# 'A Second Chance at Life':

# Labour, Love and Welfare on a South Wales Estate

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the lives of a group of welfare-reliant single mothers (the 'Lifeline Girls') living in the upper reaches of the South Wales Valleys as they participate in a community education project ('Lifeline') tasked with raising them out of poverty. The project is situated within the local social and economic structure and the broader institutional context of market and state. In this way the research conceives of the linkages between a local site of investigation and the external forces that permeate it. This is achieved through a multi-method, ethnographic approach that charts the everyday interactions of the women involved in Lifeline with the labour market and the pervasive mechanisms of street-level welfare governance. In this the recent restructuring of the welfare state is of particular interest: *firstly*, through the dispersal of welfare governance to new sites of practice in the field of community development and specifically here to 'Lifeline'; and *secondly*, through the extension of the moral imperative of employment to those traditionally assumed to be outside of the labour market. The 'Lifeline Girls' were key targets of this restructuring and the ways in which it repositioned this group of young women within new symbolic and material constraints and opportunities is the focus of this research. As such the study examines welfare restructuring, from its rhetorical imaginings to the situated action and meaning making found in one site of its practice. The account establishes the ways in which the 'Lifeline Girls' were subject to both coercive and therapeutic pressures associated with very different forms of welfare practice. Here, 'Lifeline' itself emerges as a 'space of contestation', albeit but one that is inevitably flawed.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

This thesis explores the everyday experiences of a group of welfare-reliant single mothers in a deprived housing estate in South Wales (Valleyside) as they participate in a community education project tasked with lifting them out of poverty (Lifeline). Using a multi-method ethnographic approach, the study identifies a group of young women who through Lifeline have, in the words of one of them, been 'given a second chance at life' (field note); a 'second chance', which they believe will transform their lives for the better. Lifeline is just one arm of a radically altering welfare state in the UK today that continues to materially and symbolically position this group of women. Indeed the young women involved in the project are key targets of recent welfare reform and personally feel the gaze of the welfare state more intensely than ever.

The methodological and theoretical framework adopted here enables us to understand the everyday interactions with the street-level welfare governance that were so much a part of lives of the women I met and talked with. The multi-method approach allows us to explore the dynamics of the contemporary welfare regime: from the imaginings of its rhetoric to one site of its practice, Lifeline, and the "situated action" and "vocabularies of motive" (Wright Mills, 1940) of one group of women in it. Following Burawoy (1998; 2009) the study utilises the Extended Case Study method, which allows us to conceive of the linkages between a local site of investigation and the external forces that permeate it, in this instance those relating to a radically altered welfare state. In this way the strategies the Lifeline Girls pursued to negotiate the social world are situated within wider processes of social and economic transformation and their lives are connected with both a local social and economic structure and a broader institutional context of market and state. The focus is on exploring the role of the welfare state in restricting and enabling agency and the ways in which social actors engage with these constraints and opportunities. As such the process of welfare reform can be seen to have implications for how we understand the dynamics of class and gender formations (Haylett, 2003). The welfare state is one filter of inequalities

and in recent years has been a key element of neo-liberal economic and social policies.

Two dimensions of the recent restructuring of the welfare state are of particular interest: *firstly* the changing nature of the apparatus of welfare governance and specifically the dispersal of welfare governance to the field of community development; and secondly its radicalisation through the extension of the work imperative to those traditionally assumed to be outside of the labour market. We consider how this restructuring 'played out' symbolically and materially in the lives of some of its targets, the Lifeline Girls, in one community, Valleyside. This approach understands that rapid social change of this kind cannot be attributed simply to abstract concepts reflecting, for example, the intensification of private realm or the impact of an era of extreme capitalism but necessitates a focus on particular people and places at a particular time. In turn, this raises important questions about the contemporary welfare regime in relation to the institutions of family and employment, of market and state, as well as their relationship to the history of places and the biographies of people.

## 1.1 Valleyside

In conducting the research I would make my way daily from my home in Cardiff to Valleyside in Merthyr Tydfil along the A470, the trunk road that runs the length of Wales linking the north and south of the country. Much of this route was at one time the Glamorganshire Canal, historically one of the country's busiest, which served the Valley's ironworks and coal mines. The road carves through the Valley past post-industrial commuter villages and small towns before it is surrounded by rows of terraced housing clinging to the mountainside. On this journey it was hard to envisage the Taff Valley as a dynamic powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution. Even more so in Merthyr and Valleyside itself, when with the urban hubs behind, it was hard to escape the sense of entering a dormant hinterland.

Yet the discovery of iron ore and later coal saw thousands of men and their families pour into the Valleys looking for and finding work. Merthyr itself was home to the industrialists who made their fortunes from the pits and foundries. Today, while many families remain, the jobs have disappeared as local communities have fallen victim to

wave after wave of economic contraction. As mine after mine and factory after factory closed opportunities, along with capital, moved elsewhere. The demise of industry in the Valleys disconnected the local working class from meaningful economic activity: entire generations of men lost the pride associated with being breadwinners in communities that had reason to value that above all else. In place of this world of production a feminised economy emerged based upon new forms of precarious employment and the increasing vulnerability of marginalised, non-unionised labour. Those that managed to find work lived with the knowledge that they were potentially never more than a day away from 'signing on', again. Such changes have fundamentally changed the rhythms of life in Valleys communities - the trade union movement, the non-conformist chapel, and the choirs while a cherished memory for community elders, are largely a forgotten history for younger generations. There have been a number of state interventions designed to tackle the poverty in the Valleys, most notably those European initiatives that specifically targeted regions suffering from the effects of deindustrialisation. However an era of hard work and dignity for many working class families in the Valleys has passed (a passing instigated by the state) and now it is hard to see how any government regeneration scheme can bring it back. The working class collectivism and solidarity perpetuated by a dream of a more equitable society that textured life in the Valleys is now, perhaps more than ever, far from becoming a reality.

Valleyside itself sits on the periphery of Merthyr and, like many estates of its type in the Valleys, sprawls high on a mountainside. Building of the estate began between the First and Second World Wars as Merthyr's terraced housing, once bustling with workers and their families, was cleared and their residents dispersed to the town's edges. State planning was to provide better housing for working families in enclosed estates with in-door plumbing, hot and cold running water and electricity. For a time therefore for many members of the community, Valleyside did represent a better quality of life and the possibility of a better future. However, with the collapse of employment in the area, a new reality has emerged which is hard to compare with the poverty of the past - in many ways the problems of the past have simply been traded for new ones of the present.

In the 1990's Valleyside, like many marginalised communities, simply failed to reap the rewards of an era of prosperity. The new wealth by-passed this community as new employment opportunities were developed along the M4 corridor. That said high unemployment in the Valleys is nothing new: decline has been protracted and many families are experiencing a third or fourth 'workless' generation. So much is this the case that in recent years Valleyside has been described by the state as suffering from the multiple deprivation (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). The erosion of the economic base has led to considerable social decay across every sphere of life (from health and well being to education to community safety to the environment ...). In this context government agencies have to some extent displaced the care networks of kith and kin; health visitors, social workers, educational psychologists, speech therapists are prevalent figures in the lives of too many Valleyside families.

Before I arrived for the first time in Valleyside I already knew that it had the reputation of being a tough place. This was confirmed during one of my early visits when I was asked by one of the locals 'aren't you scared? you are in Valleyside now' (field note). I learned that the residents were all too aware that their Valleyside reputation precedes them. During my time there headline after headline proclaimed Merthyr as the 'sick note' capital of the Britain and the one of Britain's least desirable places to live (see for example, The Sun, May 2008). But, it was also clear that Valleyside itself was well known beyond its borders. Stigmatised and voiceless, it became identified as a community notorious for the deprivation found within it. Within Valleyside the community's troubles were often attributed to 'problem families' that have fallen victim to the constellation of forces battering them in the day to day. When I asked community members about that reputation and realities of life in Valleyside these proverbial 'bad apples' came up again and again. Most of the people I met spoke of having had a neighbour who was 'trouble' and conversations included references like 'there's drug dealing in the house opposite', or 'her, fiddling benefits over the road' (field notes). However the stories of child abuse, drug addiction, incest, infanticide, suicide, depression and despair that I was also told were more troubling and have added to the notoriety of the place. A tough place indeed, where people needed to be tough to survive.

Perhaps unsurprisingly some of the people I met through Valleyside's community development projects were incredibly vulnerable, with significant mental health needs and biographies of abuse and neglect. Yet for the most part the story of Valleyside was one of unemployment and underemployment and people simply trying to survive and make the most of the 'hand they had been dealt'. Damaged by years of debasement, a stigmatising deprivation continuously plagues its residents. Mostly though they display remarkably resilience to the lack of prospects and the majority love their community, laughing at the suggestion that perhaps they move out and move on. For them, leaving would mean separation from the people they know and love and in a world where everything else is in scarce supply these relationships were centrally important. As such few claim to want to live anywhere other than Valleyside.

## 1.2 Lifeline and the 'Lifeline Girls'

Valleyside is the home of Lifeline, a community education project designed to tackle the poverty of single mothers living in Valleyside and its neighbouring communities. Its key aim is to foster in its participants a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1977) and secure their future mobility into professional careers as carers (for example, as social workers, nurses and speech therapists). In relation to this goal, with Lifeline, welfare-reliant single mothers are re-introduced to education and make the first steps towards college, and for some University. I first encountered Lifeline through its 'driving force', Jessica. Jessica was one of the project's two Support Officers and it is also fair to say both the brains and the energy behind Lifeline. Indeed it was hard to see how Lifeline could have existed let alone thrived without her determined resourcefulness. It was through Jessica, and her colleague Amy, that I was able to gain the trust of the Lifeline Girls themselves. For the Girls it was clear that if I was 'alright' in their Support Workers' eyes, I was 'alright' in their eyes.

The Lifeline Girls, as they referred to themselves[1], were a group of women who like many living in Valleyside were just managing to cope from day to day. Occupying as

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[1] It is for this reason that I refer to them as the Lifeline Girls. Similarly, as they consistently referred to themselves as single parents or mums rather than lone parents this is how I refer to them (other than in the context of policy).

they did stigmatised and economically marginalised positions in society their everyday lives, like those of many working class people, were characterised by 'getting by' and 'making do' (Charlesworth, 2000; Lister, 2004). Yet despite their material and symbolic vulnerability when I spent time with the Lifeliners I was struck by their resilience. This resilience was clear in the way they managed the everyday realities of economic hardship, took responsibility for the emotional and practical burdens of caring for their children alone and endured their severely stigmatised identities as 'welfare mothers'. This group of women, unlike the women of the industrial age, had no cause to feel grateful for a family life supported by a male breadwinner. For much of their adult lives their children represented their sole source of hope for the future – children were loved, they provided a sense of purpose and an identity. Yet while they enjoyed only a tenuous claim to citizenship in the eyes of the state, many of these women were highly visible in their community as volunteers, carers and through Lifeline, as learners.

The vulnerability of the Lifeline Girls was perhaps most evident in the extent and intensity of their contact with the state. This group of women relied on the state to put food on their table and a roof over their heads but there were numerous interactions with the state beyond a fortnightly trip to the Post Office and a bi-annual Jobcentre Plus *Work Focused Interview*. The state was also likely to have a presence in an increasingly regulated home, in the guise of health visitors and child support investigators; or in the schooling of their children, through speech therapists or educational psychologists. However economic necessity alone meant that their relationship with the welfare state itself remained the most significant of their many points of contact with state apparatus. The receipt of welfare relief was *the* foundation of a strategy of 'getting by'. During the course of the research the gaze of the welfare state on this group of women intensified. For this reason an understanding of the conditions in which this group of women made meaning and took action called for an examination of the impact of the restructuring of the welfare state on their lives.

## 1.3    The restructuring welfare state

The patterns of the current resettlement (Clarke, 2004) of the welfare state are many and varied. This thesis explores the dynamics of just one set of relationships with the

apparatus of welfare state governance experienced by one group of women, the Lifeliners, at one time, in one community, Valleyside. The contemporary restructuring of the welfare state meant new machinery for managing poverty was deployed to tackle the poverty experienced by the Girls and Valleyside. As I began my research this process of restructuring was beginning to makes its presence felt in the community and the new welfare contract was repositioning Lifeline Girls within new symbolic and material constraints and opportunities. For the Lifeline Girls the welfare state restructured in two key ways: *firstly*, the governance of the welfare state now dispersed to new sites of practice such as that found emerging from the community development sphere in Lifeline; and *secondly*, the welfare state extended the moral imperative to enter the workforce to those traditionally excluded from the labour market, as seen most clearly in the practices of Jobcentre Plus.

Welfare reform endorsed a welfare contract that meant citizenship was increasingly synonymous with participation in the labour market. The Labour governments (1997-2010) repeatedly stressed that work is the best route out of poverty (see for example, Department of Work and Pensions, 2008a). Earlier Feminist analyses of the patriarchal welfare state argued that for women the choice was either to become a 'lesser citizen', a full time mother, or a 'lesser man', a vulnerable worker in the labour market (Pateman, 1989). Yet, for many single mothers, welfare reform meant that this choice was no longer open to them as they have become the targets of a reconfigured welfare state and the public norms of morality it endorses. It was in this context that two distinct strategies for tackling the social exclusion of welfare-reliant single mothers emerged: one that targeted people, for example the UK government's *New Deal for Lone Parents*, which underpinned the practice of Jobcentre Plus; and another that targeted places, for example the Welsh Assembly Government's *Communities First* programme in Valleyside and the European Union's *Equal* initiative, which underpinned the early practice of Lifeline.

In effect each strategy deployed its own distinct mechanisms of welfare state power, associated with distinct forms of emotional labour (Bolton, 2005), to generate changes in behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs. As a result the Lifeline Girls, as targets of a radically altered welfare state, have found themselves subject to both coercive and therapeutic pressures. Interactions with Jobcentre Plus were characterised by a

coercive form of emotional labour focussed on moving them into vulnerable work. In contrast the practice of Lifeline was experienced as therapeutic and intent on securing their social mobility. Therefore while the emotional labour process at the heart of its practice is focused on healing damaged identities and making the 'right kind' of selves, it was also focused on re-conceptualising the rights of welfare-reliant single mothers. As such Lifeline represented a 'space of contestation' to the welfare state's dominant modality of power, Jobcentre Plus. There was then a sense in which Lifeline *worked within but was not of* the welfare state: indeed it was a source of resistance at its edges as the Lifeline Girls negotiated the terms of their exploitation and created alternatives strategies, which they were able to pursue in the social world.

Changes in welfare governance clearly had a direct bearing on the ways in which the Lifeline Girls negotiated the social world. Throughout the research I came to learn that Lifeliners' strategies of survival or 'getting by' were becoming increasingly less legitimate both symbolically and materially in the eyes of the welfare state. This necessitated a re-orientation of commitments to family and employment that was often painful. This pain is evident in the divided selves (Bourdieu, 1999) the Lifeline Girls experienced as they moved into education and were asked to reflect on their lives. Specifically their strategies in pursuit of reward, recognition and commitment in relation to family and employment fundamentally changed. The way political and economic systems shaped these pursuits (i.e. the conceptions of citizenship the welfare state invoked to define what it meant to be a 'good' citizen) was indicative of the way in which welfare states squeeze, in material and symbolic ways, the spaces social actors inhabit (Clarke, 2004). The welfare state through its avowal and disavowal of particular strategies of 'getting by' and 'getting on' in the world both constrained and enabled those it targeted.

From a critical Feminist perspective the welfare state was clearly home to mechanisms that perpetuated inequalities. However what is of particular interest is the way in which mechanisms of welfare were implicated in formations of class and gender that saw both the perpetuation and contestation of inequalities. This exploration of the Lifeline Girls' experiences of the welfare state focuses on one of the areas of social life where an individual's meanings and actions interact with structural constraints *and* opportunities. While class, gender and place remain salient

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in shaping commitments to work and care, the *manner* of their salience is changing with welfare reform.

## 1.4  Significance and scope and of the study

The motivations for this research stemmed from a sense of disbelief that the accidents of birth that make for lives of both fortune and misfortune are not more widely acknowledged and indeed redressed. I am able to draw this conclusion simply by comparing the 'choices' I have made with those made by the Lifeline Girls. The most obvious contrast related to education. I remember one Lifeliner saying to me 'well you always hate your teachers don't you?' (field note). This made me hesitate because I never had (I had even had favourites). Moments like these were consistent reminders of our respective accidents of birth and their associated injustices. My life, like those of the Lifeline Girls, was underpinned by a series of long held and unquestioning assumptions and expectations, founded on my inheritance of capitals, of the future. My 'expectations' and capitals opened the doors to Higher and Further Education, to home ownership, to a salary, to credit cards and the like; those of the Lifeline Girls opened only doors that promised little reward and recognition. As an undergraduate I studied the privilege of my fellow students and in particular their store of cultural capital. I identified just one student who could be described as working class. The rest had plasters on their knees from playing the cello, shared their parents' appreciation of Hopper's Nighthawks or Picasso's Woman in Blue, and enjoyed work experience placements alongside architects, archaeologists, bankers and barristers. At the time for me the contrast between me and my friends, let alone the lives of those I knew who lived in the vast tracts of Wales condemned to lives of deprivation could not have been starker. It was the reason I decided to do a PhD.

The injustices of material inequalities found in Valleyside combined with the stigma of poverty that serves to add insult to injury, is mirrored across post-industrial communities in the 'developed' world. However what was striking during the research process was the number of people I met who were keen to point out how far behind the children of Valleyside were in terms of their development when they began their schooling. Perhaps more than anything else this highlighted to me the arbitrariness of inequalities, which intuitively many of us recognise. Yet current

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political and popular understandings of poverty and social exclusion largely fail to include discussion of the social location of the agent in terms of gender, class or place and the way in which such formations effect social actors' movement through the social world.

By examining welfare restructuring as an important site of processes of maldistribution and misrecognition (Fraser, 1999), this study maps some of the emerging characteristics and parameters of inequalities. The case study approach adopted here follows broadly in the vein of ethnographic research and critique that seeks to understand 'from below', how social actors experience the inequalities that frame their biographies (see for example, Charlesworth, 2000; and Skeggs, 1997). An analysis of the strategies the Lifeline Girls pursue in relation to the institutions of employment and family is key to evaluating welfare policy in the UK today. Recent reforms to the welfare state mark significant changes in the way society is ordered and understood, particularly for women who are more like to be poor than men. Indeed the feminisation of poverty, perhaps most evident in the emergence of a class of women directly connected to the state as claimants, has made it harder to gloss over the paradoxes and contradictions of women's status as citizens (Pateman, 1989). However in the current ideological climate and in the face of the growing divide between the 'work-rich' and the 'work-poor' (Millar, 2002) people in Britain are becoming less tolerant of the poor than they have been in the past (Park, et al., 2010b). This is despite evidence that high levels of inequality are corrosive for society as a whole (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

The significance of this study also lies in its focusing on an area of social life where this is little consensus on the nature of 'public norms'. The expectation that mothers of relatively young children enter the workforce is one of the most striking manifestations of welfare reform. However there is a lack of clear consensus within society regarding single parents and the obligation to enter the labour market. While there is general popular support for government initiatives that link single parents' receipt of welfare to the search for work, views about whether single parents should work depend on the ages of their children. Only one in two people (52 per cent) think a single mother with a child of school age has a "special duty" to go out to work to support her child (up from 44 per cent in 1998). For a single mother with a child

under school age, the proportion who think she has a "special duty" to stay at home and look after her child has also increased (from 24 per cent in 2005 to 36 per cent at present). Yet there remains a significant number of people (38 per cent) who disapprove of mothers working full time when their children are young (Park, et al., 2010a). With popular opinion divided, the radical reform of the welfare state we have recently witnessed is contentious. In this context studies of the struggles of women to be good citizens (i.e. both good mothers and good workers) are important – highlighting work and care in society and the implications of the changing norms that surround them.

With the above in mind this thesis addresses several inter-related aspects of sociological inquiry that have been neglected to date. The study contributes to the limited knowledge of the lives of women in communities experiencing the legacy of industrial decline. Indeed the marginalisation of the women in sociological accounts of the effects of deindustrialisation was in many ways the starting point of this research project. The bulk of academic literature focuses on the ex-coal-miner or ex-steel-worker (see for example, Thursfield and Henderson, 2004) and as such fosters a "cult of masculinity" (Parry, 2003) that marginalises the experiences of women. Moreover very little in the literature touches on the changes these women are experiencing in relation to a radically altered welfare state (for one example see Braun, et al., 2008) and the ways this has impacted upon what can be called street-level governance through the dispersed agencies of the state. The particular experiences of Valleyside and the Lifeline Girls are important in developing a detailed analysis of the situated understanding of the decision-making of individuals in different places within particular contexts. This is particularly important for this study because it explores both the uneven and partial geographies of neo-liberalism (Clarke, 2004) and capitalism (Massey, 1984).

In these ways the thesis contributes to a field of research that explores women's attitudes and behaviours in relation to family and employment. Many studies (see for example, Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Lewis, 2002; Lewis, 2005) conclude that for poor women the responsibility to care for others outweighs the obligation to enter the labour market and that many prioritise caring over paid employment. By focusing on the impact of the most recent welfare reform on its particular targets we recognise

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here that this is a fast disappearing 'choice' for welfare-reliant single mothers. Moreover, the reconfiguration of the imperatives of care and work evident in welfare reform may be expected to result in divided identities (Bourdieu, 1999). This highlights the importance of appreciating the extent and rapidity of social change in relation to the welfare state and its impact on welfare-reliant single mothers. In many ways this means the study follows in a tradition of research built on US workfare policy (Piven and Cloward, 1971; Mink, 1999; Haylett, 2003; Misra, et al., 2007), which unlike the UK, has a *requirement* rather than an *expectation* for women to work. This in itself is testimony to the nature and pace of these social changes. More studies of welfare reform and its impacts on single mothers have been carried out in the United States because workfare was implemented earlier there in a more pernicious form.

The scope and significance of the study is also related to a further aspect of the radically altered welfare state: the dispersal of welfare governance to new instruments of the state. This analysis extends 'welfare' well beyond the simple payments of benefit to practices involved in community development and with it we see the emergence of something that might be termed the therapeutic state. Here empirical examples of the therapeutic ethos in practice are offered in order to understand why and how this form of statecraft is taking hold. There is a particular focus on the nature of professional expertise, how such expertise is spatially and temporally embedded as well as its impact on social actors. Here the concept of emotional labour as defined by Hochschild (1983) and refined by Bolton (2005) is developed further, paying attention to "the complexity and contradictoriness of a social phenomenon like a welfare state" (Clarke, 2004: 15) and the range of welfare activity not previously understood or studied as part of the welfare state (Lewis, 1993; Daly, 2000; Clarke, 2004) In doing so it explicitly conceives of struggles to reform welfare state as uneven and unfinished and subject to resistance, instability and contestation (Clarke, 2004). In relation to this notion of unconventional state support for the poor the thesis also contributes to research that centres on non-traditional learners participating in non-traditional education settings. While the nature of participation is one of the most researched areas of adult education (Gorard and Rees, 2002) this study is unusual in this context because it looks at non-traditional returners to education in a non-traditional setting.

## 1.5 Chapter outline

In many ways the structure of this thesis mirrors the 'journey' made by the young women participating in this study. Early empirical Chapters provide the historical, biographical and political context for later empirical Chapters that focus on the emotional labour practices devoted to changing their behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs as well as the Lifeline Girls' claims to redemptive citizenship. The final Chapter draws together the strands of this extended case study to reflect on the implications for popular, political and academic debates around inequalities.

The thesis takes the following structure:

**Chapter Two** outlines and defines the key theoretical and conceptual touchstones of this study. The position adopted runs counter to the individualisation thesis that holds that social actors are self-reflexive and self-determining agents enjoying an era of Modernity characterised by diminishing or weakening structures of constraint (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Instead subjective experiences, making meaning and taking action, are conceptualised within the context of wider social practices and structures. Theorising inequalities is underpinned by a particular reading of the mutual interpenetration and interdependency of the two dualisms at the heart of sociological analysis: material/symbolic and structure/agency. The approach borrows heavily from Nancy Fraser's (1999) bivalent model of class and gender that urges us consider *both* the material and symbolic dynamics of class and gender formations. In relation to the dualism of agency/structure the framework is built on the belief that the promise of sociology lies in examining the interconnection between "private troubles" and "public issues" (Wright Mills, 1959). As such the strategies the Lifeline Girls pursue to negotiate the social world are conceptualised within the context of wider social practices and structures. At the heart of this study is desire to move between the everyday worlds of the Lifeline Girls to the external forces that shape and constrain those movements. Several analytical concepts are useful here. Perhaps most significant is the marriage of the notion of an increasingly dispersed welfare state (Clarke, 2004) with a theory of emotional labour (Bolton, 2005) that enables us to conceive of the mix of coercive and therapeutic pressures the welfare state has brought to bear through various forms of emotional labour. More generally, what is

noteworthy about this approach is the way in which it brings together tools from the interactionist tradition with an analysis of the mechanisms of the macro-structural determinants of behaviour, values, attitudes and beliefs.

**Chapter Three** outlines the study's research design. The discussion that follows is informed by two suppositions: that theory and method are fused (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992); and that the methods adopted must reflect the nature of the research problem at hand. Having first located the research within the Extended Case Study (Burawoy, 1998; 2009) method, the Chapter broadly follows a research journey that adopted a multi-methods approach. The exploratory nature of the research journey is described with particular reference to its turning points. The research design enabled me to build the context of the study, locating extra-local political and economic systems in relation to the place Valleyside, the Lifeline Girls' biographies and the ideology driving street-level welfare governance. This contextual work prepared the ground for the ethnographic work in one site of street-level welfare governance and the life story interviews that enabled me to forge linkages between situated action and vocabularies of motive (Wright Mills, 1940) and their extra-local determinants. I touch on many of the issues common to accounts of participant observation including the role of gatekeepers and insider/outsider status and the importance of the objective social positions of the researcher and the research participants. The final elements of the Chapter look at data keeping and analysis, the study's validity and its ethical considerations.

**Chapter Four** explores in depth the history of both Valleyside and the biographies of the Lifeline Girls. This Chapter is therefore divided in two distinct sections. An initial focus on 'place' is complemented by a second section examining the biographies of the group of welfare-reliant single mothers I met and talked with. In this way, the context of the study in relation to place and biography is established as a vital element of the Extended Case Study method (Burawoy, 1998; 2009). This account begins by considering the impact of advanced capitalism on Valleyside, measured both economically and culturally within this Valleys community with particular reference to the stigmatisation of the community and the nature of state presence. In order to better understand this representation of Valleyside we then identify the historical conditions that ushered in this era of late capitalism (including de-industrialisation,

de-urbanisation and the complex implications of the decline of the male breadwinner and the family wage). Here, the contemporary debasement and degradation of Valleyside is contextualised by its economic drivers. This focus on place is then complemented by an examination of the biographies of Lifeline Girls, the group of welfare-reliant single mothers, I met and talked with. The collections of capitals they have inherited are described in relation to the strategies of survival or 'getting by' they have historically deployed to navigate the social world. In this way this analysis identifies their experiences of structurally grounded inequalities and the symbolically and materially disadvantaged social location the Lifeline Girls occupy.

**Chapter Five** further examines how the context of the field "is structured and how the key agents under study fit into it – interact with it and constitute it" (Sayer, 2010: 248). Specifically it is a critical analysis of the political rhetoric that governs the key welfare state instruments that the Lifeline Girls interact with: Jobcentre Plus and Lifeline. As such the Chapter focuses on two key fields of welfare state governance: the dominant rhetoric of 'welfare to work' and the alternative rhetoric of community development. The key tenets of these two approaches to tackling poverty (one that targeted people and another that targeted places) are outlined. This clears the ground for an analysis exploring the principles that these fields of policy shared. It is argued that in both fields key policy themes like 'parenting' and 'community' were subordinated to the moral work imperative as it is now extended to those traditionally thought to be outside of the labour market. This is largely accomplished through a moralising rhetorical agenda that elides public issues with private troubles (Wright Mills, 1959). It is argued that this symbolic moralising highlights a culture of poverty that renders the structures of constraint and opportunity less visible. It fails to discuss various types of cultural, economic and social capital that mediate decisions to take employment and care for families and ensure 'choices' are encountered and 'risks' taken. However this Chapter also argues that a community development approach enables 'spaces of contestation', to the dominant neo-liberal political project to emerge. This is because state sponsored community development focused on the institutional deficiencies of mainstream policy implementation and endorsed grassroots innovation.

