BEFRIENDING THE ELDERLY: USING THE FREE ASSOCIATION NARRATIVE INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE AND PSYCHOANALYTIC CONCEPT OF COUNTERTRANSFERENCE TO EXPLORE THE BEFRIENDING EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Research has shown that loneliness and social isolation have a significant negative impact on the physical and psychological health of older adults living in the UK, impacting not only on their quality of life, but on society as a whole through increased use of health services. There is a movement, however, that is committed to alleviating loneliness in older adults through befriending: where an unrelated volunteer gives their time to provide companionship on a regular basis to an individual in their own home. Drawing on the author's personal experience as a befriender, there is an emotive and affective dimension to caring, that is often contradictory and conflictual, and that is missing from the current, predominantly descriptive qualitative literature in this area. Applying psychoanalytic concepts to sociological and psychological research, specifically the free association narrative interview technique (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) and using transference and countertransference to support analysis and interpretation, produces data that contradicts previous views of the volunteer as rational, intentional, and coherent in their understanding and explanation of their own behaviour. This study has shown that the befriending experience is highly affective and often conflictual, producing similar anxiety that the both the befriender and the organisation through which they volunteer strive to alleviate. There are conflicting tensions between caring and sacrifice and in between being a friend but in fact restricted in the 'behaviours' that constitute this friendship. A richer understanding of the experience of befriending, from the point of view of the befriender, can help support organisations in the recruitment and retention of volunteer befrienders, as well as helping to develop further befriending services for older people based on this new knowledge.

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the personal background of the author and what influenced the choices in conducting this research by briefly outlining the academic and personal experiences that have led to it. This chapter will conclude with a brief synopsis of all forthcoming chapters.

Researcher's Background

Academically, my interest in the psychological lives and wellbeing of older people was sparked during an undergraduate lecture on Alzheimer's disease and dementia for my brain physiology and disorder module as part of my BSc Psychology. Here we have a disease that can that effect people of all ages, but is predominantly prevalent in older people, and has the unfortunate business of slowly but surely stealing people's memories and everyday capabilities. It is a harrowing and unfair disease, common and likely in many older people. In discussion with my peers after the lecture, it struck me that they seemed to be enamoured by the more glamourous brain disorders, such as personality disorders or behavioural changes after severe injury, than this 'old people's disease'. I continued with my studies in psychology but kept my eye on developments in research and articles in the news, etc. Another lecture, this time during my masters in sociological research methods and on the idea of prejudice and discrimination, again bought my attention to the fact that less attention was paid to ideas of ageism: my masters dissertation was a qualitative study in attitudes towards the elderly in masters level students and proved insightful.

Up until now my research was always qualitative, interviews semi-structured, and analysis largely thematic. I found that whilst conducting interviews there were often points that were raised, ideas that were formed, that were so insightful but that I struggled to find a place for within the confines of this methodology. It was when I volunteered as a befriender myself and met other befrienders that I came to see the rich and hugely varied map of reasons as to why people choose to volunteer. As well as volunteering because we had the time and the means to do so, there is something deeply personal and emotive about the act of befriending, and this human touch is often missing from the literature. Another realisation came during my ad hoc employment as a personal carer to a severely physically disabled lady in her own home. The environment was uneasy – the buoyant enthusiasm of the new carers contending with the silent, brooding resentment of the long-term ones. District nurses came and went: the

majority lovely and highly skilled, some overworked and impersonal. I often wondered how those working in a caring vocation had come to seem so uncaring.

This collection of experiences, coupled with my own personal and academic curiosity, lead me on the path to psychoanalytic theory, in particular the work of Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (2000). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) provided a method by which I could explore the inner lives of my befrienders. Crucially, Hollway and Jefferson provided a means by which I could analyse my own subjective experience and its relation to the research through consideration of researcher-subject transference and countertransference. My previous experience of interviewing and analysing data could never account for that uncanny feeling you sometimes get when someone is saying one thing, but meaning another, or the experience of having an interviewee say something you deem flippant or ignorant and how that taints your perception of them throughout the rest of the interview and analytical process. In reality, considering these feelings can add richness and a human depth to the analysis and interpretation that is more akin to real life experience than the rigid thematics of other methods.

Research Aims & Purposes

The aim of this research is to use psychoanalytic theory to explore the individual experience of befriending older people in a group of volunteer befrienders based in Bristol, England. The purpose of this is to gain a richer, deeper, and more 'real' picture of the befriending experience in order to better understand a behaviour that has the potential to relieve much of the psychological, emotional, and physical detriments of loneliness in older age. Implications of this research may include deepening our understanding of pro-social behaviour, of recruitment and retention of volunteers for future befriending schemes, and how befriending organisations impact and manage the event of befriending itself. There is much research on the benefits of befriending for both the befriender and the recipient of their companionship, however this research is often overly positive and does not consider the negatives of befriending – the anxieties inherent, the anxieties caused, and the tension between friendship and forced companionship (to name but a few), which must all be considered if we desire a complete and rounded picture of the befriending experience. The psychoanalytic concept of free association can be used as a methodological tool to explore the subjective, emotional involvement of befrienders: during data analysis the focus lies not only on the choice and

content of the narrative produced by the interviewee, but also in the links, explicit or implicit, between ideas in the narratives. This is a useful tool because during a thematic analysis of interview data, a change of subject should be taken at face value, whereas a psychoanalytic lens allows us to ask why an individual may change the subject, or what psychological mechanism is at work, what is being protected by not talking about a particular subject anymore, and how is this meaningful? By clearing the table and opening a space for the research subject to fill with whatever they feel relevant may give a more realistic insight into such ideas as why and how people come to befriend, what keeps them going, and what has the potential to stop them from doing it.

In our everyday social contact with others we do not typically take people at face value, rather we question, explore, disagree and debate, and we can intuit when someone may be being dishonest or have a hidden agenda. A large portion of research into befriending is survey and questionnaire based and simply cannot give voice to these nuances of experience. Other qualitative research delves further into the phenomena, but always seem to have an agenda which directs the participants' narrative, causing it to lose its specificity to the individual. In providing pre-decided options for someone to choose from, or asking questions designed to elicit particular answers, we are not doing true justice to the voice of the research subject nor are we realising the organic and nuanced nature of their experiences. Feminist academics fight to reduce the power imbalance between researcher and researched and strive to give the 'voice' back to the subject. Some academics feel that we can never truly give voice to a subject since we cannot directly access their experience (Reissman, 1993) and therefore an interpretative approach is unavoidable. Whilst this may be the case, as Hollway and Jefferson argue, an interpretative approach 'can also be fair, democratic and not patronising, as long as the approach to knowing people through their accounts is applied to the researcher as well as the researched; as long as researchers are not seen as neutral vehicles for representing knowledge in an uncontaminated way' (2000:3). The essential argument here is that the researcher is not to be granted immunity, an objective status, or positioned in a way as to be superior to the researched. The research relationship then, between researcher and research subject, is of equal importance to the overall outcome of the study: the research is on a par with the subject, just in a different position. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) argue that in order for this to happen, we need to change our view of the research subject as one whose inner world is a simple refection of the outer world, or a rational accommodation to it, and towards an individual whose inner world cannot be understood without knowledge of their

experiences in the world, and whose external experiences cannot be understood without knowing the ways in which their inner world allows them to experience it (2009: p.3). It is the more traditional interview formats that fail to grasp the internal conflict and emotional significance (as well as it's wider, cultural and social implications) of any phenomena experienced by a subject. Psychoanalysis, in this sense, is able to offer reasons why interviewees might not actually offer factually accurate, realistic, or coherent stories. Traditional interview formats rely on asking 'why' something is the case based on the assumption that the interviewee knows themselves and the reasons for their behaviours wholly and is able to articulate this to another in the same way. It is here that we become inundated with responses that are devoid of emotion or any real substance.

Freud (1900/1991) recognised our need to defend against anxiety and the free association narrative interview method here utilises this concept in order to accommodate the seemingly illogical or irrelevant that may present itself during interview and analysis. The subject in this sense is seen as a psychosocial being whom utilises narratives to inform of their experiences, these experiences being both emotional and cognitive, psychological and social, and not often entirely 'known' to the subject themselves: defences may be at play in the research dynamic which may emerge during interpretation (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). It seems that just like we need contact with others in the world, the researcher also needs contact with the researched: the subject cannot be known except through another. It is this view of the research subject as a psychosocial being that seems to resonate with the whole concept of befriending, of an individual actively seeking to make an impact in the social world, and drives the use of the Free Association Narrative Interview technique (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) as the research method of choice for this thesis. Transference and counter-transference experiences between the researcher and researched may also give insight into the dynamic of the befriending relationship itself (between befriender and their older companion) considering both activities (befriending and participating in this research) involve meeting with a stranger to openly discuss personal thoughts and feelings to the aid of the other. Looking at the befriending experience through a psychoanalytic lens means considering the tensions and anxiety inherent in the activity, as well as how organisations strive to manage this, as well as a deeper understanding of the befriending experience as a whole.

Thesis Structure

Chapter Two Literature Review: In this chapter we will critically explore the literature on volunteering and befriending, looking at both psychological and sociological studies.

Chapter Three Methodology: This chapter will begin by critically discussing the use of psychoanalytic theory in psychosocial qualitative research. It will then describe the free association narrative interview method by which participants were interviewed and interview data interpreted and analysed. It will conclude by outlining some key considerations to apply during the analysis stage to avoid common pitfalls when utilising psychoanalytic theory in this way. The recruitment method and participants interviewed will be described, followed by a description of the analytical process.

Chapter Four Data Analysis: this chapter will introduce our individual case studies and will be structured by presenting the data analysis for each individual participant, in the order they were interviewed. A brief biography of each individual participant is given before analysis of the key themes that emerged from the material.

Chapter Five Discussion: this chapter will critically explore the findings of the individual data analyses and how they influence and are influenced by the organisation through which they befriend. Themes from the critical literature review will also be drawn on during the discussion of the findings.

Chapter Six Implications and Future Directions: to conclude, this chapter will discuss the findings and how they add to the overall field of befriending research. Any findings from the analysis and discussion that would benefit from being explored further or approached again will be highlighted as directions for future research. To discuss the implications of this research, an attempt is made to apply these findings practically, in terms of how befriending services may use the knowledge to recruit and retain new volunteers and how to improve services overall for the benefit of older people living alone.

<center>**Chapter Two**</center>

<center>**Critical Literature Review**</center>

Human beings can withstand a week without water, two weeks without food, many years of homelessness, but not loneliness. It is the worst of all tortures, the worst of all sufferings.   *Paulo Coelho*

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is as follows: to qualitatively explore the experience of befriending in individuals volunteering through an organisation using a psychoanalytic theoretical framework. Research exploring the experiences of befriending volunteers has been highlighted as important (Smith and Greenwood, 2013) as understanding workers' experiences can help to identify appropriate support, which in turn can positively influence future befrienders' satisfaction, wellbeing (Stockwell-Smith, Jones, and Moyle, 2011) as well as recruitment and retention. These aims dictate the format of this chapter and focus the literature review on the key ideas of volunteering and befriending, qualitative studies on befriending, and the application of psychoanalytic theory in qualitative research. The overall focus is on psycho-social literature, as this is a thesis that explores the subjective psychological experience of befriending as well as how this is framed within a social organisation that facilitates this activity.

An Ageing Population.

"I'm getting older and I want to know how I can lodge a complaint about it. Should I write to my MP? Or the local council? One of my MEPs, perhaps? Because old age is a political issue, arguably one of the most pressing of those we face as a nation. How can we explain our tendency to ignore or kick into the long grass areas of policy that are so complicated, controversial and yet so crucial they really shouldn't be ignored at all?"
Tom Harris for The Telegraph News Online 26/05/2016

The UK has a rapidly ageing population. The number of people aged over 65 years and needing care could reach 2.8 million by 2025 in England and Wales – an increase of 25% from 2015 (the equivalent to an additional 560,000 people!) over a decade, according to a study by Guzman-Castillo et al. (2017). The study modelled future trends in disability and life expectancy in England and Wales between 2015-2025 by estimating future rates of

cardiovascular disease, dementia, and other diseases, and the functional disability they may cause. Estimates suggest that the number of people aged over 65 will increase by almost a fifth (19%) – from 10.4 million people in 2015 to 12.4 million people in 2025. For people aged 65 in 2025, life expectancy is projected to increase by 1.7 years to 86.8 years, but a quarter of later life is likely to be spent with disability (5.4 years after age 65) (2017:309). This study serves to highlight the growing burden of disability that health and social services will face over the next decade in the UK and Wales. Guzman-Castillo et al. emphasise that it will be the burden of disability that will grow as a result of the rising number of people living into old age and the authors highlight the current and difficult challenges that will have to be faced, such as a shortage of carers and social care funding cuts. The authors warn that the impact on those with lower incomes may result in many being unable to live independently; currently 40% of the national cost of long-term care is paid by the savings and incomes of affected individuals and their families (2017: 309). As researcher Dr Maria Guzman-Castillo of the University of Liverpool warns we need to take heed of:

> "…the societal costs associated with disability in the coming decade… Spending on long-term care will need to increase considerably by 2025, which has serious implications for a cash strapped and overburdened National Health Service and an under-resourced social care system" (from an interview for The Lancet Public Health journal, 24th May 2017).

In addition to increased investment in health and social care, the authors encourage the implementation of effective disease prevention measures to counter poor diet, smoking, high alcohol consumption, high blood pressure, diabetes and being physically inactive which are shared risk factors for chronic diseases and associated disability.

The rising burden of age-related disability accompanying population ageing poses a substantial societal challenge and emphasises the urgent need for policy development that includes effective prevention interventions (ibid., 2017:313). An ageing population is not only susceptible to physical disability, but also to poor emotional and social wellbeing, which in turn has massive detrimental health outcomes for older people. This can be a double edged sword: loneliness can negatively impact on physical health, and poor physical health can reduce a person's ability and capacity to socialise, putting them at risk of loneliness.

Defining loneliness and social isolation.

"The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It's the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared". Lois Lowry

Loneliness can affect any one at any age, but the focus of this thesis is on older people. Loneliness is a complex phenomenon that can be difficult to define, but has been as the 'subjective, unpleasant, and distressing phenomenon stemming from a discrepancy between individuals' desired and achieved levels of social relations' (Perlman and Peplau, 1981). Social isolation has been defined as 'an imposed isolation from normal social networks caused by loss of mobility or deteriorating health' (Windle et al., 2011). An important typology of loneliness focusses on its temporality (de Jong-Gierveld and Raadschelders, 1982), and its capacity as both a transient and a chronic condition. Transient, or state loneliness, is temporary in nature, caused by something in the environment and can be relatively easy to relieve, whereas chronic, or trait loneliness, is more permanent, has a psychic root, and can be very difficult to relieve (Duck, 1992).

Loneliness is a subjective self-perception, rather than a quantifiable 'thing', and it is not the same as social isolation. As the age-old adage goes, one can be alone but not feel lonely, or one can be surrounded by people, but still be alone in the crowd. As a resource from Age UK states, the distinction between these two concepts is often overlooked by policy makers and researchers, which makes it difficult to understand what can help people reduce [older peoples'] feeling[s] of loneliness (Age UK online, updated 19/02/2018). Social isolation and loneliness are separate phenomena, but both pose a health risk and both require attention and a solution. A discussion of the nuances between the two concepts is not within the scope of this thesis, but what is of importance is the fact that older people are more at risk of experiencing these conditions. Various factors, such as disability and major life events (e.g., loss of a spouse, retirement, disability) can put older adults at risk of experiencing social isolation or loneliness.

In January 2017, The Guardian reported the key findings from a research poll conducted by charity and combatting loneliness advocate Age UK, and the results highlight a growing number of chronically lonely older people living in the UK. Caroline Abrahams, Age UK's charity director says, "This new analysis shows that about a million older people in our country are profoundly alone, many of whom are likely to be enduring the pain and suffering of loneliness" (Siddique, 2017). Almost three-quarters of older people in the UK are lonely

and more than half of those have never spoken to anyone about how they feel, according to the survey carried out for the Jo Cox commission on loneliness. The poll also found that about 7 in 10 (71%) of respondents – average age 63 – said their close friends and family would be surprised or astonished to hear that they felt lonely (Siddique, 2017). To continue, almost half (49%) of the 73% who described themselves as lonely in the online poll said they had been so for years; 11% said they had always felt lonely and; 56% said they had never spoken about their loneliness to anyone. The Campaign to End Loneliness project 'The Missing Million' reported an estimated 1'100'00 people aged 65 and over are chronically lonely in the UK, that 17% of older people are in contact with friends and family less than once a week, and 11% are in contact less than once a month (2016:pg.8). A shocking indicator of the atomisation of older people's social world is that two fifths of older people (some 3.9 million people) say that television is now their main source of company ((Davidson and Rossall, 2014). As Laura Alcock-Ferguson, executive director of the Campaign to End Loneliness, states, "loneliness is a serious public health issue and dealing with it will take the strain off the NHS and social care services," (Siddique (2017) for the Guardian Online).

The picture portrayed by the literature is that by the time people reach their 80s, the majority live on their own, mostly because of widowhood. Older people's social networks can often be reduced as well, as children and grandchildren move away, and ageing kin and friends may have passed away. Living alone, health problems and disability, sensory impairment such as hearing loss, and major life events such as loss of a spouse have all been identified as risk factors for social isolation and loneliness (Grenade and Boldy, 2008).

The impact of loneliness and social isolation on older people

Since 2000, there has been an increase in interest and research in social isolation and loneliness and how they impact on health outcomes, both within the general population and older people specifically. The 'bedrock' for the empirical investigation of social relationships and their effect on health is formed of several early theories, namely those of sociologist Emile Durkheim, of British psychoanalyst John Bowlby, and of several notable anthropologists including Elizabeth Bott and John Barnes (Berkman et al., 2000). A major wave of conceptual development also came from quantitative sociologists such as Claude Fischer, Edward Laumann, and Peter Marsden, amongst others. This eclectic mix of theoretical approaches, combined with the contributions of epidemiologists Cassel and Cobb,

forms what Berkman et al. call the 'foundation of research on social ties and health' (2000:844). Courtin and Knapp (2017) conducted an evidence review specifically searching for the relationship between social isolation and / or loneliness, and ill health in older people as it presents itself in the wider literature, with the aim of identifying what evidence currently exists and what the limitations in this area are (2017: 799). They found that social isolation and loneliness' impact on health is a growing research area that has attracted the attention of many multi-disciplinary researchers, from schools such as medicine, public health, psychology, epidemiology, and nursing (Courtin and Knapp, 2017). The majority of studies considered in Courtin and Knapp's literature utilised measures of loneliness, such as the UCLA loneliness scale (Russell, 1996), the English longitudinal survey of loneliness (Shankar et al., 2011), and the aged-specific de Jong Gierveld Scale (1987). The key findings from Courtin and Knapp's (2017) literature review were: loneliness is an independent risk factor for depression in old age (Theeke et al., 2012: Paul et al., 2006: Adams et al., 2004: Alpass and Neville, 2003); loneliness both affects and is affected by depression and functional limitations over time (Luo et al., 2012); loneliness and depressive symptoms in old age have a strong reciprocal impact (Cacioppo et al., 2006) and; a similar effect has been found between loneliness and subjective well being in older age (Vander Weele et al., 2012). The researchers also found that: groups of older people who are isolated or lonely only partially overlap and that only loneliness (and not social isolation) was an independent mortality risk factor in old age (Tilvis et al., 2011,2010); that feelings of loneliness rather than social isolation were found to be a major risk factor for increased mortality in older men (Holwerda et al. 2012), and; found that both isolation and loneliness were independent risk factors for a range of health outcomes (Shankar et al. 2011, 2013, Coyle and Dugan 2012).

The Social Care Institute for Excellence's (SCIE) report, 'Tackling loneliness and social isolation' also highlighted some key research that shows the true extent of the damaging impact of loneliness and social isolation on physical and mental health (2018). For example, research has shown that lacking social connections is as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and exceeds the impact of well known risk factors such as obesity and physical inactivity (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Chronic feelings of loneliness can result in deterioration of physical and mental well being, and a shorter lifespan (Bennett, 2002). Research has shown that feeling lonely can increase blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease (Steptoe et al. 2004), elevate cortisol and stress levels to the detriment of the immune system (Hawkley et al. 2003), impairs sleep quality which detriments memory and cognitive

function leading to a negative impact on metabolic, neural, and hormonal regulations (Bolton, 2012) and heighten feelings of depression, anxiety, and increase vulnerability (Hawkley and Cacioppo, 2010). Lonely individuals are also more likely to visit their GP and use prescription medication (Cohen et al. 2006), at the cost of a £45 (per GP visit) and £41.35 (per prescription) charge to the tax-payer, according to government data (Health and Social Care Report, 2013). A study by Barlow and Wrosch (2015) also found that suffering with chronic illness increased feelings of loneliness, evidencing the intricate relationship between loneliness and poor health as one that can flow in either direction. The research investigated whether levels of chronic illness could predict increased feelings of loneliness in older adulthood and it was found that loneliness linearly increased over time, and that this effect was observed only among those patients that reported high base levels of chronic illness. The conclusion was that loneliness increases in older adulthood as a function of chronic illness (Barlow and Wrosch, 2015). As noted above, existing health conditions or impairments can lead to a curtailment of independence and can limit social roles, resulting in feelings of loneliness (Duane, Brasher, and Koch, 2013). Conversely, chronic feelings of loneliness can result in deterioration of health and well-being, and a shorter lifespan (Bennet, 2002). Feeling lonely has been shown to increase blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular diseases (Steptoe et al., 2004), elevate cortisol and stress levels which weakens the immune system (Hawkley et al., 2003), impair sleep quality (which causes memory problems) leading to negative effects on metabolic, neural and hormonal regulations (Bolton, 2012), and heighten feelings of depression, anxiety, and increase vulnerability (Hawlkey and Cacioppo, 2010). There is evidence that loneliness and social isolation are associated with reduced cognitive function (Shankar et al., 2013), while socially engaged older people experience less cognitive decline and are less prone to dementia (Bolton, 2012). Research has also shown that self-perceived loneliness doubles the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease (Amieve et al., 2010; Nyman, Gosney, and Victor, 2010). It is thought that cognitive health is facilitated directly through enhanced brain stimulation, and indirectly through lowered stress reactions (Dickinson et al., 2011; Fratiglioni, Paillard-Borg, and Winbladj, 2004) improved coping mechanisms, and healthy behaviours (Duncan and McAuley, 1993). Loneliness often comes hand-in-hand with depression in older people, and it has been found to be related to feelings of anger, sadness, depression, worthlessness, resentment, emptiness, vulnerability, and pessimism (Griffin, 2010). Drageset et al., (2013) rather upsettingly found that nursing home residents who report feeling emotionally lonely die sooner than those who do not.

The current picture for our older people

In September 2016 the King's Fund published a report entitled 'Social Care for Older people: Home Truths' (Humphries et al. 2016). The report had some rather shocking key messages to voice regarding the current state of social care support for older people in the UK. At the time of the study, it was reported that 6 consecutive years of cuts to Local Authorities budgets had resulted in 26% fewer people receiving help and a social care system that, in its current state, is struggling to meet the needs of our older population (Humphries et al., 2016:pg.4). A combination of government reduction in grants, staff shortages, higher regulatory standards, and the introduction of the National Living Wage is placing 'unprecedented pressures' on a system already unable to cope (ibid.). Local Authorities have sought to protect the most vulnerable, higher needs individuals whilst simultaneously encouraging others to remain independent and at home, drawing, of course, on the resources of families and communities, so as to reduce dependence on the State. The same study also projected a funding outlook for the next five years (from 2016), which they described as 'bleak', as measures announced by the Government could not meet 'a widening gap between needs and resources' set to reach at least £2.8 billion by 2019 (2016:pg.4). It is predicted that the potential for Local Authorities to achieve more within existing resources is very limited, and they will 'struggle to meet very basic statutory duties' (ibid.). As Humphries et al. state, it will be our unpaid carers that are expected to do even more and there will be an increased dependence on the third sector for help (2016:pg.4). Whilst Local Authorities have important statutory duties, in reality almost 90% of actual support is provided by almost 20'000 independent organisations, charities, and social enterprises (Skills for Care, 2016b). The withdrawal of Local Authorities and the NHS from the direct provision of long-term care has dramatically changed the adult social care landscape and created a strategic shift in policy over the last 30 years, with more emphasis placed on the roles of the third sector (Humphries et al., 2016:pg.7).

That the adult social care system is in trouble is not *new* news: even before austerity hit public spending in 2010 the state was unable to meet a large portion of older people's care needs, resulting in many using their own financial and familial resources to support themselves (ibid.:pg.6). The gap between the needs of our older population and the funding available to support them has only grown wider ever since. There are also additional factors that raise worries about the current state of the adult social care system and the quality of

service provision, including staff shortages, low level of staff pay, poor training and skills of staff, and recruitment and retention of staff difficulties (Humphries et al., 2016:pg.7). The introduction of a national living wage in 2015, whilst welcomed, is estimated to add at least £2 billion to workforce costs by 2020 (ibid.), creating fresh concerns regarding the financial viability of many service providers (particularly after years of funding reductions as well). It has been reported that some of the UK's largest care providers have withdrawn from the market as a result (Laing-Buisson, 2017). The result is that older people are more than ever falling outside of the social care system, either because their financial means are too great for publicly-funded support or their care needs are not high enough, yet little is known about what happens to these people, where they are, or what life is like for them (Baxter and Glendinning, 2014; Institute of Public Care, 2012).

Who looks after our elderly? – a political turn to volunteering and the third sector

As social care faces unprecedented pressures, politicians are becoming increasingly aware of the power of the third sector – the voluntary sector – in delivering services. For Norman Lamb, a former social care minister, there was a 'great army' of volunteers just waiting to provide 'some of the solutions to the challenges we face', and for Theresa May, our current Prime Minister, we are paving the way for a 'shared society' that promises to 'lead the way internationally in the development of social finance and to harness the full potential of our charities and social enterprises to work with business and government to tackle some of the biggest challenges in our country" (Third Sector online, 2017). Politicians are aware of the potential of the third sector and volunteers are increasingly factored in when new services are being commissioned (Third Sector online, 2017). The Care Act 2014 is the most comprehensive set of changes to be made to our adult social care system in more than forty years (Sinclair, 2017:2). Since the first phase of the reform was initiated in April 2015, many councils and their care provider partners have worked to reshape how social care is provided. Emphasis has shifted from crisis driven reactive services to more preventative measures and a promotion of wellbeing for all. In the push towards more community-based approaches and services, the voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector can be a critical partner alongside local government, as referenced in the 2016 LGA and Volunteering Matters paper, *Volunteering and Social Action and the Care Act* (Sinclair, 2017:3). The paper (*Volunteering and Social Action and the Care Act*) emphasises the promotion of wellbeing, working across places (joining services) and working with the third sector in delivering person centred, holistic outcomes (Act et al., 2014). VCSE organisations have been shown to

be an effective partner for local authorities in delivering improved person centred outcomes for those in need of support (Sinclair, 2017:3).

Which voluntary services focus on reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people?

Out of a comprehensive literature review conducted by Davidson and Rossall (2014), four classifications of interventions aimed at tackling social isolation and loneliness were found to be typical and included:

1. Interventions to improve social skills in others
2. Interventions to enhance social support / interaction in others
3. Interventions to increase opportunities for social interactions and
4. Interventions to address maladaptive social cognition (behaviours that are counterproductive or a hindrance to everyday living)

In September 2017, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and Renaisi (a social enterprise based in London) held a conference with commissioners, local authorities, and third sector representatives to discuss the opportunities and barriers present in addressing loneliness and social isolation in older adults. It was acknowledged by health and social care consultant Dr Karen Windle that whilst there is now more evidence about the impact of interventions than there was six years ago, it is 'quality' in such evidence that remains an issue. It was found that in the current literature sample sizes are relatively small and few studies offer a counter-factual assessment, a method of comparison which involves comparing the outcomes of interest of those having benefitted from a policy or programme with a control group. Additionally, few studies have explored the impact of maintaining interventions over time, and the changes that might then arise for beneficiaries (SCIE, 2018). However, despite this, some good local and international research has been conducted that explores the effectiveness of interventions to address loneliness and social isolation in older people, with a particularly effective intervention being that of befriending. Befriending has been defined as 'a voluntary, mutually beneficial, and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life (the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, http://www.mandbf.org/mbf-membership/what-is-mentoring-and-befriending). Befriending schemes are used widely to offer both companionship and emotional support to socially isolated and/or lonely older people and have found to be greatly beneficial to those receiving the service (SCIE, 2012).

Cohen-Mansfield and Perach (2014) critically reviewed interventions to alleviate loneliness in older adults and found that of the 34 interventions studied, 12 were found to be effective and 15 potentially effective, with individual interventions, such as one-to-ones, mentoring, and befriending, to be more effective than group interventions. The study was conducted between 1996 and 2011 and its inclusion criteria included involving older adults, implementation of an intervention directly aimed at addressing loneliness and/or social isolation, and included in its outcome measures the effects of the intervention. The literature was accessed by the researchers using the databases PsycINFO, MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, AgeLine, PsycBOOKS, and Google Scholar for the years 1996-2011. The authors concluded that whilst many approaches show promise in tackling loneliness, it is design flaws that prevent a proper evaluation of their effectiveness. The results of this study showed that it is possible to reduce loneliness in older adults by using educational interventions and schemes that focus specifically on maintaining and enhancing social networks. However - for an individual that is socially isolated due to poor health or mobility - attending group interventions may not be possible, in which case it is important that one-to-one interventions still be available to the individual in their own home, such as through a befriending scheme. Reviews of one-to-one befriending schemes specifically would also be useful in assessing their impact on alleviating loneliness in the socially isolated.

The Welsh government published a report by researcher Deborah Fenney (2013) on the effectiveness of interventions tackling social isolation within Welsh Local Authorities. It is important to note that social policy on ageing is different in Wales, as is funding, welfare, and accessibility to services, however this report did highlight some key ideas. Whilst Fenney acknowledged that there is a limited evidence base around the best way to address loneliness and social isolation, four specific characteristics of the effective intervention were identified from the literature as: 1. Groups with an educational theme or a specific support function; 2. Those that target specific groups, such as carers, or women; 3. Where participants are consulted before the group is set-up, or are involved in its inception, and; 4. Interventions that are developed within or run by an existing service. The effectiveness of interventions is usually measured from the point of view of the service user and not the provider, however it would still be relevant to see if these characteristics of an effective intervention are relevant to the individual providing the service. Effectiveness can not only be measured by its output, its measurable benefit to the user, but also by it input, and an effective intervention would be one that is valued and found beneficial to all parties involved.

Sylvia Bernard and Hannah Perry published a report on loneliness and social isolation in North Yorkshire and commissioned by the North Yorkshire Older People's Partnership Board in 2013 that looked at current services available in the area and which were deemed the most effective. It was found that befriending and community navigator services appear successful in alleviating loneliness (2013; pg.26) and appeared to be a common activity in many areas of north Yorkshire.