**Chapter Six** outlines the principles that governed the practice of Lifeline itself. In particular the Chapter highlights how these principles resisted a key element of the intensification of capitalism in Valleyside: the presence of a radically altered welfare state that coerces welfare-reliant single mothers into vulnerable labour. Here, Lifeline's Support Workers are understood not as revolutionary opponents to, or unwitting managers of, current welfare policy but as pragmatic mitigators against its worst effects i.e. the coercion of the poor into low waged and low status employment. Lifeline's contestation was contingent and it worked *within, but against* the state: compliance with the extension of the imperative to work to those traditionally assumed to be caregivers rather than breadwinners was matched by an emphasis on the accrual of capitals. Therefore Lifeline's status as 'space of contestation' was founded on its attempt to re-conceptualise the rights of the single mothers they work with. Lifeline aimed to shelter single mothers from dominant welfare state practice by exploiting gaps in the local labour market and supporting them to become 'career carers' (nurses, social workers, speech therapists etc). A further key element of the Lifeline ethos was the intensive psycho-social support of Lifeline's Support Workers. This support was designed to help the Lifeline Girls develop strategies of 'getting on' in place of past strategies of simply 'getting by'. The principles of Lifeline reflected recognition of the significance of biography and place in determining the strategies the Lifeline Girls were able to adopt to negotiate the social world. We see how Lifeline emerged from the community development sphere through the dispersal of welfare state activity and how in this context Lifeline's status as a partially legitimate and conditionally autonomous site of welfare governance was established.

**Chapter Seven** explores the relationship between the women I met and the key instrument of dominant welfare practice, Jobcentre Plus. To this end the Lifeline Girls' narratives of their *Work Focused Interviews* with Lone Parent Advisers were analysed. The *Work Focused Interview* formed an integral part of Jobcentre Plus' *New Deal for Lone Parents* initiative and was first rolled out in April 2001. Here how the Lifeline Girls constructed stories around these *Interviews* was used to begin explore shifting orientations Lifeline Girls hold in relation to the institutions of family and employment. Part of this contemporary welfare strategy involved changing who people think they are (as mothers, workers and carers) in the context of a changing welfare regime. The *Interview* is a mechanism grounded in the legitimacy and power

of the state to generate such changes in behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs. This Chapter identifies the material and symbolic power of this mechanism of welfare state power. In this context, the Lifeline Girls' strategies of 'getting by' that focused on full-time motherhood, increasingly lost legitimacy (both symbolically and materially). As such the *Interview* could be seen as a force of both misrecognition and maldistribution as it added "the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation" (Fraser, 1999: 46). The materiality of vulnerable employment and the Lifeline Girls expectations of the local labour market formed the background to the stigmatising practice of Jobcentre Plus. The practices of Jobcentre Plus were perceived as coercive, less concerned with providing support to people living in poverty than controlling their future trajectories into low waged and low status labour.

**Chapter Eight** examines the professional ideology of Lifeline's Support Workers. Every occupation has its own guiding ideology, a construct of that organises the norms and expectations of a particular sphere of work (see James, 1989; Colley, 2003). This professional ideology was built on the emotional labour of Support Workers in the therapeutic setting of Lifeline. At the heart of the Lifeline ideology was the extraordinary nature of the Support Workers labour process as their emotional labour was more intensive in focus and extensive in scope, than that of the state's established social pathologisers (Wright Mills, 1943). Psycho-social therapeutic interventions of Support Workers were the foundation of a form of emotional labour that was focused on coaching the Lifeline Girls through the challenges they faced in to the day to day and saw Support Workers heal damaged identities and encourage the Lifeline Girls to generate new ways of navigating the social world. This extraordinary form of emotional labour meant the imposition of therapeutic feeling rules traditionally found in the private realm moved into the public realm. It also meant the personal worlds of Support Workers were heavily invested in their work: *who* they were defined *how* they laboured. As such Support Workers cultivated an 'insider' status that allowed them access to the private worlds of the Lifeline Girls. Within Lifeline the labour process had two core elements: *firstly* Support Workers were tasked with generating a particular form of emotion work from Lifeline learners; *secondly*, in doing so Lifeline generated control over the emotion work of Support Workers themselves. Therefore Lifeline shaped not only the dispositions of those laboured upon but also the labourer herself. This Chapter explores each of these

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aspects of the labour process in turn by drawing on Hochschild's (1983) seminal work on the concept of emotional labour, and the later, partly derivative work of Sharon Bolton (2005).

**Chapter Nine** examines the Lifeline Girls' experiences of Lifeline and the particular system of meaning found within the Lifeline setting. This system of meaning validated 'meritocracy' and 'choice' and was a further mechanism within Lifeline that generated changes in behaviour, values, attitudes and beliefs. Specifically in this context the vocabulary of motive (Wright Mills, 1940) that the Lifeline Girls routinely drew upon within Lifeline to articulate their futures is explored. A future of full citizenship was constructed through a new found vocabulary of liberation and fulfilment, which could only be found with participation in the labour market. The Lifeline Girls engaged in a form of reflexivity whereby their past selves were characterised as passive, static figures in contrast to the active and mobile selves of the future, who embraced the meritocratic allocation of recognition and reward. Participating in Lifeline was a revelatory experience, a pivotal biographical moment that promised a more ordinary life. The experience of Lifeline as a 'revelation' for its participants and a site for the reinvention of self is identified. Lifeline enabled the Girls to negotiate the social world with new strategies of 'getting on' through a set of relations to education and labour market opportunities far different to those previously conceived. Escaping their highly restricted social position was seen to be a real possibility for the future and this group of women began to construct themselves as redemptive, responsible citizens. However despite fervent claims to liberation the Lifeliners' escape from disadvantage was highly circumscribed and constrained: structures of class and gender remained key in determining 'choices' in relation to future labour and education market trajectories. Thus, the Chapter explores the Lifeline Girls' meaning making in relation a 'Bourdieusian' inspired concept that understands reflexivity to be a tool or technology of governance (Adkins, 2002).

**Chapter Ten** explores the Lifeliners commitment to motherhood in the context of changing material and symbolic constraints of a restructuring welfare state. The Chapter highlights the importance of class, gender and place in shaping women's attitudes towards motherhood. However it specifically examines how the Lifeline Girls' orientations to motherhood are reconfiguring with the changing presence of the

welfare state in their lives. In light of the restructuring welfare state and the concomitant shifting dominant constructions of what it means to be a good mother for the Lifeline Girls the moral imperative to be work was both deeply felt and fraught with tensions. The 'being there' practices of motherhood, that typified the way in which commitments have historically been fulfilled by the Lifeline Girls and the mothers of Valleyside, are outlined first. Here we see how the 'being there' model of motherhood 'fits' with community expectations of what a mother should be.

The discussion that follows focuses on the divided selves (Bourdieu, 1999) of the Lifeline Girls and particularly the way in which residual knowledges of the commitment of motherhood clashed with the dominant moral imperatives they encounter through their interactions with Jobcentre Plus and Lifeline. The anxious and painful reflections on the part of this group of women were the defining feature of their divided selves and we see that the 'liberation' and 'self-fulfilment' that comes with participation in the workforce comes at a cost. Hence the Lifeline Girls thus engaged in a particular form of reflexivity generated by a crisis (see Bourdieu, 1999; McNay, 1999; 2000) stimulated by the restructuring of the welfare state and their movement across fields, from the home to the worlds of education and employment. The resettlement of the welfare state, like any ideological stance, brought with it new rules for managing feeling (Hochschild, 2003). Finally, the ways in which Lifeline Girls resolved this tension by reconciling and integrating working and mothering identities are explored. Amongst the Lifeline Girls there was a wish to become a 'better' mother and a 'better' citizen i.e. a mother who participates in the labour market. This marked a fundamental change in the way the commitment to motherhood is pursued for the Lifeline Girls.

The final **Reflections Chapter** draws out key elements of the Extended Case Study method namely making linkages between this relatively small scale study and ongoing popular, political and academic debates. To this end several inter-related fields of discussion will be touched upon: *firstly*, the theme of the changing same (Hill Collins, 2009) is explored in relation to patterns of resistance and acquiescence and the perpetuation of structurally grounded inequalities; *secondly*, the theme of 'moving on' (by acknowledging the importance of the biographies of people and the histories of places in considering the perpetuation of structurally grounded inequalities)

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considers the kind of society, and specifically the model of welfare should have if we wished to ensure greater equality. Running through this discussion is the subversion of the individualisation thesis that underpinned the restructuring of the welfare state. As such there is an attempt here to apply the knowledge of the mechanisms of power detected in this case study more generally. However is only attempted with caution: it is not assumed the necessary relations found amongst the Girls within Lifeline in Valleyside exist elsewhere and are widely distributed. That said, even the analysis of the unusual (and distinctly unrepresentative) case can reveal general processes and structures laying bare structures and mechanisms that are normally hidden (Sayer, 2010).

# CHAPTER TWO

## Inequality and Late Capitalism:
## Theoretical Issues and Practical Problems

This Chapter outlines and defines the key theoretical and conceptual touchstones of this study. Social theory is important, not only because it reveals the broader context of our actions, but because it can also show how the context of these actions creates the illusion of its own absence: "of an everyday world that is autonomous and self contained" (Burawoy, 2009: xiii). However, while it is theory that allows us to see a social reality "one of the most difficult tasks is to descend from the world of thought to the actual world" (Marx and Engels, 1998: 474). The difficulty lies in fruitfully conceptualising the objects of study and identifying lines of inquiry that allow us to *accurately* investigate the social world. Conceptualisation is incredibly important simply because to "classify a thing in a certain way ... is to commit oneself to a certain line of inquiry" (Bhaskar, 2008: 201). Given the implications for policy making in relation to the study of inequalities theorising perhaps assumes perhaps even greater significance. Sociological analyses of stratification do permeate the social world they seek to explain. With this in mind the approach outlined below allows us to consider how the restructuring of the welfare state (and specifically the moral imperatives relating to family and employment *it* prescribes) played out symbolically and materially in the lives of some of its targets, the Lifeline Girls, in one place, Valleyside. At the core of this theoretical perspective is the understanding that systems of domination and exploitation are perpetuated by the maldistribution of material rewards and the misrecognition of status embedded in institutional meanings and practices.

The Critical Realist perspective that is adopted here counters the individualisation thesis that dominated sociology in the 1990s (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). The individualisation thesis identifies the Lifeline Girls as self-reflexive and self-determining agents in an era of Modernity that is increasingly characterised by diminishing or weakening structures of constraint (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002;

Giddens, 1991). Instead it is argued that the social change experienced by Valleyside and the Lifeliners is indicative of the intensification of capitalism and an era of extreme capitalism (Crompton, 2008). Here theorising inequalities is underpinned by a particular reading of the mutual interpenetration and interdependency of the two dualisms at the heart of sociological analysis: material/symbolic and structure/agency. This approach borrows from Nancy Fraser's (1999) bivalent model of class and gender in advocating a perspectival dualism that explicitly considers *both* the material *and* symbolic dynamics of class and gender formations. In relation to the dualism of agency/structure we follow C. Wright Mills (1959) in his assertion that the promise of sociology lies in examining the interconnection between private troubles and public issues. Given the focus of this study, upon such subjective experiences of making meaning and taking action for the Lifeline Girls, it remains important to note that such research is indeed conceptualised within the context of the wider social practices and structures external to but rooted within the everyday life experiences of those situated within Valleyside.

The theoretical framework allows us to examine the impact of the restructuring welfare state on a group of welfare-reliant single mothers in Valleyside. Specifically we can conceive of the new welfare mechanisms that repositions single mother welfare claimants within both symbolic and material constraints. For the Lifeline Girls the welfare state restructured in two key ways: *firstly* the governance of the welfare state dispersed to new sites of practice such as Lifeline within the community development sphere; and *secondly* the welfare state extended the moral imperative to enter the workforce to those traditionally excluded from the labour market. This restructuring positioned the Lifeline Girls within new material and symbolic constraints that meant they generated new strategies of navigating the social world. In relation to these dimensions of welfare restructuring and the impact they had on the Lifeline Girls several analytical concepts are useful including: (i) the strategies the Lifeline Girls' pursue in relation to reward, recognition *and* commitments (Sayer, 2005) i.e. 'getting by' and 'getting on' (Lister, 2004) and their relationship to the capitals (Bourdieu, 1997) that the Lifeline Girls possess; (ii) the mix of coercive and therapeutic pressures the welfare state brought to bear through various forms of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983; Bolton, 2005) in relation to the dominant and alternative feeling rules found under the auspices of the welfare state; (iii) and finally

the possibility of the fractured identities (Bourdieu, 1999) of welfare claimants, characterised by intense emotion work, arising amidst residual, dominant and emergent meanings relating to the institutions of employment and family. Here the dispersal of the welfare state outlined by Clarke (2004) is married to the Bolton's (2005) theory of emotional labour to conceive of the multiple contradictory forms of welfare practice and its impact on its targets.

These key concepts are used here to understand the ways in which inequalities are ordered, reproduced and experienced in daily life. What is noteworthy about this approach is the way in which it brings together tools from the interactionist tradition (for example Goffman's work on stigma (1990) and Garfinkel's (1956) work on degradation ceremonies) with an analysis of the mechanisms of maldistribution and misrecognition. In this respect the study follows in the footsteps of Sharon Bolton's (2005) work on emotional labour. If we wish to explore how structural mechanisms of change are experienced we must refer to the level of taking action, meaning making and interaction. At the heart of this approach is the desire to move between the everyday worlds of the Lifeline Girls and the external forces that shape and constrain those worlds. The marriage of these approaches allows us to move between structure and agency, between the micro and macro, with view to explaining not only how the mechanisms of power found within the welfare state have changed but how these are experienced by their targets. In keeping with the tenets of Critical Realism at the same time while this position does not deny the powers of intent that the Lifeline Girls possess it does focus on the structural relations and mechanisms of power they are locked into.

## 2.1    The intensification of capitalism and the individualisation thesis

Contemporary accounts of an increasingly individualised society largely stem from a particular understanding of social change relating to the labour market. Three key developments relating to this social change can be identified: *firstly*, the employment based communities traditionally associated with paternalist employers in heavy industry and manufacturing have been decimated (as 'a job for life, just down the road' is increasingly a phenomenon of the past); *secondly*, in such communities employment is increasingly characterised by flexibility and insecurity and what

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Beynon (1997) describes as hyphenated work (i.e. short-term, part-time, non-unionised etc)); *thirdly*, the numbers of women entering the workforce have increased. For Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) these changes marked an epochal shift to an individualist risk society within which people enjoy "reflexive biographies which depend on the decisions of the actor" (Beck, 1992: 88). In other words people determine their destinies actively, rather than following structurally determined pathways. This perspective highlights processes of de-traditionalisation, globalisation and individualisation that characterise an era of capitalism without class (Beck and Beck-Gersheim, 2002: 203): the old predictabilities and certainties of industrial society are being replaced by the risks and opportunities of a new age, which affords a new capacity for the agency of the social actor in negotiating the social world. In this reading, "it is ... a *lack* of social structures which establishes itself as the basic feature of the social structure" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 51).

The ascendancy of the individualisation thesis effectively silenced 'class' in the academic sphere at a time when inequality was rising and social mobility almost static (Gillies, 2005). Moreover the theory of the reflexive, late modern agent permeated the social world it apparently described with its credibility stemming from its seductive capacity to persuade individuals that they have the capacity to shape their lives however they choose. Alarmingly, its influence was significant in shaping current social policy as dominant voices followed Giddens' (1998) claim that achieving a more meritocratic society required people to embrace their personal citizenship and become responsible risk takers. In Britain therefore we have witnessed the emergence of a variant of neo-liberal ideology that "celebrates the expansion of the freedom of choice" (Clarke, 2004: 93). Significantly for this study the many variants of neo-liberalism hailed the freedom of women to make choices where before there were none in particular. This dovetailed neatly with a liberal form of Feminism in endorsing a new social world characterised by unprecedented opportunities for women (Baker, 2008). This concept of an epochal shift to a modern, progressive world where young women (like the Lifeline Girls) can enjoy freedoms inconceivable to generations before them is increasingly pervasive. As a result, in popular, political and academic discourse, structurally grounded inequalities are often purported to be "relic of the past" (Gillies, 2005: 835).

However this strand of intellectual thought is not without its critics who question:

> the assumption of a seemingly universal, disembedded and disembodied self, which somehow uniformly transcends the cultural, material and affective parameters that were once conceptualized as the underpinnings of identity formation (Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1169).

Instead analyses of the actions and meanings of social actors require situated understandings as the sociological concepts and contexts of class, gender, race etc continue to retain their significance albeit in a changing world. The changes identified above mark the spatial and temporal dimensions of the intensification of capitalism and were all are important features implicated in the changing patterns and rhythms of life of Valleyside. From this perspective recent social changes are better seen as the manifestation of the intensification of capitalism rather than a shift to new era populated by self-determining, self-fulfilling agents (Crouch, 1999; Crompton, 2008). What we are witnessing is the evolution of capitalism and its transitions from industrial capitalism, to welfare capitalism to advanced capitalism. This perspective challenges the diminishment or weakening of the structures that constrain and enable agency. Rather we should speak of fluid and shifting structures. It is a time:

> of crisis and change in which gendered social relations are being recast into forms that are not yet clear ... the associations between different forms of work, whether paid or unpaid, are being disrupted and the associations of masculinity and femininity with particular spheres of life and with different sets of responsibilities are being undermined (McDowell, 2004: 148).

In relation to the institutions of employment and family it makes sense to discuss *dynamic* processes of class and gender formation (Beynon and Glavanis, 1999). In regard to this study this necessitates an analysis of the tensions emerging from welfare restructuring through a situated analysis of the mechanisms of misrecognition and maldistribution in the perpetuation of inequalities.

## 2.2 Theorising inequalities

At the heart of sociology are two key dichotomies upon which analysis is implicitly built: agency/structure and material/symbolic. To adopt a perspective in relation to such dichotomies is of course is of course integral to an examination of the reproduction (and potential transformation) of class and gender relations. The approach adopted here follows Fraser (1999) in seeing both the material/symbolic as entwined and interdependent entities. Similarly, C. Wright Mills' (1959) approach to agency/structure guides this element of the theoretical framework. In relation to both dichotomies, while for analytical purposes it is necessary to mark then as distinct and separate, we must retain 'analytical dualism' as neither side of the duality can exist without the other. This position allows us to distinguish 'parts' from the whole and it may be so that particular cases can be explained primarily by either side of each dualism (economy or culture, structure or agency). We consider each 'dualism' in turn below.

### 2.2.1 Material/symbolic

Since the late 1990s, there has been a revival of class analysis with much of this work adopting a strong cultural tone, often with the work of Pierre Bourdieu is the central theoretical touchstone. Further key authors include Simon Charlesworth, Diane Reay, Andrew Sayer, and Beverley Skeggs. This 'cultural turn' in contributed to a "schizophrenic state" (Beynon and Glavanis, 1999: 2) in sociology between accounts of class, economy and inequality and those status, culture and identity. The theoretical position adopted here responds to the need to explicitly consider these perspectives together, as inequalities are seen to be generated by both material and symbolic processes (see Fraser, 1995; 1999; Devine, 2004; Sayer, 2005; Crompton, 2008).

If we recognise that inequalities are generated by both material and symbolic processes, an approach to social justice that incorporates both processes of redistribution and recognition is essential. It is certainly the case that all societies are characterised by inequalities of both economic 'rewards' and cultural 'recognitions'. Therefore claims for social justice broadly divide into two types: *first*, a more just distribution of resources and goods; and *second*, claims for equal recognition

regardless of difference (Fraser 1995; 1999). What we see here is a distinction between class structure and status hierarchy: the *former* "institutionalises mechanisms of distribution that systematically deny some members the necessary means and opportunities by which to participate on a par with others in social life" (Fraser, 1999: 39); while the *latter* "institutionalises patterns of cultural value that pervasively deny some of its members the recognition they need in order to be full, participating partners in interaction" (Fraser, 1999: 39). This position provides the basis for a bivalent theory of justice (Fraser, 1999) combining redistribution and recognition in a single comprehensive paradigm. While it is possible to classify groups according to whether they experience inequalities rooted primarily in the economic structure or the status order, most groups are in fact bivalent. As such they experience both processes and mechanisms of maldistribution and misrecognition that are fixed on creating a particular social location. Substantively the two are closely intertwined with each other. Both class and gender are then best understood as bivalent categories, for neither are simply rooted in the economic structure or the status order.

The roots of gender in both the material and the symbolic realm can perhaps be best understood with reference to the debate surrounding the paid and unpaid labour of women. The question at the heart of this debate considered:

> whether women's subordination was to be seen as being largely a consequence of the material exigencies of human reproduction in the circumstances created by the development of industrial capitalism... or whether the systematic ideological denigration of femaleness and femininity should be accorded more explanatory prominence (Crompton, 2002: 542).

The distinctions of the division between paid 'productive' labour and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labour, *and* the divisions within paid labour between higher paid, male-dominated occupations and lower-paid, female dominated occupations epitomise the intersection of axes of oppression. The economic structure generates gender-specific modes of domination manifest themselves as class-like differentiation. The distinction between the roles of producer and reproducer mark women as not only different but subordinate as they are seen to contribute *less*. Gender injustice therefore appears as maldistribution. However inequalities relating to gender have elements that 'fit' under the auspices of recognition politics. Gender

codes surrounding femininity (cultural interpretations and evaluations) devalue the feminine and women, again come to be seen as subordinate. Gender therefore is bivalent and has both economic and status aspects. Moreover it is clear that institutions, such as family and employment are home to practices that play a major role in the reproduction of inequalities. One way of thinking about the location of social actors in social space is through intersectionality i..e. to consider that inequalities may exist along a number of dimensions and intersect at social locations fixed to particular individuals. The intersection of the axes of injustice along dimensions of, say, class and gender, means that oppressed groups invariably must integrate both recognition and redistribution claims.

Both material and symbolic dynamics are important in structuring the constraints and opportunities for individual action taking and meaning making. Moreover, they are entwined and interdependent in the reproduction (or transformation) of gender and class inequalities. While in the social world the cultural is embedded in the economic (and vice versa) an analytical dualism that facilitates the sociological exploration of both is necessary. This insight governs the line of inquiry here, wherein the material sanctions brought to bear by the welfare state cannot be detached and analysed as distinct from its stigmatising effects. Theory therefore must acknowledge *"both the mutual irreducibility of maldistribution and misrecognition and their practical entwinement with one another"* (Fraser, 1999: 39; emphasis in original). From this perspective what becomes important is the examination of the interconnections between the material and symbolic realms rather than privileging the claims of dominance of one over another.

### 2.2.2 Agency/structure

Throughout the influential work of *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills (1959) emphasised that that the role of the sociologist is to connect individual experiences and societal structures, for the very promise of sociology lies in exploring the interconnection between private troubles and public issues. Indeed the *Sociological Imagination* is the ability to look beyond personality and the local environment and to wider social structures in order to explore the relationship between history, biography and social structure. The interconnections between

cultural and economic forces touched on above in relation to the experience of inequalities is therefore part of a wider debate about the nature of "constraints that operate upon the social actor and how it might be possible to overcome these constraints" (McNay, 2004: 177). This contention acknowledged the dualism at work in a social world made up of external forces that constrain and enable individuals who take action and make meaning that "on the one hand, individuals are constrained in their actions by wider social forces, but that on the other hand, the source of these external constraints lies precisely in the actions of ourselves and others" (Bottero, 2005: 54). Simply, we both shape and are shaped by the social world as societal structures and intentional agency are entwined and interdependent. However, an empirical analysis of inequalities necessitates an analytical separation between structure and agency (see Archer, 1996; and Crompton, 2008).

This study maps this interpenetration between agency and structure by exploring the way in which structural forces reveal themselves in the lived reality of social relations. However, sociological analyses invariably favour one dimension of this duality over the other attributing sociological explanation either to 'agency' or 'structure' (Bottero, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977). The approach means that particular structures are highlighted and privileged over others. Here there is perhaps an emphasis on the structures of the contemporary welfare regime and particularly the mechanisms of the welfare state that 'position' its targets in gender and class formations. If we wish to explore how structural mechanisms of change are experienced and complied with we must refer to the level of actions, meaning making and interaction within local sites of practices. The most obvious examples of this are found in the welfare eligibility interviews regularly conducted by Jobcentre Plus' Lone Parent Advisers and the therapeutic emotional labour of Lifeline's Support Workers. In this way analysis moves between structure and agency, illuminating their interdependence. It is not enough to say that the mechanisms of social change found within the welfare state have shifted and that the institutions of family and employment have reconfigured. Rather, we need to explore how these changes are experienced and what effects are produced. This position does not deny the causal

powers of intent that social actors possess[2], rather it reflects my research interests: the impact of the restructuring of the welfare state on a group of welfare-reliant single mothers living in a Valleys community. This position is adopted by Skeggs (1997) in her Care Girls research: she argues that hers:

> is not an account of how individuals make themselves but how they cannot fail to make themselves in particular ways... the women are not the originators of their identities but are located in temporal processes of subjective construction... Within these constraints they deploy many constructive and creative strategies to generate a sense of themselves with value (Skeggs, 1997: 162).

This position guides this study of the Lifeline Girls. However it is important to note there are distinct differences in the social location of the Lifeline Girls and Skeggs' Care Girls. The Lifeline Girls are part of what might be termed a 'welfare class', though they identify themselves as part of an 'underclass'. In contrast, for the Care Girls education was a means by which a 'floor' could be put on their circumstances. For the Lifeline Girls, other than losing their homes and families, it is hard to see how they could be worse off, for they are amongst some of the poorest women of our society.

## 2.2.3 Why is this important?

The question of the relative importance of the material/symbolic and structure/agency dimensions of the reproduction (and transformation) of class inequalities is an important aspect of academic, popular and policy debate. To successfully tackle inequalities (class, gender or otherwise) depends upon accurately identifying the processes by which they are reproduced. Different degrees of emphasis along the dichotomies of structure/agency and material/symbolic will make for very different kinds of policy prescriptions. As Crompton (2008: 117) states:

> a broadly materialist (or economic) account of class reproduction would suggest that the major explanation of class inequalities rests in the nature of access to and take up of material resources and the institutions that govern

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[2] This reflects the methodological position of the study, a Feminist form of Critical Realism, which is outlined in greater detail below.

such access – for example, higher education. ... In contrast, a broadly culturalist account might suggest that the major explanation rests in the spoiled (or conversely enhanced) identities and behaviours generated by dominant and subordinate 'cultures of class'.

As we see clearly in Chapter Five this dynamic is played out in current welfare policy and it is important to be wary of accounts that privilege one facet over the other, and displace either one aspect or the other. Instead this approach means that we do not highlight the material and occlude the cultural, or vice versa (Fraser, 1995; 1999). That said acknowledgement of the importance of both the material and symbolic does not preclude an emphasis of one over the other. Similarly an unwarranted focus on private troubles as opposed to public issues amounts to a failure to consider total social structures and produces remedies that deal with the issue of inequality in a fragmentary way (Wright Mills, 1943). Yet it is important not to lose sight of the experience of public issues as private troubles.

In order to accomplish this marriage of dualisms, a range of theoretical influences are drawn under the 'umbrella framework' outlined above and put to work at the concrete level. An attempt is made to use different approaches in combination with each other in order to understand the class and gender formations at work in a single site of investigation. Specifically, to explore how structural mechanisms of change relating to the welfare state are experienced, we refer to the level of action taking, meaning making and interaction embedded within the social world of Valleyside. This move from external forces to interactions within the local social world sees the complementary deployment of analytical tools from distinct traditions: exploring the nature of structures of maldistribution and misrecognition with interactionist perspectives at the micro level.

## 2.3   The welfare state and the welfare regime

The intensification of capitalism is a central feature of contemporary society and it can be examined through a focus on the workings of the welfare state and the experiences of its targets. A welfare state can be conceptualised in two distinct ways: as both a redistributive mechanism of material rewards; and as a symbolically interpretive apparatus constructed through knowledges, norms and identities (Haney,

2000; Clarke, 2004). Thus 'welfare' not only provides economic relief for the poor by redistributing wealth, but also constructs historically contingent representations and interpretations of *who* the poor are and *how* best to regulate them. This bestowal of both reward and recognition is grounded in the evaluation of our relative social positions in relation to a standard of citizenship. Citizenship is constructed through a set of moral imperatives that demarcate fault lines of compliance and contestation, making visible those who fall foul and become targets of welfare. Welfare states deploy economic and cultural sanctions to secure the compliance of their targets - creating and reflecting material and symbolic structures that constrain and enable the strategies that social actors adopt to negotiate the social world. For the targets of welfare provision, the material and symbolic dimensions of welfare relief are experienced mutually and concurrently, thus determining the 'space' available to them to manoeuvre in the social world (Haney, 2000; Clarke, 2004).

Any prevailing welfare contract has a clear moral dimension defining what it means to be a 'good' citizen. Although it is important to recognise the economic drivers of welfare reform when we consider the Lifeline Girls' experiences of the contemporary welfare regime we need to recognise the extent to which they are imbibed with moral values. Moral imperatives, the strategies in pursuit of reward and recognition that they inspire and the emotional responses they induce are at the heart of this study of welfare[3]. Formations of class and gender are in part therefore underpinned by the moral imperatives that the welfare state both avows and disavows. The concept of a 'welfare regime' is helpful here as it broadens our understanding of welfare to the links welfare states build between the state, the family, employment and the market (Haney, 2000). The apparatus of welfare states are constituted by causal mechanisms generating particular behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs by legitimating and privileging particular sets of institutional practices. Specifically, welfare states endorse assumptions pertaining to who should enter the workforce and who should care within the home, as well as how and why this should happen. The contemporary resettlement of the welfare state has attempted to dramatically reconfigure these assumptions. However both dominant and alternative meanings and conventions are

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[3] This approach to morality as normativity is developed further below through reference to social actors' commitments (Sayer 2005).

evident in sites of welfare practice and we now turn to theorising the existence of these contradictory pressures.

## 2.3.1   The dispersal of welfare governance

We can think of welfare states as both constituted by, and constitutive of, the social world (Clarke, 2004). In turn this understanding presses us to think of them:

> as *constructed* (rather than natural, necessary or inevitable); *contested* (by different social forces, and from different social positions); and *contradictory* (as a result of trying to manage contradictory environments and contain contradictory pressures) (Clarke, 2004: 147; emphasis in original).

This conceptualisation of construction, contestation and contradiction, leads us to think of the welfare state as subject to conflicting assumptions and therefore as a home for alternative strategies to tackling poverty. Thinking of welfare states as constructed, contested and contradictory allows us to make visible the spaces, practices and narratives of resistance. The welfare state is a site of multiple and contradictory pressures for change - pressures which may resist dominant trends. Therefore, while in recent years the power of neo-liberalism to reshape geographies of welfare has reached new levels (Haylett, 2003) this project of governance must be seen as only an *attempt* at hegemony (Clarke, 2004). Indeed the contemporary restructuring of the welfare state is "uneven, unfinished and unstable" (Clarke, 2004: 10).

At the heart of this analysis of the welfare state as a site of conflict is the concept of the dispersal[4] of governance (Clarke, 2004). One identifiable aspect of the contemporary resettlement of welfare governance includes its "shift from direct rule to dispersed coordination through processes of decentralisation, devolution, contracting and partnership" (Clarke, 2004: 10). Lifeline itself is one manifestation of this dispersal emerging from processes of devolution and decentralisation through the recent rejuvenation of community development policy. Through this dispersal a

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[4] The term is used to conceptualise the flow of governing to non-state agencies (Clarke, 2004). Here it is used to accommodate the community development sphere under the auspices of welfare state activity.

welfare state made up of many sites, modalities and technologies of power is generated, with some potentially working both "within and against the state" (Craig and Mayo, 1995: 105).

In this context we can conceive of the potential for 'spaces of contestation' to emerge under the auspices of the welfare state and while dominant voices are clearly heard, voices of dissent can also be detected. The 'spaces of contestation' that do emerge are likely to possess only conditional autonomy (Newman 2001; Clarke 2004) and any contestation is likely to be contingent upon a degree of compliance with dominant ideologies and practices and the capacity to capture a degree of legitimacy. Within such 'spaces of contestation' social actors may perhaps negotiate the terms of their exploitation by creating alternative institutions of employment and family (Burawoy, 1991; 2000). Following this understanding of the welfare state as constructed, contested and contradictory, sites of welfare practice can be understood as sites of gender and class struggle (Haylett, 2003) that engender both compliance and contestation. We can thus theorise the contradictory mix of dominant coercive and alternative therapeutic pressures the arms of a dispersed welfare state may bring to bear. Such an understanding of the partial and uneven nature of neo-liberal welfare reforms complements Massey's (1984) analysis of the enormously different ways in which capitalist development manifests itself in practice. In this context it is important to examine the way in which space - the history of locality - makes a difference. Taking on such theoretical postulations, this is a spatialised account that explores the uneven impact of both a variant of neo-liberal welfare reform and the subsequent experience of advanced capitalism experienced within a particular locale.

## 2.4   Strategies, capitals and symbolic violence

The concept of strategies, capitals and symbolic violence are key conceptual devices that allows us to examine the systems of domination and exploitation that maintain the maldistribution of material rewards and the misrecognition of status embedded in institutional meanings and practices. It is necessary to locate the strategies social actors pursue to negotiate the social world within this conceptualisation of welfare restructuring. Strategies are focused on the pursuit of material reward, symbolic recognition *and* commitments. Which strategies we pursue and how we pursue them

are indicative of our social location, a location filtered through formations of class and gender. The strategies we deploy are influenced by our inheritance of and our capacity to accumulate capitals (Bourdieu, 1997). The concepts of strategy and capitals allow us to explore how Lifeline Girls' negotiate the social world in pursuit of reward and recognition and make linkages with the external forces that constrain and enable them. The Lifeline Girls, like us all, pursue what can be termed bounded strategies in relation to the capitals they possess, and this necessitates a focus on the structures within which meaning, making and action taking are embedded. Capitals are scarce and not accessible to everyone on the same basis and it is this struggle for capitals that tends to validate the dominance of the powerful to the cost of the powerless. Capital presents itself in three fundamental guises: economic, cultural, and social:

> *Economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights (Bourdieu, 1997: 47).

> *Cultural capital* can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.); ... and in the institutionalized state ... in the case of educational qualification (Bourdieu, 1997: 46).

> *Social capital* is the ... network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. ... The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Bourdieu, 1997: 51).

Inequalities relate to these forms of capital and our possession of and capacity to accrue them. While each allows us to consider a corresponding source of inequality, it is important to note that economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital. Indeed the other capitals are disguised forms of economic capital, and although not reducible to economic capital, it is economic capital that is at the root of their effects (Bourdieu, 1997: 54).

A further form of capital is symbolic capital or the form capital takes when it is misrecognised i.e. when it is undetected as capital. Symbolic capital is thus "denied capital, recognised as legitimate, that is misrecognised as capital" (Bourdieu, 1990a:

118). The conversion of capitals into the symbolic is crucial to understanding relations of power and inequality. Power relations are forged and consolidated through this process:

> capital (or power) becomes symbolic capital, that is capital endowed with a specific efficacy, only when it is misrecognised in arbitrary truth as capital and recognised as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1990a: 112).

Symbolic capital buys privilege and power through its legitimacy (the discussion of symbolic violence makes this clear below). Symbolic capital is inherited and reproduced through the espousal of the assumption that the distribution of capital is natural and right and "chances [are] theoretically available to all" (Bourdieu, 1990a: 141). In the case of the Lifeline Girls, like us all, the collection of capitals they have inherited and have been able to accrue is indicative of the disadvantaged social location they occupy. Through the metaphor of capital we can map how a group of welfare-reliant single mothers are born and locked into structures of inequality. It is the distribution of capitals amongst us determines that our chances of negotiating the social world successfully and securing reward and recognition from others.

Indeed it is possible that the experience of welfare practice is embedded within soft forms of domination or symbolic violence: the often invisible structures of domination and exploitation (Bourdieu, 1990a). The concept of symbolic violence urges us to be wary of the everyday assumptions that underpin the soft forms of rule that maintain hierarchies of power and is critical of the entrenched relations of domination and privilege that mask and justify the arbitrariness of the social order. Symbolic violence is evident in:

> the regularities inherent in an arbitrary condition ... [which] tend to appear as necessary, even ... natural, since they are the basis of schema of perception and appreciation through which they are apprehended (Bourdieu, 1990a: 53-54).

It is a gentle, invisible form of violence "unrecognised as such, chosen as much as undergone" (Bourdieu, 1990a: 127). Such soft domination is secured through consent to an unchallenged social order – its effectiveness secured by the ease with which it is deployed. Indeed as Bourdieu puts it "symbolic violence cannot be exercised without

the contribution of those who undergo it" (Bourdieu, 2001: 40). Importantly it "presents itself as the most economical mode of domination, because it best corresponds to the economy of the system" (Bourdieu, 1990a: 127). Thus, while a therapeutic form of emotional labour may not evoke feelings of shame, guilt and remorse in the way more coercive practices might this is not to say it is not implicated in the perpetuation of processes of misrecognition and maldistribution.

There are some significant ethnographic studies of working class life (notably those of Skeggs (1997) and Charlesworth (2000)) that highlight the limited access of working class people to circuits of distribution that enable the generation of capitals. The working class self here is immobile and redundant, rather than dynamic and purposeful, and far more likely to pursue a strategy of what Lister (2004) terms 'getting by' than 'getting on' to navigate the social world. However there is a wealth of qualitative studies that examine transitions, from one social position to another in relation to the "subjective experience of personal change" (see Thomson, et al., 2002: 337). These experiences have been characterised within the literature as epiphanies, turning points and fateful moments (Millar, 2007). In making such transitions social actors can break their anticipated trajectories through the social world: they are accruing capitals.

The restructuring of the welfare state (its dispersal and its extension of the moral imperatives to enter the labour market) mean new strategies of 'getting by' and indeed perhaps 'getting on' may be deployed by welfare claimants as material and symbolic forces change. The means by which women come to comply with, resist, acquiesce to or valorise the imperatives to work and care tells us about their social location and the ways in which what it means to occupy this location may be changing In this way we can explore Pateman's (1989) contention that for women the choice (or strategy) is to become either a 'lesser man' and accept lesser employment, or a 'lesser citizen' and accept duties within the home (Pateman, 1989).

### 2.4.1   Strategies and commitments

Strategies relate not only to the pursuit of reward and recognition - the accrual of capital - but also to commitments. Indeed, commitments are the "causes, practices or

other people that matter most" (Sayer, 2005: 39) to people. Social actors invest emotionally in commitments, not for the reward or recognition that they might bring, but because they are valuable for their own sake. The purpose of pursuing a commitment lies in its role in enabling people to flourish and live fulfilling lives, rather than in a struggle for power and privilege. Commitments therefore:

> are more durable than mere preferences; people invest in them emotionally and pursue and defend them even when it brings them disadvantage ... the emotional quality of such commitments attests to their seriousness in terms of their implications for well-being (Sayer, 2005: 126).

Commitments invoke a stronger sense of attachment and stronger emotions than the pursuit of reward or recognition. The struggles of the social field articulated by Bourdieu (1997) through capitals therefore needs to be redefined to include the commitments that social actors feel are "worthy of pursuit" (Sayer 2005: 67). Perhaps the most obvious sources of commitments are those relating to family and the moral rationales and feeling rules that govern the ways social actors commit to parenting.

However, gender, class and spatial processes influence our pursuit of commitments - notably which are chosen and how they are pursued - is rooted in both class and gender processes. Historically, how the commitment to motherhood should be discharged and particularly how these practices relate to entering the workforce has been seen in different ways by different groups of single mothers as they were defined in terms of class, ethnicity and sexuality but also by place (Duncan and Edwards, 1999). Significantly "women in different class positions, different household arrangements and living in different localities negotiate their respective responsibilities and moral obligations for caring and earning" differently (McDowell, 2005: 273). There is a wealth of literature across welfare states that supports these findings (see for example, Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Standing 1999; Duncan and Edwards, 1996; Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Hays, 2003; McRae, 2003; Duncan and Strell, 2004; Duncan 2005; Irwin 2005; Power 2005; Crompton, 2006a; 2006b; Vincent and Ball, 2006; Braun, et al., 2008). Specifically, the preference of working class mothers to stay at home to look after their own children rather than participate in a labour market has been established. In relation to the Lifeline Girls and Valleyside it is important to note that those mothers living in homogenous, white, working class

communities are more likely to express more traditional attitudes, values and beliefs in relation to mothers' participation in the labour market (i.e. non-participation) than women with similar background characteristics but from areas with a greater class mix (Irwin, 2005)[5]. It is also significant for the Chapters that follow that men, across classes, have more traditional attitudes to gender roles than women (Crompton, 2006a).

Attitudes to family and employment are closely related to behaviours relating to family and employment: it is well documented that "[c]lass-differentiated patterns of behaviour are also systematically associated with class-associated variations in attitudes to family life" (Crompton 2006b: 664). Using successive datasets from the British Household Panel Survey, Himmelweit and Sigala (2004) demonstrated that through the 1990s, as number of mothers with young children in employment rose, fewer mothers believed that pre-school children suffer if their mothers work outside the home. However, while quantitative and qualitative research (Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004; Braun et al., 2008) shows that working class mothers' attitudes towards employment are changing and becoming a working mother is more acceptable, research also emphasises the stability of attitudes towards mothering. In Britain, for example, both quantitative and qualitative studies regularly report that up to a half of mothers believe that paid work is essentially incompatible with good mothering, while most of the remainder would only consider part-time work around school hours (Strell and Duncan, 2004).

These commitments to particular practices of motherhood are not experienced as a duty through which we encounter recurring moral dilemmas, but as "situated questions of responsibility and agency such as "How can I best express my caring responsibility?" (Sevenhuijsen, 2000: 10). Hence, in pursuing this commitment single mothers "employ a moral and relational rationality" (Strell and Duncan, 2004: 41). For the overwhelming majority of single mothers taking care of their children was their most important responsibility (Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Gillies, 2005). The "need to construct a morally adequate account of oneself as mother requires women of

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[5] It is also evident that middle and working class parents live in 'different worlds' and parent their children accordingly (most notably in terms of the education of children) (Gillies, 2004).

all classes to present their prioritisation of their children's needs" (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 72). However the restructuring of the welfare state means the answer to this question of the discharge of maternal commitments is potentially changing for many welfare-reliant single mothers at this time of rapid social change

The commitments people hold dear, and the manner in which they are pursued, may be challenged or endorsed by dominant moral rationalities and "the judgement of others" (Bourdieu, 2000: 280). Raymond Williams' (1989) use of the distinction between dominant, residual and emergent meanings offers us the means to conceptualise this process. Williams' perspective (like Wright Mills (1959)) encourages us to look beyond dominant meanings and examine the residual meanings that they attempt to displace and the emergent meanings they may attempt to co-opt or exclude. The welfare state thus emerges as a site of conflict where 'new' meanings collide with the 'old' and 'alternative' meanings emerge (Williams, 1989; Hughes, 1998; Clarke 2004). That commitments are embedded within what are essentially *fluid* moral rationalities is clear in the restructuring of the welfare state, a phenomenon that it is reasonable to expect the Lifeline Girls to have experienced While previous accounts of the single parents' commitments to motherhood have somewhat dismissed the role of the welfare state in shaping the nature of these commitment (see for example, Duncan and Edwards, 1999), this position needs to be re-evaluated in light of its recent restructuring.

## 2.5    Welfare states, feeling rules and forms of emotional labour

*Viable* strategies in the pursuit of reward, recognition and commitment are related to the feeling rules that welfare states endorse. Welfare states and their sites of practice effectively endorse particular feeling rules in relation to the institutions of employment and family. Feeling rules "are implicit in any ideological stance" (Hochschild, 2003: 99) and intimately bound up with the moral imperatives to work and care as upheld by the welfare state. It follows that when an ideological stance changes new feeling rules emerge in place of old ones and an array of ideologically driven emotional sanctions are 'in play' in an attempt to secure dominance. The most recent reforms of the welfare state are indicative of such a changing ideological stance. The promotion of reconfigured imperatives to work and care on the part of the

welfare state is both reflecting and creating shifting "conventions of feeling" (Hochschild, 2003: 87). Under the auspices of a dispersed welfare state we would expect the emergence of both dominant and alternative sets of feeling rules. Such changes to the conventions of feeling may necessitate a concomitant focus on the forms of emotional labour its welfare state workers must engage in and the types of emotion work that targets of the welfare state, like the Lifeline Girls, might undertake. It is the emotional labour of the street-level practitioners of the welfare state that attempts to generate the 'appropriate' behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs of welfare claimants in relation to employment and the family and the new symbolic and material constraints of a radically altered welfare contract. Emotional labour is one of the central means by which the welfare state regulates its targets, inducing in them as it does desirable or appropriate forms of emotion work.

The concepts of emotion work and emotional labour draw on two interconnected theories – one of feelings and another of labour. Society has a dominant "configuration of feelings" (Heller, 1979: 177) and therefore while feelings are experienced as instinctive, they are also historically situated and contingent. Feelings, like commitments might be situated by gender, class and place and can be seen as normative and a product of prescription and learning, subject to economic structures and status orders as different people (men, women, rich, poor, suburb dweller, estate dweller) will inherit different "worlds of feeling" (Heller, 1979: 178). Thus, the feelings experienced by an individual are in part determined by the tasks and roles allotted to the social location they occupy and moreover, the emotion work of social actors reflects and shapes wider social divisions. The emotional labour process is focused on "processing people, [whereby] the product is a state of mind...[It] requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983: 6-7). Emotional labour itself is predicated on the concept of emotion work which "can be done by the self upon the self, by the self upon others, and by others upon oneself" (Hochschild, 2003: 96). This approach to emotion also "assumes that emotions are actively 'managed' by people according to the 'rules' of a particular situation, set within a wider structure of cultural beliefs and values" (Bolton, 2005: 78). In this instance emotional labour is brought to bear by the welfare state, through its practitioners, to

ensure the targets of the welfare state, the Lifeline Girls, are successful in managing their emotions according to appropriate conventions of feeling.

The practices of emotional labour endorsed by the welfare state are instrumental in the welfare state's regulation of the poor – the way in which the welfare state managed the space that welfare claimants can occupy when negotiating the social world. Within a dispersed welfare state it is possible for distinct forms of emotional labour to emerge across distinct sites of governance (not least 'spaces of contestation', like Lifeline, as opposed to mainstream sites of welfare practice like Jobcentre Plus). Indeed contradictory pressures may be most visible through contrasting forms of emotional labour and such processes can be seen as instrumental in the creation of new material and symbolic constraints for the welfare claimants. A coercive form of emotional labour associated with the welfare state is well documented in the US (see for example, Piven and Cloward, 1976). In this case study the Jobcentre Plus welfare eligibility interview is a clear example of coercive practice. Such encounters with the state can be understood as something akin to what Garfinkel (1956) termed a degradation ceremony: an event "involving ceremonial or ritual organisation through which the degradation of status is achieved" (Garfinkel, 1956: 421). According to Garfinkel (1956: 420) degradation ceremonies are:

> [a]ny communicative work between persons, whereby the public identity of an actor is transformed into something looked on as lower in the local scheme of social types... The identities referred to must be 'total identities'. That is, these identities must refer to persons as 'motivational' types rather than 'behavioural types', not to what a person may be expected to have done or to do... but to what the group holds to be the ultimate 'grounds' or 'reasons' for his performance.

An integral part of a degradation ceremony therefore is a particular understanding of the *motives* underlying behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs. A degradation ceremony is a stigmatising practice (albeit in this case with fundamentally economic drivers). Stigma in the modern sense is used to refer to any condition, attribute, trait or behaviour that symbolically marks the bearer as culturally unacceptable or inferior and as such its subjective referent is the notion of shame or disgrace (Goffman, 1990). Goffman (1990) distinguishes three types of stigma: there are stigmas of the body (blemishes or deformities); of character (for example, being mentally ill, homosexual

or criminal) and of social collectives (racial or tribal). In this context the Lifeliners' experiences of dominant coercive welfare practice necessitate a focus on the stigma of character. It is in an interactional context, for example a welfare eligibility interview, which a social actor strives to cope with stigma by performing a 'normal' way of life (Gray, 2002). In such instances social actors acknowledge the incongruity between themselves and the "normals" and their infringement against the "norms of identity" (Goffman, 1990: 29). This practice of a degradation ceremony marks a disavowal of alternative constructions and practices of citizenship and as such the concept provides an analytical lens through which materially and symbolically marginalised identities can be understood in relation to the mechanisms that perpetuate inequalities.

However, in contrast to this coercive form of emotional labour it is also possible to conceive of the practice of an alternative process of emotional labour under the auspices of the welfare state – a therapeutic form of emotional labour. A therapeutic form of emotional labour is associated with the recent emergence a therapeutic culture primarily concerned with imposing a new conformity through the management of people's emotions (Furedi, 2004; Ecclestone, 2004). While its practice is distinct from more coercive forms of emotional labour any labour process of the welfare state is highly prescriptive about the behaviours, attitudes, values, beliefs and *emotions* that targets of welfare reform should display in relation to family and employment. Within therapeutic settings, such as Lifeline, reflexivity is generated as a tool for understanding, developing, asserting and articulating the 'right' kind of self. Here, reflexivity emerges as a technology of power, incorporated into the everyday reproduction of social structures rather than transcending them (Adkins, 2002). Indeed the emergence of a therapeutic arm of the welfare state is theorised as a part of a divergent strategy of welfare practice that contests the coercive practices conceptualised above. In this instance welfare claimants are targets of both forms of emotional labour, that in themselves represent distinct sets of feeling rules, both dominant and alternative, that emerged in the context of a dispersed welfare state.

## 2.6 Emotion work and fractured identities

The restructuring of the welfare state meant that the Lifeline Girls were subject to the reconfiguration of the dominant moral imperatives relating to work and care and as

such changing feelings rules. In response to such judgements, social actors often engage in emotion work (Hochschild, 1983; 2003) (the act of trying to change the degree or quality of an emotion). Broadly speaking there are two types of emotion work: "*evocation*, in which the cognitive focus is on a desired feeling that is initially absent, and *suppression*, in which the cognitive focus is on undesired feeling that is initially present" (Hochschild, 2003: 95; emphasis in original). Emotion work is easily recognised when there is a tension between what someone feels and what they know they ought to feel (Bolton, 2005). In such instances the judgement of others is deeply felt, presenting "major principles of uncertainty and insecurity, but also without the contradictions of certainty, assurance and consecration" (Bourdieu, 2001: 280).

Doubts abound when social actors feel their strategies for negotiating the social world and particularly their pursuit of commitments, fall short and in such instances a divided or fractured self (Bourdieu, 1999) may emerge. We might expect the targets of welfare reform, like the Lifeline Girls, to endure such fractured selves in response to new feeling rules the state now espouses in relation to family and employment. For example, the targets of welfare reform may be pulled in different and incompatible directions by the meanings and conventions surrounding motherhood found within sites of welfare governance and those tied to traditional practices associated with class, gender and place. When social actors encounter a social world of which they are product they are like "fish in water [and do] not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127). However when they encounter a field with which they are not familiar social actors may experience transformation but also disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty (Reay, 2009). In such instances there is "a lack of clarity about what the rule actually is, owing to conflicts and contradictions between contending rules and between rules and feelings" (Hochschild, 2003: 100). In a context of residual, dominant and emergent meanings and multiple allegiances, the answer to the question "how can I best fulfil my commitment to my caring responsibility?" (Sevenhuijsen, 2000: 10) may not clear for welfare-reliant single mothers. This is because the symbolic and material structures they are locked into are themselves changing.

A divided or fractured self is a reflexive self (Bourdieu, 1999). Indeed forms of authentic reflexivity (albeit fragmentary, contextual and discontinuous) arise when

social actors encounter fields with radically altered principles or move into a new and unfamiliar field (McNay, 1999; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Instances of crisis for the Lifeline Girls might include the prospect of losing entitlement to a particular kind or amount of welfare relief or moving into education or the workforce. The Lifeline Girls' 'reflexive' choices to pursue particular strategies of 'getting on' and 'getting by' are underpinned by class and gender formations (rooted in place) that necessitate the adoption of a *situated* understanding of reflexivity (see Adams, 2006).

## 2.7 Methodological approach: through the looking glass

The theoretical framework outlined here has implications for the methodological approach and research design. It identified that systems of domination and exploitation are maintained by the maldistribution of material rewards and the misrecognition of status embedded in institutional meanings and practices. An exploration of these processes necessitates a critical methodological stance that incorporates a model of causality at work in both the material and the symbolic realms. To this end this study adopts a Critical Realist approach. This is in keeping with the premise that each aspect of the research process should engage with the theoretical framework of the study as theory and method are fused together. The key tenets of Critical Realism are outlined below (including its stratified ontology; emphasis on causality; recognition of both material and symbolic practices; emphasis on the normative and reflexivity).

Critical Realism has a strong ontological dimension and as such its fundamental tenet stipulates that there is a world that exists independently from our thoughts of it. It therefore holds that there "exists both an external world independently of human consciousness, and at the same time a dimension which includes our socially determined knowledge about reality" (Bhaskar, et al., 2002: 5-6). While, the position recognises that social phenomena need interpretive understanding (they are concept-dependent) it is not this understanding that determines the nature of the social world: the "world can only be understood in terms of available conceptual resources, but the latter do not determine the structure of the world itself" (Sayer, 2010: 83). Stemming from this central touchstone is the assertion that while our knowledge may be fallible it is still possible to progress in our understanding of the social world and develop

sound knowledge of it. This Critical Realist approach thus charts a course between postmodernist and positivist stances.

In developing this argument Bhaskar identifies two sides of knowledge, distinguishing between the transitive and intransitive objects of knowledge (respectively those that *do* depend and those that *do not* depend on the invention of humans). Intransitive knowledge therefore is concerned with phenomena such as gravity and the rotation of the earth on its axis, birth and death. Transitive knowledge in contrast concerns the paradigms, theories and concepts of the day: the "artificial objects fashioned into items of knowledge by the science of the day" (Bhaskar, 2008: 11). This approach is underpinned by a stratified ontology distinguishing between and the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical*. While Critical Realists accept there is a *real* world, they argue that it does not follow that social scientists are able to access or observe it: the *real* "is whatever exists be it natural or social, regardless of whether it is an empirical object for us, and whether we happen to have an adequate understanding of its nature" (Sayer, 2000: 11). The *real* are the natural and social objects of the world that have structures and causal powers with the potential or capacity to generate change. The *actual* refers only to the changes that do occur when structures and powers are exercised: "what happens if and when those powers are activated, to what they do and what eventuates when they do" (Sayer, 2000: 12). Finally, the *empirical* dimension is defined as the "domain of experience" (Sayer, 2000: 12). The *empirical* concerns the elements of the above that are observable (as not all the powers and structures that we experience are observable). Critical Realists therefore argue that while "observability may make us more confident about what we think exists ... existence itself is not dependent on it" (Sayer, 2000: 12).

A defining element of Critical Realism is its understanding of causality. The fundamental element of causality is the concept that objects (including people and social phenomena) and structures possess causal powers – "that is, powers or dispositions that are generative of behaviour" (Sayer, 2000: 85). In order to grasp this causality the metaphor of 'mechanism' is employed: the observable events we witness are causally generated from mechanisms, which derive from the structures and objects at work. Mechanisms at work offer insights into the existence of the unobservable world. A critical realist approach thus advocates a social science that identifies causal

mechanisms and how they work as opposed to one that identifies only empirically observable events. To:

> switch from events to mechanisms means switching the attention to what produces the events – not just to the events themselves ... mechanisms sometimes generate an event. When they are experienced they become an empirical fact. If we are to attain knowledge about underlying causal mechanisms we must focus on these mechanisms, not only on empirically observable events (Bhasker, et al., 2002: 5).