Greenwood et al. (2016) explored the lived experience of befrienders acting as companions to older adults with dementia and found that befriending makes a 'distinctive' contribution to dementia services (Mental Health Foundation, 2007:25) and is specifically recommended to reduce loneliness and improve quality of life (Alzheimer's Society, 2013a; National Audit Office, 2007; Audit Commission, 2002). Befrienders were found to provide a 'non-judgemental, mutual, purposeful' relationship that is 'initiated, supported, and monitored by an agency' (Dean and Goodlad, 1998:2). Greenwood et al. reported that for those with dementia, befriending offers an opportunity to have their emotional needs for companionship, social and intellectual stimulation and enhanced quality of life met in an effective, economic way (2016:2). Randomised controlled trials show a trend towards improved carer mood and quality of life for those who engaged in befriending (recipient and giver) (Wilson et al., 2009). Befriending for those with dementia has been praised by general practitioners and both service evaluations and funding has been set up to research further findings in this area (Greenwood et al., 2016; National Audit Office, 2007). This particular study has also been invaluable to the current thesis due to its similar purposes and methods – Green et al. (2016) chose to 'gain an insider perspective into volunteers' lived experience of befriending people with dementia' (pg.3), via conducting semi-structured interviews and using a phenomenological-interpretive qualitative analysis method. Greenwood et al.'s (2016) study reported some interesting findings about the lived experienced of befriending the elderly with dementia that may be pertinent to the current thesis' analysis, namely that the befriending relationship is both powerful and paradoxical. These findings are discussed in terms of themes and are as follows:

Theme One Comparable but indescribable: Qualities of the befriending relationship were described as being both like friendship, but also unlike friendship, leaving many befrienders without the language capacity to adequately define their experience. Befrienders also spoke of the 'sense' of their relationship, indicating something intuitive about the relationship, which may partly account for its indescribable nature. Some befrienders spoke of the element

of 'chance', in that they were often paired with a random' older person and had to hope they had 'chemistry': such as intangible, undefinable quality was voiced by many befrienders during the interviews (pg.6). The personal element of the relationship was also very important, however this differed amongst befrienders: some described a 'nice pleasant, relaxed relationship' whereas others said they shared confidential and personal information, adding a dimension of 'intimacy' to their relationships (pg.6). Many befrienders also touched upon the notion of love, of being there 'unconditionally' for their befriended, and feeling 'blessed' to have them in their life (pg.6).

Theme Two A Multiplicity of Roles: both befrienders and befriendees played a multitude of roles within the relationship and many found it difficult to define the unique position this relationship took in their lives. Befrienders described taking on the role of carer, friend, lunch buddy, and confidante (pg.6) amongst others. Many interviewees likened the people they befriended to parents, grandparents, partners, friends, and educators, with the closest likeness being as a friend, despite this not being a completely satisfactory descriptor (pg.6). There was also a paradoxical element to whether the befriender considered the role in a professional manner or in a friendly one: many befrienders defined themselves as a worker with multiple functions that included not only providing meaningful conversation to their companion, but also liaising with family, signposting to local services, supporting skill learning and acquisition, and organising community outings (pg.6).

Theme Three Two-way but not equal: most befrienders felt that the relationship was mutually beneficial and that both parties gained from it. However, what each party gained from the relationship differed, and both befriender and befriendee tended to 'get very different things' (pg.8) from it. Interviewee accounts revealed a power imbalance in many of the befriending relationships, with some befrienders consciously developing ways in which their befriendee could give to them, such as seeking adice (pg.8). Ultimately, befrienders expected a power imbalance as part of their role, and whilst this caused some 'discomfort' (pg.8), many used it to their advantage by letting befriendees 'lead' the visits: 'It's more important what's happening for him than what's happening for me' (pg.8).

In Greenwood et al.'s (2016) study, the befriending relationship was articulated as:

> … a complex and paradoxical interaction between two people that did not fall
> easily into an existing cultural repertoire. The development of a personal

connection within a professional context created issues of power and equality, as well as a fluid reality (pg.9).

The above quote highlights the paradoxical yet powerful potential of the befriending relationship, which can be fraught with anxiety, struggle, and imbalance. This study's method involved semi-structured interviews centred on the key interview questions that explore the meaning of the befriender role and the lived experience of dementia befriending and professional support. The success and validity of a structured interview can rest on the extent to which the interviewee's opinions are truly reflected, that is, is the interviewee's "voice", communicating their subjective perspective? Jones (1985) summarises the position that to really understand another person's construct of reality we have to ask them for their story in a way that allows them to tell us [the interviewer] in their terms. A threat to the validity of this type of interview is the use of leading questions or the researcher's preconceived ideas influencing what is and is not worth hearing from the participant and discussing. It would be interesting to see if the same themes as those discussed above arise in a situation where no interview guide has been set and full control of the interaction handed to the interviewee. The free association narrative interview technique is a method well-suited to eliciting narratives that are rich, have depth, and reflect real meaning for the interviewee.

Is Volunteering and befriending beneficial?

In the wider landscape, volunteering can be distinguished from other forms of 'good' action, such as charitable giving or philanthropy, in that volunteering is the specific provision of valuable time, resource, and energy to causes or recipients of services (Snyder and Omoto, 2009: p.4), as opposed to gifts of money or goods. It has been established that social isolation is associated with poor illness outcomes (Giacco et al., 2012) and so many healthcare providers and voluntary organisations attempt to address this through providing services such as group activities, community schemes, and other social activities. Friendship is commonly held to be one of the key relationships in life that gives it richness, value, and meaning (Thomas et al., 2016). The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines the word ''Befriend'' as to act as or become a friend to (someone), especially when they are in need of help or support (Pearsall, 1998, p. 156). That befriending studies often begin with a description of friendship and its benefits indicates that befriending, at least in a research context, is about facilitating friendship (e.g. McGowan & Jowett, 2003). Befriending is an activity that aims to match a volunteer with someone, usually older or at risk of social isolation, with the sole

purpose of them spending time together in a social capacity over a long period of time (Thomas et al., 2016). Research has implied that these befriending interventions can be effective in improving social and psychological function amongst those receiving the service (Davidson et al., 2004; Harris et al., 1999).

Despite there being a tendency in the befriending literature to frame it in terms of facilitating friendship, it is also clear that befriending as a practice and friendship are not the same thing because of the presence of a third party within the relationship, the befriending organisation. Befriending has been defined in the literature as a relationship between a volunteer befriender and a client which is initiated, supported, and monitored by a voluntary or statutory agency (Lester-Cribb, 2009:9). McGowan and Jowett (2003) suggested a befriending relationship can offer some, but not all, aspects of a friendship. The presence of the organising party means it is not an entirely private relationship, neither is it completely mutual because although both may benefit from the relationship, it is not one of equal power (2003:15). Dean & Goodlad define befriending as the relationship between two or more individuals which is 'initiated, supported, and monitored by an agency that has defined one or more parties as likely to benefit' (1998:5). These descriptions do not match how we would typically describe and define our friendships with others, but they are also not the only way befriending is presented in the literature. Dean and Goodlad (1998:5) also describe befriending as a relationship that is non-judgmental, mutual, purposeful, and there is commitment over time. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation define befriending as a voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life (2011:2). Does the fact that the befriending relationship is modelled on but simultaneously different to, friendship effect those doing the befriending? How does this contradiction, between befriending and friendship, ply out in the experiences of the befrienders? How is this tension between friendship and professionalism managed by befrienders? How is it managed by the organisations providing befriending services?

Research commissioned by the Department of Health and conducted independently by the King's Fund states that volunteers play an important role in improving peoples' experience of care, building stronger relationships between services and communities, supporting integrated care, and reducing health inequalities (Naylor et al. 2013). But volunteering doesn't just benefit those receiving voluntary support. To the recipients, engaging with volunteers has been shown to lead to higher self-esteem, improved well-being, decreased levels of social exclusion, and a decrease in loneliness amongst service users (Department of Health, 2011a;

Sevigny et al. 2010; Farrell and Bryant, 2009' Ryan and Collins, 2008; Casiday et al. 2008). Engaging with volunteers has also been shown to improve recipients' health behaviours, such as management of diseases and improved parenting skills (Department of Health, 2011a; Kennedy, 2010; Casiday et al. 2008). The effects of engaging with volunteers on clinical outcomes in health is less well researched, however there have been positive effects reported, for example, increased survival time for hospice patients (Department of Health, 2011a; Block et al., 2010; Casiday et al. 2008). For the actual volunteers themselves, engagement has been shown to improve self-esteem, well-being, and levels of social engagement (Paylor, 2011; Farrell and Bryant, 2009; Brodie et al. 2001). In older volunteers, engagement has been shown to lead to improved wellbeing, less depression, improved cognitive function, and increased mental wellbeing in comparison to those whom do not engage in volunteering with others (von Bonsdorff and Rantanen, 2011; Morrow-Howell, 2010; Nazroo and Matthews, 2010; Schwingle et al. 2009; Morrow-Howell et al. 2009; McMunn, 2009). At a volunteering level, the literature is rich with the benefits to both those volunteering and those being cared for. A systematic literature review undertaken by Volunteering UK and the University of Wales found substantial evidence that volunteering can increase volunteers' longevity, improve their mental health, keep them fitter, and enable them to cope better with illness when it occurs. Volunteering also has a positive impact on a range of factors affecting health service users including their self-esteem, disease management, adoption of healthy behaviours, compliance with medical treatment, and relationships with health care professionals. Within the community, volunteer programs have been shown to enhance social cohesion, reduce anti-social behaviour in youth, and provide placement opportunities that may lead to employment (Prasad and Muraleedharan, 2007).

Increasing emphasis is being given to the importance of providing high quality care to the elderly that is supportive, dignified and compassionate, a concept defined in terms of the 6 C's agenda of the NHS (Dec, 2012). The findings of an inquiry into major failings in care at the Midstaffordshire NHS Trust shows the importance of shifting to a more patient-centred approach to quality service provision (Francis Report, 2013) and this is an area where volunteers can play a vital role in providing social care and support to the elderly in homes, hospitals, sheltered housing, and in their own homes within communities. From simple talking to providing advice about services to making plans to fall-proof someone's home, volunteers can provide a more 'human' dimension to care and social support that perhaps paid employees may not have the time or flexibility to do. The patient's that were interviewed

in research by Naylor et al. (2013) rather poignantly acknowledged that there is an intrinsic value to knowing someone isn't being paid to engage with you; "…and it really works in the psyche, knowing that someone is doing something for you for free, so you're valued" (Hospital Patient, Naylor et al. 2012, pg.14).

By nature of being an empathic act, volunteering has the potential to help create powerful and effective new relationships within a community, both amongst individual members and between local services and government. This is particularly valuable for marginalised communities and the elderly populations that lay outside of the mainstream services as without these social relationships, organisations and groups may risk become disengaged and disconnected from the communities they serve. Research has shown how social participation is cumulative, that is, formal volunteering can encourage others to become involved in community activities (Morrow-Howell, 2010; Department of Health, 2011a). Volunteers in a community can offer highly valuable advice in terms of service design and planning decisions, as they could be more 'in tune' with what their local community needs and wants. A poignant example of this is the development of an online training tool by a group of volunteers at the charity Target Ovarian Cancer, which improves the way GPs make a diagnosis and that is currently used in around 15% of surgeries in England (Nayler et al. 2013). By better understanding the characteristics, attitudes and experiences behind one's motivations for prosocial action, then one could harness these particulars for education, community programs and even policy. There are huge possibilities for volunteering to transform health and social care services and to bring about real improvement for our elderly population.

The literature covering the impact of volunteering on the health of volunteers has largely been informed by social integration theory which suggests that multiple social roles provide meaning and purpose in life and promote social support and interaction and thus they contribute to feelings of well-being and offer psychosocial resources that individuals can draw on in the face of disease or ill health. Because volunteering roles are typically valued by society and carry positive associations with altruism and contribution, engaging in these roles may be even more effective in promoting feelings of self-worth. Interestingly, volunteering appears to have acquired normative connotations as something good in itself that will do good. By actively acknowledging and commending current elderly care volunteers we may be able to harness and cultivate a more aged-accepting culture of giving and community. Piliavin and Siegl (2007) contend that it is a focus outside ourselves that makes the greatest

contribution to our mental health and well-being, not just as a result of enhanced self-esteem but as a result of 'mattering' – feeling that we are a significant part of the world around us and that people notice, care about, and value our existence.

How effective are befriending services specifically?

Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain, or measure, how effective a befriending service may be without either comparing it to a control group, or by looking at changes to loneliness and social isolation over time. Unless one aims to prevent loneliness and social isolation, it is otherwise difficult to predict who will likely become lonely and whether their condition during and after social intervention improved from its baseline. It has been found that many studies produced contradictory findings, with some claiming that a particular intervention is significantly effective, and another claiming the same intervention to be useless in alleviating loneliness in older people. It was also seen when undertaking the literature review that in quantitative and comparative studies of the effectiveness of interventions to alleviate loneliness the results were a mixed bag, contradictory, and inconsistent, whereas in qualitative assessments of the effectiveness of interventions, the results were more positive and found to have a significant impact on the wellbeing of the older individuals suffering from loneliness and social isolation, especially where case studies of individuals were in the data. What I think this demonstrates is the rich diversity of needs in those that are lonely, and a highlighting of the fact that when it comes to the emotional and psychical phenomena of loneliness, there is no 'one size fits all' intervention that is guaranteed to help – what works for one may do nothing for another. Therefore those organisations that are providing services to older people to alleviate loneliness need to be flexible in their approach, and include the older person at all stages of intervention planning and designing to ensure all their needs are met. The joining up of services and the sign-posting between services would serve to greatly open up channels of service provision to larger groups of older people as well.

Why do people volunteer and befriend?

Charitable behaviour has been of interest to scholars in many different fields of study, with perhaps the greatest volume of research contributed being in the psychological discipline, where it is often referred to as 'prosocial behaviour' (Blake, 2014). Beirhoff (2002) refers to prosocial behaviour as an 'action intended to improve the situation of the help-recipient' (pg.9). The concepts of altruism and egoism are frequently a means of explaining volunteer motivation, where altruism refers to when a 'benefactor provides aid without anticipation of

reward' (Dovido et al. 2006:pg.25), and egoism referring to an action carried out as a means to benefit oneself, or a selfish form of participation (ibid.). 'Indirect reciprocity' is also a frequently used term that relates to how individuals voluntarily carry out prosocial actions with the understanding that they too will benefit in the future (for examples, see Simpson and Willer (2008) and also Dovido et al. (2006). The concept of empathy is often discussed in terms of volunteering and motivation. For most of Western history, truth and morality have come from god and king, and free will was a question of theology: for almost 1700 years we were led to believe that all humans were sinners in a fallen world, and the only way of respite was the hope of salvation in the next. British philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1651) once quipped the traditionally held belief that "the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (1998/1651:pg.84). Shortly after this, at the cusp of the modern era, the idea of individuality and freedom of rational choice began to creep its way into the mind of high society and soon, such concepts of individualism and rationality profoundly shaped both the government and culture of the west. Enlightenment philosophers tempered Hobbes' somewhat pessimistic view of the brutish man requiring strict, external control with a variety of novel narratives on human nature. John Locke (1890) argued that man was born tabula rasa and then moulded by society – a theory he breached slightly when he added that beneath our blank slate is an acquisitive disposition. The English philosopher felt that man's ultimate purpose was to be productive and to use our hands and tools to expropriate nature's resources for our benefit (1690:pg.178). For Locke, "[t]he negation of nature is the way toward happiness" (1991/1690:pg.178). One hundred years later, English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1781) believed the nature of humans reduced down to the fundamental maximising of pleasure and minimising of pain; this was, of course, later sexualised by Sigmund Freud and his theory of the pleasure principle (1895). However, throughout history, there have been genuine acts of human empathy and altruism that go beyond Freud's principles. The football match between English and German troops on the battles fields at Flanders, Christmas Eve 1914; or the brave and inspiring German citizens who helped the Jews escape during the Nazi takeover (as reported by Olinson and Olinson, 1988) are just two of thousands of events where genuine human sensibilities far exceed any notions of original sin or any innate search for eroticised pleasure. A similar trajectory of thought can be traced in developmental psychology and within infant studies in particular. (Pioneering studies in the area of empathy and infant development include: Simner (1971), "newborns' response to the cry of another infant"; Sagi and Hoffman (1976), "empathic distress in newborns"; Radke-Yarrow et al. (1992), "development of concern for others"; Kagan (1990) "Introduction to the Emergence

of Morality in Young Children"; Davis (1996), "Empathy: a social developmental approach"; Hoffman (2000), "Empathy and Moral Development"; any studies pertaining to the "foundling homes" of 1930s America.) As previously mentioned, a doctrine of original sin is paralleled in early Freudian and social learning theory, where the importance of reward and punishment (as meted by parental figures) is emphasised in moral development. A doctrine of innate purity, as in Rousseau's (1762) idea of the innately pure infant vulnerable to corruption is paralleled in Piagetian theory, where it is interaction with our parents that interferes with our moral development. Piaget (1962) stressed the requirement for free and unsupervised play with peers as integral to developing a true autonomous and moral self. The British version of utilitarianism, where empathy is a necessary social bond, is interestingly and innovatively paralleled in contemporary research in a variety of disciplines, including compassion research, self-hood studies, emotion and personality and neuroscience (Blake, 2014).

It has been argued by some that voluntary action can be egoistic, or motivated by egoistic tendencies, if this action is a product of feelings of 'distress, upset, guilt, and sadness' (Dovido et al., 2006: pg.325). In this sense, performing prosocial behaviours can help alleviate the negative feelings associated with seeing another's situation, for example, I may see an advert showing the plight of underprivileged children which makes me feel distressed, sad, and that an injustice to another has occurred, and so decide to donate money to such a cause: the act of donating helps to alleviate my negative, internal feelings. The complexity of voluntary action, altruism, and egoism is evident in Heal's (cited in Hinde and Groebal, 1991) view that people volunteer for the simple fact of pleasure. Pleasure is egoistic, yet it can also be 'disinterested', that is, the pleasure is gained 'simply in the fact that another human being is flourishing' (1991:pg. 62). This form of empathy is akin to what we understand to be unconditional love, the state of mind whereby one has the goal of increasing the welfare of a close other despite any evidence of benefit for oneself.

Cnaan et al (1996) theorised a spectrum or continuum, with decision to volunteer ranging from 'free will' to an 'obligation to volunteer' and concluded that the perception of what a volunteer is depends on the relative cost and reward: "the greater the net costs to the volunteer, the purer the volunteering activity and hence the more the person is a real volunteer" (1996: p.364-383). The idea that there can be a 'pure' (or even a spectrum of 'pure' volunteer) confirms that there is an altruistic and ethical dimension to the behaviour. This definition, of use to us here, would exclude what Johnson-Coffey coined 'involuntary

volunteering': those involved in community service, on welfare to work schemes, planned citizen education projects or as part of a community service order (1997: p.60-64). There has also been considerable effort to compile an inventory of motivations for volunteering, namely the Volunteer Function Inventory, as seen in the extensive research of Clary et al. (1996), as well as research by Okun et al. 1998; Snyder et al. (1999); and Sokolowski (1996) that attempt to consider both individualistic and social aspects of voluntary behaviour. The six dimensions in the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) are Values, Protection, Career, Social, Understanding and Enhancement. The Value motive focuses on the welfare of others and can be regarded as the most altruistic motive; the Protection motive wants to deflect from negative aspects of the personality, such as guilt, boredom etc. and can be regarded as a predominantly egoistic motive; the Career motive is a utilitarian motive concerned with furthering one's own career prospects; the Social motive reacts to social expectations of an individual's environment and is probably closer to altruism, as it is other-focused; the Understanding motive is concerned with learning new information or skills and is an egoistical motive and lastly; the Enhancement motive is concerned with enhancing positive aspects of one's personality - this can be self-realization, social relations etc. and it is also considered an egoistical type of motive (Clary et al., 1998). These motives are treated as constitutive of action and as part of a discourse that gives meaning to and helps shape behaviour (Fischer and Schaffer, 1994; Midlarsky and Kahana, 1994; Smith, 1982). So for example, in research where it has been shown that teenagers are more likely to volunteer if their parents volunteer (Rosenthal et al. 1998: pg.490; Segal, 1993: p.462; Fogelman, 1997: p.150), it would be explained that the parents have taught them a positive way to think about volunteer work. These motivational attritions have been learnt as part of a larger set of cultural understandings that were passed to them from their parents (Wuthnow, 1995: p.105). As Flanagan et al showed in their work, parents teach their children volunteer motivations when they teach them about social responsibility, reciprocity, and justice (1998: p.462) (and Fogelman, 1997: p.150).

A criticism of studies, such as Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen's (1991) study, is that they only look at motivation, not incentive, and fail to distinguish between different forms of volunteering and giving. The conclusion that "...people will continue to volunteer as long as the experience as a whole is rewarding and satisfying to their unique needs ..." [281] is almost a truism and does not give further insights into either actual motives nor incentives that aid volunteer retention. Many sociologists are sceptical of the idea of motives in research at all (Wilson,

2000: p.218). Viewing motives as purely constituent of action fails to answer why, for instance, not all teenagers whom parents volunteer are volunteers themselves, or why not all volunteers have parents that volunteer, or indeed why the physical act of volunteering itself is chosen by an individual as an action in the first place. Or why, as Rosenthal et al also show, there is little evidence to suggest that motive talk learned in early childhood has a direct effect on adult volunteerism (1998: p.491). Damico et al (1998) and Astin (1993) found that children who volunteer during their high school years develop more pro-social attitudes and are more likely to volunteer later on in life. This is suggestive that learning to think of citizenship as carrying responsibilities as well as rights can encourage volunteering in adults regardless of whether they had parents who volunteered or whether they volunteered themselves in their youth (Janoski et al. 1998). There are various reasons why values fail to predict volunteering in the sociological literature reliably. Firstly, volunteering takes many forms and each may be inspired by a different set of values. Highly generalised, survey-based questions of values may fail to capture this variation. Also, different groups in a population may attach different values to the same voluntary behaviour (see Sundeen and Raskoff, 1995) – for example, Omoto and Snyder found that some religious belief encouraged volunteer work within an AIDS charity, whilst others actively discouraged it (1993). A third reason may also be, as explored by Wuthnow (1991), that values tend to be ineffectual outside support communities where norm enforcement is possible (1991: p.156).

House (1981) conducted an extensive literature review of volunteer research conducted in the last decade for his research on social support and voluntary behaviour – for a review of earlier research on the same topic, see Smith (1994). House emphasised three key sets of factors that are associated with social support and voluntary actions: firstly, the characteristics of the individual volunteering; secondly, the properties of the relationships involved in this voluntary behaviour, and; thirdly, the community context in which this behaviour occurs (1981: pg.135). At the level of the individual, two theories predominate: the first, assumes a complexity in constitution of the volunteer actor, with context as background (subjective); the second assumes an actor with relatively simple mechanisms interacting in a wider, more complex system of mechanisms (behaviourism). This dichotomy is reflected in the wider sociological literature as well, with subjectivist theories searching for motives behind volunteering and behavioural theories searching for the rational weighing of cost and reward benefits associated within the context of individual and social resources (Wilson,

2000: p.218). Much psychological research on volunteering neglects to attend to the way prosocial dispositions may be intertwined with social conditions (Bekker, 2004). A very individualistic stance is taken that doesn't give important social factors considerations, such as social ties, organisational activity, community, social resources, and so on (Wilson, 2000). In response to this one-sidedness, there has been a dramatic increase in sociological research whose focus is on voluntary action and motivation (Blake, 2014). This increased interest has seen work conducted within the third sector and by organisations providing volunteer-led services that has led to an improved understanding of how volunteerism affects individuals and society.

Religion is most frequently referred to within the sociological literature on volunteerism, with many studies exploring different types of religion and participation, denominations and volunteerism, as well as religion and voluntary groups (see Guo et al., 2013: Musick and Wilson, 2008). Research by Low et al. (2007) on behalf of the Office of the Third Sector and based on the National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving conducted both a large-scale survey and qualitative interviewing. A multi-staged stratified random sample was adopted and resulted in the recruitment of 2'700 adults participating in the research, with interviews performed in the field and focussed on topic such as who volunteers, routes into volunteering, and limitations and barriers to volunteering. This research focussed solely on those providing formal voluntary behaviour, that is, thorough an organisation or agency (as opposed to –formal volunteering, such as helping out a family member, attending a bake sale, and so on). The key findings of Low et al.'s study were: A. those individuals who saw themselves as religious volunteered more often that those who did not see themselves as religious, and B. those who actively practised their religion were more likely to volunteer than those that did not. The issue with this particular study, however, is that it's quantitative methodology does not allow for an understanding of why religion is a motivating factor for volunteering – is it because volunteering is a direct result of religious belief, or perhaps because of the influence of religious peer groups, for example?

Park and Smith (2000) found in their study on religion and volunteerism that there are four key ways in which religious capital is influential:

1.   Religiosity: one's behaviours and attitudes towards religion

2.   Religious socialisation: exposure to religious values and behaviours

3.   Religious identity: the sense of belonging to a particular religious tradition, group, or movement

4.   Religious social networks: the degrees of access to and influence from other religious adherents

(Park and Smith, 2000: pg.273).

Park and Smith (2000) also found that a positive relationship between religion and voluntary participation, but rather more interestingly, they found that high levels of church activity increased participation in non-church related volunteering, indicating what Osborne and Bell (2010) referred to as positive externalities where individuals venture outside of their immediate social and cultural surroundings to help others (in Blake, 2014). A limitation of Park and Smith's (2000) research is that not only is it based on data from nearly twenty years ago, but it focuses on only one religious group: Protestants in America. Further research would be needed on different religious groups before any generalisations can be made.

More recent research by Rochester et al. (2012) supports Park and Smith's (2000) assertion that religion influences an individual's propensity to volunteer. According to Rochester et al. (2012), volunteering is underpinned by the following key set of principles:

1.   Altruism, or beneficence: the moral imperative for compassion and care for other people

2.   Solidarity: feelings of identification with a group or society and a sense of responsibility to contribute to that group's wellbeing

3.   Reciprocity: an understanding that helping others may lead in some way to being helped in return in the future

4.   Equity and social justice: the belief that inequality and injustice and morally and socially wrong and require addressing and eliminating

(2012: pg. 16).

Whilst the above values are applicable in many cultures, as Rochester et al. explain, their role is strengthened by the social constitution that is religion (2012). A limitation of the study by Rochester et al. is that that whilst they acknowledge that religion plays a vital role in how volunteers account for their volunteering befriending, it fails to provide an adequate

understanding as to how and why religion influences an individual's volunteering behaviour (Blake, 2014).

Musick and Wilson (1998) provide a rich and in-depth understanding of the extent to which religion influences volunteering in the US and Canada. Whilst care needs to be taken when applying this understanding to UK volunteers, the study does support Rochester et al.'s (2012) emphasis on the role of values and principles in volunteering, by explaining how 'civic values' and 'making the world a better place' were the top priorities for many volunteers (2012: pg.97). Research by both the aforementioned Low et al. (2007) and Musick and Wilson (2008) echoes Durkheim's theory of a collective unconscious which proposes that through a shared set of values and beliefs people are united together in society (Durkheim et al., 2014).

Age: the literature on volunteering highlights the differences between the motivations of older and younger volunteers. Cox (2011) found that for older volunteers in the UK, a primary motive was based on a desire to care for their local community, as they are 'more aware of and felt more able to respond to matters that pertained to their local community' (Cox, 2011: pg. 27). Cox (2011) also found that older volunteers are motivated 'by wanting to feel that they are useful members of society' and valued volunteering for providing the opportunity for 'meeting new people', for 'personal growth', and to 'fill the void left by retirement' (2011:pg.28). This view supports the earlier work of Chambre (1984), who believed volunteering 'serves as a way of dealing with role loss in old age' (pg. 292). Chambre refers to the work of Swartz (1978), who suggests that

> with retirement from work, loss of peer relationships, death of parents and/or spouse, departure of grown children, or loss of feelings of self-worth and dignity – the opportunity to share and to give service is poignantly valuable (1978: pg. 8, cited in Chambre, 1984: pg.292).

More recent work by Flores (2013) involved the semi-structured interviewing of numerous charity shop volunteers (as well as paid employees and managers) in the UK and found that many older volunteers volunteered due to what he called 'social dislocation', that is, the 'loss of spouse, ill health, unemployment, retirement, children leaving home, and moving habitual location' (Flores, 2013:pg. 388). It is these personal events that may lead to an anomic state defined by 'normlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation' (Mitchell, 1988, cited in Flores, 2013: pg.389). Flores suggests that what these individuals are achieving with their

volunteering is 'ontological security', where a 'stable mental state is derived from a sense of continuity in regards to events in one's life' (2013: pg. 392). This is similar to what Hustinx (2010) labelled 'reflexive volunteering', where 'volunteering is entrenched in the active (re)design of individualised biographies, identities, and lifestyles' (2010: pg. 426). Work by Chapman et al. (2010) supports this idea and describes a motivation to volunteer as a 'mixture of interest in the work of the organisation and associated social activity' (2010: pg.67). A similar attitude is seen in those interviewed for Flores' (2013) study and as a result volunteers have been thought to play a vital role in developing strong relationships within local and small communities (Blake, 2014). Flores' (2013) work is critical in the field of research on volunteering as it is has produced rich and compelling qualitative data which has been missing from other studies.

Over the years, the amount of younger people engaging in volunteering has remained relatively stable, however, statistics produced by the third sector show how between 2005 and 2011 there was a downward trend in volunteering activity (Pudelek, 2013). Hustinx et a. (2010) attributed this trend to the 'cultural phenomenon known as 'individualisation' which is widely considered the most dangerous threat to volunteering' (2010: pg.57). A product of modernisation, individualisation has been described by Vandenberge (1999) as the process by which individuals are freed from:

> cultural constraints, such as religion, tradition, conventional morality, the unconditional belief in the validity of science, and structural constraints such as class, status, ,gender, and the nuclear family (Vandenberge, 1999:pg.28)

Blake (2014) considers a result of these social changes to be that activities such as volunteering have become a set of personal choices, rather than the norm they once were, and that individualisation is leading 'to young people in particularly becoming more selfish and narrow minded when it comes to volunteering and helping other' (2014: pg. 21). According to Hustinx et al. (2010) there are an increasing amount of younger people who do not want to commit to long-term volunteering, but rather seek 'to use volunteering for building their resume and developing certain competencies' but 'quit when their expectations are not fully met' (2010: pg. 248). Whilst Hustinx et al. (2010)make an interesting point, it would be interesting to know if quitting 'when expectations are not fully met' during voluntary participation is reserved only for the young, or if all volunteers regardless of age, are able to leave an organisation if it does not perform to their expectations.

In all of the studies previously discussed, empiricism is the key theme. Whilst this makes sense in term of acknowledging the size and scope of volunteerism, it can be somewhat lacking when it comes to explaining the reasons why people volunteer, or the experience of volunteering for an individual. The literature overall seems unable to capture the sense of concern that is felt by individuals for others and how and why this concern fuels action to help. One only has to ask a friend how they are to realise that concern is central to the majority of people: "I'm ok, but work is quite busy at the moment and it's getting difficult", "I am ok, but I've been arguing with my partner and it gets me down", "I am ok, but I am disgusted by current actions happening in the Middle East". These responses all indicate that things matter to people and that these things directly affect how we are. Our lives can go very well or very badly depending on how the certain things in our lives are faring, whether they be significant others, objects, our careers, even political causes etc. Whilst these ideas are subjective (and therefore out of empiricism's realm of concern) there are not merely values or expressions that are just 'there' but rather are specific thoughts and feelings about things (events, circumstances etc) that are not subjective. These admissions reflect that we are social beings, sentient beings and evaluative beings. As Archer illustrates, we don't merely just think and interact, we evaluate things in terms of what they mean to us, including things of the past and the future (2000a).   Sociological and psychological empirical research tends to ignore the dimension of concern in volunteer behaviour and therefore whilst they can tell us what motivates people to volunteer, it tells us little of why these individuals are motivated in this way. Common concepts such as values, preferences and self-interest are a failed attempt to do justice to this personal dimension of motivation. Similarly, concepts such as convention, habit, discourses, socialization, reciprocity, exchange, discipline, power etc. are useful for external description but miss our first-person evaluative relations to the world and the force of meaning behind these evaluations. The trouble with ignoring these evaluations is that the individual's concern, the fuel of their motivation, becomes a mere incident, a subjective accompaniment to what is happening in the 'real world'. This is reflected in the often empty and alienated view of social life held in many empirical studies. As Renato Rosaldo writes in his pioneering work "Culture and Truth" (1989), he exalts and celebrates diversity, narrative, emotion and subjectivity in research, arguing that "cultural descriptions should seek out force" (ibid:16). Rosaldo spent time with the indigenous Ilongots of northern Luzonin the Philippines in order to study their ritual of headhunting. When asked why they did it, hunters replied that it was due to "rage, born of grief". It took Rosaldo fourteen years to understand what this meant, and it was only after the accidental death of his wife that he

finally began to understand the concept of headhunting and its relation to grief. It was the emotional force of the experience – the things that matter most to people - that fuelled the headhunting, and not merely manifestations of ritual, as previously assumed. Social science, however, often refutes the nature of values and evaluations of meaning made by people due to the assumption that they are beyond the scope of reason. This assumption implies that any values or valuations held by individuals are cannot be assessed as better or worse, or more or less true of anything because such things are merely arbitrary. Yet every day we seem to engage in reasoning regarding how to value things, for example, how to bring children up, whether a certain behaviour is acceptable or not, whether the justice system is fair or not, are we becoming a narcissistic culture and so on.