In social science, explanation thus depends on identifying causal mechanisms and specifically if, how and under what conditions such mechanisms operate and are activated. Explaining why a particular mechanism exists, means determining the nature of structures and objects (Sayer, 2000). Critical realists understand the social world to be complex and messy (indeed it is quite possible to misattribute causal responsibility). Often a complex interaction of mechanisms is at work and a process of change can involve several causal mechanisms that may be only contingently related to one another. Some mechanisms may be relatively enduring while others are continuously changing. The same causal mechanisms can produce different outcomes according to context, according to its spatio-temporal relations. Moreover different causal mechanisms can produce the same results (Sayer, 2010). Fundamentally, the *"relationship between causal powers or mechanism and their effects is ... not fixed, but contingent"* (Sayer, 2010: 107; emphasis in original).

A Critical Realist approach incorporates a methodological stance that captures a further aspect of the theoretical framework of this study: the material *and* symbolic processes of class and gender formations. It argues that an analysis of symbolic or discursive practice must acknowledge the independence of its referents in the material realm ("absolute in the case of inanimate objects, relative in the case of human social phenomena" (Sayer, 2000: 39)). While it is possible to accept that *terms* exist within discourse, their referents may well exist outside discourse: *"discourse and knowledge are not merely self-referential"* (Sayer, 2000: 62; emphasis in original). Discourse does not wholly construct or constitute people, rather discourse is just one social practice. Therefore while the position insists on the material and spatial embeddedness of social relations, it also acknowledges discursive relations (this is particularly important for an analysis of the role of misrecognition in identifying the

reproduction of inequalities). It is also important to note that discourses have a performative dimension "because they are embedded in material social practices, codes of behaviour, institutions and constructed environments" (Sayer, 2000: 44). We need therefore to understand discursive practice as well as assess the extent to which it may generate change i.e. 'that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names' (Butler, 1994: 33). In this context social science thus focuses on both the interpretation of discourse *and* causal explanation.

This approach also has a strong normative dimension: *'in order to understand and explain social phenomena, we cannot avoid evaluating and criticising societies' own self understanding'* (Sayer, 2010: 39; emphasis in original). For this study this normative dimension is targeted at the exposure of the reproduction of exploitation through processes of misrecognition and maldistribution. This strand of social science has moral imperative at its core. In the context of this study this consists of the detection of symbolic violence in relation to the current welfare regime together with a reflection on the potential for alternative visions for it[6]. The Critical Realist perspective makes it possible to understand how the social world might be different if particular mechanisms did not interact in the way they do – it therefore has emancipatory potential.

A further key touchstone of Critical Realism is its emphasis on reflexivity. Its epistemic reflexivity is markedly different to that of the post modern turn. As we saw above, Critical Realism holds that social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful and that meaning is not only descriptive but constitutive (while also insisting there are also material constituents). This means there is always a hermeneutic dimension to social science (most obviously in ethnography and critical discourse analysis (Outhwaite, 1987). This position requires that social scientists understand there is a:

> fusing of the horizons' of listener and speaker, researcher and researched, in which the latter's actions and texts never speak simply for themselves, and yet are not reducible to the researcher's interpretation of them either (Sayer, 2000: 17).

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[6] This is one of the key standpoints of this study and as such brings to the fore the importance of reflexivity as we see below.

Standpoint theory (Harding, 1987) offers a useful emphasis on the situated character of knowledge and the importance of taking into account the way in which observations are mediated by the social location of the researcher. This critique is based on the premise that the research makes an attempt to understand 'others' and avoid androcentric or ethnocentric positions. The traps and pitfalls of such an approach are many particularly given my objective social position as we see in Chapter Three. The sociologist must appropriate the theoretical tools of the discipline and reflect on his or her labour in order to control the potential distortions generated in the construction of social science (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

## 2.8 Conclusion

The discussion above identified and defined the central theoretical and conceptual markers of this study that enable us to examine how a reconfigured welfare regime is experienced by its targets. This schema allows us to analyse the intensification of capitalism by focusing on the welfare state and its targets. Specifically through this framework we are able to identify the mechanisms of systems of domination and exploitation that maintain the maldistribution of material rewards and the misrecognition of status embedded in institutional meanings and practices The study of inequalities is supported by of the mutual interpenetration and interdependency of two perspectival or analytical dualisms (material/symbolic and structure/agency). A bivalent model of class and gender demands we acknowledge *both* the material and symbolic dynamics of class and gender formations (Fraser, 1999). In relation to agency/structure, subjective experience are conceptualised within the context of wider, though localised, social practices and structures. To conceive of this interdependency the concept of strategy was developed in relation to the Lifeline Girls' possession of capitals and their pursuit of reward, recognition and commitments. This enables us to focus on the Lifeline's Girls' interactions with a radically altered and dispersed welfare state and particularly the different forms of emotional labour - both coercive and therapeutic - it practices. In a context of residual, dominant and emergent moral imperatives to both work and care, the potential for the emergence of fractured identities or divided selves is theorised (Bourdieu, 1999) as are the possibilities of new forms of reflexivity.

This framework allows us to consider the welfare state both in terms of its ideology and its practice. Moreover, we are able to consider the experience of the stigma and economic hardship that welfare-reliant single mothers live with every day and the way these experiences are changing in light of their interactions with a reconfigured welfare regime and welfare state. This highlights the moral dimensions of social actors' struggles and particularly their strategies to survive and thrive and the changing orientation to commitments and forms of reflexivity and emotion work this may provoke in social actors. In particular we can consider these changes in relation to a potential site of contestation to the dominant welfare state and their respective practices of emotional labour. This framework allows us to at least conceive of the possibility of both contestation and compliance to a variant of the neoliberal attempt at hegemony that can be seen as 'working in and against' the state. Implicit in much of the above is a Critical Realist methodological position (see Bhaskar, 2008; Archer, 1996; and Sayer, 2010. This position is developed further in the Chapter that follows (along with an account of the research design and reflections on my research 'journey'.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Research strategy

*"They were red and rugged, the hands of a labourer, their knotted erubescence evidenced familiarity with the roughest work, they seemed as if the coarse substance at which they had laboured had become an element of their conformation ... [I] watched my own painter's hand, culpable, indulged, and epicene, as it moved adroitly in the perfect glove of its skin"*

*(Glyn Jones, The Valley, The City, The Village (2009))*

This Chapter outlines the study's research design. The discussion below is informed by two suppositions: that theory and method are fused (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992); and that the methods adopted must reflect the nature of the research problem at hand. The research design adopted Burawoy's Extended Case Study Method (1998; 2009) together with a multi-methods approach including participant observation, documentary analysis, statistical analysis, ethnographic, semi-structured and life history interviewing. This approach enabled me to build the context of the study, locating extra-local political and economic systems in relation to (i) the history of Valleyside itself, (ii) the ideology driving street-level welfare governance and (iii) the Lifeline Girls' biographies. This contextual work prepared the ground for ethnographic work in one site of street-level welfare governance, Lifeline, forging linkages between situated action and vocabularies of motive (Wright Mills, 1940) and their extra-local determinants. The Chapter broadly follows my 'research journey' through which I hope to establish my integrity both as researcher and author. There were two distinct phases of fieldwork: the *first*, a protracted exploratory phase was followed by a *second* more intensive period of fieldwork *and* analysis relating to a single site, Lifeline, as research interests were refined. Extracts from my research diary are used to illustrate the nature of this sometimes troubled process. Interview extracts are also illuminating in pointing why particular decisions were made in regard to both research design and substantive focus.

## 3.1 The Extended Case Study method

The overarching aim of the study is to connect the life stories of the local world with the institutions and structures that "co-process" them (Wacquant, 2002: 1480). Specifically it examines welfare-reliant single mothers' experiences of the current welfare regime and the complex interrelationships between individual and collective agency and the structures that both enable and constrain them. The methods deployed in a research study should be those best suited to the research problem in question and Burawoy's Extended Case Study' method is employed here to this end. Burawoy's (1998; 2000; 2009) Extended Case Study method has four dimensions: (i) the extension of the observer into the lives of participants under study; (ii) the extension of observations over time and space; (iii) the extension from micro processes to macro forces; (iii) and finally the extension of theory. The *first* dimension is common to all participant observation. The *second* dimension advocates that researchers spend extended periods of time with their subjects. In particular the task of the ethnographer is to understand the significance of the events of the social field. The *third* dimension demands that the focus of the researcher moves from the rhythms of the site to its geographical and historical context with a view to discovering the forces of extra-local determination as the part is recognised to be shaped by its relation to the whole. The *fourth* dimension refers to the need to draw on and elaborate existing theory to accommodate empirical findings.

For the moment the third dimension of the Extended Case Study approach is the primary focus. This dimension emphasises the role of external forces within ethnographic sites as localities are permeated by public discourses and economic structures that shape the practices and representations of participants. This chimes with a Critical Realist perspective that urges us to identify causal patterns and mechanisms in relation to major structural change. In such cases fieldwork is focused on the study of the concrete situations that illuminate such forces. The objective, again in keeping with the Critical Realist agenda, is then to identify the mechanisms of causal power that fix social actors in social space. This exploration of the logic of practice responds to Bourdieu's (1999) call for researchers to use knowledges of the material and symbolic contexts of situated action and meaning making and embed them within a critique of domination or exploitation. Therefore the challenge facing

the ethnographer is grappling with the relationship between local sites of practice and the external forces that pervade them. As such he/she must identify the constellation of relations that connect people, institutions, symbolic and material entities. The identification of this causal group (Sayer, 2000) enables us to situate practice in its wider context and facilitates theoretical thinking and causal explanation. The extension from an analysis of the events of the ethnographic site to the structures that govern them is at the heart of this study. This relates to the linkages between the *third* and *fourth* dimensions of the Extended Case Study method noted above. Here the rhythms of the site and its geographical and historical moorings are viewed in relation to the elaboration of existing theory. This method is appropriate for a study that examines the current welfare regime in relation to the social location of the social actor (through class, gender and place) by specifying "the structural determinants and institutional bases and limits of situated agency" (Wacquant, 2008: 9-10)). In order to pursue this line of inquiry I adopted a multi-methods approach that enabled me to build the context of the ethnographic site by profiling policy and place as well as examining the practice of the site itself.

### 3.1.1 A note on validity

The extent to which we can apply knowledge of the mechanisms of power detected in this study more generally is limited. We cannot assume the necessary relations exist elsewhere and are widely distributed - the extent to which this is the case must be empirically tested. This study does not test for replication across other cases. Instead it tests for corroboration as the reflections of participants were corroborated by others in the field of study. Unsurprisingly, "most instances of generality that do exist in the social world derive from necessity rather than from contingent consequences and patterns of events" (Sayer, 2010: 239). In other words, on some terrain we may feel more comfortable when speaking of generality than others and we must be consistently mindful of the importance of spatio-temporal context. An example for this study lies in the claims made regarding the welfare eligibility interview that is a modality of power rolled out across the United Kingdom in a similar format (yet even here we must be mindful as responses to this *Interview* were very much tempered by local experiences of community education). The relatively small sample, (both in terms of the single case study of one community education project in one locality, and

the number of participants) means there are no claims to representativeness of the experiences of single mothers for example. That said, in this case it is may be that the analysis of the unusual - and distinctly unrepresentative - reveals general processes and structures and lays bare structures and mechanisms that are normally hidden (Sayer, 2010). However the case study approach here is also an important way of making linkages between the practice of street-level welfare governance and on ongoing debates in the public sphere as well as identifying macro-structural determinants of local action and meaning making. In this way a case study approach is useful for studying *dynamic* class and gender processes (Crompton et al., 2000) as we "extract the general from the unique" (Burawoy, 1998: 5). This means the validity of the study is thus not related to its representativeness but to a robust and rigorous research design and process and the capacity to make such linkages. With a view to detailing this research design discussion now turns to my research journey.

## 3.2    The makings of a 'case'

This study focuses on one community education project, Lifeline, in one community, Valleyside. This was the first community I undertook field work in (though I did consider three alternative research sites and made spent considerable time working with two of these communities). Eventually, Valleyside, the first community in which I undertook fieldwork in the course of this research project, was chosen as the focus of the study. The community ranks highly in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2008) and is a key target for policy makers across multiple layers of governance. It also has a well established history of community development activity that predates the resurgence of the policy sphere in the late 1990s and is therefore something of an anomaly in terms of community development engagement across Wales. For this reason Valleyside was not necessarily representative of communities' experiences of state sponsored community development initiatives. However the setting was chosen precisely because it was such fruitful ground for research into the impact of the 'dispersed' welfare state. I found an abundance of opportunities for fieldwork across multiple sites and given the exploratory nature of my research this was heartening.

My introduction to Valleyside was through David, an academic (and friend of my supervisor), who while no longer living in Valleyside was born there and maintained strong links through the community development teams working on the estate. David kindly agreed to take me on a 'tour' of Valleyside's community development projects (since this initial meeting I spent four years working intermittently in the community). It became clear early on in the research process that negotiating access was not to be a one off event but an ongoing process punctuating the experience of fieldwork. This was evident in the hierarchy of consent (Dingwall, 1980) populated by several key gatekeepers, that I encountered. David was able to introduce me to the lead officer of community development activity in Valleyside, Richard. However, my access to Valleyside was through the community development projects themselves and Richard's team of community development workers, each of whom became gatekeepers in their own right. Securing access was relatively straightforward as, in part to ease my negotiations with gatekeepers, I was keen to offer my services as a volunteer. During these various introductions I often emphasised that I was hoping to create a 'reciprocal' relationship with the Valleyside.

In the early months of fieldwork I jumped into community life in any way that presented itself to me. I quickly began to meet with and talk to as many people involved in the process as possible. And so over four years, alongside Valleyside residents, I walked the Brecon Beacons, potted plants in greenhouses and fried onions for hotdogs. I played basketball, football, rounders and bingo. I volunteered with cinema club, swimming club, and an after school club. I studied Human Biology, Far Eastern Cookery, and Criminology. I asked for sponsorship door to door and collected donations with a bucket in hand. I worked with a Life Skills class, and organised a seminar series for Lifeline's Summer School. I would have joined a mosaics class but I was the only one who turned up! I often found myself learning alongside participants in the classroom (making notes, completing assignments, even receiving certificates). The nature of my participation reflected my desire to get a feel for the community development activity happening in Valleyside.

While there are various ways of characterising the roles researchers adopt in the field the most accurate way to describe my role throughout my time in Valleyside was that of observer as participant (Junker, 1960): this is a role in which the "observer

activities ... are made publicly known at the outset, are more or less publicly sponsored by people in the situation studied, and are intentionally *not* 'kept under wraps'" (Junker, 1960: 223). When introducing myself to participants I experimented with several versions of the same script (usually stating that I was '(just) researching the impact of community development projects in Valleyside'). Only one response, from a walking group, was uncomfortable: 'hey Girls, she is here to spy on us' (field note). This was an unusually frank but most likely commonly held initial reaction to my presence. From them on I avoided phrases that had connotations of 'evaluation' like 'impact' and 'examine' (not always an easy task). I often took chances to spend time with and speak to people as and when I could, all the while trying not to ally myself visibly to one particular individual or group[7]. In hindsight this early work was good preparation for the main thrust of the field work with the Lifeline Girls that followed. I was later able to say 'yes, I know so and so' and 'yes, I know where you mean, I have been there' and so my status as 'outsider' was perhaps 'softened' for the Lifeliners a little. This time can thus be seen as a protracted process of 'finding my feet' that also generated useful contextual data.

Intensive research is often exploratory and the core focus of my research developed with my exposure to the field. Insofar as I had a foreshadowed research problem it lay in a broad interest in the 'strategies of survival' deployed by the women of Valleyside and the impact of macro-structural determinants on those strategies. At this time I often took heart from the knowledge that a research problem is rarely fully developed before fieldwork begins (and in this case quite some time after). Indeed I was drawn to an ethnographic approach to research because it encourages you to embrace a research problem that arises from the field and explore it in depth. However two key moments dictated the trajectory of the study and clarified my research problem and the 'case' at hand.

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[7] It became clear that although I speak of Valleyside as a single community it is in fact characterised by distinct divisions and cleavages (an eyebrow raised when I mentioned a particular name could speak volumes and I think I quickly picked up when perhaps I should stop talking about particular acquaintances).

## 3.3 The case study

One key moment came during a strategy meeting of the health and social care professionals working in Valleyside. The meeting focused on the challenges that practitioners needed to tackle in their future work programme. Everyone present was asked, in turn, to make a substantive contribution, commenting on the issues that Valleyside faces and the potential ways of working in partnership to take actions forward. The response of one practitioner in particular sparked my interest. She said:

> Welfare reform is coming. We have to gear up for this. We have to be able to react to it and to try and prepare people as much as possible. The fallout is going to be massive. We have to prepare them as much as possible (field note).

The contribution, from Jessica, a community development practitioner, explicitly related to the relationship between the field of community development and the welfare state. The role of community development was cast as one of 'picking up the pieces', and responding to the 'fallout' of welfare reform: the intensification of the 'welfare to work' agenda necessitated a response from grassroots community workers.

It was at this time that I had also just begun to access Jessica's project Lifeline. That week I was continuing to introduce myself to learners individually, taking the time to explain my interest in their experiences of the Lifeline project. When I tentatively suggested to one that perhaps we could do a life story interview together her response was notable: 'what life? I didn't have a life until I started here' (field note). This off-hand retort made it clear that the participants of Lifeline felt they were experiencing dramatically changing lives – finding 'life' through the project even. If as Geertz (1975: 8) stated of fieldwork participants, "the trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to", this was an intriguing response. This was a second critical moment. I began to write my research diary with a greater sense of purpose and clarity:

> What is the relationship between community development and the welfare state? How do these fields interact with each other? ... What are the 'strategies of survival' for women living in deprived communities? How are they changing? (field note).

Together, these incidents gave me a research problem to wrestle with. I scaled down my work with other community development projects (in fact all bar those that I had made a volunteering commitment to i.e. the after school club and the life skills class). The core research setting, and site of ethnographic fieldwork, from that point was the community education project I have called Lifeline. I began to build adductive theory from my data and existing literature, exploring the relationship between the fields of community development and mainstream welfare practice and the impact this relationship has on the lives of women living in Valleyside. The focus was on detecting within this the causal mechanisms of welfare governance that generated the Lifeliners' behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs. It was at this stage that the causal group (the constellation of people, institutions, discourses and material entities which form a network of interaction) was slowly identified.

I was conscious that the research process required careful specification of the nature of welfare governance at a particular time, in a particular place. This was particularly important because of the localised, uneven and partial impact of neo-liberalism reform and the geographies of capitalism (Clarke, 2004; Massey, 1984). Therefore a critical element of the research design was intended to define the spatio-temporal context of the study by locating it in its biographical, historical and ideological formations. The way in which participants interacted with and indeed constituted this context was a key element of explanation (Sayer, 2010). I therefore began to chart the context of the study as a multi-scalar ethnography emerged (Clarke, 2008). Both empirical Chapters Four and Five (a community profile of Valleyside, together with an accounts of the biographies of the Lifeline Girls and an analysis of welfare policy) grounds the other empirical Chapters that follow by providing the context of the practice of the ethnographic site that follows.

Elements of more extensive methods were drawn on to create a community profile that located Valleyside within a sequence of historical transformations. Statistical data sources including the Office of National Statistics' 'nomis' data, the Census and the WAG's Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation were analysed to present a picture of community life with a particular focus on the local labour market. This work was complemented by 30 interviews (this number excludes the Lifeline Girls and their Support Workers who did contribute to the biographical element of Chapter Four).

These encounters took the form of semi-structured interviews and ethnographic interviews[8]. Amongst this number were Local Authority Councillors, Local Authority officers, representatives of the voluntary and community sector and residents of Valleyside. Interviews were conducted in a number of different places, predominantly the respondents' offices or community facilities but also 'out and about' (for example with the walking group). A snowballing technique was useful and it was through 'opportunistic sampling' that typically I recruited participants (as many interviewees commented 'oh, you must talk to so and so'). The people I interviewed in this context had a long standing connection with Valleyside and I particularly enjoyed spending time and talking with older members of the community about how Valleyside and the surrounding area has changed over the years. The data generated through these interviews was invaluable in building a picture of the life of Valleyside.

A further aspect of identifying the context of the study was the analysis of the political rhetoric surrounding the restructuring of the welfare state and to this end I undertook both documentary analysis of key Welsh, British and European welfare policy documents and elite interviews with policy makers in the field. The welfare state, like other forms of governance is created in part through its discursive apparatus: the analysis of discursive practices reveals the ways language is deployed to promote change and endorse ideology (Fairclough, 2003). The documents were sampled purposively as representative of the aspirations and remit of the policy initiative because they define the parameters of the relevant welfare programme. I conducted 8 semi-structured qualitative interviews with policy makers who had experience of working in the community development field within the WAG[9]. Initial contact with the relevant policy makers was made through sponsorship from supervisors although again a snowballing technique was useful with each respondent suggesting others who would be able to offers insights and generate data. Interviews were usually conducted

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[8] For notes on the approach to interviewing adopted here please see section on interviewing that follows below in this chapter.

[9] One element omitted from this study is interviews with the relevant policy makers in UK welfare reform and European Union community development. Unfortunately this was due to a lack of time and resources to devote to additional fieldwork.

[10] Indeed initial attempts to secure access to Lifeline were denied as the project was in its first year. It was only during its second year that I gained access to Lifeline. This was possibly because Lifeline is a project that tips from funding crisis to funding crisis and alarm bells naturally ring when anything that sounded like a potential evaluation became a possibility.

in the interviewees' offices or homes. The topic of elite interviewing and the disparity of power between interviewees and researchers are the subject of much discussion (see for example, Stephens, 2007; Aldridge, 1993). Having worked for WAG myself I felt relatively comfortable talking to policy makers, or perhaps because I had worked for WAG, I managed these interviews in a particular way. They were conducted after documentary analysis as I felt sound preparation was necessary (Richards, 1996). As I had only limited contact time I found perhaps a comparatively 'disciplined' approach beneficial: the interview schedule was relatively structured; the more formal atmosphere made me more alert to follow-up questions (I was also conscious that follow-up interviews were unlikely to be granted); and I adopted a stance of sympathetic neutrality (Dexter, 1970) asking neutral questions first and leaving potentially more controversial topics until later in the interview.

## 3.4 Lifeline

While a wide gulf exists between the policy rhetoric of the state and the practices of street-level governance (Lipsky, 2010) the empirical analysis of local cases can bridge this gulf (Wacquant, 2008). With this in mind we now turn to what can be termed the 'core' of this study, noting that "a good way to learn about ... worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members" (Goffman, 1961: 7). The virtue of the ethnographic method is that it allows us to explore the situated action and meanings of the everyday reality of the participants in one site of welfare practice. One world is Lifeline. While Valleyside cannot be seen as representative of community development activity across Wales, Lifeline can be seen as a paradigmatic example of what is understood as contemporary community development best practice and policy makers hail it as such. Moreover driven by an Action Research approach to enhancing employability it exemplifies the nature of the dispersal of the welfare state to the community development sphere.

Much of the data that informs Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine was generated through an intense period of participant observation spanning six months of the life of Lifeline. As such, the study's core participants consisted of 12 women including two Support Workers. During this time I took classes and participated as a learner myself both in the Lifeline community classroom and beyond (off-site activity was fairly

commonplace particularly during Summer School when fieldtrips, often with children in tow, would take place). I met each of my core participants through events organised by Lifeline be it at the Summer School, presentation/graduation nights, or simply in the day to day running of the project. During this time, I took opportunities to talk to both past and present participants in the programme. However the timing of my arrival in the field, in the second term of the academic year, meant that working with those who did complete the Lifeline academic year was not possible. Simply, if participants were no longer engaged with Lifeline they were not engaged with me. My relationships with the Girls and their Support Workers, while not untroubled, were for the most part characterised by an easy rapport despite clear disparities between our relative social locations.

## 3.5 An objective social position and a vocabulary of motive

The extent to which the Lifeline Girls were victims of processes of maldistribution and misrecognition had important implications for this research process and my interactions with the Lifeline Girls provoked moments of intense reflexivity on my part, most notably in relation to our relative social locations. A recent survey in the UK hit the headlines when it revealed that 57 per cent of people identified themselves as working class (Park, et al., 2007). I am not one of them. While the stories of my childhood were those of my grandfather (the steel worker), and my great grandfather (the miner) my objective social position is rooted firmly in the middle classes. Indeed I am sure I would pose more of a puzzle than many of my generation for these hardworking men of a faraway age: I was neither wife, nor mother, but cohabiting, Feminist doctoral student. The daughter of a teacher and a town planning officer, I enjoy the knowledge of the cushion of the financial support my kith and kin can provide should I ever need it. I am the product of parents who passed the eleven-plus and set the wheels of social mobility in motion. I went to a state school but the kind populated by the sons and daughters of doctors and dentists, lawyers and lecturers. I enjoyed an abundance of cultural capital. There were no barriers to my education and I passed exam, after exam, after exam. I spoke only of 'when' I was to go to University, and never of 'if'. It was as an undergraduate at an elite University however that I first came across the work of Pierre Bourdieu and used that work to explore the reproduction of privilege. What I grasped were the tools to identify the

arbitrary nature of 'accidents of birth' and their transformations into prosperity and poverty.

Unsurprisingly when I first met the women of Lifeline I could not help but reflect on our respective accidents of birth. There were an array of signifiers (or for me, as it felt at the time, confessors) of class. What was particularly striking, especially given the focus of this study was the contrast between my commitments and those of the Lifeline Girls. While I am a similar age to some of the Girls I do not share their performances of care. Most obviously, caring was devoted to children, but also extended to siblings, and elderly or disabled relatives and neighbours. Often these relationships were ones of dependency, but some, particularly those with mothers, were more reciprocal. Either way, for many of the women I met and talked with these relationships were the focus of many hours of unpaid emotional labour. This was something quite beyond my experience and with it came quite unfamiliar attitudes. One early conversation with one Lifeliner, Bridget, was particularly striking. When she commented that women who prioritise their careers over mothering 'are selfish' (field note) I was conscious of the way in which our respective commitments, and our attitudes towards them, reflected very different experiences of womanhood and orientations to work and care. This difference in performances of care was just one way in which our lives diverged. Of course the arbitrary nature of the assumptions which in part constituted our lifeworlds - my unquestioning 'choice' to enter into higher education, my 'decision' to wait to have children - were indicative of formations of class and gender.

Perhaps because of a sense of unease stemming from our relative social positions I often wanted to defend the motives behind my research agenda (for the most part I refrained). These motives, inherited from my fore fathers and mothers, are embedded in the politics of working class men and women. Absorbed from an early age, tales like those of a hated Churchill who sent troops into the Rhondda betraying the working man brought to life and coloured my politics. My motivation for research stems from the motivation to answer Becker's (1967) question "whose side are we on?" with a commitment to Feminism and social justice. The framework of this thesis therefore allows us to make a critique of exploitation and recognise the symbolic

violence evident in the practice of social science research, as well as wider society. Hence the vocabulary of motive I deploy here is rooted in this critique.

My objective social position had potentially serious implications for my research in Valleyside. As Sayer says of people 'like me', the danger is while we:

> may be, or want to be, respectful, considerate and warm to individuals from other classes ... inequalities themselves are likely to frustrate attempts by tainting them with suspicions of condescension, disrespect of unwanted familiarity (2005: 1).

For "downward mixers" (Sayer, 2005: 173) there is a danger that we cannot understand the experiences of the dominated and are "doomed to seem condescending and patronising, even when sincere" (Sayer, 2005: 175). This is a structural feature of this kind of relationship, deriving from disparities in the inheritance and possession of capitals. This sentiment was echoed by some during my fieldwork as my biography was often implicitly presented to me as a barrier to good research (particularly by the various community born researchers I encountered). I was reminded implicitly of the value of being an 'insider' and my status as 'outsider' was made clear. An extract from my research diary records this quite clearly:

> David [a community born researcher] suggested that the community has research fatigue, that some people may well be 'hostile' to my research. ... He spoke of a 'distinct community culture' and that only those with 'insider' knowledge, with 'insider' credentials can understand Valleyside. He said 'it's like a different world, they speak a different language'. A stigmatised community that draws a sharp divide between 'insider' and 'outsider'. It is clear of course which camp I am in. I feel like I am a sticky beak, in it for my own ends, seeing Valleyside as a curiosity, I feel in some way (un)entitled or illegitimate (field note).