What the literature across the psychological and sociological fields show is that volunteerism is a concept that is situated both within and outside of these schools. Volunteers choose to act in the way they do for highly subjective reasons, and these reasons can be rational (Sayer, 2013), to act in ways that benefit wider society and also have the potential to display an ideology of social justice. The present thesis proposes a conceptualisation of the volunteer as a complex individual both influenced by and influencing their complex environment: the interviewee is what Hollway and Jefferson (2000) refer to as a 'defended subject' whose inner emotional experience is of a conflictual nature, leading to the subject's need to defend against unconscious anxiety, whether this comes internally or externally. Much of psychoanalytic theory prioritises the unconscious, the irrational, and the emotional factors of our life experiences, which are often neglected by more traditional research methodologies. Whilst the clinical and research settings are vastly different, this is not to say that qualitative researchers can't make use of their own feeling and behavioural states as they are induced in the research context. These states have the potential to become research data and can be used to tap an important aspect of communication within the research relationship (Holmes, 2014). In the next chapter, we will discuss the application of psychoanalytic theory to psychosocial qualitative research with a specific focus on Hollway and Jefferson's free association narrative interview method (2000).

Chapter Three

Methodology

"The complexities of validating qualitative research need not be due to a weakness of qualitative methods, but on the contrary, may rest upon their extraordinary power to reflect and conceptualize the nature of the phenomenon investigated, to capture the complexity of the social reality. The validation of qualitative research becomes intrinsically linked to the development of a theory of social reality."   *S Kvale*

Theoretical Background and Context

The purpose of the current thesis is to address the emotional factors that shape befrienders' experiences of their volunteering. Such emotional factors may be centred around, but not limited to:

a. Conflict between providing genuine friendship and providing a professional service mediated by an agency
b. Power imbalances between the befriender (as giver) and the befriended (as receiver), including reversal of typical caring roles (younger people looking after older people)
c. Tension between how an organisation expects their befrienders to act and how befrienders actualise their befriending experience in reality.

The current body of research on befriending is often statistical and aimed at defining the size, scope, and outcomes of befriending as a voluntary service. What is often neglected is what both myself and others have experienced during voluntary activity in a befriending capacity; conflict, tension, emotive responses, difficulties, and so on. As discussed in the previous chapter, there have been some significant contributions in the field that have produced rich and detailed qualitative data, yet still neglects to address one vital social dimension: the research relationship itself between researcher and researched. As Holmes (2014) acknowledges, 'the emotional state of the researcher is tied up with the communication of the participant' (pg. 173), which is similar to Gemignani's (2011) assertion that 'whether I wanted them or not, my emotions were phenomenologically present' (pg.702). Parker (2010) describes 'feelings that cue the researcher into what they think is occurring between them and

their objects of study' (pg.18), and Cartwright (2004) refers to 'inchoate…impressions in the research setting' (pg. 221) that include what Gemignani describes as close observation of feeling-states in the researcher, associations, and bodily reactions (2011). Holmes (2014) emphasises the importance of also considering the researcher's perceptions of the participant's changes in these feeling-states (pg.172).

The above extracts taken from other research go to show that, as much as we may like to deny it in our quest for objective study, feelings are present in the research experience. Either party, researcher or researched, may find themselves doing or saying unexpected things, having unexpected thoughts, or feeling unexpected feelings, in what McLaughlin refers to as 'the feeling of finding out' in her study on emotion in research (2003). Until fairly recently, there has been little acknowledgement in the social sciences, and in particular the qualitative research interview, of the active role of the researcher themselves (Lewis, 2008; Angorsino, 2005). The current thesis on befriending agrees with Gemignani's (2011) assertion that when 'embraced and addressed, the researcher's emotional reactions can be an important source of reflexivity and data' (pg. 701).

In order to explore the dimensions alluded to above, we need a research methodology that addresses both the emotional psychological elements of befriending as well as its social elements, including the relationship between researcher and participant. Through addressing the unconscious forces and motivations behind befriending we can add an additional level of analysis to sociological research that allows us to explore both individual experience and the social psychodynamics that operate within the befriending experience. The unconscious factors and psychological mechanisms that shape the data collected may also be used to support its analysis and interpretation through a process of reflexivity and introspection. As will be discussed further later, the free association narrative interview technique provides an ideal methodology from which to start.

Psychoanalytic Theory and Qualitative Research

An invaluable starting point when discussing concepts such as anxiety/tension, care work, and psychoanalytic theory must be that of Isabel Menzies Lyth and her iconic work 'Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety: An Empirical Study of the Nursing Service of a General Hospital' (1960), a psychodynamic study of a nursing service in a general hospital. With a background in economics and experimental psychology, Menzies studied under Eric Trist, a leading figure in the field of organisational development. Later, Menzies became the

only woman founding member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and alongside her social research she began her psychoanalytic training (her second analyst was the notable W. R. Bion).

Menzies classic paper on the structure of a nursing service made the original proposition that 'work in health care and social care organisations entail significant anxieties for staff' and 'defences against this anxiety are part of organisational life' (from The Melanie Klein Trust online). Nursing and befriending are clearly two distinct roles, however, they do have their similarities, namely: the purpose of the role is the provision of care; the role involves close (physical and emotional) contact with another (often unwell) person; often a patient/befriendee is older than a nurse/befriender, which is a reversal of the traditional caring role (older people look after those that are younger). Both nurses and befrienders can only practice their role under the guidance, and within the guidelines of, an organisation or institution. Menzies draws on Kleinian (1959) theory of infantile development to account for the anxieties experienced by nurses in their caring roles. As the nursing role is a caring role, i.e. the giving and receiving of care which mimics the mother-infant relationship, it makes sense that such infantile emotions may be provoked in an adult to adult caring relationship. In Menzies study, the nurse's anxieties were mobilised around ideas of love, hate, aggression, guilt and shame, and she suggests that the primary psychological mechanism at work is projection (1960: pg.443).

Menzies work is significant as it identifies the impact of anxiety in the care-giving role, whereby nurses frequently place their own projections into the workplace. Alongside anxiety, Menzies discusses another crucial theoretical concept – the relationship between emotions and our methods of 'containing' those emotions, i.e. how emotion is experienced (or avoided), managed (or denied), and kept (or passed on). Bion (1959) stated that an individual or group's capacity to think is related to its capacity to contain anxiety. Menzies takes this one step further and suggests that the way some organisations attempt to manage anxiety amplifies it, rather than modifies or manages it. Menzies' discussion of defensive techniques covers both the psychology of individual nurses and the psychodynamic of the nursing organisation, and how these impact on one another.

The primary message of Menzies brilliant paper is centred around anxiety and, how the process for managing this becomes unconsciously embedded in the structures and practices

of the organisations though socially structured defensive mechanisms. Paraphrased from her work, Menzies identifies these socially structured defensive techniques as:

- Splitting up the nurse-patient relationship
- Depersonalisation, categorisation, and denial of the significance of the individual
- Detachment and denial of feelings
- The attempt to eliminate decisions by ritual task-performance
- Reducing the weight of responsibility in decision-making by checks and counter checks
- Collusive social redistribution of responsibility and irresponsibility
- Purposeful obscurity in the formal distribution of responsibility
- The reduction of the impact of responsibility by delegation to superiors
- Idealisation and underestimation of personal development possibilities
- Avoidance of change   Menzies (1960)

A criticism of Menzies paper is that it illustrates the complex defence mechanisms used by the nursing system but does not address what can be done about it – there is no practical application. Menzies feels strongly about this point of contention and in an interview with Liz Webb and David Lawlor (2009) she stated that the paper had been widely misunderstood. People had been led to believe that providing staff support groups was the antidote to the venom of anxiety-provoking work. Menzies herself felt that the issue of anxiety had been overemphasised and what was in fact important was the process of containment. For an organisation to succeed it need not be structured around preventing anxiety but around containing it effectively, and this will be seen later as an important point for this study about the psychodynamics of befriending. One of the benefits of Menzies' study is its naturalistic methodology that enabled the researches to get close to the ordinary workings of the organisation.

It was Freud (1912) himself who asserted that in clinical psychoanalysis, research and treatment operate side by side (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009), and this is partly responsible for an increasing interest from sociological and qualitative researchers drawing on psychoanalysis to inform their work (Midgely, 2006).   There have been significant contributions from researchers seeking to parallel the analytic dyad (Bourdieu, 2000) with the research dyad, whereby the interaction between researcher and participant is analogous to that between analyst and analysand (see Lewis, 2008; Melles, 2005; Cartwright, 2004; Kvale,

1999). The most notable contribution, whereby psychoanalytic theory is applied to qualitative interview research, is that of Hollway and Jefferson and their innovative Free Association Narrative Interview method, published in their book *Doing Qualitative Research Differently* (2000). Key to the free association narrative interview method is the psychoanalytic concepts of free association, transference, and countertransference. These concepts will be outlined below, and critically discussed to present their innovative features and advantageousness over more mainstream qualitative interview techniques, justifying its use as a method in the present thesis.

Free Association

'The importance of free association is that the patients spoke for themselves, rather than repeating the ideas of the analyst; they work through their own material, rather than parroting another's suggestions.' (Pamela Thurschwell, *Sigmund Freud*, 2009:pg.24).

An underlying assumption of psychoanalysis is that people are often conflicted between their need to learn more about themselves, and the (conscious or unconscious) defences and mechanisms they have in place to protect them against self-exposure (Clarke, 2002). In free association, patients are free to relate whatever comes into their minds at a given time, regardless of content, in an atmosphere free from judgement or expectation. The aim is to avoid censoring one's thoughts and to critically examine whatever comes to mind, regardless of how (ir)relevant it may seem to a situation at the time. The aim of the method overall is to elicit rich, emotive, and meaningful stories from interview participants about their particular experiences. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) note, story-telling has much in common with the psychoanalytic method of free association – the particular stories told, the way in which they are told, the language used, the morals drawn - all represent choices made by the story-teller, and 'such choices are revealing, often more so that the teller suspects' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000:pg.35). The principle of free association allows the researcher to identify various forms of projective communication, of transference and countertransference, and the subtle nuances of the research relationship. Why do people tell certain stories? Why are they telling them? What response are they trying to elicit from the interviewer? The goal of free association is not to unearth specific answers or memories, but to instigate a journey of co-discovery which can enhance the interviewee's integration of thought, feeling, agency, and selfhood (Clarke, 2002).

Free association is encouraged through the use of minimal questioning and input from the interviewer. In the present thesis, interviewees were recruited via a befriending agency whom contacted their volunteers on my behalf – the only details given at the time was that I was a PhD student researcher interested in talking to people who volunteer as befrienders. Potential recruits were informed the interview would be informal and an open discussion about their befriending. Retrospectively this was a successful tactic as upon interview all interviewees asked me (the interviewer) 'what do you want to know?', to which I replied 'whatever you want to tell me,' allowing the interviewee to direct the interview from the very start.

The importance of the psychoanalytic technique of free association is critical in this method. By allowing the interviewee to structure the interview and choose what they feel like talking about, we are able to gain an indication of unconscious feelings and motivation (Clarke, 2002), something which is not always possible in more traditional research methods.

Transference and Countertransference

One way of usefully incorporating reflexivity into qualitative research is through applying the psychoanalytic concepts of transference and countertransference. There are many significant studies that explore the idea that psychic states can be transferred from participant to researcher in a process analogous to the projection and projective identification experiences of the analyst and analysand (for example, see Robben, 2012; Stromme et al., 2010; Jervis, 2009; Roper, 2003). Simplified, projection refers to the interviewee/patient describing or perceiving the feelings in another, which actually originate in themselves (Freud, 1905) and projective identification refers to the interviewee/patient inducing, or 'putting', (usually unbearable) feelings into the interviewer/therapist (Klein, 1946). In the literature is it often the researcher/therapist's experience of these projections and identifications that opens the way for effective analysis (Holmes, 2014).

In the psychoanalytic literature countertransference is typically defined as one of three things: 1. an 'interfering countertransference' that refers to elements of the analyst's own neuroses and which is a hindrance to the therapeutic process (for example, Freud, 1910); 2. a 'useful countertransference,' in which elements of the patient's neuroses are unconsciously transferred to the analyst and therefore are a useful tool for understanding the patient's inner world (for example, Pick, 1985; Heimann, 1950) and; 3.. as something intersubjective and co-created and which contains elements of both 1 and 2 (for example, Ferenczi, 1955) but which is also a 'third' (Ogden, 1994) that is a product of the interaction between analyst and

analysand. Social and qualitative studies using psychoanalytic concepts typically focus on the 'useful', type 2 countertransference and the placing of unconscious thoughts and feelings into the researcher – something which is based on the Kleinian notion of projective identification. When justifying this approach (for example Stromme et al., 2010; Jervis, 2009) authors tend to cite the work of Paula Heimann, where she states that countertransference is an 'instrument of research into the patient's unconscious' (1950:81). The metaphor is that of a resonating tuning fork or telephone receiver (cf. Freud, 1912) in which the analyst 'picks up' unconscious feeling states that provide knowledge of the patient's inner work. It is argued that a similar process exists between the researcher and the researched, and therefore countertransference can be described as a research tool (Holmes, 2014:168).

Clarke (2002) describes how feeling states can be induced in the researcher during qualitative research, suggesting that in the interviews he conducted he was subjected to the 'projective identifications' (174) of his interviewees. Similarly, Marks and Monnich-Marks (2003) described how participants' feelings that were unbearable were often projected into the researcher, with the result that 'the interviewer becomes the object of the interviewee's defence of shame (30). For Stromme et al. (2010) being aware of '…countertransference reactions detailing incidents of nonverbal communication … make it possible to draw conclusions about the relational attitude of the participants and their defence processes' (215). In this way, countertransference reactions could be used 'to gain access to more unconscious processes in the participant' (Stromme et al., 2010:221). Alternatively, there are studies that incorporate a conception of countertransference as an 'interfering countertransference', that is, the feelings that arise in the researcher because of his or own history. Lorimer (2010) describes a case of countertransference she experienced and defined it as a strong sensation in the mind or body that 'might indicate the presence of unconscious tension' in the participant (useful countertransference) but that simultaneously 'I had to be aware of whether a mood was brought on by the person I was speaking with or was more obviously connected with an aspect of my own life' (2010:106). It is argued that emotions will be particularly strong when researching sensitive subjects, such as interviewing Nazi-sympathisers (Marks and Monnich-Marks, 2003), but when 'embraced and addressed, the researcher's emotional reactions can be an important source of reflexivity and data' (Gemignani, 2011:701). As Holmes writes, 'the emotional state of the researcher is tied up with the communication of the participant' (2014: 173).

Some researchers have also described behavioural manifestations that have influenced the research process. For example, Gemignani (2011) speculates that it is the researcher's actions that may mirror the psychic experience of the participant as elements of their selves are projected: in his work with refugees he decided to distance himself from painful material, only to find his actions were 'contributing to the emotional isolation and incommunicability experienced by many trauma survivors' (2011: 701). These manifestations of behaviours in the researcher as induced by the participant is similar to both Sandler's notion of 'role responsiveness' (1976) and Ferenczi's conceptualisation of 'antipathetic features' with the unconscious aim of being turned away through displays of intolerable behaviour (18955: 95). Jervis (2009) describes how countertransference can manifest as 'a fluttery sensation in my [researcher's] chest', or becoming aware of 'an attempt to make more eye contact' (158). Projection has been described as inducing states of 'emotional mismatch' (Robben, 2012; Lorimer, 2010). Robben (2012) describes a process whereby the researcher's feelings are switched off to strong emotions during an interview, such as an experience interviewing Argentinian warlords who had committed torture. Marks and Monnich-Marks (2003) identified a discrepancy between the participants' often banal narrative and the [turmoil] of emotions it produced within the researcher during their interview work with supporters of the Nazi-movement: '…most of the manifest interview texts appear to be relatively banal – compared to the powerful latent emotional message between the lines … we, the interviewers, often felt overrun, bulldozed, emptied, saddened, confused, sickened, abused, or knocked down' (2003: no page number). Marks and Monnich-Marks (2003) admit that recognising countertransference in the interview setting is difficult as one has to attempt to read the message 'between the lines', so to speak. These behavioural and bodily sensations are potentially very useful sources of information if combined and used alongside other elements of the research interaction.

Critiquing the use of psychoanalytic theory in qualitative research

In the literature, the definition and best use of countertransference is not made clear. Advocates of countertransference as a tool in qualitative research, such as Stromme et al. (2010), Marks and Monnich-Mark (2003), and Clarke (2002) tend to forefront the participant/respondent's use of projection, with little consideration of the researcher's use of it. In fore fronting the participant, any mistake or error made by the researcher is justified in terms of projective identification – the participant induces the researcher to behave in this way (Holmes, 2014: pg.169). This extolls the researcher as some sort of elite authority,

incapable of making their own mistakes without being tricked by another, and we know this to be untrue: we all make mistakes because we are all human. No one is infallible. From the point of view of these researchers, and many others, the prevailing use of countertransference is as a means of developing a richer understanding of the participant, to the neglect of both the researcher and the interviewer-participant psychodynamic.

Some research can be criticised for polarising countertransference as either 'useful' or 'interfering', with little movement in between. These approaches tend to view useful and interfering countertransference as distinctly independent and in need of disentanglement (Holmes, 2014). Could it be that this distinction between useful and interfering countertransference is an oversimplification of a more complex phenomena? There are some academics who deplore the use of psychoanalytic ideas outside of the clinical therapeutic setting and by anyone other than an extensively trained and experienced analyst (Frosh, 2014). It is felt that this may be an elitist stance that hinders the development of psychoanalytic theory into other disciplines (a benefit, surely, of a theory is its wide applicability?) however it is equally important to consider all perspectives in order to undertake a fair critique, come to a reasonable conclusion, and avoid making similar errors in your own research. Some criticisms of applying psychanalytic theory in the research context include the following.

Power Relations

Unequal power relations (for example, see Burman, 1992) between the researcher and the researched is well documented in the literature (for example, as paternalism, class, education, and so on) and many authors are critical of the view that feelings can be 'put into' the researcher in psychoanalytic research for reinforcing unequal power relations (Parker, 2010; Frosh and Baraitser, 2008; Frosh and Emerson, 2005). Frosh and Baraitser, in their 2008 paper, are highly critical of those that assume the feelings of the researcher somehow indicate the state of mind of the participant, and state it as 'a direct result of the application of a Kleinian style of psychoanalysis in which the truth of the subject can be known through meditation by (or through the unconscious of) an interlocutor who has more knowledge and understanding than does the subject' (2008: 363). Parker (2010) describes the use of psychoanalysis as a way of confirming 'the shape of a world it expects to find instead of changing it' (2010: 17), or what Frosh and Emerson describe as 'top down assertions of expert knowledge' (2005: 322). Lorimer (2010) implies that psychoanalysts are masters of

the trade that have 'developed ways of addressing anxiety and in the process reducing its power' (2010: 103) and that they are reliably immune from error, as 'psychoanalysts spend hours evaluating the source of the response so that they do not allow a misinterpretation to skew their capacity for empathy' (Lorimer, 2010: 100).

Not only are approaches such as those outlined above at risk of reinforcing unequal power relations, they also miss the crucial point that it is through attempting to understand the inevitable misinterpretations that take place in psychoanalysis (for example, see Casement, 2002; Winnicott, 1969) that we often make progress. The idea that a course of psychoanalysis can put a researcher in this expert position of all-knowingness is a throwback to the early days of psychoanalysis when Freud aspired to scientific objectivity in the analyst (Freud, 1910). But as Holmes states, even the most well-analysed analysts still make mistakes, and 'it cannot be correct to assume a fully objective, transparent, and self-knowledgeable analyst/researcher' (2014: 171). This leads to –

Cartesian Certainty

The idea of an all-knowing analyst is also reflected in the language used in much research, which intimates a Cartesian certainty (see for example, Stolorow et al., 2002) regarding subjects such as countertransference. In reality, when exploring concepts such as countertransference, we should always remain aware of the potential for an exploration of multiple and even contradictory definitions (Parker, 2005b; Stolorow et al., 2002). Perhaps more useful would be to advocate a stance of what Stolorow (2003) called 'fallibilism', where the researcher would not assume a feeling state had been projected into them, but rather explore this as only one possibility out of many (Holmes, 2014: 171).

Analysis vs. Research

Critics of the use of psychoanalytic concepts in qualitative research have used the increasing prominence of its application in research articles as indicative of a blurring of the distinction between what is the clinical and therapeutic dyad, and that of the research setting (Frosh and Emerson, 2005). Stromme et al. (2010) emphasise the fact that in the research relationship it is the researcher than initiates contact, whereas in the therapeutic setting it is the patient, rather than the analyst, that initiates contact. Some feel that this makes the researcher-participant relationship the antithesis of the therapeutic setting (Holmes, 2014:171) as it becomes the interviewer's desire that drives the research. As Frosh and Baraitser write, 'the

'conditions of emergence' … are so far removed from the analytic situation as to make their affiliation with psychoanalytic terminology strained and potentially misleading' (2008: 362). However, we can also argue that whilst they – clinical psychoanalysis and qualitative research – are different settings, they are not necessarily antithetical of one other. A psychoanalyst has just as much of a vested interest in initiating therapy as the patient does – for training requirements, for professional development, and to earn money (Casement, 1985). Equally, a research participant has much to gain from participation, whether this be help someone else with a project, as a chance to talk, for social contact, out of curiosity, and so on. Whatever the decision to participate, as Holmes eloquently states, 'it is felt that the decision to take part in research – like the decision to take on a psychoanalytic patient – speaks of the fundamental human wish for deeper self-understanding' (2014: 172).

To conclude

As unconscious conflict produces anxiety, it follows that this anxiety may appear in the research relationships between the interviewer and participant and the interview data and its interpretation. The intensity of this anxiety may also vary depending on the interview topic, its setting, or the researcher's ability to contain (or 'handle') it. This concept of unconscious anxiety requires a theoretical premise of 'a defended, rather than unitary, rational subject' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008: p.296), and that the subject is best interpreted holistically, with the free associations that interviewees make as a central tenant of this interpretive process (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008: ch.3). There is currently a gap in the psychoanalytic literature regarding the befriending relationship and the experience of the befriender, or the application of the free association narrative interview method to this specific area. Given the nature of psychoanalytic theory's ability to produce rich psychological and psychosocial material, the free association narrative interview method was chosen for the present thesis.

The Method

Ethical approval was given from the University of Essex ethics committee prior to this study being conducted. As a social sciences researcher I am unqualified as a psychotherapist, and therefore no psychoanalytic interpretation or analysis would occur during the interviews. All interpretation and analysis occurred after the interviews and in regards to the interview material collected. As participants were allowed to freely associate, some sensitive material may be brought up during the interviews, however this is always under the direction of the

participant and never provoked by the interviewer. In the unlikely event that a participant says something to the researcher in regards to their practice as a befriender that the researcher feels presents a safeguarding concern for either the befriender or those in their care, then it is the responsibility of the researcher to discreetly inform the befriending organisation.

Research Subjects

Befrienders were recruited from a Bristol-based befriending scheme which matches volunteers with older, socially isolated people in their own homes. Multiple organisations were approached, but only this one was open and willing to participate by contacting their befrienders on my behalf. Other organisations said they were unable to help me with this study by allowing access to volunteers because of 'data protection', and 'confidentiality'. The befriending organisation will be not named in this research, but rather referred to as 'the befriending organisation', 'service provider', or 'organisation' during the analyses.

An employee of the befriending organisation agreed to send an email to their befrienders on my behalf, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix. Once a volunteer expressed interest in participating, further emails were sent to organise a meeting time and place. Participants were not given many details of the study being conducted, other than informal interview would be held to discuss their "befriending experiences".

To preserve the identity of the research subject, an alternative name based on their initials was given and used and documents saved under this pseudonym only.

In total, six befrienders were interviewed, chosen on a first-come-first-served basis.

Interviews

Participants were invited to choose the location of the interview based on their comfort. Some participants agreed to meet me at their homes, whilst others preferred to meet more publicly. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were recorded using an audio app, with the interviewee's permission.

The interviews were entered without a structured guide or set of questions - all the participants were aware of the nature of the research from the original email sent out. Nearly all participants started the interview with a variation of "so you want to know about my befriending?" before beginning their stories. Where a prompt was needed, the interviewer's

opening line was "I'd like you to tell me about your befriending". During the interview it was found that the interviewer and the interviewee co-produced their knowledge, often asking each other questions or creating ideas together, but more often than not the researcher was able to sit and listen with minimal input.

Fieldnotes

An extensive record of field notes was kept during the research process that included records of any observations, interpretations, experiences of (counter)transference, and reflections on the knowledge being gathered and produced. These notes will be useful during interview to keep track of specific language nuances of the interviewee and researcher reflections on knowledge produced. Notes should be:

1. Related to direct observations

2. Written down as soon as possible

3. Include empirical observations and interpretations, where possible

4. Cross filed –accurate dates and times of observations made

5. Analysed for discerning patterns of behaviour and underlying meanings using a process of reflexion.

A separate set of field notes were kept during the data analysis and interpretation process, as secondary feelings were generated with each reading of the interview transcripts. Reflective practice was necessary when referring to field notes, with the analysis conducted as much on the researcher's self as the researched.

The Free Association Narrative Interview Method

There exists no single, simple step-by-step guide to undertaking a free association narrative interview and its subsequent analysis. However, a series of key factors can be identified from the work of academics that have used it as a research method and tool in the past. These key factors are:

1. The use of unstructured interviews: no interview guide was prepared and participants were only made aware that there was to be a discussion regarding "their befriending

experiences" before the interview. (When participants asked "what do you want to know?", I responded with, "whatever you want to me.") This complies with the principle that when presented with choice, people tend to tell stories that are meaningful to them.

2. A minimum of intervention from the researcher/interviewer, allowing the respondent to freely associate: as Thurschwell acknowledges, 'the importance of free association is that the patients spoke for themselves, rather than repeating the ideas of the analyst; they work through their own material, rather than parroting another's suggestions.' (2009:pg.24).

3. Unstructured interviews and free association: allows for unconscious ideas and motivations to come to the fore.

4. Following the respondents' ordering and phrasing: this requires careful and active listening during the interview so that the researcher may ask follow-up questions using the interviewee's own words, phrases, and ordering without intruding with personal interpretation. As Hollway and Jefferson acknowledged, what may seem like a simple task conversely 'required discipline and practice to transform ourselves from a highly visible asker of questions, to the almost invisible, facilitating catalyst to their stories' (2000:pg.36).

5. Psychoanalytic interpretation occurs only in analysis: as a sociological researcher rather than a trained analyst, no psychoanalytical interpretation occurs during the interview as this is reserved solely for the analysis of interview material. Notes are made before, during, and after the interview which are used to support analysis at a psychoanalytical level later on and to also acknowledge any pre-interview nerves or anxieties that may have impacted on my (the researcher's) thought processes during the interview and during analysis.

6. Interviews are transcribed in great detail: this creates a bank of raw material from which the researcher can then begin the analysis.

Analysis

7. The first stage of data analysis is the actual listening to and transcription of the recorded interview material. In order to remain as close to the material as possible, I (the researcher) transcribed each interview audio tape in person. Such an immersion allows for thinking in a theoretical way about the material and to note any themes or issues which arise from the text when it is considered as a whole. Each interview

transcript is accompanied by field notes identifying key theme and experiences from the researcher's standpoint.

8. Identify key themes and links found in the interview material: when analysing data, it may be that certain themes or particular experiences arise again and again, both within individual transcripts and across all the material of all the interviews. By identifying these recurring themes, we can begin to see how individual experience may also be seen as a collective experience (for example, see Clarke, 2000b).

9. Analyse substantive events that participants may have experienced during their befriending

10. Identify unconscious mechanisms in the material of both the interviewee and the interviewer, allowing for analysis of the way in which research material is co-constructed between researcher and participant. This is achieved through reflexive work with the field notes made throughout the research period.

Kets de Vries and Miller (1987) created a 'model of interpretation' that was of particular use as it covers not only individual psychological events but also wider organisational and societal ones. This 'model of interpretation' was often referred back to during the various stages of analysis:

1.   Thematic unity: shaping the 'different observations into interconnected cohesive unit' (pg.245). Crucial to making initial sense out of the 'dense nature and sheer volume of narrative and observational data'.

2.   Pattern matching: looking for 'a fit' between present day events and earlier incidents in the history of an individual/organisation. It reveals repetitions, or the tendency to become 'entangled' in 'displacements in time' (pg.245). These displacements are transferences and are relevant as a tool for introspection.

3.   Psychological urgency: assumption that somewhere in the text it is possible to identify the most pressing problems. It is 'important, then, to pay attention to the persistence, enthusiasm, regularity, pervasiveness, and emotions surrounding discussions, interactions, and pronouncements' (pg.246). People may repeatedly mention common or similar overriding barriers to organisational change and progress. They revisit the same organisational myths or stories in their narratives as a way of re-enacting them to master

painful experiences'. It is often the case that more critical issues of the organisation are disowned, disavowed, and displaced by members onto more superficial concerns.

4.   Multiple functions: depending on level of psychological urgency, a part of the text may have more than one meaning and can be looked at from many different points of view. It is thus necessary to 'seek out' meaning at multiple levels, to determine the individual as well as the organisational roots and consequences of actions and decisions' (pg. 246). It stresses seeking validation and confirmation of meaning.

Careful Considerations

In evaluating the existing literature on applying psychoanalytic theory in psychosocial qualitative research some key concerns to keep in mind were identified.

Morgenroth (2010) distinguishes between countertransference-type reactions that occur in the primary research relationships, i.e. during the 'here and now' of the interview, and those that occur in response to interview material and data interpretation (pg. 227). In the research context, the second type of countertransference responses are preferred as often the researcher is too involved in the interview at the time to also facilitate reflexive thinking. However, this is not to say that one should abandon thought entirely during the interview – indeed, I found it useful to have a notebook present during the interviews and to note the recording time when a significant, event, thought, or feeling occurred. These timings, combined with extensive pre and post-interview field notes, allowed countertransference reactions experienced during the interview to be revisited during the analysis. As Morgenroth (2010) state, 'as the data are read and discussed … so the scene will re-emerge' (pg. 277). During the interpretation and analysis stage, it is critical to acknowledge the source of any countertransference responses: did they occur in real-time (during the interview), or during reading of the transcribed interview material?