David's view was an important reminder of my objective social position and while none of my 'core' participants were openly hostile to my research, I could not help but be conscious of it during my time in the field. There is as many ethnographers have found, a "strain in doing such fieldwork ... [a] strain [that] is greatest when you are a stranger and are constantly wondering whether people are going to accept you" (Foote Whyte, 1955:78). I was aware of wanting to 'pay my dues' in some way and my desire to volunteer in the community can perhaps be read as some sort of guilty

apology. I wanted to engender a sense of reciprocity as I looked to eschew the feeling I was 'taking' ultimately only to leave participants to continue to cope once I had got what I came for. However, in terms of the research design itself what was most troubling was that by virtue of my structural position, I could become a faulty interactant (Goffman, 1957). It was this that led me to conceive explicitly of the role of researcher as that of emotional labourer.

## 3.6    Researcher as emotional labourer

The relationship between the researcher and the researched has been the subject of a longstanding debate within qualitative research (see for example, Harding, 1987). Developments in Feminism (and Post-Modernism) have contributed to this debate by focusing on the place of the self in the research process. Here initial critiques of the absence of women from social research have developed into a more fundamental set of challenges about the bases of social science research (Davies, 1999). Feminist researchers have argued that the basic theoretical perspectives that social research has been founded upon, while considered universally valid, are in fact partial, presenting a male perspective as if it were 'truth' (Davies, 1999). The Feminist response to this traditional approach to research mounted the first critique of the research relationship, pointing to the hierarchical power relations embedded in the traditional dichotomy between the researcher and the researched. The Feminist canon thus highlighted the potentially exploitative nature of this relationship and proposed an alternative approach, based on trust, openness and empathy:

> the goal of finding out about people... is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non- hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship (Oakley, 1981: 41).

Here both the researcher and the researched share experiences and work towards an egalitarian relationship. However, Oakley failed to acknowledge that diverse experiences of womanhood might not lend themselves to a relationship of sisterhood. Indeed it was out of the fear that our contrasting positions and strategies for negotiating the social world would jeopardise the generation of data with the Lifeline Girls that I quickly began to think of myself as an emotional labourer. As such I

*endeavoured* to reject any semblance of hierarchy in the research relationship and focussed on authenticating participants' personal experiences as a valid form of knowledge. Of course, I do not share the 'insider's' view, that "I could not have understood it intellectually... if I had not experienced it emotionally" (Rothman, 1986: 50). Rather the interactional quality of fieldwork meant I was able to build good relationships over time and create shared understandings. An early comment from one gatekeeper confirmed this for me:

> I remember saying when you first turned up there "I left Helen down there - God help!". But then, the next week, when you came in, you were talking to them and I thought well they are talking to you more than they talk to me and I've been here years. I thought ah, you know, you must have got on with them and then when you said you had texted one of them I was like well, you got a mobile number off them as well, you must be alright! (interview).

Despite our contrasting experiences I was able to develop trusting relationships with many of my participants.

It is the case that even the most friendly and co-operative of gatekeepers or sponsors will shape the conduct and development of the research However many institutions are populated by people who take responsibility for protecting their activities from unsolicited observers. Many have encountered such gatekeepers and report on the power of these individuals to grant or restrict access to research settings (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Moreover classic ethnographers attest to being indebted to key informants without whom research could not have been conducted (see perhaps most famously Foote Whyte's (1955) relationship with 'Doc'). My relationship with Jessica was very much indicative of this kind of influence - indeed you might say she was my 'Doc' (Foote Whyte, 1955). At times I felt her consent to my presence was reluctant though during the course of fieldwork I increasingly understood the reasons for this. From my initial exploratory meeting with Jessica I was aware of the strong protective instinct she feels for her participants. Jessica's guardianship was clear in once incident which saw her 'out' me as a researcher to reiterate to the Girls that this was my role. During one lesson, Jessica said across the classroom, 'it's tough for us researchers isn't it Helen? Always having to scribble something down' (field note). I was taking notes at that particular moment.

The role of protective guardianship that Jessica adopted pointed to the support Lifeline provided for women with only a precarious sense of self worth. It was out of the concern that an outside presence could damage the therapeutic atmosphere that I was only able to access Lifeline during the latter part of the academic year[10]. My access was dependent on the comfort of the Girls as Jessica said: 'I would like to get them settled in, it's a very difficult time when they first come up' (field note). At various points I was asked by the Support Workers to 'go easy' and 'be careful' out of genuine concern for a vulnerable group of women. Support Workers often took opportunities to remind me 'how far learners had come' and 'how troubled their lives were' (field notes) and I attempted to secure the support and commitment of the Support Workers of Lifeline by explaining my motives and aims. As is often the case convincing my gatekeepers that no harm was intended and no risks were involved was a delicate process (Lofland, 1971). In time we found common ground in our mutual wish to dispel the 'stereotypes' surrounding 'single mums' living on 'council estates'. In hindsight, it was perhaps the Lifeliners' openness that spoke most clearly of the vulnerability that Jessica was so concerned about. The Girls sometimes made startlingly, unselfconscious disclosures and on occasions their honesty was disarming. I slowly began to understand the trust the Support Workers was placing in me and the responsibility I had to both them, and the women under their care. I know the rapport I developed with the Lifeline Girls owed no small part to the trust they have in Lifeline and its Support Workers. Lifeline is seen by its participants as a safe haven, a source of refuge and the Girls must have thought 'if Jessica let her in she must be alright'. To my knowledge The Lifeline Girls welcomed me into their ranks happily enough (when I later asked one if my presence had been an issue she happily replied that 'it made no difference at all' (field note)). Indeed some of the Lifeline Girls reported that they enjoyed taking part in the research (some having developed a recent interest in sociology wanted to participate in a research project of this type).

During my time with Lifeline I was conscious of trying 'to pass' as far as my structural position would allow, often by adopting my preferred role as fellow student,

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[10] Indeed initial attempts to secure access to Lifeline were denied as the project was in its first year. It was only during its second year that I gained access to Lifeline. This was possibly because Lifeline is a project that tips from funding crisis to funding crisis and alarm bells naturally ring when anything that sounded like a potential evaluation became a possibility.

which was useful and not entirely instrumental (for example I learnt how to use Microsoft PowerPoint properly and brushed up on my maths). Often the Girls wanted to help me with my studies, and many saw their participation in terms of doing me a favour (which of course they were). Attempts at intimacy were not necessarily about sharing similar stories but offering a sympathetic, non-judgemental ear. It was interesting that particularly during the early fieldwork process the Lifeline Girls 'were occasionally concerned by my reactions to their lifestyles. I recognised such moments as they were followed by a glance in my direction to test for a judgemental reaction. One example involved sharing information on how entitlements to benefits changed depending on the make-up of your household. I hope I always responded with equanimity (I certainly felt no anger or resentment). In time the furtive looks and qualifying statements seemed to disappear. As such I was hopeful I was managing to distinguish between the "locality's voice to the outside world and it's much more complicated messages to its own members" (Cohen, 1982: 7).

However it remains important to note that these relationships were not developed without recognition of the disparity of our social locations. An extract from an interview with one Lifeline Girls, Lynne made this clear:

> Helen: Do you relate to class then? Does that mean something to you?

> Lynne: Yeah, I do relate to it because I think when you are a student, where you are, when you are a student you are at the bottom. When I get through I will be in the middle. I could be up the top cos it changes all the time doesn't it? But I think it is stupid when they say classes ... really. ... It doesn't bother me. Some people get intimidated though. Like I am not being thing but you are from Cardiff and people think Cardiff is snobby. You are a student so I could say you are down the bottom like me, see, which I wouldn't say that because I look at you as like a doctor standing over by there, that doctor is right by there. But you don't look at people like that, but some people do. I think it is stupid having classes everybody should be classed as equal (interview).

These reflections by Lynne reveal a set of complex responses to our relative positions, based on place, occupation, mobility etc. When you scratch the surface you get a very clear awareness of our relative positions. Yet, and in contrast to the structural pessimism of Sayer (2005), there is a quality of frank exchange here acknowledging difference and reflecting upon it that was only possible because we had developed a

level of rapport over time. It is clear here that Lynne did not feel condescended to, but acknowledged our differences and reflected upon them.

## 3.7 Lifeline and the interview

Towards the end of the fieldwork process, once I felt the Lifeline Girls were comfortable in my presence, I conducted qualitative interviews to complement my field notes. This approach allowed me to fill in gaps, follow up lines of inquiry and specifically explore the reflexivity of participants locating welfare restructuring in relation to their biographies. I conducted three kinds of interviews with the characters that populate the world of Lifeline: life stories interviews with learners; working life story interviews with Support Workers; and with both interactive ethnographic interviews. The latter conversations in the field were numerous and conducted in a variety of situations and locations: including picking up children at the school gates or buying a bag of chips. My presence in these kind of situations meant as time went on I was able to appreciate and take advantage of the naturally occurring ethnographic interviewing opportunities that came along.

Some have argued that the interview is one of the weakest means of research because the interviewee is likely to provide the interviewer with the 'official account', which reifies norms, values, ideals (see Bourdieu, 1977). This is a particularly interesting criticism for this study given the interest in the moral imperatives surrounding the institutions of family and employment. Yet:

> to understand other persons' constructions of reality we would do well to ask them (rather than assume we can know merely by observing their overt behaviour) and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and a *priori* by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings (Jones, 1985: 258).

Moreover in later work Bourdieu (1999) himself does advocate interviewing as a research strategy and this reflexive practice is proposed as a means of creating a protective space within which the participants can tell their stories as well as increase the interviewer's understanding of those stories. Indeed the interviewee is able to:

grasp the situation as an exceptional opportunity offered to them to testify, to make themselves heard, to carry their experience over from the private to the public sphere; an opportunity also to *explain themselves* in the fullest sense of the term, that is, to construct their own point of view both about themselves and about the world and to bring into the open the point within which this world from which they see themselves and the world, become comprehensible, and justified, not least for themselves (Bourdieu, 1999: 615; emphasis in original).

There is therefore an inherently emancipatory (if momentary) dynamic to interviewing in particular circumstances, notably for victims of processes of maldistribution and misrecognition. The interview allows participants to describe their lifeworlds and gives respect to their interpretations and meanings. In fact many of the Girls did grasp the opportunity to speak out and be heard.

Unlike many research populations, many of the women who participated in this study had experience of interviews most obviously many were used to being interviewed by the state. For example welfare eligibility interviews with Jobcentre Plus were regular occurrences for many as a result of recent welfare reform. Indeed when the Girls created narratives around their welfare eligibility interviews there was a sense in which they were experiencing a 'double interview'. It was therefore particularly important to be conscious of the accomplishment of the presentation of self that occurred in this context. The narratives of welfare eligibility interviews were embedded in a set of dominant institutional practices and specifically the 'moral' dichotomy between the 'inactive' and 'active' citizen. Stories were often told in the hope of gaining understanding as the Lifeline Girls were trying to persuade both audiences and interviewers - the state worker[11] and the researcher - of their sound moral character. It was apparent here that interviewing in both instances did reify the moral and questioning in this particular context led to a heightened awareness of judgement. However these welfare eligibility interviews were often experienced as intrusive (one Lifeliner commented of 'the social', 'even with nothing to hide you still feel like you have something to hide' (field note)). As a result it was particularly

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[11] It is important to acknowledge here that a beneficial contribution to the research would have been through contact with Jobcentre Plus itself, either by observing welfare eligibility interviews or conducting interviews with Lone Parent Advisers. Unfortunately, access proved difficult to secure in the timeframe available.

important that I created a very different interview experience for them to that of the state.

I adopted an in-depth qualitative approach to interviewing (with the degree of structure depending to a large extent on the responses of interviewees). While even the most unstructured interview is structured - there is no such thing as presupposition-less research (Jones, 1985; Collins, 1998) - I did not adhere to a strictly defined interview schedule and I did not decide the exact questions I would ask prior to the interviews. Participants were not asked the same questions (my knowledge of them would have made this ridiculous in some cases – pretending I did not know things I clearly did). However the interviews conducted with Lifeliners did draw loosely on the life story approach to interviewing. My interest in this method of interviewing was prompted by the way many of the Girls saw Lifeline as a life changing experience. I wanted to contextualise these accounts. Moreover the practice of telling stories is a universal activity, one that is learnt in early childhood and then employed and developed throughout a person's life (Reissman, 1990). The hope behind this approach was that the interview would become a comfortable and familiar type of interaction (even if people are only rarely, if ever, asked for a life story they frequently recall its 'snippets'). For the most part I allowed participants to dwell for as long or as little as they would like on different phases of their lives (this in itself was a telling: what was glossed over? What was the subject of intense scrutiny?). The aim was to give people the time to be themselves. I also became an active and methodical listener: during the fieldwork I identified key emerging themes that I would also follow up in the interviewing stage of this phase of the research; moreover following Flick, et al. (2004) alongside the primary aim of exploring individual meanings I did ask theory-driven questions (for example when interviewees recounted experiences that related specifically to sociological ideas such as stigma and emotional work). What emerged as a result were "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984: 102).

By the time these interviews occurred I knew most of the women well – I knew who I could press to talk about what and who was perhaps likely to be nervous and more reticent on particular topics. I rarely asked about class specifically, and only when I felt the relationship was strong enough to 'take it' (usually this was with participants (like me) who had developed a sociological understanding of their objective social

position through their studies. This approach in keeping with the understanding that there:

> cannot be definitive rules about the use of open-ended questions, leading and loaded questions, disagreement with respondents, and so on. Such choices must depend on the understanding researchers have of the person they are with and the kind of relationship they have developed in the encounter. Some relationships may allow, without destroying trust and comfort, much more of the to-and-fro of debate and discussion between two human beings than others. What is crucial is that researchers choose their actions with a self-conscious awareness of why they are making them, what the effects are likely to be upon that relationship – and indeed whether their own theories and values are getting in the way of understanding those of the respondents (Jones, 1985: 259).

I attempted to make the process as comfortable (for both parties) as possible, adapting thoughts and questions to the circumstances of the interview. My commitment to interpreting participants' own meanings meant for the most part I adopted Foote Whyte's (1984) non-directive stance and avoided making moral judgements encouraging reflection and description when I felt it was called for. If at all possible I refrained from overly steering the conversation in a particular direction and allowed participants to talk as freely as possible.

The other interviews I did at this time were with the Lifeline Support Workers. The core interviews complemented previous interviews with other community development practitioners working in Valleyside. These interviews also followed the principles outlined above (active listening, non-directive steering etc) but typically followed a more structured approach. My main concern here was to encourage workers to talk about their professional expertise and reflect on their working lives. Again the extent that the interviews were structured was largely dependent on the responses of the interviewees, for example one Support Worker was happy to talk freely and openly with very little direction, the other was more guarded and demanded a more structured approach.

## 3.8   Getting out

Leaving the research site was for the most part straightforward and a decision out of my hands: while Lifeline itself continued the cohort of women that I spent time with

moved on to new courses at the local college. I continue to maintain links with Lifeline largely through the provision of a seminar programme whereby doctoral students in Criminology and Sociology discuss their research with the Lifeline Girls. However, leaving Valleyside wasn't simply a case of leaving Lifeline and my volunteering roles were harder to leave behind. In time I managed to take the opportunity to leave the Life Skills class when the community development worker I had joined up with took maternity leave. My most difficult exit was from the after school club and in this instance my exit was finally precipitated by the breakdown of my car which made travelling to Valleyside a three to four hour round trip by train and bus. In this instance cooking the hotdogs for the Halloween disco became my final contribution as a volunteer. That said, I continued to work with Lifeline by organising a seminar series as part of their annual Summer School and I am maintaining my contacts with the community.

## 3.9   Data keeping and analysis

While data analysis comes at the end of this Chapter it by no means came at the end of the research process. Data analysis was an ongoing process of reflection on data generation - part of an adductive process of working with existing and new theoretical and conceptual reflections (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The theoretical framework of the study was developed in this way, through an in-depth analysis of the data from both the interview transcripts and field notes as well as by working with existing literature. However it was only cemented once I had left the field and began to reflect on my field notes and transcripts from a distance and analysis continued for as long as the writing continued. I produced a lot of data and working with its most meaningful aspects was in itself a challenge. This was particularly the case with the field notes largely because initially I wrote down everything I could think of (my research diary and field notes became the same thing: a log of what I was seeing, hearing, saying, thinking and feeling). In time, inevitably, I began to focus my note taking around the research problem and my field notes became more refined. At the end of the day, or when possible during natural breaks, I handwrote the mental notes I had managed to make including more detailed descriptions and reflections of the events of each field visit. I also occasionally managed to use my role as participant observer to make notes. I have a somewhat ramshackle collection of note pads, filled with forgotten

moments from the field, as well as snippets from seminars, and media references. To this I added interview data (every interview was recorded and transcribed and often detailed notes were taken down immediately after the interview as early analyses).

For the most part analysis consisted of qualitative content analysis. Field notes and interview transcripts were broken into thematic codes both indigenous and constructed[12]. An example of a meaningful aspect of the data was the role that Jobcentre Plus played in helping women make sense of their respectability and responsibility. This reminded me of Skeggs' (1997) notion of (dis)identification, and subsequently became one of my core analytical categories to which I attached various related themes such as stigma, and emotion work. As manuscripts were read and re-read, themes and categories were developed as theoretically relevant or abandoned completely. On the whole I found interview data easiest to work with. Perhaps the lack of confidence that besets a novice researcher gave me the feeling that there was something insubstantial about my field notes. However as I immersed myself in interview analysis I found myself being drawn more and more to my field notes thinking of related events and reflections.

For Chapter Five, the policy analysis, while there was a place for thematic content analysis, the main thrust of analysis focused on the successful universalisation of a particular concept i.e. the extent to which it figured as a background *assumption* in a text. This follows Fairclough's (2003) incorporation of dialogical theory in his analysis: "a word, discourse, language or culture undergoes "dialogization" when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things" (Holquist, 1981: 427, in Fairclough, 2003: 42). In contrast undialogised language is absolute. Here the "fathomable and the unfathomable" (Prior, 2003) were examined in relation to the policy priorities of the public sphere. In this context the way in which documents defined social roles, the *hows* and the *whos* of welfare policy

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[12]  I did consider computer aided data analysis software but I enjoyed working with pen, pencil and paper and did not make the transition. The relatively small sets of interviews I have done made the task more manageable than perhaps other studies. Moreover the overwhelming majority of my field notes were handwritten and so converting them into a digital form would have been a time consuming exercise for what I felt was little gain. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 10) note, analysis "is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of techniques; it is imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive". For me, pencils and paper lent themselves to this type of analysis.

implementation, were of particular interest. Policy documents were understood as structuring collective performances and in relation to welfare mark out the needs of the needy.

Moreover for Chapter Seven I undertook narrative analysis of three participants' accounts of their welfare eligibility interviews with Jobcentre Plus. During the process of the research I found participants' experiences of these encounters were often traumatic. In this instance, with the emergence of such distinct stories within (life) stories, discrete narrative analysis seemed appropriate. The premise of the approach is that telling a story is a naturalistic means by which we tell others about ourselves (Reissman, 1990) and the method was appropriate for studying the everyday presentation of the self undertaken by the Lifeline Girls in this context. Unlike traditional qualitative methods, the approach necessitated identifying longer stretches of talk that take the form of a story (organised around a particular time and event) through which a narrator recreates a world (Reissman, 1990). Considering how a story was told revealed the complex, interpretive work that the Girls undertake when making sense of their welfare eligibility interviews: as "[t]he *how* of the telling is important in understanding *what* it is that s significant for the teller" (Reissman, 1990: *xi*). Therefore close attention was paid to the importance of rhetorical devices that narrators commonly use when discussing their interactions with a mechanism of state power[13].

## 3.10 A note on ethics[14]

A stance on ethics is particularly important for a research study that incorporates participant observation within its research design, indeed for the ethnographer ethics comes alive in the field. The likelihood of transgressing the researcher's code of conduct occurred when there was a danger of me slipping into a role more fitting to 'participant as observer', rather than 'observer as participant'. This role:

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[13] It was important to be mindful that these stories are performances for me as the audience (someone who they may well have wished to convince of their respectability and responsibility in much the same way as the Jobcentre Plus workers who initially interviewed them).

[14] The research strategy was informed by British Sociological Association ethical considerations.

may provide access to a wide range of information, and even secrets may be given to the field worker when he becomes known for keeping them, as well as for guarding confidential information. In this role the social scientist might conceivably achieve maximum freedom to gather information but only at the price of accepting maximum constraints upon his reporting. ... Hence the question of professional ethics may be more critical for this position than for other roles (Junker, 1960: 224).

The clearest examples of me slipping into this kind of role were the Lifeline counselling sessions that I attended. Having been enthusiastically urged to come along to those sessions by the Girls themselves ('you definitely should come to those', 'yeah those are the best sessions we do, you should come to those' (field note)) I was happy to do so. It was only later, and after several sessions, that I was reminded by Jessica of our agreement that I would not to attend counselling sessions. In the learners' warm welcome I simply forgot. I feared I had threatened my relationship with my key gatekeeper as I had transgressed professional ethics, albeit, unintentionally. I immediately gave the necessary assurances that I wouldn't use the data generated in this context and I managed to renegotiate consent to my presence. This meant I was privy to information, which I was asked specifically not to report on. The incident brought to the fore the issue of ethics which coloured everyday life in the field. I was often conscious that the students of Lifeline constituted a 'captive' research population and while I was careful not to assume that all wanted to participate, given the intimate nature of the field, to make the decision not to participate would, I think, have been difficult (certainly not as straight forward as refusing an interview with a researcher one has never met). I often felt conscious of refraining from probing too deeply, pushing too far and frequently double checked what participants were comfortable with revealing. For example, I often took the opportunity of the one-to-one interviews to give examples of some of the material from field notes I might later use.

### 3.11 Conclusion

This Chapter outlined the research design that underpinned this study. The approach adopted here is that of the Extended Case Study method (Burawoy 1998; 2009), which allows us to marry the vocabularies of motive and situated action of sites of practice with the extra-local forces that co-determine them. The research design was

focused on enabling the discovery of the mechanisms of welfare restructuring targeted at changing behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs. Hence the multi-method approach taken here allowed the exploration of both the power of structural forces *and* the intent of social actors. The implicit theme here again was the subversion of the individualisation thesis. The reflexive narrative of the research journey pointed to the key turning points in the fieldwork process and the subsequent refinement of the research problem. It then charted the manner in which in accordance with this Extended Case Study method the spatio-temporal context of the study was identified through community profiling and policy analysis before attention was turned to the site of welfare practice, Lifeline. Of particular importance during the second phase of fieldwork in particular was the significance of the objective social positions of both the researcher and the researched a theme that runs throughout the Chapter and explains many of the decisions made in regard to research design. This Chapter mirrored to a large extent my research journey and many of the themes touched on above became important touchstones in distinct and discrete ways for the empirical Chapters that follow. For example, the role of gatekeepers and their cultivation of an insider/outsider status dichotomy, the significance of objective social positions to the relations of social field, and the import of emotion were all features of my relationships with my participants but also substantive themes of the study. In the first instance, I begin with building the context of the study by offering a historical community profile of Valleyside that goes some way to explaining its current status of deprived community as well as introducing the residents of Valleyside including the Lifeline Girls themselves. I took heart in the generous welcome I received from the Lifeline Girls. Having shared a small potentially life changing part of these women's lives I remember them with fondness and not a small sense of injustice on their behalf. The biographies I write in the next Chapter I hope reflect this warmth, as well as conveying the nature of the day to day realities of a life of, in the words of one Lifeliner, 'just about coping' (interview, Kerry)).

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Places and People: Valleyside and the Lifeline Girls

*"the sun streaming through the windows was nothing compared to the sunshine in the hearts of the people when they know there is work and security instead of poverty and insecurity"*

*(The Hoover News (1948))* [15]

The South Wales Valleys covers some five hundred square miles, and are home to approximately one million people. Amongst them are some of the most highly concentrated deprived communities in the United Kingdom. Resting high on the upper reaches of one Valleys' hillside, above the town of Merthyr Tydfil is community Valleyside, a housing estate first established in the 1930s as the town's slums were cleared. One amongst many of its kind, Valleyside has experienced a process of steady social and economic disintegration and now meets the criteria for the status of deprived community (as determined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2008)). Geographically isolated, Valleyside is populated by predominantly white, working class people seemingly living the stereotype of welfare dependency. Valleyside is also is home to the community education project Lifeline.

In order to understand the material and symbolic marginalisation of the Lifeline Girls we need to understand the particular processes of marginalisation that have effected Valleys communities in relation to their historical and local context. An analysis of maldistribution and misrecognition such as this must correspond with "historically specific social-structural differentiations, paradigmatically those associated with modern capitalism" (Fraser, 1999: 40). To this end statistical analyses are interwoven with the accounts of those who know Valleyside well to locate the context of this

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[15] The Hoover News magazine was published in 1948 for the official opening of the Hoover factory in Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil.

study, identifying its spatial and temporal dimensions. In this we are aware of Massey's (1984) work and the way in which she has pointed to the enormously differentiated ways in which uneven capitalist development takes place. Such unevenness has created "stark divisions between rich and poor regions and between social classes" (Massey, 1984: 3). It is also important to introduce the Lifeline Girls at this stage. Accounts of their collective biographies, particularly reference the capitals they typically possessed and the strategies of 'getting by' they deployed. Therefore this Chapter is divided into two distinct sections: an initial focus on place is supplemented by a second section that concentrates on biography of the group of welfare-reliant single mothers

## 4.1 The structural logics of spatialised marginality

Valleyside's status as a marginalised community can be traced to historical processes rooted in structural logics. Wacquant's (2008) study of such deprived places - *Urban Outcasts* - identifies a new, spatialised marginality which can be readily applied to Valleyside. He links the development with the intensification of capitalism and identifies a number of elements: *firstly,* rising inequality in a context of overall prosperity whereby the marginal poor become decoupled from the cyclical fluctuations of the national economy and so fail to benefit from this wealth; *secondly,* the transformation of labour (quantitatively in terms of the loss of jobs and qualitatively in terms of the degradation of basic conditions of employment); *thirdly,* the concentration of the new marginality in stigmatised communities "rife with deprivation, immorality and violence" (Wacquant, 2000: 114); *finally,* the retrenchment of the state and specifically the radicalisation of the welfare state in the replacement of the right to welfare with the obligation to work.

What is clear is that in this era of capitalism the dynamics of spatialised polarisation are clearly apparent and deeply felt in Valleyside. *Firstly,* Valleyside failed to reap the rewards of the recent era of prosperity in the nineties. New wealth simply by-passed this community employment as employment opportunities were developed around Cardiff and the M4 corridor. *Secondly,* Valleyside witnessed the contraction of its labour market through the collapse of heavy industry and the decline of the manufacturing base. This was accompanied by the emergence of new forms of

precarious employment and the increasing vulnerability of marginalised, non-unionised labour: all important features implicated in the changing rhythms of life in the area. *Thirdly*, and in this context, Valleyside became identified as a community notorious for the poverty found within it. Damaged by years of debasement, stigmatising deprivation continuously plagues its residents. *Finally*, and building on these elements, the impact of a radically altering welfare state was beginning to makes its presence felt in Valleyside, although a process of retrenchment of state activity was not evident in Valleyside as in the *Banlieus*, *Favelas* and *Ghettos* that draw Wacquant's (2008) focus. These structural logics together fuel an era of capitalism characterised in part by the type of spatialised polarisation epitomised by Valleyside. While Valleyside conforms to these logics of marginality there remain distinct differences between the highly urbanised localities that preoccupy Wacquant (2008) and this increasingly peripheral housing estate on the edge of the old South Wales coalfield. These distinctions emerge from the *particular* implications of the waves of de-industrialisation, and de-urbanisation that Merthyr Tydfil continues to experience. Perhaps most notably the state has not withdrawn from Valleyside via a process of retrenchment as Wacquant's (2008) analysis of Urban Marginality suggests, but makes its presence felt, not least in the community development projects that have sprung up across the community.

## 4.2 Valleyside

The Valleyside estate itself was constructed in stages (building began during the 1930s and continued well into the 1970s) to re-house those displaced by the clearance of the slums that had grown up around the town's ironworks. Its creation was a piece of state social engineering mirrored across industrialised nations. Industrial terraces were moved street by street as entire communities were uprooted and pieced back together as before onto a new landscape. One community member recalled this while showing me a map of the area:

> They knocked the whole street down and half the street opposite when they sent us up to new housing. They lifted that street of the community and they put us in that street there. So my mother's mother and father just lived round the corner and my aunties as well. ... Communities were picked up and dropped in ... so we brought our sense of family, community with us to a large degree (interview).