Countertransference in isolation

During interpretation and analysis, it is considered best practice not to consider countertransference experiences in isolation, but rather to consider it in relation to other data (Jervis, 2009). Heimann previously advocated countertransference as an 'instrument of research' (1950: pg.51), but later warned against an 'un-critical use of countertransference' (1960: pg. 153). An un-critical use of countertransference would be to label any feeling experienced by the researcher as countertransference, without relating it back to the 'actual

data in the analytic situation' (ibid.). To avoid an un-critical use of countertransference, it is important to consider all countertransference responses in relation to actual data and to remember, as emphasised by Sandler (1993), that not all feelings generated in the researcher come from the patient, and therefore not all feelings generated in the researcher come from the participant. Countertransference reactions should not be considered in isolation, but rather in collaboration with other data and cross-compared across the entire research experience. To avoid a top-down assertions of knowledge it is critical to 'consider unexpected feelings with an open mind' (Jervis, 2009:pg.179) and to avoid assuming that they have been projected from the participant. Jervis (2009) also recommends conceptualising countertransference in qualitative research in line with Ogden's (1994) notion of an 'intersubjectively created element in the research dyad… neither wholly made up of nor wholly devoid of projective elements from both researcher and participant' (pg. 179).

Hunt (1989) draws attention to a third problem that may arise - the temptation of researchers to indulge in 'wild analysis'. In order to minimise this it is important to compare and contrast research findings by using a systematic method by reflecting on the processes that have produced the data and by recognising that the researcher may be partially responsible for some of its fantasy elements. In this way researchers remain faithful to the notion that they are not objective and impartial observers, but are often prone to error.

Outside of the Clinic

Clarke (2002) argues that the problems that arise from taking the psychoanalytic method out of the clinical setting and into the social field actually strengthens the argument for a method that identifies unconscious forces (pg. 189). This happens in two ways: firstly, the methodological problems posed are (to an extent) a result of unconscious forces (being imposed in the research environment and data), and secondly if we are not to carry out research in an ad hoc way and make 'wild analyses' then we need a form of systematic method that can be applied in different subject areas (Clarke, 2002). The psychosocial method offers this and therefore it is not a psychoanalytic practice but a research method informed by psychoanalytic ideas. As Richard (1989) notes, 'psychoanalytic ideas emerge from traditions of thought in the wider culture; they are culturally embedded and thereby partially autonomous from clinical practice' (pg. 29).

Chapter Four

Analysis

Associational Pathway

To remain faithful to the free association narrative interview technique, this individual analysis will explore key themes in the order that the interviewee discussed them. It is important to note that the open and free nature of the interview meant that key ideas were often brought up, before being abandoned and revisited at a later time, and did not appear neatly and sequentially. After multiple readings of the interview transcripts, the different aspects of these themes could be teased out and explored further.

Structure

Each individual analysis (case study) offers a brief biography of the befriender, before discussion of the key themes identified during the analysis. The role played by myself as interviewer in the research relationship and my countertransference experiences are discussed throughout, rather than separately, to remain true to a psychoanalytic model that emphasises the co-production of material between researcher and researched. During these times, the first person is used to express the subjective element of these experiences. At the end of each individual analysis I present some concluding remarks.

Mrs. B Analysis

A Brief Biography

Mrs. B is a sixty-three year old white female living alone, and my first interviewee. She is single, with both parents deceased and no children of her own. She has physical disabilities to her legs and one arm, the result of a severe car accident that occurred when she was younger, however she is mobile and independent. Born in 1952, Mrs. B grew up in post-world war two Britain, the daughter of a RAF father and a Women's Royal Voluntary Service club manager (the Darby and Joan Club), however this direct link with volunteering was not known prior to interview. Her mother suffered from dementia before death, with P01 being her sole carer: her father also died many years before, however it is unknown how or when, although there was implicit suggestion that it was during his time in the RAF. Mrs. B does not work except in voluntary capacities, including previously as a teacher and lecturer at a local university. She is also a student of psychology, completing a thesis entitled "The Dementia Patient", and is very knowledgeable in this area.

Mrs. B was the first to respond to the email call for volunteers and kindly invited me to her home for our interview. She has been living in Bristol for many years and knows the city extremely well. Mrs B currently does not work but was previously employed as a lecturer on a part-time basis. Mrs B was in a life-threatening road accident when she was a young adult which resulted in her being physically disabled (but mobile) but unable to work full-time or in particular roles. Mrs B's home was very welcoming, with lots of pictures on the walls and trinkets from her travels, as well as an old ginger cat that was roaming about. Upon arrival, Mrs B offered me "normal tea or redbush" – my choice of redbush sparked a long conversation about our shared love of tea and alternative health options which created a good rapport between us. We had other shared interests and experiences including fathers in the RAF, time spent in the Middle East and foreign food and cooking. Mrs B was very chatty and easy to talk to and made me feel at ease being in her home.

Mrs B talked freely during the interview, with her opening narrative being minutes long and infrequently punctured by sounds of agreement and encouragement from myself. Her story began with temporal coherence, beginning with her childhood exposure to volunteering via her mother, through her work with other charitable and voluntary activities and ending with her current befriending role. However, once this introductory history was given, Mrs B's chosen topic of discussion turned political and concerned with issues of bureaucracy and

health and safety. I could feel her passion when talking about this and I think sometimes her excitability took over, causing her to jump from subject to subject, go on tangents and sometimes lose her train of thought. Multiple readings and rearranging of the narrative allowed these fragmented thoughts to be considered together, as an idea, an explored in relation to Mrs B's befriending experience.

A Bygone Era

Mrs B begins her narrative by a setting of the scene and a brief personal history, particularly emphasising: a bygone era where caring was 'normal' and her Mother's involvement with the WRVS. This presents two key areas for discussion here: the first being a *narrative of decline*, the second being the *influence of parental relationships* on decision to volunteer. Mrs. B's narrative is littered throughout with references to a past time, a bygone era, a past society and values-system, a "golden era" of society, voluntarism and community participation. This golden age was dispirited primarily by politics, including Thatcherism and our current obsession with health and safety and litigation, which has resulted in today's society being reluctant to help others, to take responsibility for their own actions, as well as what Mrs. B deems a lack of "intuition" amongst individuals today and a fear of getting in to trouble. There are some important things to acknowledge about Mrs. B's narrative of decline that go beyond the simple "fading away" of a past, better time and a desire to return to it. Firstly, such a narrative, despite claiming political hindrance of voluntary spirit and a belief that true voluntary organisations should be politics-free, actually has a highly specific politics of its own. Mrs B's blaming of the state for the decline of voluntarism today serves to create a clear distinction between what is state and what is society. Here, such a dependency on state suggests there are no actors or no agency other than the state. If voluntarism is hindered by state welfare then society is nothing but a blind follower of the state, unable to think and act on its own two feet. P01, in succumbing to a narrative of decline, denies the true diversity, vitality and adaptability of civic participation and voluntarism in an almost paradoxical fashion: state is criticised for hindering society, but a declinist narrative does not allow for societal agency. Or, in other words, how can one "take responsibility for one's own actions" in a world where there is no agency but state agency?

Mrs B's mother was in the Royal Voluntary Service in the fifties and used to run what was known as the Darby and Joan Club, which was dedicated to helping older people in the community. The club would run lunches, entertainment, games events and so on. For as long

as Mrs B can remember she 'would go along with her [mother] to visit people in their homes' (20-21). She would help her mother with the chores or food preparation, or read and sing to the older people, fondly reminiscing about two blind sisters in particular she used to spend time with. From the ages of ten to twelve, Mrs B would help the Red Cross with their work in older people's care homes, from socialising with residents, helping people eat and even domestic chores such as laundry and making beds. Since her childhood, Mrs B has worked with other charities and organisations but came across befriending specifically when attending a hospital appointment and taking a leaflet off a girl that was recruiting there. The idea of a bygone "golden age", of the way things used to be, perforates much of Mrs B's narrative and is a theme she returns to throughout. Growing up in a post-war era may evoke images of the struggle of getting on one's feet again, but in reality, it brought together and solidified people, 'you had this generation where there was, it wasn't, people relied on each other and family and neighbours and services like the RVS to take care of them and provide entertainment give people food and tea, that sort of thing' (22-25) and 'it was the era where you didn't think twice about helping. It was all part of society; you didn't get brownie points' (39-40). Being exposed from a young age to this type of communal activity has instilled in Mrs B a sense that supporting and giving to others in your community is the norm, it is a way of life and "something you just do." This early exposure to older people in particular, including those injured or widowed by war, has seemed to protect Mrs B from any of the typical anxieties surrounding older people, such as what if they are suddenly taken ill, or worse, as these are not concerns for her in her befriending, rather 'if it happens, you get on with it. Call an ambulance, it's not rocket science' (54). That Mrs B has a personal history of voluntary activity which stems from her childhood exposure and is her remnant of a 'lost' society indicates that she has ingrained propensity for this sort of activity. Looking after the community was primary task for her mother who in turn instilled this in her daughter. What is interesting here is that despite this personal tendency and general culture of care, and despite being a member of other charitable and voluntary organisations, it wasn't until the coincidental meeting with a recruiter during a routine hospital appointment that Mrs B volunteered as a befriender. This is interesting because firstly, it may mean that despite active engagement in voluntary activity within the community, Mrs B had not been exposed to the services of befriending organisations. This would lead one to question the process and success of current advertising and recruitment campaigns in the local community. Secondly, that Mrs B had not considered befriending before, potentially indicating a gap in the dissemination of knowledge and information pertaining to the need for such services in her

area. Thirdly, that despite a tendency to community activity, the simple act of being asked to be involved is very effective in influencing someone's decision to do so, as well as the provision of basic information regarding the service and its place in helping society (the leaflet Mrs B was given by the recruiter).

Mother and Father

Mrs B begins her narrative with her Mother and frequently returns to her throughout the interview. On the surface, her mother is credited as being the catalyst of Mrs B's volunteering career: her Mother was in the WRVS and ran the Derby & Joan Club, all at the tender age of her earlier twenties. Whilst Mrs. B speaks only fondly and lovingly about her mother, there are some tensions at play in their relationship that still impact on Mrs. B and her current befriending now. For example, we know from the interview that Mrs B's mother suffered dementia, and Mrs B was her sole carer, and it was a struggle to get help from the State, who are criticised for 'not understanding' and that social services were also of little help as well – 'I still have some of the reports and read then and I think, "this is bollocks"' (127-128). We also know from the interview data that Mrs. B distinguishes between types of helping, 'it's a contradiction, but you do an awful lot for your elderly parents and you do it because, it's a chore and it's awful and you feel terrible about that but then you just do it, especially if you have elderly mothers – my father died many years ago – you have this duty. So for the family it's duty, so that's a different relationship' (115-118). Here we can identify two key points – firstly, that Mrs B has a very personal reason to dislike the state (their inability to help her and her mother) and secondly that there is much guilt surrounding this relationship with her Mother during her final years (duty and obligation) that runs counter to the golden era of community spirit and participation (which is also represented by her Mother, as she was the figure who exposed Mrs. B to this form of care). Whilst it is not known for certain as Mrs B did not explicitly mention it, there is a chance that she is also personally dependent on the state herself as well for disability benefits – she openly admitted that she does not work and has not worked "since I got squashed" (road traffic accident that has left her physically and visibly impaired) when she was younger. Either way, Mrs B talks very critically and scathingly of the state and government and politicians in general, often to the point of being a bit 'preachy', which was a note I made during the interview at the time. It seems that Mrs B has had to rely on an institution that has been nothing but a disappointment, a let-down, and a 'load of bollocks'.

Mrs B's mother is obviously a highly influential factor in her voluntary work and befriending. It was her mother who instilled her own personal values into Mrs B and it was the wider culture of that time that influenced the mother's participation in community activity. Mrs B began by accompanying her mother when she was very young to older people' homes before volunteering with the Red Cross when she was old enough to be out and about on her own. Mrs B talked freely during the interview, with her opening narrative being minutes long and infrequently punctured by sounds of agreement and encouragement from myself. During a particularly long and rich narrative about how she "was just brought up to do it", Mrs B makes the brief comment 'Maybe my mother is part of it, I don't know' (43). This comment was highlighted at the time in my field notes, along with the note that Mrs B smiled knowingly at me after saying it. As Mrs B knows I am studying psychology, and she has studied psychology before (and given the little smile), my impression is that this was said deliberately and as a little joke. The idea of the mother's significance in psychology is clear even to lay people, with the idea of Oedipal complexes being the frequent hook in much literature, film and comedy. The assumption here is the stereotypical perception of psychology as being only about "your mother" is quite embedded. On the other hand, we know that quite often jokes can be outward expressions of deeper internal things. This fieldnote is linked to a later one from when Mrs B directly likens her current befriendee to her father and how the similarities add enjoyment and nostalgia to the relationship.

In further conversation the idea of altruism is touched upon, with Mrs B claiming 'No, I think you do it because you want to do it … and I don't think its altruism … no, it's not altruism at all. It's about being human and that's what volunteering should be. About being human' (104-105). She then directly introduces our first mention of the 'lovely gentleman [she] sees once a week now' (105), who was in the war, is 93 ('so the same age my parents would have been had they were alive' (106), was also in the RAF like her parents and who 'loves talking and tells me all these wonderful tales. It's almost like, he gives me more than I could ever give him' (107-108). I highlighted this comment of giving more in my fieldnotes. Her tone became very relaxed and nostalgic as she described the similarities between her parents and her befriendee. I think the 'wonderful tales' he tells her reminds her of her own childhood and of her own parents. Her befriendee represents the 'old society' and the lost relationships with her parents. The time spent with her befriendee is perhaps therapeutic, and this partially drives her motivation to sustain it.

In describing her enjoyment of her relationship with her befriended, she voices his [the befriended's] concerns that Mrs B is only visiting because she has to, to which she responds, 'Listen, I don't do anything I don't want to do, I never have and I don't do anything anybody ever orders me to do. I only ever do anything I want to do. I come to see you because I want to see you, not because it's a chore' (111-114). The defiant rejection of authority and fierce independence of this statement sets the general tone of Mrs B's belief in doing things for yourself, because you want to and because it's the right thing to do for you as an individual. The final part of this particular narrative sequence (altruism, parent-befriended similarity, defiant independence) is the idea of obligation, and Mrs B distinguishes between the befriending relationship and that of obligation to an older family member. She says, "you do an awful lot for your elderly parents and you do it because it is a chore, and it's awful and you feel terrible about it, especially if you have elderly mothers – my father died many years ago anyway – that you have this duty. So for family it is a duty, it is a different relationship'(115-118). Mrs B was the sole carer for her elderly mother who died suffering dementia. There is a conflict here for Mrs B between voluntary action and obligation – having been raised to know the importance of caring for others by her mother then being faced with the full burden of care for that same mother later on must be stressful and emotionally difficult. Her mother is associated with both general voluntary action, a beneficial positive and obligation, a difficult negative. It may be said that Mrs B finds the positive remnants of her mother in her befriending relationship, whilst simultaneously avoiding the negative by projecting this outwards into structures of bureaucracy and wider society's loss of a 'golden age'.

Defining Volunteering

Mrs B has a clearly-defined personal definition of what it is to volunteer – it is something one does for no financial reward: "…not for any reward whatsoever, it was just because it was part of the community" (5-6). This strict adherence to 'unpaid' work extends to her views of organisations and institutions within the voluntary sector, 'but the problem with all charities and with all volunteer work is that you have a management, you have paid employees' (44-45). For Mrs B, 'volunteering is volunteering' (56) and is a concept that should extend to all individuals within an organisation in this sector – management included. Volunteering is the unpaid dedication of time to helping another in your community, for no reward at all and for no expectation of reward – 'you didn't get brownie points' (40).

Mrs B acknowledges the powerful role her upbringing plays in her current choices to volunteer, being a young child in the post-war era, living in the 'sort of culture whereby people helped each other. They did things, no questions about it' (3-4) and so she 'was brought up … was used to it' (29). This exposure may have led to Mrs B's defining of volunteering in terms of just 'being human' (104-105). She talks of helping others and caring for others as not defined as 'altruism' or 'compassion', but merely 'being human'. Mrs B defends inherent human caring and attacks modern society, which 'makes us less compassionate, less intuitive' (262) and that we are, in fact, 'constrained by society' (266). What should be a natural behaviour for the social individual (helping others, caring – we are social animals after all) is now defined as 'altruistic' or 'compassionate' or 'empathic'. Mrs B's repeated amusement at such terminology ('You better pause that thingy so you can write it up properly and make sure there is no bloody passion! No compassion! No compassion! (71-72) serves to reinforce her view that they are mere labels for a behaviour that should already occur and not need naming or acknowledging in terms of 'brownie points'. For Mrs B, volunteering is 'not altruism at all' (104) but about humanity and 'taking control and responsibility' (179) in life and recognising that, 'We are animals. It's all about survival of the fittest and evolution…so inherently yes [we] will look after someone, it's heart strings and that sort of thing' (260-261). The idea of the 'naturalness' of helping others is further reiterated when Mrs B, despite saying she was not bought up in a religious home, describes her view as 'if you like, a Methodist thinking on my part' (57). Methodism emphasises helping the poor and disadvantaged via the establishment of hospitals, universities, orphanages, homeless shelters etc. and is based on the belief that building loving relationships with others through social service is a means of working towards the inclusiveness of God's love. Whilst this branch of the Church of England has members from 18th century aristocracy, their aim was to spread the message of God's love through caring to the lower echelons, the marginalised and demonised, and those deemed on the fringes of society. What is interesting about Mrs B's reference to Methodism is that in response to a previous question, she stated that she 'was not brought up in a religious home' (36-38) and either didn't know or was not aware at the time of any religious aspect to the WRVS and its work. This potentially shows the often irrational but also fragmentary nature of participation – despite not being explicitly religious, Mrs B finds a Methodist discourse as a suitable analogy for her view of the meaning of nature (in this case, that it is natural, or a way of being, rather than altruism or compassion or a spiritual/religious condition) and has 'picked' this narrative aspect of religious as an appropriate system into which to frame her own way of

thinking. This is an interesting view of volunteering – as not really volunteering at all but a natural part of life, part of a community and should be acted out in order to fulfil our *humanity* as humans.

The Political Mrs B

Mrs B's mother also seems to have been the fuel for her political fire and concern with social injustice and bureaucracy. Her mother, for whom Mrs B was the primary carer, suffered from dementia until her death and Mrs B actually wrote her university dissertation, The Elderly Patient, based on her mother's condition. Mrs B disliked the way her mother was treated after diagnosis and how little support they received from social services in coping with the disease and the care involved. Her father had already passed away and Mrs B was sole carer for her mother, who she miraculously managed to keep out of residential care until mere months before her death. Mrs B instructs me to find a poem called "Crabbit Old Woman", a poem left by an older dying woman as she lay in hospital, ignored and unseen, trapped in her crabbit old body. The upcoming severity of dementia and the burden of the disease on other people and on the social system were not of concern as the disease was relatively unknown at the time, however, Mrs B had direct experience of the disease and did recognise the severity of this 'ticking time bomb' (88) The fact she was neither listened to nor recognised amplifies her view of the state and of bureaucracy 'as just bollocks' (27).

Mrs B is extremely vocal in her dislike for current social and political issues such as bureaucracy, litigation, health and safety, administration and so on. In trying to apply for voluntary positions she has experienced conflict with being ordered to complete 'politically-correct, tick-box, bloody paperwork' (130-131) just for 'someone at the top, pen-pushing, being paid because they need to get statistics for this, that and the other' (147) or being 'interviewed by some twelve-year old little punk' (54) before being able to 'just do what you want to do' (56). . Whilst a lot of her negative feelings are directed at wider social structures as well as individual "punks" and "pen-pushers", Mrs B is not entirely irrational in her rejection of following protocol (she would not be able to volunteer with a group at all if so) and acknowledges its necessity when she says, 'then I suddenly thought and I said, 'what you need to say to me is I'm sorry this is a load of bollocks but it's gotta be done because of this, that and the other' and I would have said "that's fine"' (143-145). Maybe it is not the necessity of rules and regulations that irks Mrs B, but rather the form in which it is delivered, by pen-pushers and punks, people she finds 'so bloody patronising' (135).

It seems that Mrs B's dislike for paperwork is really a dislike for authority. She acknowledges its importance but does not like the way she is told she has to do it. I wonder where Mrs B's dislike for such authority comes from and can't help but think of the lack of recognition she received from doctors and social services over the condition of her mother's illness and also her own disability, which may have prevented her from doing "what she wants to" in the past. She associates the need for paperwork and background checks as a "lack of trust" on the part of others, despite the good-nature of the role at hand. To have someone or something limit Mrs B's independence, particularly in the freedom of caring for others, which is "something you just do", must be particularly difficult. Combined with having a disability of her own which may have hindered her freedom it is understandable why Mrs B struggles with this aspect of organisational participation and projects a lot of her conflict outwards on to larger social structures. This conflict arises in reality in Mrs B's little actions of defiance, such as not phoning ahead to inform the office that she is visiting her companion, or not bothering to fill in their paperwork when they send it to her.

Despite always referring to the culture of care as a thing of the past, Mrs B does not think it is irretrievable, just temporarily "lost". We have become so selfish as a society, concerned only with ourselves and with money (a leftover from Thatcherism) that Mrs B feels we no longer have the courage to think "Oh, sod the consequences!" and to get out in the world and do what we feel is right. Health and safety rules have created a fear of litigation and consequence so that we will no longer go to other's homes, or offer to help strangers, or take children to entertain those in elderly care homes. There must be others of Mrs B's age group that also grew-up in similar households and with similar values. I wonder how many of these people don't get involved in volunteer work because the idea of going from a society where it just happened to one where you have to apply and be granted permission to participate is too incomprehensible. People of this age group may also have been out of work for some time and so retired before the necessity for having a criminal records check for employment started and therefore may have the perception that applying is much more difficult than the reality.

Concluding Thoughts

Mrs B clearly defines all aspects of voluntary work as unpaid, even finding the fact that a large organisation such as Age UK or Oxfam even have a payroll "a contradiction in terms". Mrs B is very defiant in her beliefs, values and opinions and is not hesitant in voicing them.

She believes that it is concern with our selves and with money that has caused the breakdown between people in communities, and why services such as befriending even exist. She grew up in the post-war era where voluntary organisations such as the Royal Voluntary Society were at the forefront of providing the elderly, injured and in need with food, home help and companionship and these organisations had no payroll or state involvement. Bureaucracy and a culture of fear have created an obsession with health and safety and litigation that serves only to scare people away from "getting out there and doing something".

Mrs B's befriending experience infiltrates her being at many levels: it has been embedded in her way of life since she was a child; it was the vocation of her beloved mother; it has nostalgic links with her early relationships with her parents whilst simultaneously blocking negative memories of caring for her severely unwell mother later on (it is therapeutic in this sense); it is a remnant of a bygone era where life was much more pleasurable and meaningful and; it way of expressing her intense political concerns with social injustice and public repression by the state. Mrs B's dislike of the structure of voluntary organisations is reflected in her need for an organisation to capacitate her desire to participate and her frequent breaching of the rules and boundaries of her role. However, of all the voluntary activities she has encountered, befriending seems to provide a freedom of action ("I can visit whenever I want") and lack of any real reprimand if rules are breached.

Interview Analysis: Mr. F

A brief biography

Mr. F is sixty-eight year old retiree who lives alone in Bristol. He grew up in England with his Mother and as a teen ran numerous youth clubs in his otherwise boring hometown. In adulthood he moved to Ireland, where he was the local handyman and spent twenty five years 'working on' his family; his French wife and their two daughters. He moved from Ireland to Bristol, where he found employment as a handyman for the local council, working in various sheltered houses and accommodation across the city. Mr. F and his wife divorced and she returned to France, whereas their two daughters are living and working in Scotland. Mr. F retired three years ago, turning his hobby for photography into a small portrait business, as well as volunteering and befriending.

Bureaucracy

Mr. F begins his story about befriending by expressing his disappointing experiences with various charitable organisations he has volunteered for, particularly the last organisation through which he befriended with. He described their disorganisation ('First of all they said they would need a photograph. Well, they took my photograph on the first meeting and lost it' (03:3-4); their unnecessary requests for information ('I said I'm not using my car to carry people, full stop. They said they would still need my details, which is rubbish' (03:4-5), and; their lack of preparation ('And then they sent me a lady who preferred a female befriender. So it's just gone on and on in a very amateurish—and I've only got so long a patience' (03:7-8). Mr. F's disappointment is not specific to the one organisation described above, and he expresses his scepticism towards charitable organisations in general; 'But I find a lot of charities, not only the befriending side, a lot of charitable organisations, it's a nice job, and they forget what they're supposed to be doing, bringing in funds and paying themselves nice wages and having nice offices' (03:11-13). That some charitable organisations are unscrupulous in their distribution of funding is a publicly-held perception, magnified by the various media 'exposés', such as that of the children's charity Kid's Company, and expressed as a concern by many of this study's interviewees. That some charitable organisations manage themselves to a business model is also seen in Mr. F's (and others) criticism of recruitment policies and procedures. Mr. F blames society's obsession with DBS (disclosure barring services, formerly criminal records bureau) checking as directly impacting on people's desire, duty, and ability to volunteer or engage in community work; 'You're

supposed to do voluntary work. But with this ridiculous CRB checking you can't do voluntary work. I say it's stupid because what does it prove? It proves you've never been caught, that's what it proves' (03:41-43). Mr. F further ridicules this bureaucracy by exampling his last DBS check, where he gave his address as only 'Ireland' and was never questioned on it. Mr. F also references a common public rhetoric that DBS checking his an 'immediate reaction' (03:53) to public exposures of adults in responsible positions abusing children in their care ('And all these teachers that are getting caught now, male and female teachers they've been found out, they've all been CRB checked. It proves nothing' (03:50-51). Mr. F views this bureaucracy as a hindrance, an obstacle, and as something unnecessary that prevents us from doing 'what we're supposed to do' (03:41).

Mr. F also tells an extensive story about his work with a previous volunteer organisation and how they mismanaged travel expenses. Those that volunteered were given a mileage allowance of up to ten miles, however, Mr. F was frequently sent further than this radius and expected to pay the remaining mileage. After talking to a paid employee of the charity, he found out that they (the full time, paid employees) were reimbursed for all their travel, whether it was one mile or one hundred; '"So the people who work for you for nothing then, you only pay them ten miles but you send them twenty miles." I said, "Forget it, I'll work on my own, bye. I'll still carrying on visiting them if I want." (03:85-87). The frustration Mr. F describes is based on the fact that despite gaining more independence and responsibility for providing public services, the voluntary sector remains governed by many public sector practices, such as recruitment and monitoring practices. Many individuals who are salaried are rightly subjected to recruitment, vetting, and training requirements, but for the many who are unpaid, and do not wish to make a 'career' out of their voluntary activity, may be put off by such excessive human resources processes. Red tape has left Mr. F, and other interviewees, wondering why they are being treated like full time employees when they are not receiving a full time employee wage. Superficially, Mr. F blames bureaucracy and red tape for hindering peoples' desire and capacity to volunteer, but the real underlying issue is one of trust and expectation. To Mr. F, people are *supposed to* volunteer and more importantly, people *want to* volunteer. By putting restrictions on and applying procedures to something so natural serves only to disengage people from the activity. For Mr. F and our other interviewees, there is a tension between wanting to do something meaningful and worthwhile for society, but not being trusted to do so without being extensively (and rather pointlessly) scrutinised and checked first. This suggests that there is level of spontaneity to

voluntary activity, and it is an activity that becomes appropriate as and when our individual needs change, such as moving to a new place, having more time on your hands, leaving work, and so on. For some, the urge to volunteer comes out of the blue and has to fight its way through many of the distractions of modern life (work, family, time, resource) otherwise it may lose its momentum. For any real transformation to occur in the voluntary sector, we need to reacquire the habit of spontaneous and sudden giving.

Retirement

At this point I noted a marked change in the direction and dynamic of the interview, which I have attributed to the end of one story (the aforementioned 'bureaucracy') and the beginning of another. As our discussion about DBS disclosures can to a close, Mr. F suddenly reveals that:

> I suppose you volunteer, if it's in your system you volunteer for different things. My volunteering now, because when I retired three years ago, I mean I was lost. You're just programmed to work for ten hours a day and then all of a sudden you're not working… (03:62-65).

It is this loss and sense of disappointment that pervades much of Mr. F's narrative and forms the conscious and unconscious elements of his befriending experience. The transition into retirement can be a complex minefield to negotiate, particularly when an atypical retirement occurs alongside ageing (i.e. retiring at sixty five) and we face a decline in our bodily function as well as our social networks. Disengaging from working life can have a significant detrimental psychological impact that makes such a transition difficult and stressful, both for the retiree and those around them, and research shows that men can be particularly affected[1]. Indicators of a smoother transition include having a spouse or partner, strong family connections and a support social convoy, and some continuity in activity from the pre-retirement period (*ibid.*); personal factors that Mr. F lacks to an extent. On the surface, Mr. F's retirement has been partially successful, following a long and successful career with the city council he has been able to comfortably retire and purse his hobbies of amateur photography and cooking. Under the surface, however, there is a darker element to Mr. F's story, some of which came to the surface during the interview and subsequent analysis. These are discussed further below.

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[1] See John W. Osborne's 'Psychological effects of the transition to retirement', *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 2012 vol.46:No.1

Over-identification with occupational role

Mr. F identified strongly with his previous occupational role as a handyman, and even sought to continue this role into his retirement by looking for voluntary roles that utilised his skills, such as a 'Men In Sheds' scheme or similar; 'I wanted to pass on my skills of cooking or my skills of woodwork or painting and decorating or whatever' (03:67-68). Mr. F refers to his previous work when describing himself or his past experiences, such as being a handyman in Ireland, painting fences with youths as part of a scheme, and his years spent as handyman for the council. This role has given him a plethora of life experiences, including equipping him with the communication skills to engage with those in the council flats he served, work colleague relationships, and being able to provide for his family ('…the twenty five years I was married I was concentrating on working on my family' (03: 24-25). Not being able to continue his role to some extent into his retirement must be difficult for Mr. F, particularly when he has invested so much of himself into this role, and he voices this conflict not only as it occurs within himself, but for all men; 'Because I think there is a big problem with men, especially widowers, not a clue how to cook a basic meal' (03:164-165). Another indicator of Mr. F's strong identification with his previous occupational role is his direct linking of it to his ability to have meaningful experiences with others:

> I… was helping young people recover from abuse or drugs or sexual abuse, whatever. I found painting that wall, rather than talking face to face to somebody, you've got far more rapport if you're stood next to them, physically painting a wall or doing something. You've got more input, you've got more output (03: 169-172).

Mr. F perceives his ability to build rapport with others as directly linked to his ability to perform physical and functional tasks, such as painting a wall. This suggests that part of Mr. F's personal subjectivity, his identity, is formed to a large extent by his previous occupational role. After this initial burst of inner psychic material, Mr. F returns the conversation to a criticism of wider social and organisational policy, possibly as a way of directing his inner tensions outwards and towards other people and systems. That Mr. F turns to wider social issues immediately after his conscious revelation of being personally lost after his retirement could have a self-protective function. His concern with the financial morals of charitable organisations may also be linked to Mr. F's struggle to continue what was his paid occupational role as a handyman into his retirement and into his volunteering. By blaming larger, external powers Mr. F is directing attention away from his own subjective struggle to

act effectively within society. His rejection of the organisation with questionable distribution of funding and resources was validated by Mr. F's perception of his own autonomy; 'I said, "forget it. I'll work on my own, bye"…At least I'm my own boss, I go when I want and do what I want' (03: 87-88) - an attempt to reassert his position within society under his own terms.

Autonomy

Acting under one's own terms was of particular importance to many of the interviewees of this study. Mr. F continues his narrative by exampling how his befriending must work around his other activities, namely his small portrait photography business. The beauty of befriending is that it is a mutual and organic experience, where both parties can state their preferences for the time and duration of meeting, rather than being a strict regime one has to rigidly adhere to. When viewed in this way, it no longer becomes a chore or an activity that has to be undertaken because of one's commitment to signing up in the first instance, but rather an activity to participate in as part of one's everyday life. This autonomy is important and can either facilitate or prevent an individual's ability to volunteer, particularly for Mr. F who values his own time and that of his photography, and who has stopped visiting a particular person because their preferred visitation times clashed and Mr. F was unwilling to sacrifice his personal hobbies. For Mr. F in particular, this autonomy is more important that the nature of the relationship with the befriended itself; he tells me of his current befriended who lives locally and is available to see in the mornings (photography is in the afternoon) but who is also severely mentally disabled and unable to communicate. That Mr. F has the ideal time to visit his befriended means, 'I won't give up straight away like that. If he does remember me next time or the following time, if there is some spark of recognition…' (03:107-108). Mr. F uses his example of his current befriended's needs to highlight the importance of communication and conversation in reaching out to others as his next association. Despite his befriended's mental impairment and speech impediments, Mr. F tells me that he has already (in only two meetings) discovered that if he mimics his befriended's repetition, he gets a response from him by repeating himself in a similar fashion. Showcasing his communication skills prompts Mr. F to credit his life experiences for his ability to relate to others, something he deems an important part of befriending in general; 'That comes easy with age because I've got a lot of experiences I can talk about. If I'm at a bus stop or a till or bus stop I can speak to people' (03:114-115). Mr. F admits that in his younger years and even into his forties he found it difficult to engage with others, but that he has now reached 'a

point where I couldn't care less what people think of me. I'll say what I think' (03:118-119). We are all preoccupied with what others think of us to a certain extent, but that this lessens with age is an age-old adage and particularly true of our older interviewees. Self-esteem, a sense of personal competence, and control over our life choices are all indictors of life satisfaction, particularly in those that are older and/or retired[2] and these variables are also important to Mr. F, and influence his choice and ability to volunteer. If we are to engage older people in befriending activities, it is important to acknowledge these factors and adapt organisational services to account and cater for these, rather than put restrictions and hurdles in place that make engaging in such activities difficult and against their personal terms.

Fight or Flight

Mr. F's talk of himself at this point in the interview initiates another sudden change in the tone and feeling of the interview, when he has another unexpected inner association:

> But the whole idea in volunteering is, as I say, early on it was apathy because there was nothing happening so I made things happen. Now it's to get me, I can either sit at home and get LinkAge to visit me, or I can drive and walk and get out the flat for a couple of hours a week. That's all it's about. (03:12-128).

At this point in the interview I rather clumsily pass over this admission and ask Mr. F if he enjoys the relationships he builds with his befriendees, something unrelated and acknowledging of the emotional admission just made. In my fieldnotes post-interview I wrote of the rapport and warm connection I felt with Mr. F, whom I described as a Father Christmas type, in both appearance and nature. In hindsight, I felt protective of Mr. F, acknowledging his inner sadness from afar but not willing to move closer through fear of hurting him. In reality, maybe Mr. F wanted to talk about these emotions and bring them into consciousness, however my own anxiety as researcher did not allow for this.

Mr. F places himself in two simultaneous positions here, -the first as the older, isolated man that needs befriending, a recipient, and then as the independent, proactive older man that can offer befriending, the giver. Studies on retirement, particularly in men, have acknowledged that people can either experience a positive or a negative transition into retirement, or view it as a new chapter (such as Jung's idea of the afternoon of life) or succumb to an increasing

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[2] See John W. Osborne's 'Psychological effects of the transition to retirement', *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 2012 vol.46:No.1

existence of loss and decline. For Mr F., this choice was very much a reality and he decided to act, to be the giver. Having retired and being a divorcee appears to have reduced Mr. F's non-work routines and social networks. He only briefly acknowledges work colleagues at a couple of points during the interview but never by their name and talks of invitations to Christmas parties in Ireland that he has declined through preference of being alone. Now, three years into his retirement and having reached a point where he no longer cares what people think, Mr. F is proactively taking steps to forge his own meaningful relationships and engage in activities of personal interest.

Girls and Daughters

Mr. F is a walking poster boy for the importance of meaningful engagement in activity and relationships in older life. He has a both a desire and a need to seek out this meaningful engagement where it is not present in his life already, and these needs are tied in both at a social level, of wanting to participate in society and a maintain a contributory role into retirement, and also at the subjective level, of wanting to fill the gap left by the missing meaningful engagement in his personal life. That this meaningful engagement is unconsciously centred around his daughters is identified in his polarisation of men and women in both his previous work role and his current personal life, as well as in the countertransferences I experienced as interviewer. Mr. F separates men and women along gender stereotypical lines, believing that 'I suppose women would feel more comfortable having a female befriender. Men I don't suppose it bothers' (03:286-287) and 'I suppose men can feel freer to say what they want with another man, bad language doesn't bother men…I've worked with them before' (03:292-293), but he also acknowledges the role of relatability and common ground in meaningful relationship; 'I don't know if [befriended] talking about the war and his experiences during the war with somebody your age week after week or whatever, I don't know how you would go on. I was born during the war so I come from an Army family so I've got more of a link with that' (03:295-297).

Mr. F then makes an assertion that I found odd at the time, especially the remarkable difference in tone and the way his words became more clipped:

> Yeah. I don't know what a female volunteer would talk to an elderly lady about, like I'm being sexist now, but talking about their children or grandchildren, which doesn't come in to my conversation. I know they've got children and grandchildren from all

the photographs around the room. They know I've got two daughters, that's it. It would be a totally different conversation with me (03:299-302).

Why wouldn't Mr. F's conversations include the sharing of parental experiences? At this point in the interview I felt confused and as if I had missed something, or misunderstood him and I noted his sudden change in tone and the coldness of his statement in my fieldnotes. This statement seems to contradict his earlier statements about his life experiences giving him the fodder for conversation, and his ability to talk to most people. It was only after multiple readings of the transcript that the tensions surrounding Mr. F and his daughters came to light. Immediately after the above comment about not really discussing his family life, Mr. F gives me a heavily gendered account of his photography business preferences, asserting that majority of the people he photographs are young women and that he prefers this, even to the extent of describing his difficultly of ascertaining the gender of those that have 'continental or Indian names' (03:319). He consciously theorises that the majority of his clients are 'seldom women over thirty' and that maybe this age 'like being photographed more than men, I don't know' (03:307-308), without acknowledging his underlying preference for women as clients, after all, spending a couple of hours photographing a man 'could bore me to death' (03:322). But why does Mr. F dislike photographing men? Or rather, what is it about working with younger women that he prefers? Why does he feel he can relate more effectively to this particular group? Mr. F starts talking about his daughters in more depth towards the end of the interview, and in a way which I felt contradicted his previous statement about not really discussing them often:

Because we're moving all over the place now. I try not to worry about it, I try not to think about it. My two daughters are in Scotland, workaholics, career women and that's it. Something happens to me they're not going to give up their jobs and come to Bristol, I hope. I'd be mad if they did. So all the families are fragmented, whereas in Ireland the families are still—you've still got twelve, thirteen children in some families. It doesn't matter what part of the world they're in, if they bury someone within 24 hours of dying they turn up from Australia, Canada, California, all over the place (03:460-466).

Mr. F's framing of the tensions surrounding his own family within wider, societal issues of the breakdown of the family unit in general is protective in function, and takes the full attention off Mr. F and his personal anxiety by spreading it outwards and into others. When

Mr. F says that if something was to ever happen to him he'd hope his daughters wouldn't give up everything I didn't believe him, and I even felt a sense of guilt in myself, and thought of my own parents who live far away. These feelings, plus my earlier descriptions of Mr. F as a Father Christmas of sorts, could be identified a countertransferential experiences, and that our research relationship was currently taking the form of the father-daughter relationship Mr. F seeks. This is later corroborated after the interview tape had stopped, and Mr. F said it had been wonderful to talk to me, and that given my age and studies I reminded him of his own daughters. The importance of his relationship with his daughters is highlighted by the effect of the absence of it on Mr. F. After what I assumed to be a natural close to our conversation, I thanked Mr. F for his input and went to turn the recording tape off. I was, however, interrupted by Mr. F who suddenly began talking again, and so I left the tape running:

> I mean you hear this thing on the radio about loneliness. It's a true thing, you can be lonely in a crowd. I'm thinking about Christmas, I don't like Christmas. I'm thinking about Christmas now. I'm thinking about how can I ring up my daughters and asking what they're doing for Christmas…I'm quite happy on my own because I can organise myself and I'm thinking of my Christmas dinner now, looking at recipes and coming up with ideas. I should be quite happy on my own because I know that I won't be alone tomorrow, whereas I think if you're alone you can't see any tomorrow (03:508-517).

Mr. F began talking more quickly at this point, as if he needed to finish before I threatened to turn the tape off again. Mr. F is the altruistic befriender that goes out of his way to help others and he is simultaneously the lonely old man from the radio, spending Christmas alone, not looking forward to the future but telling everyone he's fine. His daughters used to come down to the Bristol for Christmas when their mother and Mr. F's ex-wife lived here, but now she has returned to France, I assume these visits are less frequent. Mr. F's references to not looking forward to Christmas but equally being 'quite happy on my own' are contradictory and confusing. To protect himself he opposes himself to the truly lonely man, who 'can't see any tomorrow', differentiating between them and him. I also don't believe him when he says he enjoys being alone and has many plans, rather feeling that these statements are designed to protect me, a mechanism he also uses with his daughters: 'But a lot of the time people lie. I mean, if my daughters ask me, I wouldn't lie and say I'm quite happy on my own, but I'm not going to make it sound better being on my own' (03:522-523). Mr. F softens the blow of this

statement by following it up with an anecdote about his time in Ireland, having invitations to numerous Christmas parties and telling each party he was attending the other, so they all thought he was somewhere and not on his own. Mr. F blames his dislike for Christmas on negative past experiences with a family that drinks too much and argues, and uses this to convince himself that he prefers a Christmas alone. In reality, he would like a Christmas with his daughters, admitting that his loneliest Christmas was when his wife and daughters hid the fact they were 'two miles way' and 'never even rang me up' (03:535). He justifies his elder daughters lack of visits on not liking to fly, even though 'she's flying all over the world for her job and so 'doesn't want to fly at Christmas if she can help it' (03:542-543). At this point of the interview I feel sorry for Mr. F and wish I could improve his situation for him and so suggest that calling or emailing his daughter about her Christmas plans might be a good idea. He responds with a 'yes, boss' before abruptly closing our conversation by nodding at the tape recorder and saying 'thank you very much' (03: 552). As discussed before, a large function of Mr. F's befriending, as well as his photography work, is an attempt to recreate meaningful connections and experiences in the face of a loss and decline of such post-divorce and retirement.

Concluding Remarks

Mr. F is the ideal candidate for making a real change to the lives of other men in his community. He is not only highly skilled but he is inspired, proactive, and actively looking for a role where he can pass on his skills. The transitional period of retirement has been shown to be particularly difficult for men, with loss of working roles and purpose, and may find themselves disengaged from their community if going out to the pub or watching sports isn't necessarily an interest of theirs. As a single man, Mr. F is not interested in such things as going to the pub, and would rather engage in activities that some may say shows a role reversal of sorts, such as cooking, experimenting with recipes, and sharing recipe experiences with others. That he does this willingly and with enjoyment and is aware that 'it's a big thing for men, can't even cook a basic meal' puts him in the ideal position to support others like him in his community. The generality of community activities on offer do not always appeal to men and as they expect to meet their own needs then some level of social isolation can also occur.

<center>**Interview Analysis Mrs. S**</center>

A brief biography

Mrs. S is a sixty-eight year old, married retiree living in the north of the city. Mrs S has engaged in voluntary work for many years, both when she was in full time employment and subsequently since her retirement. Mrs. S has engaged in different types of volunteering, from supporting those in a hospice, managing reception of another organisation, and working in the coffee shop of another. Mrs. S has been a regular befriender for some years, something she started after the passing of her father, and is actively involved in the management of the organisation through which she befriends.

Father and Mother

After an initial clarification of what I, the researcher, was expecting ('So what do you want to know, basically about befriending?') Mrs. S first association and opening story was of her father. Despite his relatively brief appearance in Mrs S' story, her father is rendered significant to her befriending activity by nature of his appearance as a primary association:

> I think I decided that I wanted to do something like my father. He was ninety-three, he lived on his own, and even though he had people visiting him and I always used to go down, I often used to think he must be quite lonely sometimes because he always used to be busy, but because of his health he wasn't able to get out and about (02:4-7).

Within this short extract we can distinguish some clear perceptions that Mrs. S holds towards ageing and older age. Mrs. S differentiates between types of relationships and how some fulfil a role that others don't, as she felt her father lonely despite his visitors, suggesting a difference in function and quality of the relationships he did have. Mrs. S positions herself as the 'good daughter' who used to always visit her father but simultaneously acknowledges that, despite this, he may have been 'quite lonely' still. Being in a position to but still being unable to ease her father's situation must be quite difficult to cope with, and may fuel her desire to do something 'like her father' and provide others with the meaningful companionship necessary to their wellbeing and which her father may have lacked. The difference between care provided by family and that by friends is further differentiated by Mrs. S later on, when she makes a comment about wishing to volunteer more and take a more active role within the befriending organisation but being unable to do so because she is currently caring for an unwell sister and also wishes to see her spouse. That caring for family

is not considered a form of volunteering or a way of contributing productively within her community is a recurring theme throughout the interview that is centred on societal and gendered expectations of women in retirement, and will be discussed further later.

Mrs. S draws explicit links between a perception of her father's loneliness and his poor health and immobility, which refrains him from 'being busy' like he always used to be. Mrs. S' concern with facilitating mobility (and therefore facilitating independence) also arises at other points in the interview, when she confesses going against the rules of the organisation and beyond the 'criteria' of the befriending relationship to take companions out for trips in her car, or to lunch or tea at her financial expense. Mrs. S is extremely invested in the organisation through which she befriends, and so to go against their regulation and policy is a significant transgression, but something she is willing to do to improve the quality of life of her companion and enhance the befriending relationship – in short, acting in the ways she felt would have benefited her father had he been more mobile. That every interviewee in this study admitted to breaking the rules of the organisation in some way suggests that the current rules in place – no spending money, no going on excursion, no helping collect medications or undertake shopping, and so on – actually hinder the development of the befriending relationship and forces members to go against these rules, even though there is a risk of repercussion for them. That the befriending relationship actually goes beyond the strict criteria of 'tea and a chat' (as advertised by the befriending organisation) is suggestive that perhaps organisations need to review their strict and limiting activity policy when it comes t encouraging and maintaining voluntary activity.

Mrs. S does not discuss her mother until slightly later in the interview, when she draws her discussion away from befriending and towards her voluntary work at the hospice, which serves as opener in order to introduce her mother:

> [on befriending] I do enjoy it. But I also volunteer for the hospice anyway … fifteen years I've done it .. I think when, well, my mum died of cancer and I thought, "I've got to do it." So yeah, I've been doing it for fifteen years and I enjoy it (02:56-61).

At this point in Mrs. S' talk she trails of, leaving her sentence incomplete, and both during the real-time interview and when listening to the recording after, I feel ambivalence at where the interview is headed: I want Mrs. S to discuss her mother only if she wants to, but equally I am curious to know what of her mother's death encouraged her 'to do it'. Mrs. S spoke of her father much more assertively, consciously acknowledging her desire to befriend as a way of

providing others with a companionship that she felt her father was missing. When discussing her mother, Mrs. S does not have as much clarity, her sentences becoming less formed and the pauses between words much longer, suggesting that her understanding of the meaning of her mother or her role in Mrs. S' befriending is not so consciously easily to clarify. At this point in the interview I hoped to gain some clarity about what was being said as well, and so asked Mrs. S is she felt befriending was a way of giving back to those that cared for her mother or a way of changing how that care is delivered to others in a similar position if poor health:

> Mum died in the seventies, so the care that cancer patients got then was definitely not the same as you get now. Even though mum had a Marie Curie nurse, you can't compare the two now, it's just gone on leaps and bounds. To pay back? No, I don't think so. It's just something I wanted to do. I started off that the day hospice, but I got fired from there [laughter] (02:65-69).

Here the insinuation is that the care her mother received was not good, at least not in comparison to today, and she disregards the idea of her volunteering work being a way of retributing the hospice for their care of her mother. In hindsight, Mrs. S did not actually say that her mother was in the hospice that she proceeded to volunteer in- this was an assumption of mine – in which case my question would not have made sense in the same context that I had intended. This section of the interview seemed to have become 'unstuck', or off rail, around the idea of her mother, but thank fully rescued by Mrs. S' humour and her 'getting fired' anecdote. This comic interjection felt like a welcome relief for both of us, and further illustrates the emotional and anxiety-inducing (as felt by myself as a countertransferential experience and ambivalence) meaning associated with Mrs. S' mother. My personal impression is that her mother's death was an unpleasant experience and something that Mrs. S feels anxious about, and I feel her later comments about not being able to volunteer in a hospice immediately after a family member's passing because the emotional distress is too 'fresh' corroborates this, however, this remains a countertransferential feeling of mine, and may have been misinterpreted. Neither Mrs. S' mother or father are discussed individually again, however she continues to make wider, more generalised comments throughout the interview. Mrs S. tells me that when she volunteers at the hospice she sees 'a lot of younger people coming in to volunteer, and I think they're doing that once they're at university, to add to their CV or whatever, or between jobs' (02:109-111) and directly contrasts this with her fellow befrienders, her age and older, who volunteer for very different reasons: 'So I think

it's the older people, and maybe they think the same, maybe they're had parents who have been on their own and they don't want to let another person have that' (02:116-117). The experiences of her parents have impacted significantly on Mrs. S and form the conscious basis to her current befriending. In addition, not wanting others in a similar situation to suffer shows social identification and further motivates Mrs. S' participation in various groups and organisations. There is much research to support the notion that individuals will be more likely to participate in an activity when they believe that their actions give them an opportunity to help their preferred groups (see Fowler and Kam, Beyond the Self, 2007). For many of the older interviewees, it was the experiences of their elderly parents that motivated their participation with other older members of society to prevent them from having the same poor experiences.

At a narrative analysis level, the significance of Mrs. S' parents experience with loneliness and inadequate care in her befriending activity is reinforced by her use of interpersonal communication, a cognitive method employed to help clarify or understand our own thoughts; 'When he died I thought, "gosh, there must be loads of elderly people like my dad,"' (02:8). Mrs. S utilises self-talk quite often throughout the interview: at a surface level, this helps her to illustrate a point to her audience, but unconsciously, it is argued that interpersonal communication helps to appraise feedback between our inner and outer worlds and allow for the accumulation of self knowledge at an emotional level[3], further reinforcing the significance of her parent's role in her personal befriending story and identifying how even now, years later, Mrs. S is still trying to make meaning out of her past and how it shapes her present. It has been shown in other research that children who were exposed to volunteering activity through their parents are more likely to volunteer themselves, and it seem this also hold true for older adults. Experiencing first hand your parents' or grandparents' potential loneliness or decline in health and personal relationships seems just as effective in motivating us to participate or give back. That those who have experienced having to care for an unwell parent would more likely be older, suggests that perhaps volunteer recruitment marketing needs to be targeted to account for people's differing motivations.

Befriending and Being A Friend

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[3] Mrs. S' frequent use of interpersonal communication and self-talk lead me to read more in this area and the interesting work of L. Miller (1991) Toward a Neuropsychodynamic Model of Ego Autonomy and Personality, *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, vol 19 (2) pp.213-234.

Mrs. S talks frequently of Ray, her 'first man' (03:30), who she first mentions after her father and who she continues to visit despite the fact he has moved away and no longer requires befriending support:

I still keep in touch with him, I still go out and see him even though he doesn't really need me. Because I thought, we've been together for two years and I would be ashamed that if because the criteria stopped that I wouldn't visit him anymore (02:41-43).

Mrs. S' relationship with Ray has developed beyond the 'criteria' set by the befriending organisation into an organic friendship that continues despite obstacles in the way, such as distance. Her fondness for Ray is illustrated by being placed in contrast with another gentleman Mrs S was paired with via the befriending group:

And [the organisation] gave me another elderly gentleman. I wasn't quite happy with him. He was alright, but he was in the military and all he wanted to talk about was military and what it was like during the war. So I wasn't able to help him there. (02:14-17).

For Mrs. S, befriending is a reciprocal activity, where both parties must meet the 'criteria' of being able to nurture and develop a mutually beneficial companionship. The befriending relationship isn't a service or a transaction to be carried out despite difficulties, but is rather like our everyday friendships and relationships we have with others; reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and based in shared interests and values. Where these factors aren't present, the befriending relationship doesn't 'help' anyone. Mrs. S makes another reference to the importance of common ground between people befriending later on in the interview that is also tied up with ideas of gender and roles:

But I think women with women is a good idea because women can talk about rubbish all day long. Men, they're very... They're not… What can I say? They can't involve in general chit chat like women can…Women can talk about any topic—kids, this that and the other—, but men are more specific in what they can discuss. …If you haven't got a topic of interest with them just forget it (02:155-162).

Mrs. S uses the example of her experience with another gentleman who wanted to talk about his experiences in the war, but who Mrs. S could not relate with, and how she informed the befriending organisation that he needed someone else more suited to be his companion. This fits with Mrs. S' emphasis on needing to meet the correct 'criteria' in a relationship,

otherwise it is not beneficial for either party. However, her claim that matching women with women is preferable because they can engage in general chit chat more conflicts with the fact that her current befriended, Ray, is male and that she has developed a particularly strong relationship with him. Perhaps Ray meets her needs in terms of 'doing something like her father' and she feels a father-daughter affinity with Ray, which would account for any differences in their gendered capacity to relate. That many of the interviewees acknowledged differences in men and women and their ability to talk and relate to others could suggest two things: firstly, there is an assumption that befriending is about sitting and chatting, rather than doing, and; secondly, matching befrienders with their companions in terms of personality, values, and interests is extremely important if we wish to attract and retain volunteers. Mrs. S and I touched briefly upon an interesting idea of promoting the concept of befriending to the public in a similar fashion to signing up to social media or even a dating website: you have your own profile outlining your background and interests and can choose to reach out to older people using the service based on these values and interests. The older service user, in mutual agreement, has their own profile and can equally reach out to potential companions based on mutual interest and respect. In this way, the needs for autonomy and control over our own choices and behaviours are met for all parties involved.

Mrs. S cements her friendship with Ray as a relationship beyond the boundaries intended by the organisation when she tells me of a conversation she had with him regarding their friendship, 'He said to me he enjoyed my visits, and I enjoyed seeing him. And I said, "If you don't mind, I'd like to come and see you,"' (02:50-51). This conversation, experienced by many of the befrienders interviewed, feels like an affirmation, a peak point in their experience when their befriending develops into real friendship. That many of the befrienders, including Mrs. S, break the rules and boundaries set by the organisation in order to enhance their befriending relationships not only illustrates the emotional investment individuals place in these relationships (they are willing to 'get into trouble') but also presents a conflict in the befriending relationship: between befriending (as the organisation intends it) and 'being a friend'.

Active Ageing

Mrs. S is an extremely social, active, and healthy woman who I was surprised to know was retired and had been for some years. Her weekly schedule is packed with befriending, volunteering at the hospice and the donkey sanctuary, weekly canoeing with friends, and of

course the obligatory day to oneself to recuperate. Mrs. S would like to do more voluntary work 'but as somebody pointed out to me, "you can't do too much"'' (02:76-77) and she is aware of the effects of burn out, not having any time to oneself, and becoming 'a manic rush' (02:90). Mrs. S also cites personal obligations as taking priority over her time:

> I think if I widowed and single and had no commitment then I would probably volunteer more, but at the moment I've got a sister that's poorly, a hubby that I like to be at home with in the evenings. But no, I think if I was on my own I would probably do a lot more volunteering (02:92-95).

For Mrs. S, volunteering would be an ideal way of replenishing the loss of her personal relationships and remaining socially active and contributory to society. In this sense, Mrs. S represents the category of the traditional formal volunteer whom donate their time to community agencies and organisations, for both personal reasons and to meet societal expectations of remaining active during retirement.

In discussing her retirement and the many ways she spends her time, Mrs. S tells me:

> Once you've retired, you see, you don't have much time to do a lot. You're never going to believe this but I sometimes wonder how I ever went to work, because I do the hospice, I do [befriending], I help out with the donkeys. I do lots of different things and I always keep Fridays to myself and on Wednesday I go canoeing with a friend anyway. So if I did five days a week I wouldn't have any time to myself, I would just be a manic rush (02:86-90).

Mrs. S represents what has emerged in Europe over the past two decades as the principal policy response to the challenges of an ageing population, the move from 'successful ageing' (focussed on retaining health in older age) to 'active ageing', focussed on remaining active and continuing to contribute to society. As noted in my immediate post-interview fieldnotes, I was extremely surprised that Mrs. S was of retirement age and had been for some years, not only because of her youthful appearance and health, but because of her active lifestyle and general worldview. She felt that people should take more responsibility for themselves, should worry less about what might happen, and that I don't think people in Bristol appreciate what they have on their doorstep' (02:221-222). When I questioned this assumption of mine (that Mrs. S was not yet retired), I found that Mrs. S didn't fit with my expectation of the slower, quieter, less able retired woman - an obvious prejudice and

stereotyping of my own – but rather represented a new type of retiree, - a wealthy, healthy, and educated 'young old' - of retirement age but still extremely capable. I felt that Mrs. S' age and status within society (affluent retiree) had little impact on our relationship or on my response to her, and that we actually had much in common, including a shared concern for seeing the success of befriending organisations operating in our area. Throughout the interview I felt active in Mrs. S' story-telling, rather than a submissive listener and despite my minimal input, and felt inspired by her participation in and knowledge of the inner workings of the befriending organisation (she was on first name terms with members of management, understood their recruitment processes, and was concerned with maximising the groups exposure to the public). Given the age difference between Mrs. S and I, these countertransferential responses of mine are beneficial in that they reflect the possible positive outcomes of intergenerational communication and the feelings of empowerment and solidarity that can arise when this communication is facilitated over a shared concern. Intergenerational communication, the sharing of knowledge, and the passing of experience between generations breaks down boundaries and facilitates a stronger sense of community and solidarity, and can help societies develop, act, and change.

Mrs. S also personifies the ideal of positive ageing and having an active retirement. In talking about her friends, she also shows how the socially shared concepts of how to age well are changing, a point that will be discussed further momentarily. Public discourses of 'positive' ageing and 'active ageing' operate at a national and local level, are reflected in social policy, encouraged by medical professionals, and help older individuals position themselves within society after retirement. Mrs. S clearly values her social network and invests a significant amount of her resource into maintaining and developing it, as illustrated by her busy week schedule. For Mrs. S, retirement is not the slowing down and gradual withdrawal from society but rather the opportunity to do and participate more.

 Mrs. S' stories about her day to day life also illustrate the difference between an active retirement and a productive retirement, two distinct but overlapping public narratives. Active agency can be seen to be motivated by the will to stay alive as long as possible and postponing personal dependency, and includes the image of the affluent, open-minded, and somewhat 'cosmopolitan' retiree, engaged in alternative activities, such as Mrs. S' regular canoeing and tai chi classes. Other examples of campaigns to promote active ageing include exercise classes for the elderly, 'silver surfers' IT classes, Nordic walking, round-the-world trips and cruises, and so on. Whilst Mrs. S engages in such activities, she also represents a

new image of the elderly that goes beyond maintaining activity to being actively participatory and productive within society.

Mrs. S tells me about her time in employment when she used to work shifts, and how this would sometimes interfere with her volunteering, which lead to the earlier funny anecdote about getting 'fired' from her voluntary position. For Mrs. S, retiring hasn't been a winding down of such activities, but almost even an increase; 'Because once you've retired you see, you don't have time to do a lot. You're never going to believe this, but I sometimes wonder how I ever went to work' (02:82-83). Mrs. S engages in many activities, such as her befriending, volunteering at the hospice, volunteering with a donkey sanctuary, tai chi classes, and canoeing with friends. Interestingly, she distinguishes this sort of activity as voluntary and separate to her other activities: 'I think if I was widowed and single and had no commitment, then I would probably volunteer more, but at the moment I've got a sister that's poorly, a hubby that I like to be at home in the evening with' (02:88-90). Retired women often give to their families in various ways, such as delivering essential care to spouses, grandchildren, and so on. Such caregiving demands are placed on women at a time when they feel they should help because they are retired – even Mrs. S sacrifices her desire to volunteer more so that she may help her sister and spouse. Unfortunately, the societal message we are currently given is that such types of caregiving is not a form of volunteering, hence Mrs. S' and others, separation of the two types of care provision. Mrs. S feels the need to explain to me why she cannot volunteer more and talks of the risks of burnout and not pacing herself, when the reality is that she is, in fact, providing her services voluntarily in all instances.

Productive Ageing

Mrs. S seemed very attached to the organisation through which she befriends, knowing management by name and referring to the organisation and herself and their actions as 'we'.

After the above anecdote of being unable to volunteer as much as she would like because of other commitments, Mrs. S turns to criticism of other older members of the community for not participating in similar ways at all; perhaps an attempt at relieving her own feelings of guilt at not being able to volunteer more, even though she would very much like to. Again, this is rather unfair and a product of our society's belief that family caregiving is not a form of civic participation. To grasp back her autonomy and re-establish her participatory and productive position, Mrs. S wonders if 'Maybe they just don't want to give up their time or maybe they think it's too much of a commitment. It's only one hour a week for goodness sake.

If you can't give up one hour a week, it's very sad' (02:118-120). Mrs. S then goes on to discuss the work that 'we' (the organisation) have been doing in the local community, a subject on which she is very knowledgeable. She speculates if volunteer recruitment and retention is linked to the part of the city where the service is provided, acknowledging the 'south side' as more participatory and the 'north side' less so, possibly due to affluence and what Mrs. S deems 'community spirit'. For Mrs. S, this side of befriending – the campaigning and marketing – is very important and something she is actively involved in, suggesting a political side to her desire to participate, and corroborated by her use of 'we' when discussing the organisation as a whole. Unlike other interviewees, Mrs. S did not discuss the bureaucracy involved in participation, nor the difficulty of having your befriending activities monitored and reported on, suggesting that her advocacy for political action and change within her community outweighs the 'politics' involved with being involved.

Interview Notes and Concluding Comments

We met in a coffee shop, a location chosen by Mrs. S. At first I found Mrs. S to be slightly 'frosty', seemingly reluctant to shake my hand upon arrival or engage in small talk prior to the interview starting. However, once the interview had begun Mrs. S seemed much more talkative and engaging, asking me questions throughout and talking freely about her lifestyle, family, and current commitments. In retrospect, perhaps we were both nervous about participating in the interview; our contact prior to the interview had been minimal and was only to organise the time and venue of our interview, whereas other participants had been more inquisitive and many actually phoned me to talk prior to meeting, giving us a more friendly footing to begin with. Mrs. S' first question to me was 'what do you want to know, basically about befriending?'; perhaps Mrs. S' initial nerves came from not knowing what to expect or anticipate for the interview. As the interviewer I felt that we both warmed towards each other as the interview went on and we found we had common ground in our wish to see befriending organisations more effective and engaged within our community. Our talk becomes much freer as time goes on, and Mrs. S even asks me questions throughout as we co-constructed a shared meaning of befriending: this need to build rapport and trust is reflected in Mrs. S frequent talk of the 'criteria' for befriending, which includes common ground and shared interest, and how if these 'criteria' are lacking then the befriending relationship is ineffective and unsuccessful. Our research relationship and my feelings as researcher could be considered a reflection of her stance on befriending; the relationship

develops as we realise we have shared experiences, but there is no assumption at the start that I would meet her 'criteria' and be accepted. Mrs. S' strict criteria for the befriending relationship, initially construed as negative (my feelings towards her being described initially as frosty), were actually positive; the essence of the befriending relationship is to personally connect with someone else through shared experience and common ground, and where this was lacking then the befriending relationship is no longer viable, effective, or meeting the needs of either party involved.