The phased building of Valleyside meant that while the first part of the estate was created broadly along Garden City principles, later development was designed in keeping with the Radburn housing system. The phased building also meant Valleyside is in many ways not one single community but several interlinked communities constructed in the present day through distinct territorial loyalties. Early plans for the estate incorporated the infrastructure to serve the population (for example a cinema and a library). However, after World War II 'they just couldn't afford all the add-ons, so they just built the houses really' (interview, community member). Nevertheless at this time Valleyside presented a 'fresh, optimistic horizon', 'a wonderland' (interviews, community members) to its new residents. Not surprising as modern housing, offering hot and cold running water and indoor bathrooms and toilets, were viewed with awe-filled eyes by new residents.

During my time in the community, some of the homes of Valleyside were still loved dearly, adorned by a new porch or a hanging basket. Many were simply anonymous, with few adornments to mark them as cared for, or indeed neglected. Only a very few were in a state of disarray, with gardens littered with broken toys or discarded plastic bags. At the heart of Valleyside is its shopping precinct where the shops were trimmed with coils of razor wire, often with only half-raised iron shutters and filled with goods more expensive than the town's supermarkets. Here you could find the bakery, the grocers, the bookies, the social club, the chippy, the Post Office and more. It was also home to Valleyside's community development programmes (the offices of the state-funded workers, and their drop-in centre). Valleyside's marginalisation was inscribed in the uniformity and utility of its housing and the disrepair of its shop fronts. These visible markers of status were hard to bear and reflections like 'oh my God, where are we living?' and 'it just looks like a dump' (field notes) on the part of residents were not uncommon.

Having experienced a protracted period of economic decline, life in Valleys' communities like Valleyside now typically features long term unemployment, low incomes, poor housing and all the problems typically associated with social exclusion (Bennett, et al., 2000). In the 1980s the speed of decline was rapid: one community member stated 'the employment base of the area was just destroyed in a decade' (interview). Another touched on the social decay that stemmed from this economic

trigger: 'them boys couldn't work anywhere, they wanted money, they had a standard of living, then people do anything in it, debt, burglaries, you name it, drugs, and that's what you got now' (interview). In 2008 Merthyr Tydfil, stood out, even within the most deprived ten percent of all Local Authorities in Wales, with 31 per cent of its communities scoring amongst this number for overall deprivation. Within this, Valleyside ranked particularly highly in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation scoring on indicators such as the number of adults and children living within Income Support households, the numbers with limiting long-term illness, the standardised all-cause death rate, the proportion of people not entering Higher Education aged 18-19, and the number of youth and adult offenders. The high incidence of deprivation and the experience of inequalities have damaged the Valleyside people and their relationships and unsurprisingly in Valleyside anxieties abound for yourself, your family and your community. These worries often relate to things many take for granted things like walking home after dark, or balancing the budget for the week and planning for Christmas.

A local community culture has emerged from these conditions of social and economic decay[16]. Like many post-industrial working class communities this culture is enmeshed in conditions of struggle and necessity organised around the pragmatics of 'getting by' (see for example, Charlesworth, 2000). Valleyside is therefore a community endowed with "shared meanings which touch on all aspects of their lives, helping shape *who* they are by virtue of *where* they are" (Beynon, et al., 1994: 5). Today this shared culture is attached to sense of loss, inertia and immobility that co-exists alongside community issues of debt, substance misuse and domestic violence. The debased conditions under which many people began to live in Valleyside meant that it fell under the gaze of the state.

## 4.3    Valleyside and the state

By the early 1990s Valleyside began 'to help itself' (interview, Local Authority Officer) without recourse to the state. The same Officer went on to say:

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[16] Acknowledging this distinct 'culture' is not indicative of subscription to a culture of poverty thesis (see for example, Murray 1990) that asserts that the poor remain poor because of their pathological values and practices.

> A group came together because at the time, the Valleyside estate, ... it was pretty grim. It was probably at its most troubled point in its history. It was absolutely out of control ... residents had really, really had had enough.

Officers from the Local Authority were well placed to harness this grassroots momentum and early bids were successful in securing funding for the first attempts to regenerate the Valleyside. In time, the state's most visible presence in Valleyside came to be its community development initiatives. During my time in the field in the shopping precinct alone there were three units devoted to community development services. Across the locality there were a host of community facilities, which were home to various outposts of statutory service provision (many of which stemmed from partnerships formed through community development initiatives). These initiatives were also visible in the numerous placards that claimed sponsorship or ownership of the community's flowers, trees, playgrounds and roundabouts. The state had not abandoned Valleyside, even if its presence was most visible in the community development initiatives that ask the community to help itself. Some of the community development presence on the estate was working under the auspices of a broadly conceived welfare state and there was a focus on employability in particular. Given that for some in Valleyside reliance on the welfare state has been a feature of family life for three or even four generations the restructuring of the welfare state, through both its dispersal and radicalisation, was making its presence felt in Valleyside. This was clear both in its community presence through initiatives like Jobcentre Plus' Want 2 Work initiative and Lifeline and in changes to benefit entitlements of single mothers and those in poor health.

State presence beyond the realm of community development was perhaps more clearly indicative of what Wacquant (1998a) terms the retrenchment of the state in the neo-liberal era. The provision of state services was considered by most community members to be poor in comparison to more affluent neighbouring communities (for example a part-time doctors surgery shared a tired space with the Want 2 Work programme and the Credit Union amongst others). This perspective was compounded by an antipathy to the state within Valleyside, which for many the state has simply become a mistrusted entity. Typically issues in relation housing allocation and maintenance and poor relationships with the police were the primary source of

frustration and resentment. Such relationships were often cast in terms of a battle pervaded by anxiety and sense of powerlessness within the community. One Community Development Worker commented of this dynamic:

> There is a hostility to the establishment and the experiences people have had from the establishment. ... There is a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong as far as the way to be and the way people deal with people from the Valleyside (interview).

Hostility to the state emerged from discordance between norms of the establishment and those of community, indeed Valleyside's cultural norms are in part constructed through this understanding of the state as 'common enemy'. There is a sense in which through these policy dynamics the state now positions Valleyside as a pool of untapped vulnerable labour and a container of an undesirable problem population. Valleyside has quickly become a place of "relegation" (Wacquant, 2000: 108) with the chasm between its residents and the rest of society deepening. This contributes to the distinctive community culture found in Valleyside that also derives in no small part from the stigma attached to the community and its residents. This points to the complexity of Valleyside as on the one hand there are attempts on the part of the state to 'save' Valleyside, yet on the other it remains hugely stigmatised, in part by the state itself.

## 4.4    Valleyside and stigma

Valleyside is home to welfare claimants, social housing tenants, and credit union customers (or society's 'scroungers', 'fiddlers' 'chavs' and 'slappers', to use the terms of popular discourse to refer to the recipients of the welfare or lower working classes). The community has become symbolically marginalised far beyond its geographical boundaries and lives in popular imagination as stigmatised - sustained by myth as a place of relegation fit only for the undeserving. This community was often constructed by its members through references to the world beyond its borders and many of the community members I met, spoke of how they were treated when they were 'outside' and the expectations 'outsiders' had of them. The following anecdotes are examples of this phenomenon:

> You can go round the world and people have heard of Valleyside. I went to Las Vegas for my 50th. First time I had been to America and the first person I bump into - I tell 'em where I am from (it's a Yank like). Went to the bar, chap came in, heard me ordering a drink ... got talking 'where you from?', 'Wales', 'you from anywhere near that Valleyside place? (interview, community member).

And:

> We was known from here to Bangkok I think. Everybody knew about the Valleyside: 'where you from?', 'Valleyside', 'oh I'll check my watch first, see if it is still there on my wrist'. Terrible, terrible, wherever you went. (interview, community member).

The response to this stigma was experienced as something of a paradox, met with both a stubborn and determined indifference and a keenly felt shame. There was fluidity to accounts that both acquiesced to and attempted to resist the stigma associated with the Valleyside of community. It was quite common to hear a denial ('all you are getting is the bad points. ... I don't think it is actually as bad as they make it out') quickly followed by a resigned acceptance ('it's a dump, it looks like a dump') (field note). In both denial and resignation territorial stigma remained a burden to bear. The intensity of Valleyside's stigmatised inscriptions make the assertion that the "socio-spatial segregation of society makes living in a class society more bearable" (Sayer, 2005: 186) appear naive. For a short while changing the name of the community was even considered: one Local Authority Officer commented 'it was laughed off ... but it was something we probably should have done' (interview).

Although it was often claimed that 'outsiders' constructed Valleyside through 'myth', these representations often chimed with those pervasive within the community itself. For example, residents of Valleyside often said that their community was feared by 'outsiders': one of the Lifeline Girls commented 'people say 'ahhh Valleyside' and they think it is frightening'. Yet within the community fear often appeared to divide its members as Laura, one of the Lifeline Girls, explained: 'on the estate Hel, you know who's who, do you know what I mean? And it's a barrier between people that you think are bad and they might not be, and that's what it's like around here' (interview). Valleyside was built on rigid, often strictly spatialised ties of kith and kin, of 'who you bother with, and who you don't' (field note). While residents speak of the

comfort and support they take from the tight networks of kith and kin that bind them together these relationships were sources of both security *and* fear. Moreover within the community the poverty of Valleyside is also associated with a darker world, beyond indicators and statistics, filled with hushed voices telling of stories that would make your 'eyes roll back in your head' and 'you would not believe what goes on behind closed doors' (field note). This was a veiled poverty of what constituted an 'underworld' to an 'outsider' such as myself. It was relayed to me through tales of deviance and urgings to 'open your eyes and see what's going on' (field note) but also, I could not help but feel, to shock. In these ways perhaps the stigma of community is recognised and indeed in one sense perpetuated from within.

## 4.5    The rise and fall of Merthyr

To understand the marginalisation of this 'dangerous place' both materially and symbolically we need to locate it within its local historical context of structural social processes. The patterns and rhythms of life in Valleyside have changed dramatically over its short life. The same eyes that witnessed the development of the community have seen the landscape before them rapidly transform, becoming greener as the signs of industry, the smoking towers and winding wheels have disappeared. Yet there was sense that Valleyside, like many Valleys' communities, was a place trapped in time as with passing of the industrial era, it lost its sense of purpose.

Merthyr Tydfil grew rapidly during the 18th and 19th centuries when its proximity to iron ore, coal, timber, limestone, and a plentiful water supply created the ideal conditions for the production of iron. Drawing thirstily on these natural resources, Merthyr emerged in the nineteenth century as a powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution and by 1801, had grown into the largest town in Wales. As the century progressed Merthyr's inland location became increasingly disadvantageous for iron production and the town's ironworks began to close. However at this time the advent of coal mining to the south of the town gave renewed impetus to the local economy and the population began to grow once again. Located in a valley bowl, with coal seams rising above it, Merthyr was the heart of the South Wales coalfield. In this age of prosperity new mining communities continued to develop at the periphery of the town and the population of Merthyr itself rose to a peak of just under 90,000 in 1911.

But the town's fortunes were to change and while the 1920s marked the height of Merthyr's prosperity they also marked the rapid decline of the coal and iron industry, with only worse to come with the depression of the 1930's.

Historically Merthyr was home to 'traditional' employment-based communities that sprang up around the coal mines and iron foundries. The foundation of these communities was labour market both in a geographical sense (with the pit just at the end of the road) and in the sense of 'belongingness' (associated with dependence on and commitment to large, well-established employers that provided a 'job for life'). Wealth was the product of male industrial labour as men either earned the 'family wage' in the town's iron foundries or the coal mines firing them. This established class and gender structures dominated by male labour organised into trade unions that generated traditional, collectivist, working class ideologies. These bonds of solidarity extended to and pervaded the tight networks of kith and kin that existed in such communities. The anchor of male employment in heavy industry meant work, home and community became indistinguishable spheres of life as occupational and familial identities were entwined in class and gender identities rooted in place. These distinctive economic, social and political structures marked the extraordinariness of former coalfields and the elements that bound them (Bennett, et al., 2000). Unlike many localities found in the coalfields however reliance on the mining industry alone for employment has not been the case in Merthyr for some time (as we see in Figure 1 below by 1951 Merthyr had a mixed labour market). Yet because the local economy has historically been dependent on several large paternalistic employers (both initially in heavy industry and later in light manufacturing) for many years Merthyr remained a collective of employment-based communities.

The paternalistic manufacturers that arrived in Merthyr after depression of the 1930s made things from buttons, to lamps, to chocolates, to prams, to hoovers. Perhaps more than any of its contemporaries being on Hoovers' pay roll meant you had 'more than just a job' (field note). Hoovers offered employee and community support well beyond its production line (it had an active social club for example and a caring association for company retirees). The post-war era was a time of relative prosperity for Valleyside as one resident stated: 'yeah a lot more jobs then, when I left school at 15 you could literally walk out of one factory and walk in to another and get a job'

(interview). What was notable when talking with those who worked for Hoovers, and the like, was their length of service and the satisfaction derived from working alongside family and friends. Comments like, 'I worked in that canteen for over twenty years, I knew everyone, and we were like a family' and 'look at Thorns, everyone used to work there, I mean everyone' (field notes) were commonplace.

However, successive waves of labour market decline throughout the twentieth century culminated in the 1980s with the eventual collapse of the coal industry. This was felt acutely in Valleyside and one resident described this time to me:

> Oh, massive decline for places. Employment went when the pits closed down cos the pits employed anybody. Didn't have to have qualifications, job for life, however thick you were, even if you didn't know a pick from a shovel (interview, community member).

This was a trend mirrored across the industrial heartlands of the UK and spatialised inequalities were generated and exacerbated by the "unevenness" of the capitalist economy. The economic geography of Britain, in terms of "the spatial organisation of the relations of production" (Massey, 1984: 3) changed dramatically over the 1980s and 1990s. The concurrent contraction of the manufacturing sector compounded the inequalities experienced by the locality. One community development practitioner recollected the local labour market conditions at this time:

> The month Tebbit made his famous 'get on your bike' speech we actually went to the Job Centre in Porth where there were 3,500 people registered unemployed and there were seven vacancies. We said 'that is some bike you are gonna need' (interview).

Historically therefore the high levels of economic activity, particularly amongst men, were closely associate with the manufacturing and mining crises of the 1980s and early 1990s. Moreover, the decline of manufacturing continues slowly but surely as 'factory fortnight' is becoming a thing of the past in (Hoovers closed its doors for the last time in 2009). The Figure 1 below depicts these changes to the local labour market over time.

*Figure 1: Industries of Merthyr*



Industries of Merthyr
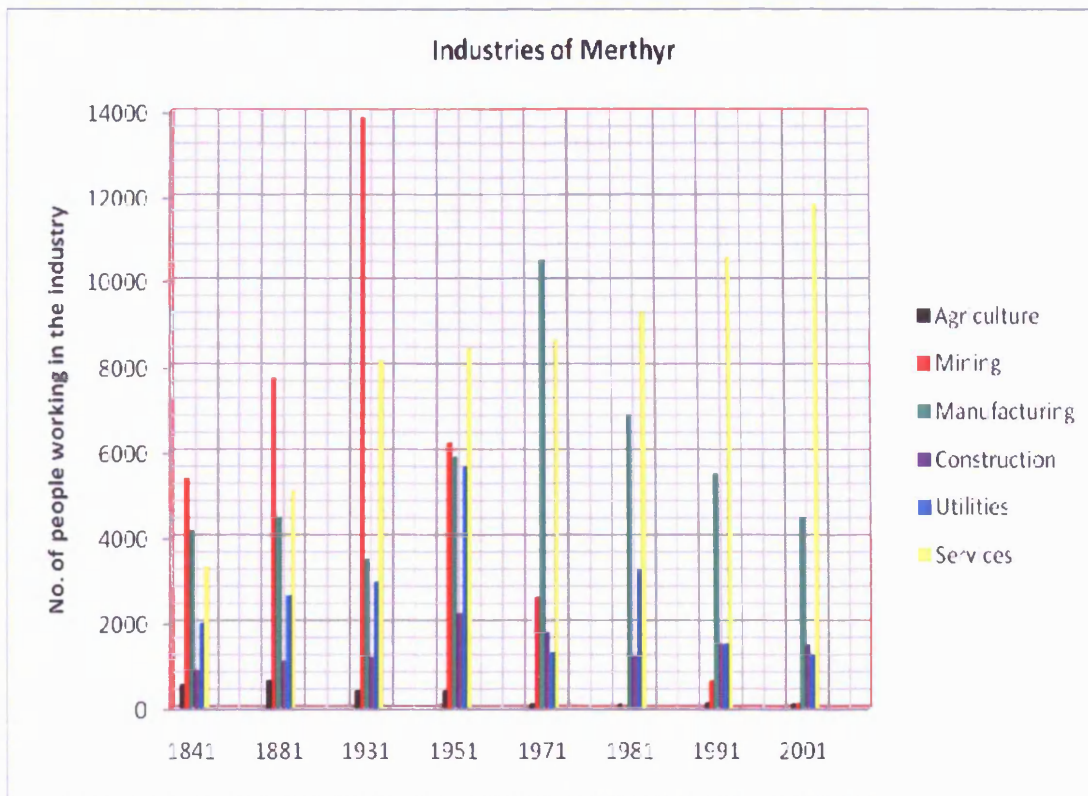
*Source: Census data 1841-2001*[17]

Broadly speaking we see the peak and protracted collapse of the mining industry, shadowed by the later rise and decline of manufacturing. The mining industry employed 13,842 in 1931 and just 93 in 2001. Similarly, those working in the manufacturing industry in Merthyr fell from 10,460 in 1971 to 4,437 in 2001. In contrast those employed in the service sector rose from 8,590 to 11,801 over the same time. While it is important to be mindful that the category of services is broad (incorporating diverse labour market activities like catering, cleaning, tourism and insurance) we can identify dramatic shifts in the composition of the labour market that signalled the decimation of traditional working-class communities.

Across the United Kingdom there is evidence that the economic restructuring that followed decline and massive unemployment in the 1980s did increase the number of jobs available (Crompton, 2008). However the labour markets of the Valleys remain

[17] Industry data is organised into the categories used in the 2001 Census key statistics (these cover workers living in an area and not those working in it).

highly localised and there is evidence of an absolute scarcity of work (Fothergill and Wilson, 2007; Winckler, 2008). Perceptions within Valleyside chimed with this finding: 'the jobs for young people now are very few and far between ... there are not enough jobs and that's a pity' (interview, community member). It is certainly the case at one point in 2010, the number of Job Seekers Allowance Claimants per unfilled Jobcentre Plus vacancy in Merthyr was 15.4 and higher than the averages of the Wales (4.4 claimants per vacancy) and Britain (4.9 claimants per vacancy) (Source: nomis, Office of National Statistics, (ONS), 2010).

It is perhaps unsurprising that in 2008, Merthyr Tydfil had the largest percentages of workless households in Wales, at 24 per cent (for United Kingdom the figure is 16 per cent) (Source: nomis, ONS). Moreover as Figure 2 below shows the percentage of the population that is economically inactive is higher in Valleyside than both the United Kingdom and Merthyr Tydfil as a whole.

*Figure 2:  Economic Inactivity*

**Economic inactivity**

| | Hillvallley | Merthyr Tydfil | Great Britain |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economically inactive people | 44.25 | 36.4 | 24 |
| Economically inactive women | 49.3 | 41.6 | 29.7 |
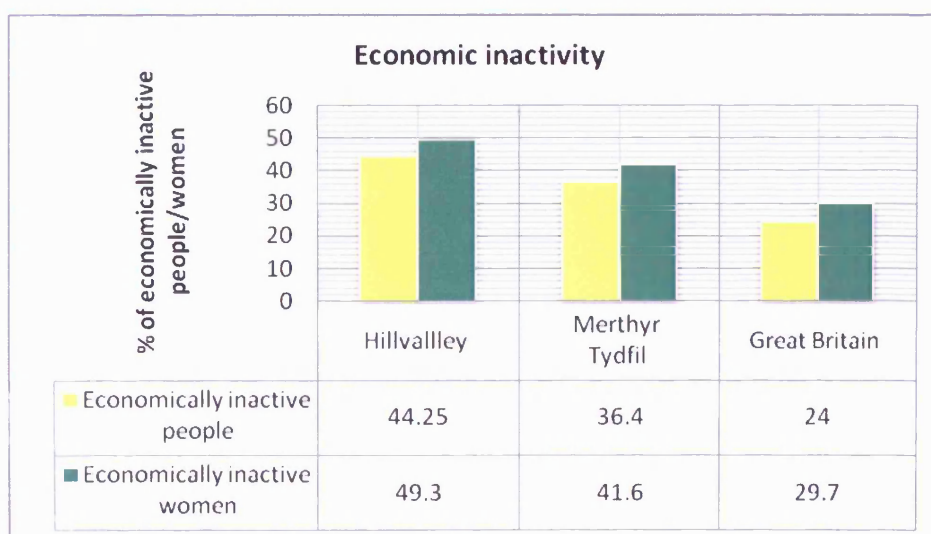
*Source: Census 2001 nomis ONS 2010*

The employment opportunities available in the locality are often limited to low wage and low status work. One community member explained:

> There's no job security now. My oldest son ... he can use computers ... forklift trucks and all this sort of thing and in one year he was made redundant 3 times. Firms close at the drop of a hat - there is no warning. ... It took him a

*Figure 3: Employment by Industry*



**Employment by Industry**
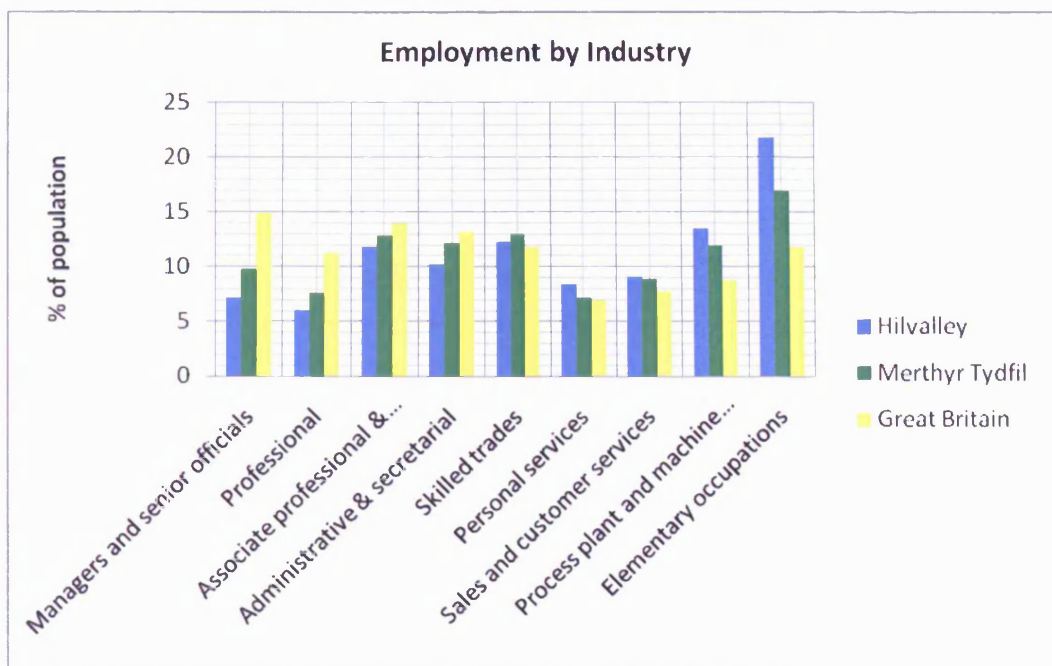
Source: Census 2001 nomis ONS 2010[18]

If we look at the numbers of managers and senior officials we see just 7.1 per cent of those living in Valleyside were employed in this capacity (compared to 9.8 per cent in Merthyr Tydfil and 14.9 per cent across Britain). The percentage of the population working in elementary occupations rises to 21.8 per cent in Valleyside (compared to 16.9 per cent in Merthyr Tydfil and 11.8 per cent across Britain). This picture is indicative of the national geometries of power identified by Massey (2010). The inequality in growth between regions is explained by the overwhelming concentration of wealth producing finance and associated sectors in (small parts of) London and the South East. Other regions, including the Valleys have become increasingly dependent on public-sector and para-state employment. In Merthyr in 2008 the number of employees in the public administration education and health sector stood at 39.3 per cent (compared to 32.9 per cent across Wales and just 27.0 per cent across Britain) (Source: nomis, ONS, 2008). While the number of jobs in Merthyr steadily increased since the late 1990s this was predominantly in sectors not anticipated to grow in future years. The number of employees in the finance, information technology and

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[18] Percentages are based on working age population.

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other business related activities stood at just 8.7 per cent in Merthyr (compared to 14.1 per cent in Wales and 22.0 per cent across the whole of Britain) (Source: nomis, ONS, 2009). It was clear sense that both Merthyr and Valleyside have been behind by a technology-driven wealth revolution and it is not surprising that given such labour market realities the population of Merthyr has steadily declined since the early twentieth century: as of the 2001 Census the population stood at just under 55,983 people while the 2006 mid-year Census showed the population to be down to 55,500 (Source: nomis, ONS, 2008). Outward migration is the dominant factor affecting the population of Merthyr in recent years. We can now explore the impact of these changes on relationships between the men and women of this community.

## 4.6    Valleyside men and women

A 'job for life' earning a 'family wage' bears little relevance for contemporary life in the Valleys as the male dominated industries associated with industrial capitalism of which the male as breadwinner was a core component are no more. Across Britain the number of households with a single male breadwinner has declined rapidly since the 1970s, while those with two people working and with no one working have both increased (Crompton, 2006a). Moreover the proportion of women working in the United Kingdom labour market has steadily risen from 34 per cent in 1931 to 58 per cent in 2001, the same rate for men in contrast has fallen from 91 per cent to 71 per cent (Crompton, 2008)[19]. This trend continues, albeit at a slower rate, and in recent years is notable for its concentration amongst women with young children (Dench, et al., 2002). Like other regions dominated by traditional employment based communities (see Beynon, et al., 1994) historically employment in Merthyr has been highly gendered: women's employment has been less extensive, lower paid and lower skilled than men's. Merthyr and Valleyside mirrors these trends related to work and family felt across the Wales and the Britain. Although female economic activity rates in Valleyside remain below the British averages, since 2001 women have been entering the workforce in increasing numbers. These relatively high levels of male

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[19]    This can be attributed to both push factors (including rising levels of education, effective fertility controls and a significant normative shift with regard to gender relations and expectations of women through second-wave feminism) and pull factors (including the buoyant labour markets of the 50s and 60s and more recently the erosion of the family wage, the shift from heavy industry and manufacturing to service sector employment and the weakening institution of marriage) (see Crompton, 2008).

worklessness and the contrasting increases in female participation in the workforce make for significant reconfiguration of traditional gender roles (Connell, 1995; McDowell, 2005).

The increase in the number of women entering the labour force was welcomed by some in Valleyside as a break from 'old fashioned' (field note) values and the opportunity for women to pursue and enjoy new life chances; although for some women it was motivated by a desperate attempt to hold together their communities as best they can. Either way, the young women who were entering the workforce were often hailed by the older generations as stoic heroes, in contrast to many of the men of the community who were the object of contempt at worst and dismay at best. As a result, one community member memorably described this contemporary era as one populated by a generation of 'missing men' (field note). Another stated 'the contribution of women ... is striking and quite simply it is the men who appear to have gone AWOL' (field note). Historically the gender division of labour that was a fundamental feature of industrial societies was premised on the notions that "[m]aking things and making things happen is masculine; [and] caring for people, especially reproducing the next generation, is feminine" (McDowell, 2004: 148). The changing divisions of labour generated challenges to masculinity in a community previously defined by a tough male-dominated labour market.