Mrs. S' stories were primarily political in nature and centred around the functional ability of the befriending organisation to manage the activity of befriending. When referring to the organisation, she is on a first name basis with management and also uses 'we', denoting her personal association and position within the organisation. She talks of the organisations need to market and advertise itself better, and compare their behaviours to those of other organisations providing similar services in the south west, something she is extremely knowledgable about. Mrs. S reflects on the potential effects living in a more affluent area of Bristol has on people's desire to volunteer, but ultimately believes that everyone has some capacity to volunteer, regardless of their circumstance.

<center>**Miss C Analysis**</center>

A brief biography

Miss C is a twenty-three year old female living at home with her Mother. She has been volunteering since she was at school, and specifically befriending for almost a year. She sees one older lady, Margaret, who is home-bound but lives locally to Miss C and her route to and from work. They get along well and Miss C looks forward to their weekly meetings, when they either sit and chat or watch the golf together. Unfortunately, Margaret was recently taken ill and has had to move into a nursing home, something which is of concern to Miss C. She worries about Margaret's safety and wellbeing in the home, and is worried that she won't be able to see her as often now that she is no longer living in the area.

The basis of Miss C's befriending is centred around the guilt she feels at being unable to support her grandfather, who lives far away and who Miss C is worried is lonely. She feels that she could and should be doing more to support him, and this anxiety is also present in her befriending relationship with Margaret, as she often worries that her befriending support isn't enough to relieve her loneliness either. Despite her compassionate belief that everybody can help at least one other person, Miss C's narrative is tinged with concern and worry about the state of things, from the world in general to the nature of her personal relationships.

Grandad

Miss C's first association and opening story was her grandfather:

> I had actually thought of [volunteering] because my grand dad was widowed last year, and he lives down in Plymouth and I am here. Suddenly, because he spent all his time with his wife, he suddenly ended up having, like, nobody, and nobody to chat to (5-8).

Miss C's grandfather was recently widowed and although he is still mobile and driving and enjoying an active social life at the boy's club, Miss C still worries he may be lonely as he now lives alone without the daily company of his wife. Loneliness is highly subjective and the form it takes depends on the individual experiencing it, so that one may have many friends but still experience loneliness without a romantic or intimate partner. Companionship, like loneliness, takes many forms and Miss C feels her grandfather 'was kind of really lonely' (9). I felt that Miss C feels quite guilty that she can't be near her grandfather, despite saying she knows 'like, well, I can't change the fact that I live in Bristol, he lives in Plymouth' (9-

10). She wishes she 'was doing more that was, like, good for my grandad because I know he's, like, lonely but… (17-18). Miss C's use of 'like' and trailing off at the end of this sentence suggests an emotional element, as she struggles to articulate herself clearly, instead puncturing her sentences with 'like' and 'yeah' and leaving the thought incomplete. On this point I could empathise with Miss C, having had my grandfather taken ill but being unable, due to geographical location and work commitments, to be at his side. I did not offer my personal experience to the conversation, despite it being a shared point for us, to avoid framing the discussion in my own sense of guilt, which I may have been bringing to the table, so to speak. To cope with her negative feelings of being unable to 'do good' for her grandfather, Miss C copes by applying the following emotional logic:

> I was, like, there's almost definitely going to be the same situation where, like, someone lives in Plymouth and their grandad's in Bristol, and whatever. So, I was, like... yeah, I don't know, I just thought, maybe. Yeah, I could do that (10-12).

Although her befriending has no impact whatsoever on her grandfather's circumstances, it helps relieve her ill-feeling and is a strong motivating factor for Miss C. The link between her current befriending and her grandfather is that she is acting how she would want to for her grandfather, but in the only capacity that she can from so far away. Easing the loneliness of anyone is infinitely better than doing it for no one and it serves to relieve and protect her from the inner conflict of knowing her grandfather is lonely but being unable to help him.

Miss C's grandfather is discussed and three other points throughout the interview, and each time Miss C stipulates how she wishes she was doing more for him. During these points, her (already frequent) use of 'like' and 'yeah' increases, and she struggles to articulate her feelings. Her grandfather is mobile and drives and still enjoys an active social life at his men's club, which he attends regularly to catch up with old friends, but Miss C still worries that he is experiencing loneliness now that his wife has passed away. Miss C is differentiating between types of companionship and relationships here, perpetuating the belief that you can be lonely even if surrounded by others, and the important role his spouse played in his wellbeing. Having a partner, or the lack of partner, was talked about by all the interviewees in this study in some way, and Miss C's concerns for her grandfather are echoed in wider, social issues surrounding older men and retirement, divorce, or being widowed, where such events have particular detrimental effects on wellbeing and health outcomes. These issues are discussed further later in this chapter.

Her grandfather does not have anyone from a befriending or social service visiting him, but Miss C feels that this may be an option 'in like, five years' time if he's less mobile' (259). Again, Miss C blames herself for her grandfather's situation, admitting:

> It is hard though when, like, yeah, like, being based in Bristol to not, like … And I rarely ever go to see him. So, I've got no idea how I would, like, get him involved in any kind of, like, social activities or community activities, or anything. Like, I just, yea, I'm gonna go ask him again (261-263).

Miss C does not elaborate on why she rarely goes to see her grandfather, a question I wanted to ask but did not through fear of upsetting her. This whole section of the interview felt tentative and delicate, and perhaps Miss C picked up on my reluctance to press further as she suddenly changes the subject and talks about her current befriendee. The dynamics of Miss C's family are also unknown, so it possible that Miss C may be one of only a few relatives, so that she may feel a sense of obligation to relocate to care for him. However, she does state earlier in the interview that since being widowed 'And so then we were all, like, suddenly calling him all the time' (8), so one presumes there are other family members, possibly living near him that are supporting him. The dynamics of Miss C's family would be interesting to know as research has shown that women feel more obligation to care for a family member, yet this is normally in respect to children and their older parents, rather than grandparents.

Miss C feels that having a good relationship with a grandparent or elderly family member gives younger people the experience of interacting and engaging with an older person, and that getting a younger person to volunteer not having had this relationship may be difficult, especially if 'there is, like, a kind of a huge gap between them in terms of age and between, like, interests' (519-520). Trying to engage younger people who may not have had such relationships with the elderly may be difficult, but Miss C suggests – as did another interviewee – that some sort of open day or 'taster' session could be a good way of letting people see what befriending is about, rather than relying on them to go through an extensive sign-up process 'and do this paperwork and do this training' (523) without actually knowing 'if it's for them' (526).

Weltschmerz

Miss C has a history of volunteering, starting with her involvement with the Duke of Edinburgh scheme when she was at school. She also participated in an 'Ears for Peers'

scheme when she was at college and ran a fitness club for over sixties when in university. The fitness club was a great success and is still running now, despite Miss C graduating and no longer participating. Later in the interview Miss C tells me about her voluntary work abroad, which includes sea turtle conservation in Costa Rica as well as at a national park in America. Miss C makes some interesting insights during this section of the interview, and presents herself as a compassionate young woman with an interest in making a difference. Despite living in 'the worst of the worst kind of accommodation' (303) during her volunteering trips, 'you could just totally see what you were doing and how important it was' (304-305). The idea of making a difference and being able to physically see the results of your labour was reported by many interviewees in this study, who enjoy watching the relationship with their befriended develop over time, and the joy this brings both parties. Other research into charities and charitable giving have identified impact as one of the key drivers that keeps people donating their time and money[4]. Miss C responds subjectively to those issues which personally touch her life, such as her grandfather's circumstance, and is motivated to give her time to an organisation she can see making a difference to other older people in a similar situation.

Whilst talking about the pleasure she receives from voluntary activity, Miss C also identifies the downside of being concerned with social and world issues:

> But sometimes I get that... that thing where once you start thinking about what you wanna do, there's too many things that you wanna do, you know? It's, like, sea turtles, you can spend your whole life… It's, like, one animal and you just think, there's so much you can do. There's kids, there's the elderly, there's, like, education. I mean…. Even thinking right now …Yeah, I just, yeah... I'm really a bad decision maker. It's hard. I get like, apparently there's a German word for it, It's like, when we always forget, it's like, world sadness or something, like, you just, like, feel too much about... like, all the problems. And don't know which ones to try and help fix (313-322)

Weltschmerz, or 'world pain', was coined during the Romantic era and in many ways can be considered the German expression of ennui, describing a world weariness felt from a perceived mismatch between how the world should be (an ideal image) and how it is in reality. An emotional response, weltschmerz is felt as a sadness about the state of the world,

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[4] A survey of more than 160 business leaders and philanthropists across England and Scotland, carried out by Pilotlight, found that nearly 60% of respondents felt that information on the impact of a charity's work was a deciding factor in their decision to donate.

and a pain that things cannot always be changed, no matter how much we may want it to be so. To cope, Miss C lives by the belief that we should all 'just do what you can' (322-323), and frequently discusses how things can be improved with others, 'one of my best friends who really... we suffer from the same sort of, like, feeling and we have this, like... we always debate. What's the best way that we can do something?' 327-328). Miss C came to the conclusion that giving her time is the most effective resource and action she can take, and that sometimes we have to face the truth, which is that 'you can't do everything and you have to accept you can't do everything' (336-338), but just 'doing what you can'. Even the smallest action can have the biggest effect:

> The nicest thing about that is, obviously, it's a much smaller scale. But there's something, really to be said, like, overseeing somebody who is, yeah, like I said, the first time I saw [Margaret] she was, like, "Oh kill me," and was clearly, like, really miserable. And then, the more I saw her, like, week after week and she'd, like, she actually smiled. And you know, and seeing her being, like, happy from when I've seen her being so depressed. That's, like, I felt, like, even if, yeah, it doesn't matter, that is just one lady. It's, like, why is she any less important than anybody else on the planet? It's, like, it's just if, yeah, if you've got a chance to make any kind of positive impact no matter how small it is, it's really nice to be able to do that and see that (349-357).

I felt this statement of Miss C's to be very poignant, and I felt moved that we having this conversation and sharing these thoughts with one another. During this part of the interview I wrote in my notes 'Ronald Regan', because as Miss C was talking I was reminded of his famous quote, ''we can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone' and how the truth of this resounds with the act of befriending. Miss C's concern about the condition of others in the world in general and more specifically in her grandfather seem to be the driving force behind her befriending and wider volunteering activities.

Working with the service provider

The interviewees in this study had mixed and differing views regarding their experience of volunteering with the organisation. Miss C found the signing up process long-winded and often felt the paperwork to be 'excessive' but ultimately it was something she was used to doing, having been through university and various employment positions, and she understand the need to safeguard. After deciding to befriend, she used the internet to search for volunteering opportunities in Bristol and signed up with this particular organisation 'and

[they] came out, like, on top and so I just clicked, and yeah, it seemed like a no-brainer' (53). Her previous volunteer work was undertaken when she was working freelance, and so was often sporadic, however since gaining full time employment she has found it easier to befriend as she has set hours and can commit regularly, 'like, the old people often, like, need a bit more routine and kind of regular meet-up' (57-58).

Miss M is unsure how the organisation matches befrienders with their companions, but believes it to be based primarily on geographical location, which makes it easier for people to commit to regular meets. She speaks fondly of the organisation and its team, deeming them helpful, friendly, and very supportive. She describes them as 'the nicest bunch of people, like, they're a very…they've…you can see how they really care. I'll give that to them, like, they really care' (454-456). Miss C hopes that the office team are paid employees 'because they're doing it all the time' (460) and 'they really, really care about it' (461). She contrasts the befriending organisation with other charities that employ street fundraisers, 'like, kind of charity, people in the street. It's hard to feel, like, they really care about what they're telling you about' (462-463) and 'which is probably maybe why I haven't, like, done the... just the monthly money giving before' (467-468). The positive experiences Miss C has had with the befriending organisation plays a role in her continual participation not only in terms of befriending but also in terms of service development, recommending the service to her friends; 'I know it's good and I've had a really positive experience with it and how easy it is. I've told these people, like, "You should look at it and see if there's somebody in your area who needs, like, a visitor" (492-494). Miss C invests quite a bit of her time in the organisation, not only befriending but giving her time handing out flyers at local fairs and events. She is a self-described 'passion-driven person' (464) and identifies with the volunteers at the befriending organisation.

However, it is not always plain-sailing when working with organisations - they originally wanted to pair Miss C with a lady that suffered dementia, which was a source of anxiety for Miss C, who did not feel that she had the experience to meet such a challenge. Whist the organisation offered good training, it was to be completed online and Miss C did not feel that this would equip her with the skill to engage with someone with dementia, and she was worried because ' I kinda felt, like, I didn't wanna commit somebody and say that I was gonna go there every week if I didn't know how to, like, best handle it' (119-120). Two other interviewees also expressed concerns regarding dementia. It is public knowledge that with our ageing populations we are experiencing an increase in those with dementia, yet dementia

and related diseases are not widely understood by the public, and there remains a stigma surrounding the disease. It may be possible that there are members of the public that are willing to engage in befriending or a similar scheme, but unwilling to do so with older people because of the stigma surrounding the elderly and dementia. If this is the case, then befriending services would need to take steps to change this perception, and reassure people that they would never be a companion to someone suffering dementia unsupported or without adequate training and personal confidence.

As with other interviewees, Miss C emphasised the need to show people how easy it is to volunteer, or as she put it, 'It's literally … it's, like, a convenient volunteering' (489), and over time the relationship develops and you realise, 'they're like, your friends in kind of a way. It's, like, they've got so much stuff to give, like, stories and stuff' (495-496). She feels that the whole idea of volunteering should be reconceptualised, 'It should be called, like, charity share or something. I don't know, but it should something that implies the joy aspect of it. Because, yeah you're volunteering but you're not, not getting anything in return, like, you are' (540-542). Like others, she also suggested organising a sort of 'taster' event where people could come along and see what befriending entails, before going through a formal sign up and induction process.

The befriended

Miss C has a strong relationship with Margaret, the lady she befriends, and speaks fondly and warmly of her. Margaret isn't particularly mobile and is often unwell, so they spend their time together having a chat or watching the golf quietly. Whilst Miss C enjoys their relationship and looks forward to their weekly visits, there is an underlying anxiety inherent in the relationship which affects Mss C's conviction in her own actions and leads her to question the impact of her activity:

> I think... I think of all of the hours that she has that she's alone in her house, which is, like, all of the hours in a week, I don't feel, like, my one hour, like... Well, sometimes I'm more. And, like, I could go on the way to work. I think that she needs more than that (94-96).

Miss C finds this aspect of the relationship difficult, but continues to visit Margaret. Margaret has recently had heart problems and so has been moved into a nursing home, something Miss C describes herself as being 'in two minds about' (100). On the one hand she feels that being

in a home will give Margaret the additional company that she requires throughout the day, proper healthcare, and will take the stress away from wondering if her carers will show up on time or let her down, which is the current situation in her own home. On the other hand, however, Miss C has 'heard, like, really bad stuff about some of the care homes in Bristol. So, I just... yeah, I don't know. I hope it's good. I'm gonna go and see it with my own eyes' (104-106). There is a social rhetoric surrounding care and nursing homes in the UK, which are often thought to be horrible places and not fit for anyone, let alone our vulnerable and ageing. At the same time though, they are necessary when social service provision of domiciliary healthcare is equally limited. In wanting to go and see Margaret's care homes with 'her own eyes' reinforces the strength of their relationship, and one presumes that if the condition of the home was not good then Miss C would take action, such as whistleblow or raise safeguarding issues. Miss C expresses her concerns regarding the care home again later in the interview and the fact that Margaret is no longer at home presents a difficulty for Miss C:

> Well... so... I'm not... it's so... Again, this is, like, now the, it's really unfortunate. Like, obviously, it's so... I feel so bad for her. She's been out and now gone into a home. I hope the home is good for her but... because the home is now out of the city. So, I use to be able to walk to see her and, like, I mean, it's a bit out of the way but it's, like, it's...So, it was, like, you know, I kinda have to be there (265-269).

Again, Miss C overuses the words 'like' and 'yeah' and doesn't complete her sentences, indicating her sensitivity to the topic being discussed. Margaret has been moved to a home that is no longer on Miss C's usual routes and involves travelling significantly further. With her current work commitments and car-sharing with her Mother, Miss C is struggling to maintain her relationship with Margaret, and this is a source of ill feeling as she feels 'now, like, I'm, like, tied to her and I really like seeing her' (272-273). She tells me that she now as to organise a visit ahead of time with the care home rather than Margaret directly, which proves difficult when they 'don't answer the phone'. The fact that the care home has restricted visiting hours is out of Miss C's control, yet, 'It's a bit... and... Yeah, so now, I don't know. I feel, like, I'm letting her down' (278). It is a shame that Margaret and Miss C have been separated now that she has gone into a home, and it is possible that her bad feelings of being unable to continue supporting Margaret echo those she feels for being unable to support her grandfather either.

We can also identify another tension in Miss C's befriending relationship that she shares with other befrienders – the health of her befriended. There is a concern when engaging with older people that they may suddenly become unwell or even die during our time spent with them, and how we may cope with this if it should happen. Interacting with someone who holds their own concerns about their wellbeing is also equally difficult, as Miss C found when she experienced this for herself:

It's really tough because, like, the very first time that I went around and, like, literally, the first time I met her, she was just, like... You know, when you say, "How are you?" in that very British way, "Oh yeah, I'm fine, thanks. How are you?" And she was, like, "I wish that I could just die." Because she's, like, really… her husband died, like, four, five years ago. She's really lonely and she's got no kids. She told me she could never have kids. Like, she wanted them but she can't have them. Her husband had died and... And then, yeah, she needed... I don't know. I think she just felt, like, she was, like, "I wish that I... there was a pill that the doctor could give me, so that I can just go... " She was like, "I'm done now." But it's the... Yeah. And then obviously, it's kind of, "Yeah. Well, obviously I can't help you with that. But let's try and hopefully make you not as sad (82-92).

I was impressed with Miss C for continuing to see Margaret after this harrowing first meeting, as I do not know if I would be able to continue seeing someone I knew felt like they wanted to die. What if I can't help them feel better? What if they asked me to assist in their death? What if they commit suicide? What if I fail as a befriender and friend? My own anxiety as researcher (and human!) at this part of the interview is obvious when listening to the transcript, and I fumble over my words when I attempt to ask Miss C if she feels her visits are improving Margaret's condition. Miss C doesn't answer my question at this point in time and instead talks of her concern that her once a week visit isn't making a difference to Margaret, but later she revisits the topic and expresses her pleasure that Margaret seems to enjoy her company:

But there's something, really something to be said, like, overseeing somebody who is, yeah, like, I said, the first time I saw [Margaret] she was, like, "Oh kill me," and was clearly like really miserable. And then, the more I saw her, like, week after week and she'd, like, she actually smiled. And you know, and seeing her being, like, happy from when I've seen her being so depressed. That's, like, I felt, like, even if, yeah, it doesn't matter, that is just one lady. It's, like, why is she any less important than anybody else

in the planet? It's, like, it's just if, yeah, if you've got a chance to make any kind of positive impact no matter how small it is, it's really nice to be able to do that and see that (347-355).

Concluding Thoughts

Miss C, despite describing it as a small difference, has made a huge difference to the life of Margaret. In return, Margaret has made a significant difference to Miss C as well, who says ' I know people who always talk about, like, volunteering... there's no such thing as a selfless act because you're doing it to feel good about yourself and stuff. I'm, like... anyway, that might be true but I don't know why that's bad. Like, it does definitely feel good' (357-359).

<center>**Mr. P Analysis**</center>

A Brief Biography

Mr. P is a married, fifty-two year old male working in Bristol. He first starting volunteering when he was in the Navy, but this was often fundraising for military charities. He retired from the Navy a couple of year ago, but is currently in full time employment as a specialist consultant. He works and lives in Bristol with a friend during the week and travels home at weekends to see his family, which is known as being the 'weekend warrior' in the military. He started befriending about a year ago and sees one companion, Paul, on a weekly basis.

Mr. P is an intelligent, very family-orientated man and talks often about his wife and children. I could relate to Mr. P's 'weekend warrior' story, as my father was also in the military and would often only be home at weekends, so were able to build good rapport before the interview started by talking about this. I found Mr. P easy to talk to and thought he had a good sense of humour. The majority of his interview is centred around the idea of family and the responsibility we have as adults to look after our children, and the story he tells about Paul's childhood as an orphan suggests he also feels like a father figure towards his befriended, an idea which is discussed further later. There is an underlying struggle for Mr. P to cope with the nature of his job ('I was on a nuclear submarine for twenty five years, firing weapons at countries…that was my job' (309-310) and he has chosen voluntary work because 'to be honest, he [Paul] is the complete opposite of what I used to do' (308-309).

Me: Okay. There we go. Volume's up. So, yeah. Just go for it, whatever you want to tell me.

Meaningful Engagement

Mr. P sets the background for his befriending in his opening story, providing a chronological account of when he started. Mr. P first came to volunteer as a befriender when he was still employed as a Navy Officer in 2012. His decision to befriend was based primarily on the fact that he felt stuck in the "weekend warrior" cycle of working away from home during the week and travelling back to see family very briefly at weekends, something typical to many people in the armed forces:

> So, in the week, I was working up here and the navy give you a flat or a house to stay in. So I was sharing a flat with a mate of mine. And, it basically consisted of every day, getting up for work, going to work, coming home, going to the gym, trying to

keep out of the pub, having something to eat, and then same over again. Doing the weekend warrior thing… (5-9).

Mr. P felt he was stuck in a rut of getting up, going to work, coming home, going to the gym, avoiding the pub, eating, going to bed and then doing it all again the next day, 'so after a while of doing this I was getting really bored and where we live…there's not really a soul to the area' (11-12). Mr. P was looking for an activity that both alleviated his boredom, but presented a bit more meaning than hitting the gym or the pub every day. The catalyst for action was when someone else suggesting volunteering to Mr. P, 'and I don't know why but I just fancied doing something like that' (17-18).

Originally, Mr. P wanted to work with younger people, such as running a football team or a youth club, but after looking into it:

> It became pretty apparent that this was not an easy thing to do. I thought they'd see and then that's it, they'd come running, "Oh yeah, come! Come on and volunteer, we're looking for people like you." I'm thinking, because I've been in the navy for 25 years, I thought, "Well, they're bound to want some of my skills or something like craft, engineering, leadership and all that." (20-26)

For Mr. P and the other male participants interviewed in this study, the sharing and transferring of knowledge and skills to others plays a primary role in their desire and motivation to volunteer. Mr. P understands the values that his skills and knowledge could have, and his desire to find a voluntary role that involved children is a reflection of his strong sense of family value. That he was faced with red tape and hurdles to jump before he could work with children is a sad indictment of society today, and its lack of trust, excessive bureaucracy, and the unspoken stigma and social assumptions surrounding an older male wanting to work with young children.

Mr. P, like many of our interviewees, used the internet to search for volunteer opportunities in the local area, and discovered the organisation through which he currently befriends, and thought 'doing something like that might be easier' (27) than his previous attempts at working with children. Mr. P sent the organisation an email and they got in touch, conducting an informal telephone interview and providing Mr. P with more information about the nature of the role. Mr. P agreed to do it and was told they would be in touch once they had found him someone suitable to befriend, ''cause obviously it's a two way thing. They're not just

going to give you anyone or send you off here or there' (30-31). Mr. P responds to my agreement that matching befrienders with companions is good by jokingly saying 'Yeah, so we don't end up with some crazy lunatic or… somebody who's got nothing to talk about' (33-35). The use of humour here could be suggestive of a defensive mechanism[5], and that maybe being paired with a 'crazy lunatic' was an actual anxiety of Mr. P's, and probably is for many other potential befrienders as well. If this is the case, then during the recruitment process organisations need to be extremely clear that no befriender or volunteer would work with any older individual with a mental health problem unless fully trained and personally confident and able to do so.

The "Warrior" and "Protector"

The idea of the 'warrior' and the 'protector' are recurrent themes in Mr. P's narrative, connected to both his role in the Navy and as a parent. His initial use of 'warrior' is used to describe the repetitive travelling from work to family and back again over an extended period of time and has the positive connotation of someone putting in a great effort for others and battling through the many hours of travel to see one's family. Later, however, Mr. P identifies the darker aspect of being a 'warrior', the side of physical violence and harm to others when he juxtaposes his volunteering as completely opposite to 'the twenty-five years spent on a nuclear submarine, firing weapons at countries, delivering violence – that was my job. That was my role on the submarine' (309-310). Mr. P's description of his job as 'delivering violence' is particularly loaded. Immediately after referring to his role as the deliverer of violence, he emphasises that he is not the only one fulfilling such a role and feeling the need to do something opposite, and that 'speaking to some of the other guys in the Navy it is not unusual at all' (318). Firstly, this statement is interesting as Mr. P is acknowledging the negative side to his job, then immediately relieving his feelings by acknowledging that others are in the same position as him and he is not the only one. Mr. P states that charity work is common to many people in the armed forces, both as a product of support for their brothers and sisters ('I think it has a lot to do with getting people back on their feet' (320) and as a way of maintaining the public persona of the armed forces 'as the force for good … a protector of the public' (321-322).

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[5] As conceptualised by Freud (1960) and later Meyer (2000) it is proposed that humour is used as a vent through which we get relief from tensions that origination in our desires or fears.

Mr. P is not only a protector of the public, but he is more specifically a protector of Paul, his befriendee. Mr. P tells me about the first time he met Paul, who has learning difficulties and a significant speech impediment. Despite this difficulty in communication, Mr. P enjoyed their first meet; 'It's quite a good laugh. He was telling me about his bingo every week and how he had been banned from bingo because he swore at an old lady. It's a thing we obviously thought was hilarious but then we were telling him he can't swear at ladies and things' (40-44). Mr. P uses humour again here but for a different purpose – rather than relief, the use of humour serves to generate positive and affective responses both in himself towards Paul, and also for me in hearing about Paul, reinforcing the enjoyment and pleasure he derives from his company. After their initial meeting, there was mutual agreement between Mr. P and Paul that they would continue to see each other on a weekly or fortnightly basis without a chaperone.

After this humorous introduction, Mr. P tells me an upsetting story about Paul's childhood, and it becomes obvious that Mr. P feels protective of Paul, much like a father to his son:

> I mean, [Paul], he's an orphan. He was given away as a child at two years old and he was poor, you know? Yeah. That.... I mean when he first told me his story, I was— And I'm not a person that cries a lot, you know me. I was literally, "How could a... When I've got children... How could you give away a child at two?" … And he was actually put in the children's home about two miles from where I used to live so, I know, yeah. So that was really weird. So he's had quite a tragic life (77-86).

Mr. P expresses his disbelief at Paul's childhood experiences and in talking of his abandonment says, 'I couldn't do it' (82). Mr. P is not only unable to abandon his own children, but he is also unable to abandon Paul, either:

> He's a really nice guy. And if I'm totally honest, when I first started doing it, I was a bit like, "What I've got myself into?" You know, this... Because when you've done a day's work and my job as a navy is quite stressful … But then I thought, "He's got nobody else. He's got literally that family, you know, then he's got me and how would I feel if that was my dad or my granddad," and stuff like that. An hour of your time or two hours, three hours … it's absolutely nothing (195-202).

From the outside, Mr. P's concern for Paul and his desire to look out for him and protect him is admirable and inspiring, but it comes at a cost. Mr. P struggles with a lot of anxiety

regarding his relationship with Paul and they have encountered problems in their relationship that Mr. P has confided in both his wife and friends about, emphasising its importance to him. One such problem involved money and the fact that Mr. P discovered that Paul's 'family' (the random couple who 'took pity on him' all those years ago in the pub and currently provide him with weekly hot meals) are actually maintaining control of Paul's finances, keeping his benefit and welfare money in their home and instead providing Paul with an extremely small weekly amount for 'pocket money'. Mr. P found this situation difficult as he believes that Paul should have control over his own finances and be able to buy what he wishes, when he wishes; 'I had to speak to my wife and a few other friends as well about this money issue' (73-74), which shows his level of concern.

As with other interviewees, another anxiety inherent in the befriending relationship is that of the health of the befriended; all interviewees told me a story of a time their companion was taken ill, and the difficulty this presented for them:

> a while ago, about a month ago, I rang him up and he didn't answer his phone, which is not unusual because sometimes he takes a while to get to the phone. I rang him the next day, no answer. I rang him the next day, no answer. Now this wasn't usual. I was getting actually quite worried and….In fact, I went around to the house and there was nobody there. There was no staff there. I think they shut off in the evening. There was no other people around. I knocked on his door, so I was like... And I thought... "Somebody..." I had a really horrible thought and you do have horrible thoughts that something had happened to him and that maybe he had actually passed away (218-226)

Mr. P identifies an interesting point here regarding the amount of control that a befriender can exercise of their relationship. Some individuals may have no family or next of kin and rely solely on their befriended as their companion, yet befrienders are often excluded from their companion's health outcomes because of precisely the fact that they are not family or next of kin. As Mr. P identifies, 'nobody' going to tell me 'cause not all the family don't really know me and they're [the hospital] aren't going to tell me any details' (248-249). Mr. P was clearly concerned about Paul's condition, 'I felt really bad, and I was telling my wife about it and my wife was getting really worried' (250-251). It took a few days of worry and stress on Mr. P's part before he was eventually contacted by someone from the befriending organisation who told him, 'He's ok. Can't tell you any more details or what hospital he is in, but he's fine'

(255-256). At this point in the interview I felt myself getting quite annoyed at the lack of compassion and indifference Mr. P faced when trying to find out if his friend was alright, which I am sure is only a fraction of what Mr. P himself felt. Having heard the stories of worry and anxiety regarding their befriended health, I think it could be a pertinent idea to raise the status of befrienders when it comes to access of information about their befriended, so that in situations like this, neither party feels worried or like they have been neglectful or indeed abandoned; 'Imagine if he'd passed away, and I have not seen him before he's passed away, that's what I thought. And I felt really bad' (249-250).

Family and Social Networks

Mr P's opening narrative, of only thirteen lines, makes three references to his family, including emphasis of the fact he is currently separated from them. The theme of family is prevailing throughout the interview: Mr P makes frequent references to his children and his family – his wife's support of his volunteering is important and he often acknowledges that she is very compassionate and caring herself. Indeed, Mr P spends a lot of time discussing the importance of his children and how if he and his wife could afford it they would have more. When talking about the older individual that he befriends, Mr P again makes constant references to the fact that he [the befriended] was abandoned as a child and grew up an orphan with very few others in his life. Mr P expresses his disbelief that someone, a mother, could abandon their child in such a way. When Mr P feels tired or like he can't really be bothered to go see his friend, it is the idea that he has no one else that drives Mr P's action. The impression given is that despite Mr. P being significantly younger than his befriendee, he feels that he is the 'protector', the father figure that can give him the parental relationship he never had. It seems that being the 'warrior' at both a conscious and unconscious level contributes to driving Mr P's desire to maintain his befriending and keep giving his befriendee the support he needs. From my (the researcher') personal experience of having a father in the military, I was aware growing up that maybe he wasn't around as much as I had liked him to be, and I wonder if Mr. P's focus on family and his children is a way of compensating for his absence.

Elaborating on this idea of parental abandonment and given Mr. P's Navy past, I asked if he thought male relationships were particularly important: I did not specify if I meant important to him or important in general. Mr. P expressed no particular preference for befriending a man or a woman, and having had grandmothers of his own he felt at ease in their company,

despite 'not having as much to talk about and definitely not talking about football'. It was at this point that Mr P mentioned his 'two sons with my ex-wife down in Plymouth', something not previously mentioned or even alluded to: he has only mentioned his current wife and daughters. Then: "I get the whole … my Dad, we got along really well as well. I get the whole father-son relationship, you know. And I'm working in a massively male environment, I mean, until this year or last year, there were no ladies on submarines." Mr P's one and only reference to his own father and his sons from a previous marriage were unexpected, brief, and seemed to be passed over before they could really be touched upon further. I felt genuine surprise during the interview when Mr. P talks of his ex-wife and other sons and wish this could have been elaborated on, as we had spent much time talking of family and abandonment that I wondered how these two ideas (abandonment and the brief mentioned of his 'other' family) married, if indeed at all.