It was perhaps the case that within Valleyside the women constitute a reservoir of low-skill labour in a feminised labour market, whereas the men are part of a population that no longer have any political economic utility in the new era of capitalism partly defined by spatial polarisation (Wacquant, 2000). The feminisation of the labour market meant men in the community often viewed this 'new' work as 'for women' (field note). The labour market simply no longer offers the independence to provide for family life that was so powerful a feature in past years. It is certainly the case that compared to national averages there is less disparity between women's participation rates in the labour market and men's across Merthyr. During 2009 in Merthyr the percentage of economically inactive males was 24 per cent, compared to a British figure of 17 per cent. This contrasts with a figure of 29 per cent for economically inactive women in Merthyr, compared to 30 across Britain (Source: nomis, ONS, 2009). Structural changes to the labour market undermine the role of

employment in the formation of identity leaving behind "damaged selves" (Sennett, 1998: 148). Despite this reconfiguration of the gender regime, Valleyside retained 'a very macho culture: it is a tough place in a way, it is male dominated, people do not suffer fools gladly' (interview, community development worker). The power and advantages men have over women were a common point of discussion amongst the Lifeline Girls. In the context of family life, there were few claims of gender-neutrality and equivalency between the behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs of women and men. Many of the women I spoke to recognised their community as out of step with another more progressive world, which they would like a part of. There was a sense that patriarchal structures remained largely intact despite the disintegration of the economic structures that grounded them and they continue to possess what can be described as an enduring residual meaning (Williams, 1989; Hughes, 1998; Clarke, 2004).

## 4.7   The Lifeline Girls: 'a strategy of survival'

The lives of the Lifeline Girls are rooted in this history of the Valleys and it seemed they had little chance of forging working class live of security, dignity and respectability of the kind enjoyed by their fore mothers and fathers. Indeed some of the Lifeline Girls professed to being part of the underclass. This analysis of their social position was in keeping with those social scientists that identify the receipt of welfare as the defining element of the underclass (see for example, Runciman, 1990). However the underclass status of the Lifeline Girls is not as straightforward as they themselves might have us believe. The traditional role of women as caregivers has long meant that women's status and economic position is ambiguous within a classification system that privileges the occupation of the breadwinner as the unit of analysis alongside a normative idea of nuclear household. Clearly for this group of welfare-reliant single mothers this position is problematic. Moreover the experiences of the men of in the community indicate that unemployment in places like Valleyside has paradoxically become defining features of *working* class life. In relation to welfare these elements of social life are clearly important and we need to consider the implications of the 'non-working' working class and working class 'mother-work' (Millar and Ridge, 2008). It is undeniable that this group of welfare-reliant single mothers occupy a materially and symbolically disadvantaged position in society. If we

consider them to be part of an internally differentiated working class they are very much at its 'lower' end. The Lifeline Girls were born and locked into a set of structural opportunities and constraints that severely circumscribed the strategies they deployed to negotiate the social world. The Girls' class and gender positions rendered them victims of both maldistribution and misrecognition. Here a Bourdieusian analysis of the Lifeline Girls' collection of capitals serves to highlight their paucity as well as the deprivation prevalent across Valleyside.

What is often described as the feminisation of poverty is strongly associated with the rise of the single parent family (Hays, 2003). While the taxonomic category of 'lone parents' can't be seen as determinant of behaviour (Duncan and Edwards, 1999) the single parent family is associated with the emergence of an "underclass of women who are directly connected to the state as claimants rather than indirectly as men's dependents" (Pateman, 1989: 196). In Merthyr the percentage of all households that are single parent families is higher than the national average (the percentage of these households not in work is also higher). If we look at the number of lone parents who are claiming welfare aid we see that the percentage for the UK is 1.8 per cent, for Merthyr Tydfil 2.8 per cent and for Valleyside 5.5 per cent (Source: nomis, ONS, 2009)[20]. All of the Lifeline Girls, at least for part of the time we spent together, were amongst this number.

Many Lifeliners felt the breakdown of their families was precipitated by the community's distinct 'macho culture': as Sarah, one Lifeliner, said, 'it's a man's community ... men get away with a lot more, a man can walk away from his family at any time and nothing gets said, we are the ones holding the babies' (field note). For the most part the ex-partners of the Lifeline Girls - the fathers of their children - are only sporadically part of family life and are not a reliable source of security either emotionally or economically. Thus one of the Girls commented: 'he is not worrying

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[20] Indeed this was identified as one of the key social issues facing the area and funding for the first phase of the Lifeline project was to target economically inactive lone parents. Reflecting on this, the project's lead officer commented:

> 'living in an area like Valleyside where we know there is a high percentage of single parents, we didn't have to actively target them we knew ... if you run something we know a percentage of them are going to be that. We don't have to stigmatise people. You know they are here and that's it.' (interview).

about where his child's dinner is coming from, you know, he doesn't even know, he doesn't have a clue, if anything happened to me and she went to him he wouldn't have a clue, he wouldn't have a clue' (interview, Sonia). The Lifeline Girls cast the fathers of their children as feckless, unable or unwilling to support their families. Tussles with the Child Support Agency over for maintenance payments and conflicts over visitation rights were not uncommon and these troubled relationships were often a source of huge anxiety. Often the sole source of comfort available was a determined 'we are better off without him' or a laughingly dismissive 'what was I thinking?' (field notes). The responsibility of motherhood was keenly felt - conversations about partners (be they past, present or future) were consistently framed in terms of their roles (and responsibilities) as mothers first and foremost - even if there was a feeling that somehow their mothering skills were not quite 'up to scratch'.

While inequalities continue to be correlated to income, education, place etc a new pattern of inequality is emerging in relation to welfare-reliant single mothers. It is single mothers who typically experience 'the other glass ceiling' of responsibility for parenting (Green and Parker, 2006) and are more often reliant on one income (as is more often than not the case for the Lifeline Girls). The Lifeline Girls all claimed Income Support as single mothers for at least some period of time during this study and reliance on welfare aid was the foundation of their strategies of survival. Money was a constant source of anxiety. One participant, Katie, described the way in which the presence of economic necessity dictated the nature of everyday life:

> It's not too bad. It just does my head in then when I am thinking right I have got to get nappies and wet wipes and I got a tenner then in my pocket and you have got to make sure you have got milk and things like that and you have got to make sure you have got food in the cupboards. Because if it was just me ... I wouldn't care like but her as well that's thing stressing me out - to make sure I have got food in the house. That's about it (interview).

Similarly, Sarah said,

> It is like uniform for instance. ... It is not compulsory to have a uniform in primary school but they prefer them to be in uniform. So it is like right I have got to get all this in now. I have got to do this. I have got to do that. ... There is always something. So I mean to save is impossible on the money that you are having. ... I worry about it. But then it's like I get about £100 a week but by

the time you make sure you have got plenty of gas, plenty of electric, pay the water, you know, telly licence. So I have got to make sure. So I mean that's the thing like (interview).

Covering essential outgoings was always a worry and patterns of consumption were predictable, often confined to what were 'essentials' with no scope for the experimental or the ethical. The Lifeline Girls were thrifty out of necessity and tight purse strings meant luxuries and treats were for children. Theirs was a life of 'making do' and Bethan succinctly explained this reality: 'I buy Asda's green and white and that's it, nothing else. You buy what you can afford' (field note). A night on the town is something that occurred only rarely, far more common was a bottle of something in the house with a friend in a similar predicament. Many of the Lifeline Girls were customers of the local credit union. For some, bad debt was an issue and rent arrears could mean threats of eviction, while others depended on small loans to make it through Christmas and birthdays.

The educational attainment levels of the Lifeline Girls were uniformly low and school for many was a negative experience. Given that "the biggest divisions in British society, leading to class-of-adult destination, is based on decisions taken at 16, 18 and 19" (Delamont, 2001: 46) this was a key indicator of the future trajectory the Girls would follow. Poor academic records together with little work experience restricted their movement in the labour market (even before their priority was to care for their children). Few had time to establish a strong employment track record before they 'caught' and fell pregnant and many quickly learnt to suppress childhood aspirations and ambitions of careers. Most of the Lifeline Girls had working histories up to the point when they had their children (typically this was lower working class labour caring for the elderly, cleaning or in retail). Many reported that while grandmothers and grandfathers had enjoyed 'good' jobs in Merthyr's factories and traditional industries, their mothers and fathers often found themselves in a similar position to themselves (i.e. employment opportunities confined to marginalised and precarious labour at the periphery of the labour market). There were exceptions of course, for example, Bridget's mother cared for the elderly for a number of years but later retrained as an art teacher, while Laura's father worked for the Water Board for a number of years. However for the most part, the employment of these extended

families was confined to a secondary labour market marked by pervasive unemployment and underemployment (Beynon, 1997).

For many of the Lifeline Girls taking the kind of work they could hope to secure simply did not add up. As Teresa said of one job she went for at a local hotel 'my money would go down, I did check that, by £5.50' (interview). One of Lifeline's Support Workers, Amy, commented that until recent welfare reforms this led many of the Girls to conclude 'well if I just live on the dole for the rest of my life I can have my hundred and odd pound and as long as I live quite wisely and I don't take out too much debt you know I can get by' (interview). The lack of a financial incentive was matched by the importance for this group of young women of 'being there ready to drop everything' (field note) for their children. The pursuit of the commitment to motherhood in this way had, until very recently, been incredibly important to them and was highly valued across the wider community. Such performance of care extended not only to children but close and extended family and neighbours. Caring became a means by which the Girls were able to value themselves and carry themselves with dignity (Skeggs, 1997)

The social capital found in working class communities is often understood to be dense but disadvantaged (MacDonald, et al., 2005). Working class people are seen to suffer from 'network poverty' Granovetter's (1973): a scarcity of ties to more extensive, diverse networks beyond their community (what can be termed the 'bridging' social capital (Field, 2008) that enables them to 'get on'). Working class communities, in contrast, are a source of 'bonding' social capital (Field, 2008) that is invaluable in 'making do' in a marginalised location. Therefore the networks people have access to help them 'to cope' but not 'get on'. However the social networks of kith and kin some of the Lifeline Girls access, are perhaps not entirely in keeping with this dominant representation. While circles of friends and family are limited to the community in which they live (often out of economic necessity as one Lifeline Girls explained: 'if it's not here I can't do it' (Sonia, interview)) the strong bonds of kith and kin still associated with former coalfield communities were not as evident as we might expect. Some Lifeline Girls spoke of their isolation and welcomed Lifeline because it put an end to time spent alone in the house. Moreover while family ties were very important to all the Girls, I would often find inconsistencies or small

contradictions in accounts of familial relationships that spoke of bitterness and resentment particularly towards mothers. Often this was attributed to the experience of truncated childhoods because of early roles as carers or a lack of support for schooling from their mothers.

What is particularly striking about the Girls is the extent to which their lives were entwined with state structures. While the focus of this study is on their experiences of the welfare state the lives of this group of women were deeply embedded in a host of state institutions. In the past these interactions might have included those with the health visitors of Flying Start and Home Start, the case workers of the Child Support Agency, their Local Authority landlords, their child's Speech Therapist, their 'ex's' Substance Misuse Counsellor, the criminal justice system. This was in addition to those who worked under the auspices of the welfare state (for example Jobcentre Plus' Want 2 Work, and WAG's Genesis I and II, as well as mainstream Jobcentre Plus initiatives, like the *New Deal for Lone Parents*). The Lifeline Girls lived their lives under the gaze of the state. We see how therefore how for this group of women the nature of state presence in their lives is problematised beyond straightforward notions of neo-liberal retrenchment.

Understanding the intensity of this focus of the state on the lives of the Lifeline Girls helps us to understand their symbolic marginalisation – as 'single mums' they are one of the most clearly defined (and pathologised) targets of the state's gaze. This group of women occupied highly stigmatised positions and through popular inscriptions these women are society's 'chavs' and 'slappers'. In time it was the Lifeline Girls' shared experiences of materially and symbolically disadvantaged positions that bound them together as a collective. Yet, of course, despite this sense of shared biography they also have distinct life histories and personalities. Their biographies were not uniform: for some school was a happier experience than others, some have worked in 'better' jobs than others and some families are more supportive than others. Moreover they held different dreams and ambitions for the future and of course had very different personalities. Sonia is an eternal optimist, Kerry the ultimate pragmatist, Sarah the budding entrepreneur and Bridget, the future forensic scientist. I hope some of these subtleties and nuances come to life in the Chapters that follow. The aim here is to complement the community profile drawn above and go some way towards

dispelling the myths surrounding the both 'council estate' and the 'single mum' who lives in it.

*"the caricatures of working class life ... it's not all chips and beans"*

*(Nicky Wire, Manics (1998))*

## 4.8 Conclusion

The themes that run through this account reflect how both Valleyside and the Lifeline Girls have experienced and responded to a set of localised structural realities. The economic and social disintegration of Valleyside has occurred as a period of intense social change. Merthyr's origins as a powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution have disappeared and if we think of Valleyside's position in the 'hierarchy of places' it is perhaps best to understand it is a working class community abandoned, despite the presence of the state, to a fate without work, as the *un*-working class. Now the pressure of economic necessity; antipathy to and fear of the state; and the stigmatisation of identity and place define daily life both for Valleyside and the Lifeline Girls. The women who participated in this study were some of the most marginalised of our society and so insidious is the stereotype that pervades our collective conscious that we often believe we know who these women without meeting and talking with them. For those interested in stratification they are the 'elephant in the room' of class analysis. While those who would identify them collectively as the underclass (Murray, 1990) are admonished there is a dearth of alternative, acceptable representations as to name, label, categorise and classify is often to stigmatise. The key theme running through the above account are the processes of maldistribution and misrecognition experienced by Valleyside and the Lifeline Girls. In the words of one participant 'the common people have been exploited and it is still happening maybe, not to such a degree but nothing ever changes' (interview, community member).

Many of the themes touched upon above are developed in subsequent empirical Chapters as they are key points of reflection for the young women I met and talked

with. The primary focus of the study however is the ways in which the Lifeline Girls engage with the structural constraints specifically in relation to the radically altering and dispersed welfare state. This picture of the home of Lifeline, the community of Valleyside, and the lives of the Lifeline Girls provides the context of this study and the Chapters that follow - this is the context in which the radically altered and dispersed welfare state emerges. The element of the context of situated action and meaning making identified here helps us understand that the manner of this strategising is embedded with the organisation of social relations rooted in place. Having established an account of the place Valleyside and the biographies of the Lifeline Girls we can go on to consider the dynamics of class and gender formations in relation to the welfare state. For the moment, however, Chapter Five also serves to contextualise the study by analysing the policy that underpins the restructuring of the welfare state.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Political Rhetoric:
## Tackling the Poverty of Poor People and Poor Places

*'this is a kind of spirit of the age sort of thing'*

*(interview, policy maker)*

This Chapter identifies the context of this case study in relation to the rhetoric of welfare state policy. It is partly through this rhetoric that the new welfare contract repositions lone mother welfare claimants including the Lifeline Girls within new symbolic and material constraints and opportunities. Two elements of the rhetoric underpinning the restructuring of the welfare state are of interest here: *firstly*, its, radicalisation (specifically the extension of the work imperative to 'lone parents'); and *secondly*, its dispersal (the emergence of the community development sphere as a conduit of state welfare practice). Therefore this Chapter is an analysis of the political rhetoric that defines the principles of dominant state sponsored welfare practices as well those of the community development sphere. In doing so, the key tenets of two approaches to tackling poverty, those targeting people and those targeting places, are outlined and the particular manifestations of the radicalisation of the welfare state and the resurgence of welfare in relation to 'community' across multiple levels of governance are highlighted. This analysis clears the ground for an analysis exploring the principles that these fields of policy share.

It is argued that the dominant welfare rhetoric and the rhetoric of community development share an allegiance to model of citizenship that emphasises the responsibilities of individuals and communities. Specifically both spheres subscribed to active model of citizenship that extended the moral imperative to work to those traditionally assumed to be outside of the labour market, even at the risk of vulnerable labour. This amounted to an attempt to forge a new welfare regime by re-fixing dominant meanings and values in cultural and economic formations. This

reconfiguration was largely accomplished through a moralising rhetorical agenda that elides public issues with private troubles (Wright Mills, 1959). However it is also the case that this brand of moral politics, appealing to institutions of community and family as well as values of responsibility and duty, is only superficially cultural (Driver and Martell, 1999). Deep down welfare reform was principally concerned with supporting economic growth by perpetuating processes of maldistribution. However despite these shared principles, found under the auspices of a dispersed welfare state, potential for spaces for the contestation of dominant knowledges and practices exists within the community development sphere. The potential for community development to become more than a conduit for welfare reform is something that is explored directly in this Chapter. In addressing these themes this Chapter draws on policy documents, the rhetoric of leading politicians, and data generated through interviews with policy makers themselves. The key policy initiatives of relevance in this case are the Jobcentre Plus' *New Deal for Lone Parents* and EU's *EQUAL* and WAG's *Communities First*.

## 5.1 Welfare, neo-liberalism and New Labour

While it is misleading to talk of a single coherent ideology in relation to neo-liberalism we can explore the welfare regime in relation to the variant of neo-liberalism currently dominant in the UK. It is impossible to reflect on neo-liberal policy without referring to the individualisation thesis at its heart. The influence of individualisation thesis was significant in shaping recent welfare policy in the UK and dominant voices followed Giddens' (1998) claim that achieving a more meritocratic society required people to embrace their individualized citizenship and become responsible risk takers (Giddens, 1998). While it was hoped by many that the election of a New Labour government in 1997 would herald a new era for policies addressing inequalities, New Labour's particular variant of neo-liberalism, known as The Third Way, did more to retain (and extend) the principles of Thatcher's reign, in relation to welfare and lone mothers, than abandon them. The political economy of social democracy was largely forsaken and, taking the lead from the US (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000), Blair's New Labour made little attempt to refute the neo-liberal ideology they inherited. Indeed it was New Labour that made the case for radical

welfare reform involving the considerable extension of the principle of the individual responsibility of welfare-reliant welfare mothers.

However Blair's New Labour did challenge the 'pure' neo-liberal belief that welfare is best undertaken as a private enterprise. Indeed the element of Thatcherism that New Labour was most critical of was its economic egoism, which they replaced with notions of 'community' and a concern for the moral bonds of society (Driver and Martell, 1999). The incorporation of a strong focus on community was indicative of a morally conservative tone that has seen a welfare policy couched in terms of our differences emerge as a force of misrecognition that continues to perpetuate maldistribution. For New Labour there was such a thing as society. The Third Way conceived of the state in the role of moral 'guardian' as well as 'enabler' or 'facilitator', particularly in relation to moving the socially excluded into the workforce. As such, while it is may be true that the welfare state is constantly resettling (Clarke, 2004; Hughes, 1998) under New Labour it has been radically altered.

## 5.2 Tackling poverty: people and places

Two aspects of policy designed to help those living in poverty are of interest here: *firstly*, programmes enabling *people* to find work by replacing dependency on state benefits with individual responsibility and work (supported by a series of reforms of the welfare system); and *secondly*, programmes aimed at empowering *places* through a process of community development to find solutions to the deprivation their community faces. The restructured welfare state combined these approaches. The emergence of a welfare state, with radically altered principles, was therefore accompanied by a parallel resurgence of state sponsored community development indicative of the dispersal of the welfare state. These elements of policy stemmed from different layers of governance (dominant welfare reform was driven at the UK level whereas the relevant community development policy was driven by European Union (EU) and Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) structures. This restructured welfare state worked with the narrow target groups such as 'lone parents' and 'communities'. However they cannot be considered independently of each other in the

context of the experiences of the Lifeline Girls. Here each approach is considered briefly in turn before their shared principles are examined in more detail.

## 5.3    Targeting people: the *New Deal for Lone Parents*

By the 1970s lone parents were increasing in number. Popular consensus at this time agreed they should be free to choose whether to work in the labour market or stay at home with their family. By the late 1980s, as lone parents became more visible, policy (if not popular consensus) started to change. A number of factors, including the weakening of the tie of marriage and the erosion of the family wage, meant the responsibility of caring for lone parents increasingly fell to the state. In turn, the introduction of Family Credit in 1988 and its extension in 1992 to those working sixteen hours per week are examples of key policy changes to incentivise lone parents to seek employment and combine income from both benefits and part-time working (Finch, et al., 1999). Slowly the "right to be cared for" (Haylett, 2003: 809) by the state was being eroded by welfare reform.

Since the election of New Labour in 1997 there has been significant further government promotion of employment for lone parents (which is part of a broader 'welfare to work' agenda) including increased financial support for those in work (the Child and Working Tax Credits) and a limited expansion of childcare services. The latest of a tranche of public policy to target lone parents, the *New Deal for Lone Parents* (*NDLP*), was first established in 1998. Its primary mechanism for ensuring that more numbers of lone parents enter the workforce was the compulsory bespoke *Work Focused Interview* conducted by Lone Parent Advisers to formulate 'employment action plans'. As the policy literature phrased it *Work Focused Interviews* 'ensure that they [lone parents] know about the opportunities available to them and the benefits of work' (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP, 2006a: 54). This was a significant statutory development involving women on welfare in serious questioning over labour market options and through discussion agreeing to individual action plans. In this way it was being made clear that lone mothers were no longer wholly released from the obligation to work: while they cannot be deprived of welfare aid for refusing employment they must attend *Work Focused Interviews* (or risk partial loss of their welfare entitlements). These *Work Focused Interviews* were

introduced for all new claimants and rolled out over time for existing claimants. A number of the Lifeline Girls were involved in such events during the period of field work.

Towards the end of my time in the field further welfare reforms were implemented (those that so concerned the community development practitioners of Lifeline as noted in Chapter Three). Lone parents with children aged seven and over are currently being moved from Income Support onto Jobseeker's Allowance (the age is set to fall to five in 2011). Thus as of 2010 all lone parents with children aged seven and over have to be available for work as a condition of receiving welfare benefits. While this change does not effect the income they receive it does require them to sign on at Jobcentre Plus fortnightly and demonstrate they are actively seeking paid work and take the employment that is offered. This significantly ratchets up the conditionality of the receipt of welfare aid for lone parents. These changes are part of the Government's drive to increase the number of lone parents in employment by 300,000 in order to achieve an employment rate of 70 per cent, similar to the employment rate of mothers in couples (DWP, 2009). These changes are part of a wider welfare reform agenda that aims to increase the overall employment rate to 80 per cent, by focusing on employment among groups with historically lower employment rates (DWP, 2009). Finally, encouraging work as the best route out of poverty is a key element of reforms designed to reduce child poverty (Timms, 2009). These measures have been supplemented by 'make work pay' financial supports, including the national minimum wage and the child and working tax credits, with the childcare tax credit.

Lone parents have become the particular targets of the welfare state. The state is removing 'care' as the basis for receiving Income Support - instead the market is to provide both care and income in this shift towards gender sameness. Perhaps most tellingly of this era New Labour merged the Benefits Agency with the Employment Service to form Jobcentre Plus in 2002. This removed the historical distinction between those seeking work and those claiming welfare relief and highlights most clearly the radicalisation of the welfare state. These reforms mean that for the Lifeline Girls one concept that has historically underpinned welfare policy (the work imperative for the male breadwinner of a family) has been firmly supplemented with another (the work imperative for the lone parent). This variant of neo-liberal reform

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amounts to an attempt to reconfigure the choice for women historically upheld by our welfare regime, between becoming a 'lesser man' (and accepting vulnerable work) or a 'lesser citizen' (and looking after the family in the home) (Pateman, 1989).

## 5.4 Targeting places: *EQUAL* and *Communities First*

The state sponsored community development model in the UK dates from 1969 when the Community Development Projects were launched in an attempt to drive progressive social change. The projects had a strong research focus and an emphasis on social action "as a means of creating more responsive local services and of encouraging self help" (Loney, 1983: 3). When they were concluded in 1976 the field went into a period of decline that was to last until the mid 1990s (Popple, 1995) and its subsequent revival across multiple layers of governance. Community development no longer lies at the margins of the state and in recent times it has become a cornerstone of 'poverty policy'. Initiatives marking the re-emergence of state policy in the community development tradition have taken the lead on supporting and funding Lifeline: Lifeline was initially funded by the European Social Fund's community development programme, *EQUAL*, via its thematic priority of 'employability' and later hailed as an example of best practice by the WAG's *Communities First* programme.

*EQUAL*, a European Social Fund community initiative, was launched in 2001 and ran across member states until 2008. The policy aimed to bring together the key players within geographical areas to create development partnerships that promoted innovate policy solutions. In keeping with the European Employment Strategy in the UK its implementation supported solutions to employability deficits and targeted economically inactive groups. *Communities First* is WAG's flagship programme for tackling deprivation in communities across Wales (rolled out in 2001 the programme is currently funded to continue until 2012). It targets the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, which currently equates to 178 localities identified by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WAG, 2008). The programme aims to provide local people with the opportunity to play an active role in shaping the future of their communities. It advocates community development practice that tackles the realities of deprivation (projects focus on education and employment, but also community

safety, health and well being, etc). The expectation is that people will actively participate in their communities to ensure that policy innovations are responsive to their community needs.

One community development practitioner explained how together *EQUAL* and *Communities First* were the driving force behind Lifeline:

> When *EQUAL* finished obviously the *Communities First* team wanted to continue Lifeline because it hits so many cross cutting themes so ... [they] decided to take that on and it has got various pockets money. For instance ... I coordinate the project at the moment and my funds come from the Heads of the Valleys economic strategy. Amy, the Support Worker, her money comes through the ... centre, which is probably Bridges to Work money. The rent for the building is paid by somebody else. The childcare is paid by somebody else. You know the WEA provide tutors. ... So it's a partnership of people now that enable us to keep delivering this (interview).

Community development workers in Valleyside were keen to sustain the project and Lifeline currently adopts a typical community development approach of multi-agency partnership working[21]. Lifeline like many community development initiatives of its ilk must secure funding from multiple levels of governance and therefore its aims and objectives initiative must resonate with policy across the scalar imaginaries of governance.

Both *Communities First* and *EQUAL* are spatially targeted programmes that focus on geographical pockets of poverty. They advocate the tools of partnership working, grassroots innovation and experimentation as well as community action and leadership in tackling poverty. The premise of these programmes rests on two assumptions regarding the nature of poverty: *firstly* that poverty can be attributed to the deficiencies of communities themselves (i.e. in terms of a social pathology); and *secondly* that poverty can also be accredited to deficiencies in the ways institutions respond to the needs of those living in poverty (Shaw and Martin, 2000). It is worth

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[21] This partnership approach to service provision makes for a precarious status for the field and projects are dependent on short term funding streams that are characteristic of the community regeneration sphere (Beynon, et al., 1999). This vulnerability is often a cause of concern for the Lifeline's Support Workers and a frequent topic of conversation (though only when the learners themselves are not within earshot).

noting here that it is the latter that allows for the creation of 'spaces of contestation' to the dominant paradigm to emerge through grassroots innovation.

## 5.5   A note on devolution

The success of Lifeline (at the very least the manner in which the project was able to securing funding) suggests that their community led approach chimed with dominant knowledges across multiple layers of governance. Indeed the notion of community as the key to tackling poverty emerged not just in European and Welsh contexts but also across the United Kingdom under New Labour. As we have seen, a variant of communitarianism (Etzioni, 1993) was a key tenet of New Labour thinking: *firstly*, it marked a political response to both the New Right and to Old Labour (the Third Way) involving a partial critique of both neo-liberal individualism and rights-claiming social democracy; and *secondly*, it marked a conservative moral turn marking the Third Way as distinct from progressive left politics (Driver and Martell, 1999). An emphasis on community for New Labour became a means whereby the Party could eschew the extremes of market individualism but not capitalism itself, as well as embrace collective action (but not class). After all, the class war was over (Blair, 1999). This emphasis on community thus softens and challenges the neo-liberal market model by denying individualism as its sole defining principle.

However in Wales there is a perhaps a heightened perception of the danger of policy foregrounding a notion of 'community' becoming tokenistic. This might be attributed to the distinctive political climate associated with devolution of governance in Wales. It is often argued that the WAG discharges its "social policy responsibilities in a way that has a specific set of articulated, ideological principles which mark out that agenda as distinctive" (Chaney and Drakeford, 2004: 121) from central government. The 'clear red water' (Morgan, 2002) that divides Wales from Westminster is a much debated topic (at least in some circles within Wales itself). The ideological principles of a particularly 'Welsh' social democratic agenda (pursued to date chiefly by Old Labour's Rhodri Morgan) are threefold: universalism (as opposed to mean testing); equality of outcome (in place of equality of opportunity); and cooperation for the common good (rather than competition) (Chaney and Drakeford, 2004). As a result of this distinct policy agenda, post-devolution Wales is often felt to generate and

facilitate a politics quite different to that of Blair's New Labour (and indeed most recently in response to changes to the funding of Further Education Cameron's Coalition). However the distinct policy feel found in Wales is not uncomplicated and precisely how deep and wide 'clear, red water' runs remains questionable.