Mr. P goes on to tell me about his next meeting with Paul and describes his excitement at introducing his befriendee to his old Navy friend, a 'very extrovert, very out loud…a really nice folk' (194), who he has organised a meet over their shared love of football. That Mr P is introducing his befriendee to a personal friend of his own shows the significance of shared interest and commonality in the forging of meaningful relationships. It shows how a shared interest can transcend the usual boundaries between people, whether this is age, gender, ethnicity and so on. Friendship, particularly male friendship, is important to Mr P and seems to be a product of his Navy days, expressed in his camaraderie and belief that "friends are friends for life". Though Mr P is only one interviewee, that he has expressed a camaradic attitude, sense of brotherhood and highlighted a propensity in the armed forces for charitable effort, it may be worthwhile exploring this group as a pool of potential and committed befrienders, particularly given the large group of military personnel (many physically disabled by war, but all united in common experience) that will inevitably be entering old age in the future. Setting up channels of support and communication between people united in this way could lay the foundations for preventing loneliness later on.

The Navy – delivering violence vs delivering a service

Mr. P's desire to volunteer is tied in with his career as a Naval officer aboard submarines. He started volunteering during his 'weekend warrior' phase, when he found himself bored during the working week when away from his family (who he went to see at weekends), and wanting to engage in something other than 'going to the pub'. It was a friend who suggested

volunteering to him, 'And, I don't know why but I just fancied doing something like that' (15). Mr. P refers to his career in the Navy at numerous points throughout his interview, a career which has equipped him with skills: 'I've been in the navy for 25 years, I thought, 'Well, they should want some of my skills or something like engineering, leadership, mechanics, and all that'' (20-21); as well as good friends, 'You make friends for life' (476); as well as emphasising the importance of male bonding and friendship, which he is now introducing to Paul himself. Being in the Navy has positively influenced and impacted on Mr. P's befriending activity, from introducing him to the idea of befriending to his sense of strong male friendship and his bond with his befriendee, Paul. However, alongside this, there is a darker side to military involvement:

> I was on a nuclear submarine for 25 years, my job was to fire weapons at countries, delivering violence… That was my job. That was my role as a submarine officer. That and then... doing this. I thought this could be different but speaking to some other guys in the navy it was not unusual at all (317-320).

This is a sensitive subject for Mr. P as he trails off at this point and doesn't resume talking. I try to frame my question in his own words and ask if he feels the difference between what he did in the Navy, the delivering violence, and his current befriending is intentional: 'I think so. I've heard of—The guys in the navy and the army all do lots of charities, generally for navy charities, all of the charities' (326).

Then:

> And I think it is just the natural thing to do is charity work. And I do remember my mate, XX, who was the supplier for the submarine. I said to him, "What are you going to do when you leave the navy?" He said he was going to do charity. He said, "I want to do something completely different. Something that…"(02:337-340)

For Mr. P, his time in the Navy and the things he has undoubtedly experienced are painful for him, and something he feels he should atone for through his voluntary and charity work. To share the burden of his past experiences, Mr. P talks of discussing it with other officers, and how many of the other men, such as his mate in the above excerpt, feel the same way as he does. After his statement (as above, lines 337-340), Mr. P trails off and there is a significant pause in the interview. The topic is sensitive for him and to detract from the negativity of both his feelings and his description of his work (the delivering of violence) he justifies it by

placing it comparable to charity work. He introduces the public narrative of the good military, our protectors, 'a force for good' (330) and how he and has fellow men have a duty to maintain the 'high esteem' (332-333) of the armed forces. The comparison between the military and charity is nonsensical to me, but is based on a simple logic for Mr. P that provides comfort in the face of the darker side of his work:

> It's the, the similar thing is we are not profit making at all. The navy, the army, the RAF, not interested in money at all. We do not make money. We are given a pile of money, we got thirty-six billion. We'll spend that and we'll spend every single penny of it and more to get the best kit we can to deliver violence or do whatever or protect people, but we are not interested in money … And charity's all the same. They deliver a service either counsel research or helping elderly people, things like that (341-347).

Mr. P's logic makes sense superficially, after all, the Navy do provide a service that is to the benefit of others, but in reality, they are non-comparable. For Mr. P however, framing it in this way helps to relieve the tension and negative feelings associated with his line of work, and in terms of proactive behaviour it can only be good that this conflict fuels his wish to volunteer within his community. There is an insinuation of feelings of shame, guilt and reparation in the demonising of his job and placing of his befriending as the intentionally positive opposite. In a way, Mr P has to maintain his relationship with his befriended not only because he is his 'protector', but because the relationship works to relieve him of the negative aspects of his work. In a broader sense, one could identify with the idea that many organisations may use charitable action to relieve themselves of the anxiety (or at least give the impression that they are reparable) of the work they have to do; indeed, Mr P himself highlights the link between armed forces and charitable action, particularly fundraising.

Concluding Thoughts

Mr P's befriending can be thought of as an expression of his desire to protect and 'father' those in need, a role he fulfils and acknowledges consciously, 'I can't bear the thought of knowing he has no one else', as well as unconsciously (by splitting the positive and negative aspects of his "warrior" self). This role is very prominent and even during times of weakness when he 'can't really be bothered to go and see him [befriended]' it is his need to fulfil this role that motivates him to action. It also influences his decisions to break organisational rules by helping his befriendee with tasks that are outside of his official role. Mr P has practical skills that could easily benefit others (but has been turned away despite them), that he uses in

his everyday life and that he shares with others in his social network but is restricted in using them in his befriending relationship, despite his befriendee "being just like a normal mate now, part of the family". That the rules are broken and no one comes to any harm highlights the conflict inherent in the befriending relationship – between being a friend, but not being too much of a friend. For someone with a wide social network, practical skills and an active interest in using them, being confined to tea and a chat must be difficult. Perhaps if befrienders and their befriended were given the freedom to act in ways they deemed appropriate to their relationship, even if this transgressed the "tea and chat in the living room" boundary, then the relationship would be allowed to flourish in ways more appropriate to both parties and perhaps more people would be interested in volunteering themselves if they knew further activities could develop within the relationship. The fact that the befriending relationship is restricted to an hour, once a week, serves Mr P on two levels: firstly, as a way of highlighting how easy it is to give your time and make such a difference to someone else, and secondly as relief, that "when I can't really be bothered I think, 'it's just an hour', and he really hasn't got anybody else." Mr P's time in the Navy has amplified his reliance on and need for male friendship, reflected in his role as his befriender's 'father' and also in his desire to introduce his befriendee to his 'real' friends and wider male social network.

Analysis Mr H

A brief biography

Mr. H is an sixty seven year old single retiree who shares his owned property with a younger female tenant. Mr. H had a successful career as an IT business intelligence analyst when the end of a contract caused him to have a drastic change of perspective on his life and how he was living it. Realising he was 'just going through the motions of living' (48), he decided to 'just kind of change my lifestyle' (42) and embarked on a journey that lead him through life coaching training, mentoring special needs students at the university, and befriending with a local organisation. This sudden life change has not been easy, even resulting in a divorce from his wife, but Mr. H describes it as 'definitely a journey, yeah, but I'm not arriving. It's always a journey' (54).

Mr. H has been befriending for over a year, and has a very strong relationship with his only befriendee, John, whom he sees on a weekly basis. Mr. H has previously volunteered with other organisations that utilise his skillset, for example as an SEN mentor (before this became paid employment) and as a development assessor for the Prince's Trust. However, this often did not provide enough 'work' for Mr. H, who then joined a befriending scheme in his area.

Dependency

Mr. H's opening story was a very succinct and chronological account of his actions over the past few years, a narrative that seemed well thought out, almost rehearsed. Mr. H started befriending a year ago, and he only sees one gentleman, John, on a weekly basis because he 'wants to take it slowly' (4-5), but they have a very good relationship, although now John 'has his moments and he's not as bright as he used to be' (7-8). There is some tension evident in this relationship, as Mr. H expresses his desire to 'take it slowly' (5) and his concerns about the future of their relationship, 'we have quite a good relationship and I hope that it can carry on without him getting too dependent on me because he's a lonely person' (8-9), and this anxiety of dependency is common to all interviewees in this study. Mr. H protects himself against this anxiety by emphasising his control over the befriending relationship, 'I see him weekly but it does vary a little bit as I'm often away' (6) and, 'it's up to me how long the relationship lasts, where it goes' (116). Being in control of the duration and frequency of befriending activities, as well as not letting it get in the way of other life activities, helps reduce the befriender's anxiety that their companion will become dependent on them,

transforming the relationship from one of friendship to one of need. As we find with our own friends in our everyday lives, where someone asks too much of us or becomes too needy of our attention, the friendship can struggle and ultimately end, and this is the same within the befriending relationship.

Career and Retirement

Mr. H's opening association is a descriptive history of his career and voluntary activity over the years. The importance of Mr. H's career in IT is highlighted by its appearance in his opening association and by his reflections on the skills and knowledge acquired from this position. His success in this sector is also important as he places it in opposition with his youth, when he worked 'over fifty full time jobs' (422), and self-described as not having 'a lot of confidence when I was young, but I had a brain—but I didn't know I had a brain. So I was always kind of dissatisfied with menial jobs' (428-430). After realising he had more to offer and earning a degree from university, Mr. H embarked on his long and successful career as an IT business specialist. Losing this work or being made redundant in this area may have a significant impact on his identity and sense of self, which is restored when he reminds himself that he still holds the successes of this previous work in terms of his wealth ('I've got money tucked away, but I live a very modest life' (529). Perhaps the loss of Mr. H's IT consultancy work and a failed attempt to start his own life coaching business ('which didn't go very well to be perfectly frank' (19-20) is a reminder of his youth, when he was just 'floundering around from job to job' (430-431) with little direction or purpose.

The above described tension emerges at other points in the interview, but for now we catch only a passing glimpse, in the line; 'I just hope that it can carry on without him getting too dependent on me, because he's a quite a lonely person in the house' (8-9), before Mr. H moves on. Next, he rhetorically asks, 'how did this all come about?' (11) before:

> Well I've been volunteering for different organisations for about six or seven, possibly even eight years now. I was working as an IT consultant, business intelligence analyst and then I got made redundant. I was a contractor so the contract came to an end. I thought I needed to do something completely different because I really didn't like—I mean, I must have been good enough because it was well paid and I was an independent contractor but I wanted to do something completely different (11-16).

The above extract is a brief synopsis of the content and overall tone of the remainder of the interview, and some of the key themes of the interview are also evident here. Mr. H has volunteered with many different organisations, but lack of available work, or need for his services, usually leads him to join a different organisation; this is discussed further under the heading Career and Skills. Mr. H's career in IT came to a sudden end and at the recommendation of a friend he decided to do something completely different, life-coaching, which opened his eyes to various disciplines and schools of thought. Mr. H's urge 'to do something completely different' stems from a realisation that he had become one of the capitalistic and materialistic 'fat cats' that he despises. As will be discussed under the heading Materialism and Idealism, this precarious balance between the two forms much of Mr. H's current way of being, and accounts for much of his behaviour, such as his befriending.

Skills

The events surrounding Mr. H's change of career are somewhat ambiguous, as he gives conflicting accounts of what happened. As a consultant, a contract coming to an end (13-14) should not necessarily mean the end of one's career, yet Mr. H also uses the phrases 'made redundant' (13) and 'at the end of IT' (43). I would like to suggest that the ambiguity surrounding the end of his career is due to Mr. H's personal and conflicting feelings towards it – after all, losing one's job or not being offered further work can lead to negative self-feelings about one's skill and competence. I feel this is corroborated by the fact that Mr. H is keen to emphasise the importance of his previous role in terms of success and wealth ('I must have been good enough because it was well paid and I was an independent contractor' (15-16), and he returns to these points throughout the interview. Reasserting his previous position as successful seems to help Mr. H justify his new way of living to himself, for example, he talks of now being more conscious of the environment and taking the bus everywhere, but stresses that he once had 'my big, fat executive car' (532-533) and that he doesn't drive one anymore out of choice, rather than out of a lack of resource. In fact, Mr. H's frequent references to his personal resources (money, time for hobbies) not only cements his position as productive and successful, but also fits with psychological and sociological literature on volunteering that stipulates those with more resources are more likely to volunteer[6].

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[6] For example, see Yao, Kimberly, "Who Gives? The Determinants of Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Their Relationship" (2015).Wharton Research

Mr. H describes his attempts to find voluntary work that is similar to, or uses the same skills, that he has developed over his career in IT, as well as through his life-coaching and NLP training. He describes himself as a practical person, very numerate, and more interested in the motivation and drives behind people's behaviours:

> And so I am very practical, so when I see someone sort of floundering around in the swim, if you like, I kind of have to, I always want to sort of talk to the person about why they're motivated to behave the way they are. I can't change it, I don't want to change it, I want them to perhaps start the process of looking at it (164-167).

Helping someone to understand their own actions is very much an aim of life coaching, which seeks to help people understand the reasons behind their actions. Mr H talks of signing up with various different voluntary organisations, but never being given enough work to satisfy his interest. As we have found with our other male interviewees, Mr H is another highly skilled qualified, and willing individual that is prevented from using his skills, experience, and knowledge to practically benefit others. That there are individuals like Mr H that are capable and willing to use their experience to benefit others but are not currently catered for in the voluntary sector indicates a potentially large loss of human capital, and when this is combined with the fact that older men can suffer worse health outcomes in retirement it is easy to see that there is a grey group of older men that unable to help either themselves or others.

A life change

I was initially concerned at the start of the interview that Mr. H was unwilling to offer a personal or emotional dimension to his befriending as he seemed to be only offering a highly descriptive account of his activities, however, after a good few minutes and an A4 page of transcript, we begin to touch on the more intimate side of his experience. Mr. H was describing his voluntary work with an organisation prior to befriending when:

> And all this has sort of come about because I kind of just changed my life style. My whole life just turned around at the end of IT and because I was a married man and I'm now not a married man, so a lot of things changed all around 2007, 2008 and

2009. My life changed a lot and I kind of changed my whole attitude. I can't really say what it was. (41-49).

Mr H's entire interview was focussed on the tension he is experiencing between his previous life, self-described as materialistic and capitalist, and the life he is currently trying to lead, with its focus on bettering the self and living a more fulfilling life. Mr H is keen to emphasise that this life change is not based on any religious sentiment or ritual but is rather based on the philosophy of self-awareness and self-development. On two occasions Mr H makes quite scathing remarks about religion, calling Buddhism in America 'a business' and warning that we must be 'circumspect' about those volunteers who do so 'to get ahead' by doing right in the eyes of god. Mr H struggles with accepting and moving on from his past as a career-driven executive. In conceptualising his view of chronic loneliness, he blames a capitalist society and collective concern with materialism and considers his old self a guilty participant in this. His embarrassment at using terms such as spiritualism and self-realisation demonstrate his sensitivity, as does the fact he feels the need to frequently reposition himself as successful and wealthy, despite not wanting to be a part of that lifestyle anymore. He admits to using facebook at certain times, such as when he is home alone, but acknowledges that 'this is a capitalist device in itself' (264). Mr H seemed embarrassed to an extent of this spiritual journey, using the negative connotation of the 'hippy' and referring to my use of 'Buddhism' and 'spiritualism' as 'dreadful words'. He is keen for me to know that he is not a hippie, or 'lying around all day on the sofa' but rather that he has personal wealth, personal hobbies, and the means to do as he wishes.

Meaningful Connection

Mr H's befriending is product of this spiritual journey and an expression of his desire to live a more connected and meaningful life, and not the whimsical activity of a retired man with little else to do. He talks of having a desire to understand more, whether that is his self and his own goals and desires or the motivations of others less fortunate than himself. He talks of being practical, numerate, and with the experience to teach or mentor others as one aspect of his motivation to volunteer, with the other aspect being his efforts to live a more spiritual life, with deeper, more meaningful connections to others and a realisation that we are all the same and to be treated equally.

At this point in the interview I was anxious that we would not cover any specific details bout his befriending relationship, and so I prompted Mr H by asking how he thought John had

impacted on his spiritual journey. Mr H responded with a long prose about John, and it is clear that they have a strong and lasting relationship, despite previous concerns about dependency. Originally from Nigeria, John moved to Bristol in the sixties and became a well-known character in his neighbourhood. He used to be an active member of the labour party, although ow his views on politics are slightly jaded and more in tune with the scepticism of Mr H. John has a daughter and a granddaughter who both frequently visit and who Mr H has met on numerous occasions and actually has a strong relationship with, attending John's hospital appointments together and keeping each other informed of his news. Mr H enjoys his relationship with John and goes out of his way to maintain a good relationship with his daughter. Mr H conceptualises his relationship with John and his family very philosophically; 'I've kind of expanded it into a bit of a friendship, well, not a friendship, an acquaintance, with the family as well as the daughter…It's just people. We are all just people, so all these demarcations, if you think about it, is pointless' (198-200). For Mr H befriending is about the nature and quality of the relationship itself and the fact that he is engaging in it that is of utmost importance. Mr H forms his relationship based on what he can learn both about the other person and about himself in the process, as everything he does is with the aim of furthering his introspection. The concept of the business executive turned philanthropist is not unusual, particularly amongst older CEOs who are reaching retirement age and reach a point where their priorities and interests have changed (for an excellent book on this, see 1000 CEOs by editor-in-chief Andrew Davidson).

Talking about his relationship with John leads Mr F to think about other older people who may be experiencing loneliness, and why. He believes that we need to be careful in our conceptualisation of loneliness, as there is a difference between this and being alone. Mr H, again, blames capitalist society for the condition of loneliness, with our need for money and drive for profit. He refers to previous executive position again at this point, further reinforcing my belief that he carries a lot of guilt and shame regarding this, and his befriending activity is a way of giving back and paying a personal reparation. Another point of contention for Mr F is his own affluence, which only he talks about in the interview, and he feels the need to convince me that he does give money to charity, as if I didn't believe that he did.

Mr F views loneliness as 'a result of not putting our energies into people, we put our energies into profit and being busy and rushing around like headless chickens, rather than actually talking to people and having a proper conversation, engaging, communicating, connecting'

(274-277). That Mr F feels this way and finds befriending an adequate way of relieving his feelings gives credit to the power of friendship between people. It is important to note that befriending can create a meaningful connection and experience with someone who may be so unlike us.

Concluding Remarks

The overall theme of Mr. H's narrative is one of change and transformation. Despite 'cringing' at the terminology, Mr. H is on a spiritual pathway to enlightenment, self-awareness, and richer introspection. His befriending activity is a part of this process, allowing him to connect at a deeper and more meaningful level with another individual. Mr. H shows compassion in his befriending, going out of his way to take his befriended to hospital appointments, although he always stresses that this is on his terms. His befriended, John, and his family are the cultural and political opposite of Mr. H, and they have shown him that 'it is just people. We are all just people, so all these demarcations…about who is someone in whose sphere' (199-201) serve only to make life more difficult and tiring for us.

Mr. H is clearly very intelligent, articulate, and introspective. He is well-read in various schools, including neuro-linguistic programming for life coaching, Buddhism, the works of Krishnamurti, meteorology (he has his own weather balloon), and intelligent business analytics. Whilst he was passionate about his political beliefs and fierce in his criticism of capitalism, I never found him to be forceful in his opinion nor did I feel as if he was trying to teach me a worldly lesson, as has been the case with other interviewees. Mr. H has worked as a SEN mentor before, and so can communicate and articulate in a way that encourages thought and learning, rather than just sitting and listening. However, having said this, Mr H and I did not co-produce as much material during the interview as had been so with other interviewees. Mr H was the primary orator of this interview, and as I listened to him talk, I could almost see the articulating of his thoughts beginning to become more clear for himself. It felt like Mr H needed to talk to someone about his spiritual journey and I feel the fact I was a relative stranger was beneficial – just like he claimed about his befriending, our interview was the coming together of 'just two people' to create and share a meaningful experience.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The individual analyses conducted found that there were some key themes that were common to all of the interviewees, particularly in terms of how their befriending was affected by the organisation through which they volunteered. Here, I will discuss the nature of the anxiety in the befriending relationship, how the befriending organisation attempts to manage this, and how this ultimately impacts on the befrienders experience. I will then discuss the key elements of the free association narrative interview method and how these were experienced in the current thesis.

The Nature of Anxiety in Befriending

The primary role of the befriender is to provide social relief to those that may otherwise become completely disengaged from mainstream society. In healthcare, the nurse bears 'the full, immediate, and concentrated impact of stress arising from patient-care' (Menzies, 1960:439). In befriending, the volunteer also bears an elevated responsibility for the social participation and wellbeing of another individual, a role which comes with its own stress and anxiety. For the befrienders interviewed for this study, a concern for the wellbeing of older people who were otherwise alone was at the forefront of their action, and with concern naturally comes worry. Any sort of care giving role, whether that involves personal, physical, or social care, has its specific stresses and anxieties. Isabel Menzies Lyth, in her study 'Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety', made the following intuitive observation about nurses in a teaching hospital:

> Nurses are in constant contact with people who are physically ill or injured, often seriously. The recovery of patients is not certain and may not be complete. Nursing patients with incurable diseases is one of the nurses' most distressing tasks. Nurses face the reality of death and suffering as few lay people do. Their work involves carrying out tasks which, by ordinary standards, are distasteful, disgusting, and frightening. Intimate physical contact with patients arouses libidinal and erotic wishes that may be difficult to control. The work arouses strong and conflicting feelings: pity, compassion, love; guilt and anxiety; hatred and resentment of the patients who arouse these feelings; envy of the care they receive. (Menzies Lyth 1960: 440).

I aim to propose that, based on the interviews conducted with befrienders and the free association narrative method used, befrienders are faced with similar psychological situations as those described above in nurses and that these situations are significant enough to warrant being brought, without prompt, to the interview scenario. Just as nurses are during their prescribed shifts, befrienders are also, for a period of time, in constant contact with people who are older, who may or may not be physically unwell, but who are all at risk of social isolation without them: there is an element of need to the befriender-befriended relationship, just as there is in the nurse-patient relationship. Given the prevailing attitude in our current society towards the elderly, whether they are physically ill or not, it seems just 'being old' is their disability, their "incurable disease", which brings them into closer proximity with death and dying than the young which are sources of anxiety to the rest of society. Therefore, our befrienders, who are volunteers, are just as close to the concepts of suffering, dying, and death as nurses are, even if this is just a metaphorical and social 'suffering'.

Research has shown that there is a generalised fear of working with or volunteering with older people that many have attributed to a generalised fear of death and dying, and so going out of your way to volunteer as a befriender to an older person (or are typically lonely due to disability, immobility, or spousal bereavement) is something that many may consider as unusual, frightening, or a something they couldn't do themselves. Befriending, equally, aroused strong and conflicting feelings in our interviewees, who described feelings of obligation, guilt for feeling this way, anxiety of the wellbeing of their befriended when they weren't together, anxiety over others' treatment of their befriended, frustration at not being able to know about their befriended's welfare when they were not together and frustration at the rules imposed by the befriending organisation on to them.

In the befriending role, the direct impact on the befriender of the social needs of the befriended are often intensified by the psychological anxiety in other people, particularly family members. Many of the interviewees described situations where they had come face-to-face with a relative of their befriended and how there was a sense of animosity and distrust at first. Two of the female interviewees used the term "gold digger" to describe how they felt they were initially perceived by relatives and another interviewee described a situation where he felt his befriended's relatives were unfairly controlling their finances, but was aware this "wasn't really any of [their - befrienders] business". All interviewees mentioned having a feeling that their presence as a befriender caused feelings of inadequacy in family members, a possible countertransference experience of their own. Though the feelings of the

befriended's relatives are subjective and should be directed at the befriending service in general, it is often the individual befrienders who bear the full force of these persecutory feelings. Having someone question the genuineness of your actions in any situation can be upsetting, let alone when you are going out of your own way to benefit someone else. Some, but not all, of the interviewees briefly touched upon the fact that they were befriending a stranger who did have relatives and wondered why their services were needed. I say 'touched upon' because this seemed to be a very loaded subject for the interviewees and they did not want to elaborate on it. There was the sense that relatives should be there fulfilling the companion role, but interviewees were reluctant to voice this, instead making a broad statement about the complexity of families before moving on. Rather sadly, any hostility between befriender and any relative is wholly unnecessary - it should be known that whilst an older person has relatives, those relatives themselves may not live close by, or may have families and work commitments of their own, and whilst their relationship may be a good one, it simply may just not be enough. Relatives should take solace in the fact that in between their visits, their older family member still has a social life, rather than view the relationship with hostility (perhaps with feelings of their own inadequacies). During these parts of the interviews, individual befrienders were influenced by wider cultural norms, such as the nuclear family, the responsibility of family as carers, and relocation of family members away from the family unit. As mentioned earlier, in befriending the aim of the organisation is to alleviate loneliness in older people by providing warm and genuine companionship. However, what can be seen is that in focussing entirely on the primary task, an organisation may neglect, or fail to explore, other areas and actual inhibit itself in its capacity to achieve it fully. A large part of the anxiety experienced by the befrienders was encapsulated in the relationship between befriender and befriended. The closer and more intimate this companionship (factors that came with time), the stronger the experience and impact of anxiety. The befriending service, as an attempt to reduce this anxiety, enforces a rule limiting the amount of time spent with any one older person to one hour per week. It was evident in each of the case studies this was what Menzies (1960) referred to as organisational defence mechanisms against anxiety.

Splitting the Befriended

> The focus of anxiety for the nurse lay in relation with the patient. The closer and
> more concentrated this relationship, the more the nurse was likely to experience
> the impact of anxiety. The nursing service attempted to protect the individual

nurse from anxiety by splitting up contact with the patient. (Isabel Menzies Lyth 1960: pg.443)

The befriending organisation employed the defensive mechanism of splitting to protect individual befrienders from anxiety. This occurred on two levels: the splitting of the befriended, and the splitting of the time spent between befriender and companion.

Splitting the befriended: the older individual in need of companionship may or may not be physically or mentally unwell or disabled. During induction at the organisation, befrienders are explicitly told that their role excludes health, physical, or personal care, including cleaning, shopping, taking to appointments, collecting medicine prescriptions, and so on. The befriendee is split into a physical and a social being: the befrienders role being only to address their social needs. Only the befriendee's social side should be catered for, and in ways that do not exceed 'a cup of tea and a chat'. By removing the physical being from the equation, befrienders were relieved of the anxiety surrounding the physical care of another person, often experienced detrimentally by nurses and other healthcare professionals. To prevent dependency and blurring of the companionship/physical carer relationship, the organisation imposes restrictions on the activities the befrienders and befriended can undertake. This makes sense when the primary task is to alleviate loneliness through companionship, not foster practical relationships to alleviate physical incapacity. It also makes sense in terms of wider restrictions, such as those of confidentiality, data protection, patient protection and so on. However, despite befriending services existing to specifically reduce loneliness in older people by creating a space within which people can form close and meaningful relationships, the relationship is rarely allowed to fully blossom. All the interviewees described how the relationship with their befriended developed over time into a real, 'normal' relationship, losing its dynamic of needed and needy and developing into a genuine love and compassion and care and concern. When their befriended was taken ill, the befrienders responded as any one of us would if it happened to a loved one – with worry, anxiety, concern, being crippled by the lack of knowing where they were, if they were alright and if they had anyone with them. Many interviewees went to great lengths to find these things out, making numerous phone calls to their homes, the manager of the organisation, even local hospitals and going to their house unannounced to see if they were there. Some interviewees expressed a bit of self-doubt, that maybe their companions just didn't want to talk to them, that maybe they were overstepping their role, but this was a fleeting feeling that was overruled by pure concern for their wellbeing. Of course, many interviewees did go

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beyond their role of simple conversation-buddy and took their friends out for the day, or took them grocery shopping, or helped them with household chores or DIY, or bought them prepared food or milk for the fridge. Mr H even went as far as to take his friend to hospital appointments and to collect prescriptions. Whilst these were breaches of the protocols established by the befriending organisation, it was not felt that they amounted to a safeguarding risk concerning the older individual being befriended, and therefore not in need of reporting as an ethical issue. There would be ethical considerations and safeguarding issues should the befriending organisation advertise themselves as performing such services, and allowing unregulated individuals into vulnerable adults' homes, as part of the befriending role, but they do not. Rather these are responsibilities that the befriender has chosen to take on and participate in, because their relationship with their befriended has developed as such that such tasks are necessary to the friendship.

Splitting an individual into a psychological and a physical being and only allowing someone (someone who cares about them, is concerned about and wants to protect their wellbeing) access to one side seems to contradict the very nature of friendship, which is what our befriendees are striving for. In trying to relieve the befrienders of the physical needs of their companions, the organisation is inadvertently harming its members by denying them access to their whole being. The organisation becomes an entity that encourages relatedness, then chops it up and takes part of it away. But simultaneously these rigid boundaries also protect both the befriender and the befriended: some interviewees acknowledged their companions would require a form of care 'outside of their role'. While this socially structured defence system worked in most cases to forestall the immediate anxiety, in instances of emergency, the boundaries ceased to exist and the system in place to manage better not to use to word contain to avoid confusion since this is the opposite of what we normally mean by the word in our discipline it serves only to hinder and exacerbate the individual members' anxiety. In preventing befrienders from being allowed to be concerned about their companion's physical wellbeing, stress and anxiety is actually increased, because befrienders are being prevented from acting in ways acceptable in any other of their friendships, but not in this particular befriender-befriended scenario. As discussed in the individual analyses in the preceding chapter, befrienders became closer – and therefore more concerned – to their befriended over time, with the relationship being described as developing from one of deliberate 'befriending' to one of a more natural friendship, 'just like having normal mates'. As the relationship develops, it appears that the social defence system in place begin to hinder the relationship

and the befriender's relations with the organisation, resulting in acts of rebellion and, ironically, further anxieties. The implication is that the conversation that occurs during the befriending hour is enough to fulfil the necessary requirements of the organisation's primary task. This, then, leaves little room for individual members to add individual skill, qualities or resources to the relationship in order to support or enhance it. As previously discussed, not being able to add to the relationship can impact poorly on the befriender, many of whom had to deal with the conflict of recognising what would enhance the relationship, having the means in which to achieve it but being bound by strict rules against doing it. In terms of organisational management, again, by focusing on one aspect of the befriending relationship – conversation – the organisation cannot really define itself a 'target market' from which to seek to recruit. Nor can it withhold to recognise other skills that individuals may have that may also enhance the wellbeing of an older individual, such as DIY skills (making homes more 'user friendly', helping with simple things, like constructing a steam mop or putting a shelf up), a resource (such as a car and a willingness to take their companion out), or even social networks (inviting their companion out to meet others). As found with the male interviewees in this study, being able to use their skills and knowledge to support others was extremely important, and the effect of not being able to do so very detrimental.

Splitting the befriended: the befriending hour: as previously mentioned, the befriending organisation employed the defensive technique of splitting to protect the befrienders from anxiety. This was done in two ways, by splitting the actual befriender, and by splitting the time each befriender could spend with their befriended. Splitting is foremost an intrapsychic event and refers to how we internally split the object that represents the other, leading to external splits, such as loving mother and hating father. Many interviewees worked full time or were in full time study, or had families and wide social networks that took up a lot of their time. Every single interviewee explicitly told me that they only met for an hour once a week with their companion. I refer to this as the 'befriending hour' and I find it a fascinating, complex concept. 'An hour a week isn't a lot, really'. 'The hour just flies by'. 'If only everyone gave just an hour.' 'It's only an hour of my time.' 'It's an hour, it's nothing really. It's sad if someone can't give even an hour for someone else' and so on. I felt a myriad of responses to these differing versions of the same thing: that an hour isn't a lot and for our befrienders it is no different than meeting a friend for an hour after work; that an hour isn't a lot and more people should be giving it, like it should be enforced, then; that the befriending hour is used as a way of down playing their efforts, to avoid being seen as a do-gooder, or an

over-the-top involver, you know, 'it's just an hour, it's nothing really'. It wasn't until my interview with Mr P that my eventual understanding of the meaning 'the befriending hour' emerged as a method of self-protection and of personal motivation – 'I'd feel bad if I didn't go, and it's just an hour, it's nothing really.' For Mr P the befriending hour is a welcomed relief, a motivation to know that after a long day's work and when you might not really feel like doing it, you should, because 'it's just an hour'. Mr P's phrasing made me think of my only personal experience as a carer of the elderly, and the idea of shift work, and the feeling of relief gained from knowing your shift is almost over, no matter how much you enjoy what you do. For the duration of the hour, the befriender and their befriended are engaged in an intentional dynamic of intense emotional support and care. The dynamic of needed and needy, of giver and receiver, of dependency and co-dependency, is present just by nature of the encounter and its fundamental purpose. But one is not to assume that the needed-needy dynamic is necessarily a befriender-befriended one – the roles are often switched or acted out by both parties simultaneously. To attempt to make more manageable, the intensity of the befriending relationship and the anxieties it arouses, the befriending organisation enforces the one-hour befriending relationship and actively discourages members from participating more. By limiting the time spent between befrienders and befriended the relationship is being split into manageable chunks in an attempt to reduce the intensity and level of anxiety. This particular mechanism was a successful way of reducing the stress of prolonged exposure to the intense emotional needs of the lonely. Whilst all the interviewees abided by this strict rule, there were nonetheless times of rebellion and disregard. Acts of rebellion included not informing the organisation's office until after a visit had been made (the protocol is that bookings are made with the office prior to the visit), not submitting expenses or visiting twice in one week without informing the office either. All the interviewees bent the rules in order to benefit their befriended (gong on a day trip for fun for example) slightly but ultimately abided by them since they were for their benefit. It can be argued that the breaking of the organisation's protocol is a form of rebellion by the befrienders against what many of them deem the 'too strict rules' surrounding what you can and can't do with your befriended, especially for those that have a well-established relationship with their companion.

It can be seen form the analysis that the organisational defence mechanism of splitting was successful in managing the befrienders' anxiety – to an extent. Befrienders were aware that their role involved attended to the social needs of an older person, and not their physical needs, although many befrienders admitted that they often helped their befriended out with

household tasks, such as putting up a shelf or going out for the day or to an appointment. Where protocol is broken in this way, it is usually by the befriender – 'I know we're not supposed to do things like that for them but it's no bother to me and I'm happy to help out' – rather than by the befriended, which would put a strain on the befriending relationship ('I know at some point he is going to need more care than what I can give him, and somebody else will have to come in'). The splitting of the contact between befriender and their companion, the 'befriending hour' is a successful defensive mechanism that permeates the entire culture of the befriending organisation. The befriending hour is viewed in two ways – as short period of time that everyone could spare for in order to help someone else out, and as a short period of time that motivates when one may not feel like befriending, 'Sometimes after work, it's a long day, you can't be bothered, then you think, it's only an hour'.

Responsibility and Irresponsibility

Being a befriender is also a great responsibility: essentially, you start as a stranger entering another stranger's home on the assumption you have a quality to offer that will alleviate their loneliness. Not only is this a role a befriender has to take responsibility for, they are also expected by others to undertake the role responsibly. This is further amplified by the extensive application requirements to befriend: background checks, interviews, administration, training, a trial meet, the strict requirements to report all meetings and expenses and so on. Menzies (1960) suggested, 'the psychological burden arising from a final, committing decision by a single person was dissipated in a number of ways, so that its impact was reduced' (pg.446-447) and it is felt that was also a tactic used by the befriending organisation through excessive use of background checks, identity checks, as well as many multiple re-checks, before an individual was paired with their befriended. (For some befrienders, this paperwork was a necessary torture and something that had to be done, whereas for others it was a hindrance, a chore, and it detracted for the spontaneity of their desire to help others.) The overall picture is that befriending is serious stuff, requirement commitment, and not something to walk into with ease. The burden of responsibility can be wearisome, physically and psychologically, and difficult to carry constantly in its full force. There were frequent acts of irresponsibility among the interviewed befrienders, from disregarding requirements to pre-book visits with the office or submit expenses to taking companions to hospital appointments and to collect prescriptions. Some interviewees were more responsible than others, abiding by the rules but simultaneously acknowledging the rules were often detrimental to their role whilst others took great delight in deliberately

breaking the rules (at no point was it felt that the befrienders' behaviour posed a safeguarding risk to the older individual they were companioning.) Either way, the conflict between responsibility and irresponsibility always seemed to be ticking away in the background. The idea of (ir)responsibility is both an individual struggle, a struggle amongst individuals and a struggle between organisations and their members. For any one individual to support all of this struggle alone would be intense and extremely difficult. To alleviate this burden from its individual members, an organisation employs a socially constructed defence mechanism by attempting to convert this intrapsychic conflict into an interpersonal conflict. By projecting this anxiety onto external systems and objects, it serves to alleviate the full force of the conflict into more manageable parts. Interviewees were quick to lament rules and stringent responsibility by demonising others: bureaucracy, the state, health and safety and so on, using terminology employed by the organisation itself to justify its own behaviours. Interviewees were quick to lament rules and stringent responsibility by demonising others: bureaucracy, the state, health and safety and so on. Their own organisation, however, that they befriended through, was interestingly exempt from criticism. It was praised for being small, local and task-specific, and most interviewees expressed this in their interviews as reasons for joining. Being protective of one's own in-group is a well-researched subject in psychology and social/group psychology, particularly relating to identity and belonging. Our interviewee's organisation was protected because it was adequate (although not fully, but enough) in allowing them to exercise their desires to befriend others and to care whilst simultaneously helping protect them against the anxieties inherent in this role. Other organisations may have made it difficult for them to become a befriender, unknowingly belittling their wishes and feelings of self-efficacy in having something to give.

All of the above is an attempt to highlight the stresses and anxieties inherent in the befriending role and their similarity to other (care) giving positions. Where these anxieties exist, the organisation providing the befriending service is required to structure itself in such a way that these anxieties are reduced and kept under control.

Free Association

The free association narrative interview technique was successful in eliciting rich, detailed and emotive stories from the befrienders during the interview. As portrayed in my pre-interview fieldnotes, I was extremely nervous before conducting these interviews, with particular anxiety related to being unable to start the interview effectively, running out of

things to talk about during the interview, and following up on topics of interest without 'taking over' the interview. In retrospect, these pre-interview nerves were unwarranted. The participants were aware before the interview that I wanted to discuss their 'befriending experience', but it was not specified which aspect of this experience. Every befriender interviewed initiated the interview themselves (I didn't have to) by asking me "what do you want to know?" about their befriending. My response was the same: whatever you want to tell me. The interviewees typically began their stories by telling my how long they had been befriending for and who they were currently befriending. It was at this point that the interviews then diverged, with different participants discussing their different free associations: some participants started talking about their family at this point, others about their employment history, and still others about their general life interests. At some points during the interviews I did worry that the conversation was going 'off topic', or taking a tangent elsewhere and during two interviews I felt a bit lost and that I was being 'preached to' or 'lectured' (as written in my fieldnotes), rather than engaging in a meaningful dialogue. These anxieties were entirely my own and through reflection I came to see that my concerns with going 'off-topic' were related to my academic background in sociological research and my normal use of structured and semi-structured interviews. I had entered the interviews with preconceived conceptions of what I wanted to hear, which rather contradicts the nature of chosen method. Reflecting on this was extremely useful as once I realised that I was projecting my own anxiety into the material analysis, a re-reading of these interview transcripts allowed me to view the material in a different way: going 'off topic' and on a tangent was, in reality, the interviewees exploring their own thoughts and feelings about their befriending, and by freely associating they were able to share the emotive, meaningful aspects of their befriending, even if at the time of interview these seemed to be unrelated to the discussion at hand.

During some of the interviews it felt as if the conversation was bouncing from topic to topic without any real coherence or consistency. In the first stage of the analysis and the first read through of the transcripts, it was difficult to see through the mass amount of material that seemed to cover such a breadth of subjects. Over time and with multiple readings, however, you could begin to discern patterns and the forming of topics. As free association typically draws up what is emotionally meaningful to the participant and, as a 'defended subject' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) sometimes it was necessary for them to 'break up' the intensity of the topics being discussed by punctuating them with little side stories, or seeming

unrelated comments. For example, Mrs S mentioned her mother numerous times throughout the interview, but never in a consistent way. It wasn't until the analysis of data stage that it could be seen that 'mother' was an emotional complex for Mrs S and something she could only talk about in snippets, before changing the subject entirely. The concept of mother was returned to again and again throughout Mrs S' narrative (see individual case studies for more) and it wasn't until the interview material could be transcribed and viewed as whole that this could be traced via the free associations made, punctuated here and there by lighter comments or humour as relief.

Transference and Countertransference

My anxiety that I would not be able to follow up on certain topics during the interview through fear of 'taking over' was also unwarranted. It was clear in the interview when a topic of particular importance or emotive power was touched upon as this could be felt in the changing dynamic between myself and the participant. In my fieldnotes made during the interview I noted changes in the voices of interviewees, in their tones, and the softness with which they spoke. There were also changes in body language, for example Mrs S' face seemed to light up at any mention of her mother, or Miss C lowered her eyes and quieted her voice when reflecting on how her widowed grandfather must feel. During these times I felt myself reacting similarly, by softening my own voice, by making eye contact and not consulting my notes during these times to show that I was fully engaged. Above all, when the interviewees were discussing sensitive things, such as their personal experiences with their own families, I could empathise and understand as I have also experienced these things. These non-verbal reactions are still a form of communication and encouraged the participant to elaborate on their sensitive material in what (I hope) was a safe and non-judgemental space.

The majority of countertransference responses were experienced during the interview material analysis and interpretation. This links back to Morgenroth (2010), who distinguishes between countertransference-type reactions that occur in the primary research relationships, i.e. during the 'here and now' of the interview, and those that occur in response to interview material and data interpretation (pg. 227). Despite psychoanalytic analysis and interpretation not occurring during the interviews, countertransference responses were still experienced (recording the fieldnotes by the time in which they occurred, according to the recording device). These countertransference responses took the form of what Jervis (2009) would

describe as 'a fluttery sensation in my [researcher's] chest', or becoming aware of 'an attempt to make more eye contact' (158). Projection has been described as inducing states of 'emotional mismatch' (Robben, 2012; Lorimer, 2010). Marks and Monnich-Marks (2003) identified a discrepancy between the participants' often banal narrative and the turmoil of emotions it produced within the researcher during their interview work. For example, I experienced feelings of guilt in myself when Mr F was discussing his Christmas plans, which when reflected upon were both my own response (not seeing my own grandparents at Christmas time) as well as his (projecting into me his disappointment in his own daughters for not visiting him at Christmas). A discussion with Mr P about his Navy role 'as a harbinger of destruction' was an obvious source of guilt for him (and is largely responsible for his desire to 'do good' and volunteer) despite the jovial tones in which his comment was made, and stirred feelings of shame within myself on behalf of my father's role in the Falklands war during his RAF deployment. Marks and Monnich-Marks (2003) admit that recognising countertransference in the interview setting is difficult as one has to attempt to read the message 'between the lines', so to speak but that these behavioural and bodily sensations are potentially very useful sources of information if combined and used alongside other elements of the research interaction. Keeping detailed field notes and a research diary was an invaluable tool for reflection.

To Conclude

This thesis research has shown that emotions, feelings, and bodily reactions are not absent from the research experience, and in fact form a crucial part of its meaning and understanding. As Holmes (2014) concludes, there are numerous feeling and behavioural manifestations that could be considered as including projective elements from both the researcher and the researched. These are defined as: strong, unexpected, anomalous or mismatched feelings; elements of behaviour; pauses and confused questions and responses, and; difficulties that the researcher experiences, for example, repetition, asking a closed or leading question, as well as; difficulties that the participant experiences, manifesting as incomprehensible or incongruous responses (2014: 175). Kvale (1999) feels that if we consider these strong and changeable feeling states as interpsychic (rather than intrapsychic) dynamics, then they can 'enrich and deepen' research data (1999:87). Cartwright give an example of how analysing participants' words in isolation may miss important elements of the data – this research describes a scenario whereby the researcher felt threatened because the participant was sat forward quite aggressively in his chair, but his words were describing

his philanthropic tendencies (2004:227). Feelings and bodily states are important sources of information and can help contextualise inferences during the research process and could become part of a wider, more open, and more reflexive research approach (Holmes, 2014: 175). This can only be achieved however through careful use of countertransference: seeing it merely as projective identification (where feelings from one are put into the other risks reinforcing a 'top down' assertion of expert knowledge (Frosh and Emerson, 2005: 322). To view countertransference as projective identification or as useful and interfering countertransference is to make a distinction that is crude and an example of the outdated influence of the Cartesian mind (Stolorow et al., 2002). Ogden instead conceptualises a mutually created and inseparable 'transference-countertransference' (1997: 729) where 'no thought, feeling, or sensation can be considered to be the same as it was or will be outside of the context of the specific and continually changing [research setting] (1994:8). With this approach, the feelings of researcher and participant may be understood as being uniquely linked, but entirely distinct as they are filtered through each individual's subjective experience. Researching with an observational and reflective attitude that incorporates acceptance of the fact that neither participant nor researcher is emotionally stable (and therefore any changes must have been caused by the other) would lead to the view that countertransferential experiences are intersubjectively created, co-created, between researcher and participant during the research relationship (Holmes, 2014). As Cartwright acknowledges, the limited time frame of the research interview means it would be pertinent to consider 'inchoate feeling-state responses' not as independent evidence, but 'as a corroborative source of information that confirms or disconfirms analytic impressions' (2004: 226-227). Reflexivity would then involve an awareness of these behaviours and feeling states, observation of them, and reflection on what interpsychic dynamic may have influenced their emergence (Holmes, 2014: 177).

In some ways it could be argued that the researcher is in a more beneficial position compared with the analyst: researcher data can be cross-compared in ways that would be unethical in the therapeutic setting; a researcher is able to make use of a tape recorder in order to revisit their interviews after the fact (an analyst may not), and the research interview can be a much more flexible, open space that isn't confined to the 'analytic hour' (Holmes, 2014: 172).

Chapter Six

Implications and Future Directions

The results of the individual analyses demonstrated that befriending is a highly subjective activity that people engage in for very personal reasons. Freely associating enabled interviewees to reflect on their more emotive and meaningful thoughts and experiences, as well as their concerns and underlying anxieties. As many experiences and anxieties were shared by the befrienders (despite differences in age, gender, social class) then this is indicative that their personal experiences may also reflect those in the wider community. The biggest implication drawn from this research is that there are plenty of people that want to volunteer and that want to do good by others, but that their engagement should be ideally focussed on their personal interests, skills, and abilities. Attempting to provide a service of companionship restricted to 'a cup of tea and a chat' is not fulfilling enough and does not enable the development of a real friendship between two people. Some people express their compassion for others through cooking for them, or engaging them in an activity they know will be good for them, or by using their own skills to help others, for example through DIY. It is with this knowledge that it is suggested that befriending organisations and services restructure themselves to account for more dynamic and shared-interest relationships to develop between volunteers and older individuals at risk of loneliness or isolation.

The interviewees in this study all stated that they felt they had something to give to others, specifically their resource of time, and the resource of human capital in the form of skills, experience, and knowledge. It was identified that whilst our befrienders participated because they wanted to support lonely older people in their community, it was also explicitly acknowledged that the benefit and gain from the activity was mutual and reciprocal, with the befriender getting just as much from the relationship as the befriended. Many interviewees suggested that more of the wider public may engage in befriending if they were more aware of these received benefits of befriending, rather than assuming it was just an hour a week spent chatting to some random older person. A way of achieving this could be to allow potential befrienders to pick and match with their own older person, rather than relying on the organisation to do this. By allowing people to see the background, history, and personal interests, say via an online profile for example, of a potential companion, they may feel more inclined to engage knowing that there will be common ground and shared interest. Many interviewees used humour to express an underlying concern of being paired with 'a crazy

person' or 'someone who doesn't talk very much', which could reflect the attitude of the wider public and explain why some people are fearful or reluctant to be involved. An online portrait of the individuals requiring befriending services may help normalise the activity and allow people to see that the people they may be paired with are only older individuals with personal histories, interests, and desires like the rest of us. Knowing that you have at least some shared topic of discussion prior to meeting someone would help relieve the anxiety of not knowing and may encourage more people to engage in this activity.

The employment of the free association narrative interview technique and consideration of transference and countertransference experiences in the researcher and research relationship allowed the identification of various tensions and anxieties inherent in the befriending relationship, which impacted both positively (by protecting befrienders) and negatively (by hindering the organic development of the befriending relationship). One of the main impacts the organisation had on its befrienders was by restricting the range of activities that volunteers can engage in (there are strict rules against taking companions out for the day, helping them with household chores or shopping, or attending appointments / prescription collections on their behalf) is a source of annoyance for our interviewees, particularly the men, who all expressed a desire to engage in voluntary activities that utilised their skills and experience. All the men interviewed in this study made attempts to join other voluntary organisations that would allow them to use their physical and practical skill prior to befriending, but bureaucratic red-tape prevented them from doing so, and befriending was deemed a secondary alternative. That continuing to use their skill and experience into retirement was so important to our male befrienders, it could be argued that engaging in such activities may also be important to the male individuals on the receiving end of the befriending service as well. Where this is restricted and the individual cannot express aspects of their pre-retirement occupational identity, the befriender experiences tension and anxiety that is projected outwards as an expression of annoyance at wider, bureaucratic processes. The impact of being unable to express themselves in this way may also contribute to levels of depression, isolation, and loneliness in older, retired males resulting in negative health outcomes and increased reliance on social and health services. Having a hobby or engaging in activities that use a skill or some form of knowledge can help reduce isolation and gives individuals a sense of purpose. In this study, Mr P was looking to escape the rut in his life by engaging in a meaningful activity – coaching a children's sports team, working with troubled youths, or even physical work that utilised his engineering capacity. Mr F spent a life-long

career as a handyman before retiring and he found that there were no spaces or groups available that he could continue with this type of work as a hobby, such as a Men in Shed's scheme. Mr F identified that single, older men often struggle to take care of themselves, not knowing how to cook a basic meal, but services offering cookery lessons or even a space where men could get together to learn was non-existent, and Mr F was turned away when he tried to start such a club himself. Again, Mr H attempted to find an activity that combined his extensive skillset with his desire to motivate and support those less fortunate than him, but was also faced with an impenetrable wall of bureaucracy.

Of course, there are ethical implications to consider when allowing people to engage in activity of this kind, however, it is not impossible to achieve. Men in Sheds is a fantastic scheme whereby older men can meet together in a set space to undertake DIY, learn a new hobby, or engage with other men over woodwork or carpentry, for example. Risk is managed in this scenario with public liability insurance and common sense – the men involved are aware of what they are going to do and if they hurt themselves in the process then there is little difference between them cutting themselves accidentally at home or when with their friends - no one is to blame, or in the words of participant Mrs. S, 'grow some balls and stop with the liability crap!'.

Having restrictions placed on the befriending relationship was not only detrimental to men, but the female interviewees in this study as well. Miss M was aware that her companion was unable to go out anymore due to her ill health, but was reluctant to allow the relationship disintegrate into an hour of a week of just chatting, and so she found other methods of engaging, such as the sharing of personal photographs or bringing food round for them to eat together, to keep their relationship developing and moving forward. Mrs S often broke the organisation's rules by taking her companion out for day trips in her car, something that is heavily discouraged and frowned upon. Mobility and independence are important concerns to Mrs S, who acknowledged her own father's loneliness when his poor health meant he could no longer leave the house. Mrs S, in a similar fashion to Mrs B, does not worry about the consequences of breaking these rules and believes nothing bad would happen if we all took a bit of responsibility for our actions and used common sense. Mrs S reinforces her belief that it is acceptable to break the rules by recounting an anecdote of receiving a kiss on the cheek from her befriending after their first day trip out together, an expression of his pleasure at their time together. Mrs B was very vocal in her disregard for bureaucracy referring to it as pen-pushing bollocks on numerous occasions.

Overcoming bureaucratic processes can be extremely difficult, as these are set a national level from above, however this does not mean that it is impossible. The interviewees in this study acknowledged the need for basic DBS checks to be carried out on volunteers, for basic safeguarding purposes, as important and necessary. Excessive paperwork however, providing numerous forms of proof of identity, proof of address, attending multiple interviews, induction days, and supervisions serve only to discourage people from volunteering and take the spontaneity out of their desire to engage. Where befrienders are partnered with individuals suffering from physical or mental disability then the process of keeping tabs on activity and requesting frequent contact and feedback from the befriender makes sense, as the aim of these relationships is to improve the health outcome of another. However, in the simple act of befriending as experienced in this study – the provision of a mutual, safe, and respectful relationship between two people – such processes and requirements are deemed unnecessary and often hinder the relationship.

To overcome this, perhaps we need to view befriending the elderly as a different form of volunteering and one that requires a different model to be effective. I am to propose that a Compeer model of befriending, as described by McCorkle et al. (2009) is a much more fitting model through which to engage befrienders. This model fits more easily with the idea that the befriending relationship develops and grows from one of service provision (a volunteer with the purpose of spending enforced time with another) to a natural, organic, and compassionate relationship, as experienced by the interviewees in this study. The Compeer model fosters the creation of 'intentional friendships', which are not time limited, do not involve the setting of goals or provision of milestones, and the progress of the relationship is not monitored. In essence, this model facilitates the placing of two suitable people together, but then takes a step back and allows this relationship to flourish autonomously. I would like to see a befriending service that models itself as a friendship or dating website: consenting individuals create a profile of themselves, their history, interests, and needs and match with others based on shared, reciprocal interests. Once a volunteer has had their DBS check and a basic interview to ensure, as Mr F so humorously put it, 'you don't have two heads', the relationship is left to develop naturally. The aim of the befriending service from this perspective is similar to that of a dating site – it exists to facilitate the initial meeting of people but then has no input or responsibility for that relationship. Such a model could reduce the anxieties surrounding befriending quite drastically – there is no fear of being paired with someone unknown or unlike you and there is freedom to engage in other activities without

worrying about liability. Crucially, where both the befriender and their companion are in mutual agreement, more power may be given to the befriender, for example in the form of a named emergency contact, that would allow them to be party to information regarding their companions whereabouts in the event of ill-health. Being unable to act in the event of their befriended being taken ill was expressed as a concern by the participants of this study, and quite often lead to distress for the befriender. The reality is that older people may be suddenly taken unwell, whether in our presence or not, but that this shouldn't be something to fear or anticipate in worry if the right supportive processes are in place. With the Compeer model or similar, as the relationships are open ended, they can develop over time from something that is, in the first instance, an artificial pairing of two people previously unknown to each other, into a relationship that is characterised as being reciprocal and equal, and in which both parties are comfortable in sharing. The compeer model echoes the model described by Varah (1980), who founded the first befriending programme for people in suicidal crisis, which eventually became known as The Samaritans, and which has proved a fruitful endeavour. This model presents a befriending relationship focused more on the idea of friendship, rather than professionalism, with the aim reducing the conflict between being a friend, and being asked to befriend (within the rules of the organisation). The primary aim becomes pairing two people together so that they may talk with one another, listen to one another, and encourage one another to the mutual benefit of both parties. Rather than setting goals or meeting targets, the befriending organisation becomes the facilitating catalyst that ignites these friendships into existence, before taking a step back and letting them run their natural course. The parties involved gain a new social contact, a new source of interest and entertainment, and someone that will celebrate their achievements and listen to their concerns. The relationship here may feel rather mutual, and the both the befriendee and the befriended may feel valued for themselves as an individual without being under pressure to achieve or 'do' anything (or not do anything, as the case may be). Where the befriending relationship has developed into an organic friendship, suddenly the aim of 'tea and a chat' is not enough. In such a case, it may be beneficial for the befriending organisation to 'sign off' mutually agreed relationships between volunteers and befriendees, so that the relationship becomes autonomous and outside of the organisation, rather than contained within it. In this way, befrienders and their companions can express their friendship in any way they wish, without the organisation being responsible for them. Reconceptualising befriending older people within the framework of a Compeer model of befriending would require a pilot attempt, as is the case with most things, there are still risks involved. The befriendees interviewed in this study all hailed the positive

qualities of their befriending relationships, such as reciprocity, equality, intimacy, and reliability – however as I only explored the experiences of the befriender (and not the befriended) it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which these qualities are dominant in any friendship. In the spirit of psychoanalytic thinking, even the bestest of friendships have their difficulties, and our friendships with others can often be unequal and even exploitative. There is an assumption in this model of befriending that friendship is not governed by rule, and as such there are no 'rules' against things such as sexual intimacy or excessive emotional disclosure between companions that may lead to emotional difficulty. There are a range of concepts of befriending, ranging from a relationship that is very similar to a professional therapeutic relationship, to one that is very similar to a natural friendship. These differing concepts are linked to differences in the way that befriending services are delivered. It could be problematic that a service with the word ''friend'' in its title does not offer all aspects of a real friendship, and it may be appropriate to modify this terminology. Some patients may benefit from a new friendship with all its emotional implications, while others may prefer some form of supported companionship in which the boundaries of the relationship are clear. For organisations running such schemes, the issue of risks to both volunteer and patient need to be considered, and may be more prominent if it is a more mutual relationship with less emphasis on boundaries and regulations. Different schemes may be appropriate for different contexts, and finding new labels may be helpful in allowing schemes to clarify whether they mean for their volunteers to befriend or to be a friend.

There are, of course, ethics and safeguarding to consider when offering a befriending service of any sort. The fact that volunteers have to be DBS and identity checked, and possibly interviewed, is unavoidable. What can be influenced is how this is managed and fed back to the volunteers. The interviewees in this study acknowledged the necessity of the application process of signing up with the befriending organisation, but the effort involved is not reflected in the nature of the relationship. As Mr F eloquently stated, "why do they need my driver's licence and car details if I am not allowed to take anyone anywhere in my car?". Many befrienders felt that the legal hoops they had to jump through were unnecessary or mismatched for the role they were asked to undertake, and therefore unnecessary and off putting. Offering an online profile matching system means the application process could be tailored to the individual volunteer: if they don't drive or do not want to drive or go out on day trips with their companion then they look for a befriender that also prefers to stay at home. In this instance no information is needed regarding vehicle registration insurance

public liability, and so on. If a volunteer would like to engage with a companion in this way then they have the option to do so, and the administrative process through which they go during the application process reflects this more engaged level of participation.

Ethics and safeguarding can be achieved through proper risk assessment of any organisation or service. This risk assessment should cover the following key principles: identify the risks for those involved in befriending and these may include lone working, working with vulnerable groups, abuse from either party, personal injury, travelling at night, stressful circumstances and breach of confidentiality. After identifying the risks they should be evaluated according to the likelihood of the risk occurring and the consequence of the risk e.g. the likelihood of a volunteer abusing a befriending client may be low but the impact of this risk if it did occur would be very high; manage/control the risk by identifying and implementing measures for reducing the risk. Measures to manage risk may include identity checks, references, good recruitment and selection processes, support and supervision procedures, insurance and policies such as confidentiality and code of conduct.

Future Directions

Often, volunteers are comparatively younger than the older person they are befriending. This, combined with the nature of the relationship as one providing something to another, reflects closely the dynamic of the parent-child relationship. The idea of family, particularly parents, was a common theme throughout many interviewee's narratives. Befriending an older individual may have an impact for much younger volunteers as it may arouse unresolved feelings of separation, dependence and independence from their relationship with their own parents. Miss C particularly felt conflict from knowing that her grandfather was lonely, but that he lived in a different city. Miss C would move back to be with him 'if I could but I can't'. Miss C made the conscious decision to befriend and older person 'like her grandad' possibly to try and alleviate these feelings, whilst simultaneously trying to make a life for herself in a new city. Mr P's outwards love of children and family, his sense of brotherhood from his time in the Navy and his general omission of his own separation from his sons from a previous marriage reflected in his compassion for his befriended and his disbelief that a parent could abandon their own child. It seems Mr P is playing the role of protector and father in his befriending relationship, providing a figure his companion never had growing up and playing this role is the driving force behind his action. Apart from a brief comment ('my father and I had a good relationship' and 'I had two Grandma's, I can talk to older ladies') Mr

P does not mention his parental family, only the family he has created for himself with his wife. Mrs S spoke more of her mother in reference to her befriending, but verbalised that it was mainly after her father died that she wanted do something along the lines of befriending. Mrs S was very particular in her requirements for the befriending relationship and once stopped seeing an older gentleman because 'all he wanted to talk about was the war, and I couldn't give him what he wanted.' Where other befrienders acknowledged they didn't know much about the war but were willing to sit and listen to people's stories, Mrs S could not. It cannot be claimed for certain but maybe Mrs S's father died in the war and thus it has become a subject too painful to acknowledge, or maybe her father was strictly opposed to war, and so she couldn't recreate the relationship with her befriended that she had with her father; or maybe Mrs S befriended in order to bring qualities of her own to the table and being pigeon-holed into talk of the war prevented her from expressing herself in the relationship. To conclude, the dynamic between befriender and befriended is both complex but extremely fascinating, and although outside the scope of this research, viewing the relationship through psychodynamic observation could further exploration in this area, although this would make an interesting psychodynamic observational study. Previous study, such as that by Waddell (2002), into the role of projective identification in the relationship between younger care-givers and older patients has identified that 'by this mechanism [projective identification] the baby/child/elderly person who cannot understand, think or talk about his or her fragmentary for fragmenting experience may none the less be able to engender in the care-giver some version of that basic experience' (see Waddell 2002: p.248-249). Other research has explored the role of unresolved feelings of separation, dependence and independence in the relationship between younger clinicians and their older patients (see Martindale, 1989). Waddell's research acknowledged the painful conflict inherent in the care of older people, which can often "require a painful reversal of the original pattern of container-contained (the young now struggling to offer states of reverie for the old)" (2002: p.248-249). As the befriender occupies a different space to clinician, care-giver and even relative, it would be fascinating to see how this particular relationship expresses itself when happening. Such insight into relationship between befriender and befriended could be beneficial in furthering the idea of applying a Compeer model to befriending the elderly services.

Appendix

Appendix One – Copy of email sent on my behalf for volunteer recruitment

Hello everyone,

A phd student in Bristol, Kate Wainwright, is interested in interviewing volunteers. If you would like to support her please contact her on her email: wainwright.ka@gmail.com

Kate says:

"I am collecting narratives of people's volunteering experience, so it really is just a friendly chat for an hour. I am happy to meet where ever in Bristol people are most comfortable. Our talk will be recorded but the participant will remain anonymous and not named in the final research piece. I am aiming to discover what motivates people to volunteer, particularly their time and with the elderly"

Kind regards,

Jo Sanderson, Volunteering Officer

(Monday to Thursday)

<u>Draft of email to be sent to initial volunteer contact:</u>

Good afternoon X,

I am currently undertaking some research for my PhD thesis in psychoanalytical studies. I am exploring the experience of volunteering in those that support the elderly in their community.

As a volunteer yourself, I was hoping you would agree to meet me for an informal interview to talk about your experience of volunteering. This is not a typical interview where I will ask a series of questions – rather I would like you to take the lead and tell me whatever you want about your volunteering and what it is for you.

The interview will take approximately an hour. I am happy to come to your place if it is easier for you, or we could meet somewhere if you'd prefer.

I would also be keen to utilise your vast social network of like-minded people if you could think of anyone that would fancy participating as well.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Kate

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