One case for discussion is that of *Communities First*. Established as a spatially directed programme with a renewed emphasis on economic inactivity and employability it is hard to see this policy initiative as exemplifying the social democratic ethos of the 'Welsh Way'. Rather, the appropriation of the concept of community for a flagship policy designed to tackle poverty was very much in keeping with New Labour's approach. This was confirmed by those who created *Communities First*:

> We weren't inventing new stuff here. We were very much picking up on a very broad literature and quite dominant themes emerging within social policy theory itself and obviously the election of the Labour government in '97 was a major kick to all that. ... It was a very dominant paradigm. I think there was a paradigm shift somewhere in the early nineties that said community empowerment is of critical importance (interview, policy maker).

While there was a 'feeling in the Assembly that this was a radical programme' (interview, policy maker) this cannot be attributed to the distinct social democratic ethos nurtured by Rhodri Morgan and Welsh Labour. Rather, the concept of community pervaded multiple level of governance and was an integral part of the New Labour philosophy, for Giddens "fundamental to the new politics" (1998: 79).

The discussion that follows examines the relationship between these two streams of welfare governance that the Lifeline Girls encountered exploring their common principles and standards within our welfare regime. At the heart of this analysis is the moral force of a political rhetoric that effectively camouflages its economic drivers (and silences the structural determinants of poverty).

## 5.6 Citizenship: responsibilities (and rights?)

The fields of community development and welfare share the principal aim of tackling poverty, be it in the guise of targeting poor people or poor communities. They also

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share and conform to a particular construction of active citizenship predicated on a contract consisting of rights and responsibilities. This model of citizenship emphasises the responsibilities of people and places[22] rather than their rights. In this way poor people and poor communities become "both the problem *and* the solution" (Fremeaux, 2005: 271; emphasis in original). In the words of one civil servant working on the *Communities First* programme:

> The problem is that people are much too quick to say everything is the responsibility of the state and that we have no responsibility at all and that everything should be handed to us on a plate (interview).

This sentiment is confirmed by a *Communities First* policy document that somewhat paradoxically stated:

> success of the programme is *entirely* dependent on the active involvement of local people, but they need the support, encouragement and help of the public, voluntary and private sectors in their area (WAG, 2007: 3; my emphasis).

Similarly, guidance for dominant welfare policy regarding mainstream welfare provisions proffered the following:

> The success of the New Deal has been based on a clear framework of rights and responsibilities. We have been extending this to all claimants, building a system that recognises the responsibilities *people have to get themselves off* benefits, while ensuring that society fulfils its obligations to those unable to help themselves (DWP, 2006a: 3; my emphasis).

While the framework of citizenship includes both rights and responsibilities, it is the responsibilities of individuals that were typically emphasised. There was a focus on a cultural form of politics that appealed to institutions like community, family and employment, alongside values like obligation and duty to promote moral order (and economic gain). The contract between poor people, poor communities and the state was redrafted through a language of conditionality that created an anticipatory model of citizenship in the future (Lister, 2003). This reflected the ways in which citizenship is not a status achieved or granted once and equally for all, but a contentious and uneven "instituted process ... that must continually be struggled for and secured anew"

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[22] In such policy, through the construction of community, places are given the qualities of agency.

(Wacquant, 2008: 38). The expectation was that poor people and poor communities were free to determine their biographies for themselves, although this was to occur through normatively restrictive channels.

## 5.7  The dominance of the work ethic

Historically welfare state relief was extended on the basis of a set of assumptions of the gender roles of a household, whereby men were tasked with earning, while women were responsible for caring for the young and old. The birth of the welfare state presupposed that certain aspects of welfare could and should be provided by women at home, and not primarily through public provision (Pateman, 1989). The dependency of women was at the core of a welfare settlement built on the foundation of full male employment and a one wage stable family unit: women and children were to be provided for by men[23]. Therefore while the "settlement at the heart of the modern welfare state was between capital and labour ... *there was a second key settlement between men and women*" (Lewis, 2001: 152; emphasis in original).

The current resettlement (or radicalisation) of the welfare state in line with an adult worker model is an attempt to reconfigure this welfare contract and redefine citizenship as a mechanism of exclusion/inclusion in predominantly economic terms. In recent years there have been significant normative changes in gender relations and a gradual increase of women's employment. These changes are associated with numerous factors including: the breakdown of martial ties; the decline of the family wage; the commoditisation of the domestic sphere; the rise of a feminised form of employment; and Second Wave Feminism's fight for equality in the workplace (see Crompton, 2002). The welfare state both reflected and created these changes to the institutions of family and employment and the rhythms and patterns of social life they engendered. The imperative to enter the labour market is now extended to those traditionally assumed to be outside of it: there is 'targeted support for those who need it most' i.e. 'those traditionally assumed to be outside the labour market' (DWP (2006b: 20). This marked a new performative citizenship with an emphasis on the

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[23] The rise of the single mother family and the dependence of women directly on the state has rendered this settlement more visible.

agency of the social actor as increasingly full citizenship and participation in the labour market are synonymous. The promotion of this adult-worker model of citizenship fundamentally reconfigured the nature of the welfare regime and the gender regime of which it was a key element.

The policy fields of interest here share an allegiance to this active model of citizenship that understands that to be a responsible citizen is now synonymous with entering the labour market. However at the heart of this policy prescription lay a contradiction, as the insistence that adults should undertake paid employment lay alongside an emphasis on the importance of parenting practices and community participation (see McDowell, 2005). As McDowell points out, community participation[24] and parenting largely depend on unpaid labour, but what she fails to emphasise is the way in which both have become embedded within and subordinated to the work imperative in the dominant policy paradigm. Work is identified as *the* path to citizenship and self-fulfilment and in this way the family and community work performed by welfare-reliant women has been devalued: political rhetoric of this type holds that poor women living in poor places pursue the wrong kinds of commitments (typically in relation to family and community).

## 5.8 The work ethic and the family

Recent welfare reform explicitly privileged one set of norms over another creating an ideal type of citizen, the economically active citizen over the economically inactive. The tasks allotted to genders (and classes) have changed with the intensification of capitalism – the era of patriarchal capitalism that positioned women as wives and mothers and took for granted their separation from the labour market is coming to an end. Women are increasingly expected to cease caring in the family home and enter the workforce. For poor women strategies of 'getting by' that once relied on welfare relief increasingly become less tenable materially and lack legitimacy symbolically. In contrast to Pateman's (1989) formulation, there is for poor women increasingly no

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[24] A distinction between community participation in the process of statutory decision making and implementation, and community participation in the outcomes of this process is useful. In this respect community development must be considered in relation to two elements: *firstly*, as a source of participatory or deliberative democracy whereby communities influence the nature of service provision; and secondly in terms of its outcomes for example, the emergence of the employability project Lifeline under the auspices of the welfare state.

choice between becoming a 'lesser citizen' (and caring in the home) and a 'lesser man' (and entering the workforce as a vulnerable labourer). For many the 'choice' is now confined to the latter.

This radical shift in the ethos of the welfare state from care in the home to employment locked welfare-reliant lone mothers into the institutions of family and employment in new ways. Appeals to Feminist rhetorical strategies of equality (for example the assertion that welfare reform gives *'everyone the opportunity* to better their lives through work' (DWP, 2006b: 3; my emphasis) assumed that everybody wants to better their lives through work. As such, welfare reforms advocated working parenthood as the key to citizenship for lone parents and the means by which they could raise their families out of poverty. Thus running parallel to the argument that a citizen is in effect a working citizen therefore is the assertion that a good parent is a working parent. Moreover the implicit meaning underlying welfare reform is that a 'workless' parent is a neglectful parent. A key policy document thus pointed out that:

> achieving the 70 per cent lone parent employment target would lift around 300,000 children out of low income, which would make a significant contribution to our target to halve child poverty by 2010 (DWP, 2006a: 54).

Here a link is made between the alleviation of 'child poverty', as opposed to 'lone parent's' social exclusion. In dominant rhetoric 'poverty' consistently referred to only the deserving poor i.e. the young and the old. In contrast social exclusion is used to refer to the undeserving poor i.e. those adults of working age like our Lifeline Girls who are not working. It is these people who were the target of the New Labour mantra 'work for those who can' (Department of Social Security, 1998). This emphasis on the poverty of children stressed the *moral* obligation of lone parents to engage in paid work.

Concurrently, parenting itself has become a significant issue Gillies, 2004; 2005; Braun et al., 2008). For the most part it is working class parents who are understood to be in need of particular guidance with classes designed not to ease economic hardship but to educate in relation to parenting practice (Gillies, 2004; 2006). Here, the way in which the working class commitment to parenthood is pursued, together with the site of the home itself, is degraded (Haylett, 2003). It is of course primarily mothers who

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are the targets of good parenting initiatives and the gender-neutral language of 'parenting' in much policy discourse obscures its gendered implications (Braun et al., 2008). Policy also emphasised that childcare in the market place is as good, if not better, as that provided in the home by lone parents:

> Our ten-year childcare strategy, *Choice for parents, the best start for children* ... will be of real benefit in enabling parents – particularly lone parents – to go to work, knowing that their children have a safe and stimulating place to go (DWP, 2006a: 55; emphasis in original).

Thus parents are faced by two imperatives: to be a 'good', self-reliant worker-citizen and a 'good' parent of well-behaved children (Braun, et al., 2008). In subsequent Chapters, this contention brings to the fore the paradoxes inherent in welfare claimants' standing as citizens and specifically the tensions between their roles as parents and waged workers, and to a lesser extent community volunteers.

## 5.9 The work ethic and community

The subordination of community participation to the work imperative was evident in the way in which community development initiatives were embedded within the dominant welfare regime. This was perhaps exemplified by the *EQUAL* programme that incorporated a community development approach to implementation of the:

> goal of achieving a high level of employment for all groups in the labour market. To achieve this, the development of the skills and employability of those currently outside the labour market is essential. ... The equal participation of women and men in the labour market must also be ensured (European Commission, Employment and Social Affairs (ESA), 2000: 2).

This strand of community development policy was solely focused on enhancing the employability of groups who historically have not participated in the labour market. It was the concept of employability, i.e. the qualities a worker possesses, their attitudes to work and skills, but also their expectations regarding working conditions and rewards (Peck and Theodore, 2000), that dominated policy rather than community participation *per se*.

Similarly, *Communities First's* policy makers believed enhancing employability was one key way this community development programme can 'actually add value'

(interview, policy maker). This was seen by some of the policy makers I interviewed as a strength. As one noted:

> The advantage that *Communities First* could bring is actually in the services around that ['welfare to work'] agenda. ... It can be in support of employment without actually providing employment itself. ... What they can do is make it easier or reduce the barriers for people to get employment in the locality (interview).

Here the explicit aim was identified as complementing mainstream policy directives, rather than perhaps challenging them in response to community needs. Other policy makers working in community development were uncomfortable with the knowledge that community development was embedded within and subordinate to the employability thesis. As it stands, with the emphasis upon empowerment and the like, it can be managed. However as one WAG official pointed out 'if community development just becomes a mechanism for getting people into work then we have got a problem' (interview). In this way community development programmes can unwittingly become conduits of welfare policy. This was not an isolated view.

## 5.10 When public issues become private troubles

In this context of the rhetoric underpinning the restructuring of the welfare state an important distinction needs to be made between private troubles and public issues (Wright Mills, 1959). Troubles:

> occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his or her immediate relations with others; they have to do with one's self and with those limited areas of social life of which one is directly and personally aware. Accordingly, the statement and the resolution of troubles properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of one's immediate milieu - the social setting that is directly open to her personal experience and to some extent her wilful activity (Wright Mills, 1959: 8).

A trouble is, therefore, a private matter when "values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened" (Wright Mills, 1959: 8). In contrast, issues are concerned with "matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the limited range of his life" (Wright Mills, 1959: 8):

Issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of her inner life. They have to do with the organization of many such milieu into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieu overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life (Wright Mills, 1959: 8).

An issue is therefore a public matter where "some value cherished by publics is felt to be threatened" (Wright Mills, 1959: 8).

As is the case with welfare reform an issue often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements. In the case of the reconfiguration of the welfare regime one set of relationships between the family, the state and the labour market is replacing another and the nature of the commitments of social actors are cast in a different light. However the rhetoric of the state presented this public issue as a private trouble of the poor: political rhetoric slipped past structure to focus on isolated situations and circumstances and construct issues as the problems of individuals. In this instance a disproportionate emphasis was placed on poverty deriving from individual pathologies rather than outcomes of structural, political or normative arrangements. This was evident in a policy agenda that created "a discursive space where moral evaluation is made explicit" (Skeggs, 2004: 24).

The mechanism of economic citizenship outlined above implicitly created a moral dichotomy between the 'inactive' and 'active' citizen and 'inactive' and 'active' community. The lone parents who claim welfare and live in Valleyside became failures in moral self governance. This type of welfare policy focused on a psycho-social dimension i.e. it was aimed at reforming the pathological behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs endemic within community cultures. The symbolic positioning of people claiming welfare in this way drew on a moral underclass discourse of deservingness that can be traced back to nineteenth century concepts of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor (Morris, 1994). The poor thus become both a threat to and a burden on the state and the rest of society. This meant welfare dependency becomes the target of reform rather than poverty *per se* and policy was thus aimed at break the 'clear link between benefit dependency and hardship' (DWP, 2006a: 19).

The policy documents created for mainstream welfare reform can read as morality tales as they hailed case studies of exemplary 'good' citizens and communities and

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made the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. This is the key rhetorical strategy and the text voices a rallying cry for the moral reflexivity of the poor (see for example, DWP, 2006b: 12). Reformed citizens from target groups share their journeys (achieved with the light touch support of the state) from welfare dependency to the labour market. These accounts of redemption allow for the construction of an 'ideal type' of active citizen and the contrast of 'good' and 'bad' lifestyles and community cultures. It becomes possible to discern between the attributes of the active responsible citizen-parent and her antithesis, the welfare-dependent lone parent. The active citizen is mobile, dynamic, hard-working, bright eyed and bushy tailed, while the inactive citizen simply a list of related antonyms.

It is also worth noting that while the number of lone parents has risen in recent years across the United Kingdom the number of lone parents claiming Income Support as a percentage of households stands at just 1.8 per cent (Source: nomis, ONS, 2010. Given the popular and political attention on this group we would be forgiven for thinking this figure was far higher. It is also significant that more lone parents work than do not and the employment rate is 56.7 per cent (Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS, 2009). Moreover studies that compare the situation of lone parents *vis a vis* other women suggest that their gender and class position, rather than lone parenthood *per se* may be the principal driver of their poverty (Rowlingson and Millar, 2001).

This preoccupation with the personal or more aptly here the local and cultural was also evident in community development policy. In this instance status and class was mapped as a spatial phenomenon as attention was given to the geographical markers of distinction between the poor and prosperous (see Levitas, 2001; Skeggs, 2004). This was clear in one document that identified the places that poor people live as 'breeding grounds ... of low aspiration' (DWP, 2006b: 4). Constructions, such as this, of biological or genetic understandings of class and poverty appeal directly to historic notions of the deserving and undeserving poor. Communities, like people needed redemption. As such community became an inherent site of a stigmatising power imagined through symbolic boundaries rooted in place and space (Cohen, 1985). In this sense 'community' (like 'lone parent') became a codeword (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001) for class, status and inequalities emerging as euphemism that can bring to mind a culture of poverty. In turn, poverty itself was constructed as the result

of the failures of localities themselves as rhetoric furnished places with agency. It is worth noting that while community is embedded in a dominant construction of the logic of deprivation and poverty, more poor people in Wales live outside *Communities First's* 178 areas than inside them.

The dominant understanding that poverty can be explained by poor people's disconnection from mainstream values is also found within community development rhetoric. One WAG policy maker made this in clear in the way in which he described the aims of *Communities First*:

> if you recognise that a hell of a lot of people in *Communities First* areas are so far away from actually getting a job then the idea of them making that leap in one bound is absolute nonsense, actually the first thing you have got to do is to get them out of their homes or address their appallingly low level of self esteem or actually just get them talking to somebody else, or actually sort of question the fact that 'my dad didn't work and his dad didn't work so why the hell should I ever work?'. Yeah ok we want them to get to the top of the ladder but actually getting to the bottom rung of the ladder would be a start ... so what happens with *Communities First*, is yeah it is down the bottom end of the ladder (interview).

Given the prominence of the employability thesis the role of policy is limited to addressing the suspect qualities and cultures of poor people and the places they live. The implication here is that people living in deprived communities, like Valleyside, wouldn't get jobs even if there were any. Another policy maker similarly stated: 'the community development process helps people to be job ready, gets them out of the mindset ... reawakens that thirst for work, which has traditionally characterised these communities' (interview). Here a self afflicted by a culture of worklessness, was the target of policy intervention. An individual's 'employability' is seen as *the* determinant of employment chances. Structural or contextual change is not therefore a feature of the policy agenda. Instead people and places are to be equipped with the capacity for inclusion. Thus perhaps it is possible to state that in relation to community development a greater emphasis was placed on the individual's and community's conformity to social norms than on the devolution of powers (Driver and Martell, 1999).

The restructuring of the welfare state meant the opportunity to participate as active citizens was not extended to all in the same way - the deployment of the terms 'lone parenthood' and 'community' created an exclusive and targeted model of citizenship. Moreover structures of opportunity and constraint were rendered invisible by a rhetorical discourse of moral worth. The powerful message linked moral values to economic achievement: a citizen *should* work and the responsibility to work lies in the hands of the individual and the community. This message is shored up by populist caricatures of the 'single mum' on the 'council estate'. Indeed the degradation of deprived communities is personified by the degenerate welfare mum, only ever a pram-push away from home. She is cast as a threat to our morality and a material drain on our resources. Societal divisions are partly made through such stigmatising symbolic judgements of poor people and the places they live. As policies that target lone parents are frequently based on stereotypes of lone motherhood (Fraser, 1995) her stigmatised social position is fixed by the gaze of the welfare state.

## 5.11 Privileging the moral over the economic?

While the targets of the welfare state were symbolically positioned as in need of reform, it is important not to lose sight of the material realities of the welfare state as processes of maldistribution and misrecognition are often inextricably linked. The restructured welfare state focused on supply-side initiatives, and the *New Deal for Lone Parents*, *EQUAL* and *Communities First* were part of a wider activation model of welfare that aimed to increase the number of people in employment even at the risk of creating vulnerable labour. Indeed Peck and Theodore (2000) compellingly argue that welfare reform together with deregulation of the labour market ensures the coercion of people into vulnerable labour. Modalities of state power have radically reformed in line with a variant of neo-liberalism whereby the state and the market work together to enable (or coerce) men and women to bear responsibility and participate (or compete) in the labour market. In New Labour's terms the welfare state offers a "hand-up, not a hand out" (Blair, 1999). The welfare state across multiple levels of governance, embraced flexible labour markets (and as such vulnerable labour) by promoting a morality that promised not only economic but moral inclusion. Welfare was no longer concerned with the redistribution of wealth and mitigating against the harshest effects of the intensification of capitalism. Instead it became a

vital cornerstone of the intensification of capitalism. This marked the end of the social democratic emphasis on an individual's rights to welfare, a right to protection for care, and the responsibility of the state to ensure a greater equality of outcome. The constructions of need and the needy identified above thus served an economic agenda and when New Labour defined itself in moral terms this largely served to camouflage these economic drivers.

## 5.12 Welfare rhetoric and the silence of structures

The broader issues underpinning poverty and inequality are sidelined through the construction of a culturally distinct and deficient minority. The policy rhetoric offers only a 'thin' discussion of the various types of cultural, economic and social capital that mediate decisions both to work and care (and ensure 'choices' are encountered and 'risks' taken). Discussion of the collection of capitals social actors inherit was limited to the cultural realm and there was a preoccupation with the personal. Within dominant policy rhetoric the social actor was constructed as primarily an economic unit un-contextualised by contexts of place or biography. As such this position reflected a process whereby the social actor is portrayed as increasingly free to control her destiny unconstrained by the structures of society (Giddens, 1991; 1992; Beck, 1992). This thesis is applied to both communities, which become endowed with 'agency' qualities and welfare-claimants. Calls on poor people and places to bear the responsibility for their poverty negate the necessity for the policies that acknowledge and challenge classed and gendered structural realities. In effect these 'silences' enabled the normalisation of meritocratic principles and specifically the elision of class and status with the illusion of meritocracy. Simply, if successes are to reflect the workings of meritocracy then failures must also be judged by criteria of agency.

This reading of poverty as a private trouble rather than public issue meant that structural realities were only rarely acknowledged. If the community development sphere does acknowledge structural realities it is either in terms of: (i) the *raison d'être* of the programme: policy makers recognise the need for 'post industrial rescue' because 'the coals mines went and people are still living there and there is no possibility of industry on that scale coming into those areas' (interview, policy

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maker)); or (ii) the need for additional interventions to those of community development that *do* address structural realities. In the words of one policy maker:

> Someone has to do the big stuff and that is jobs, economy, benefits system, taxation policy, and that probably will make the huge difference, and you know if you haven't got jobs you know what are you changing? (interview).

However this analysis of community development policy pointed to its key inherent contradiction, namely that local solutions can be found for structural problems (Corkey and Craig, 1978). Paradoxically, the expectation that active communities can tackle poverty sits alongside a construction of their lack of efficacy as being the root cause of their poverty (Dicks, 2009). There is a tension within policies that ask the most deprived of all to take responsibility for the poverty of the place where they live as individuals and communities must draw on their own latent qualities, their own selves, in lieu of externally provided solutions. This meant that often for community development policy makers and practitioners alike their efforts were seen as merely 'a drop in the ocean' (field note).

The silence of structure is perhaps most evident in the championing of the equality of opportunity. For example *Communities First* would 'promote individual and community empowerment, *equality of opportunity*, participation and sustainability' (WAG, 2001: 6; my emphasis). Similarly UK welfare policy emphasised that '[t]ackling poverty and promoting *equality of opportunity* lie at the heart of our approach to government; they define our policy agenda and drive our vision of the future.' (DWP, 2006b: 2; my emphasis). Equality and diversity agendas supported welfare initiatives as we see below:

> equality of opportunity is a powerful justification for inequality. If all have an equal opportunity to be unequal, then the unequal outcome must be regarded as justified and fair, as a reflection of 'natural' inequalities of personal endowments, rather than of structured social processes (Crompton, 2008: 13).

In communities like Valleyside, facing structural unemployment, a government that 'does not accept that the main cause of unemployment and high benefit receipt is a lack of available jobs' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001: 69) posed significant challenges. Indeed it is the lack of employment for many Valleys communities in particular that

leads some working in community development to conclude that 'there is something very sad about this job ready thing' (interview, policy maker). The assumption that the market will solve these private troubles was of little comfort for the communities that faced endemic unemployment, a lack of infrastructure and a state that accepted no responsibility and saw welfare reform as the solution to societal problems.

The significance of structures of constraint and opportunity was clear in the following analysis of a typical constellation of interaction between *Communities First* community members, its practitioners and its policy makers. A common criticism levied at the *Communities First* programme is that it was 'dogged by a lack of prescription' (interview, policy maker). Policy statements emphasised that the programme 'does not prescribe a solution but sets out a vision for the future' (WAG, 2001: 2). The 'vision' was that 'the programme will enable and empower people ... to decide what is needed for their area's regeneration and then help them realise their ambitions' (WAG, 2007: 3). This kind of utopian language led to accusations of a lack of direction and guidance yet a lack of prescription is an fundamental element of what was, after all, a state sponsored community development programme: its success was to be found in innovative grassroots thinking not in the top-down imposition of pre-determined interventions. However this lack of prescription created a tension: in the words of one policy maker, 'you can only think outside the box as far as the state will or maybe can allow' (interview, policy maker). In a similar vein, one WAG official commented of the programme:

> The phrase 'communities identify their priorities' - it was like a mantra... If you think through the implications of that... it has some inbuilt contradictions... The logic of that is to imply something well beyond what *Communities First* is able to deliver (interview).

This was clear on the ground where perhaps the loudest and most frequent demands from local residents were for the creation of jobs. However the *Communities First* 'vision' precluded tackling 'the big stuff' and job creation was recognised by policy makers, practitioners and in time by community members to be 'well beyond what *Communities First* is able to deliver' (interview, policy maker). Instead the lack of explicit and detailed prescription within the policy framework created a space that was invariably filled with conventions such as 'employability' borrowed from the

dominant policy paradigm. As such selective programmes of geographical targeting were endorsed at the expense of structural models of intervention that would require a far more extensive commitment from the state.

## 5.13 Spaces of contestation?

The argument above has suggested that community development approach to tackling poverty is little more than a conduit (unwitting or otherwise) for dominant welfare practices. It highlights the way in which community development policy makers have had 'to live in that world of 'welfare to work' to a large extent' (interview, policy maker) bound by forces that lie beyond their control. Working under the auspices of the welfare state was an uncomfortable experience for some policy makers and there was little discursive space for manoeuvre: 'you can't argue for getting people back into work without seeming to be in the camp of people who want to take their benefits off them' (interview, policy maker). The field was characterised by this sense of constraint defined by parameters imposed elsewhere. Here, the state's espousal of a work ethic in itself was not problematic, however the manner in which it was configured (neglecting the importance of care, its intensely moralising tone, its coercive practices) was troubling for those employed at 'the sharp end' of community development. This reading seemingly affords little scope for contestation of the neo-liberal project of hegemony. For some working in the community development sphere this derives from the very nature of state-sponsored community development. As one civil servant explained of 'older style community development workers':

> As far as they are concerned the state is the dead hand. It kills community participation. You cannot have a state-sponsored community participation and there is a sense where that is quite an accurate perception in some ways (interview).

This position leads us to conclude that "far from redistributing power, the 'community solution' was part of the hegemonic apparatus of the state aimed at organising consent and managing dissent" (Shaw and Martin, 2000: 404).

Nevertheless, it is possible to begin to think of state-sponsored community development as something other than a strategy for the control of a problem

population in keeping with a governmentality thesis (see for example, Rose (1999). At the heart of this analysis is a view of the dispersal of welfare state governance as a set of 'flows' from the state to other agencies that are now engaged in governing. This "process of dispersal involves divergent strategies of reform and generates new sets of tensions, contradictions and potential instabilities" (Clarke, 2004: 116). Several rhetorical elements of community development policy suggest that such an approach can facilitate and support 'spaces of contestation' to the neo-liberal project thus limiting its attempted hegemony.

*Firstly*, we return to the premise that community development programmes are built on: the assumption that poverty can be attributed both to the deficiencies of communities themselves *and* the deficiencies of the institutions that respond to their needs. *Communities First* policy documents emphasised this facet of the programme: *Communities First*:

> provides opportunities for people living in areas we term to be disadvantaged, and the agencies that deliver services in those communities, to examine the realities of poverty and to learn and work together to address it. (WAG, 2007: 1).

Policy solutions that stem from grassroots innovation and address state institutional deficiencies are advocated and there is a mandate for critique of the practice of mainstream 'welfare to work' agencies for example. *Secondly*, and related to the above, the community development approach foregrounded grassroots innovation as a means of funding new ways to respond to poverty:

> *EQUAL* will act as a testing ground to develop and disseminate new ways of delivering employment policies ... at the level of territories able to generate local co-operation (ESA, 2000: 2-3).

The lack of prescription created an opportunity for counter-hegemonic constructions and practices (not necessarily filled by unrefined conventions such as employability).

The dispersal of welfare state activity carved out potential sites of contestation to emerge through 'cracks' in a dominant ideology. State-sponsored community development projects and their practitioners had the capacity therefore to work both

"within and against the state" (Craig and Mayo, 1995: 105) beyond simply re-moralising communities into the new welfare culture. While such 'spaces of contestation' may be 'squeezed' by the resettling welfare state this is not to say they did not emerge through the chinks in its armour – and act not simply as conduits of its dominant rhetoric and practice. Indeed within the community development sphere we may find spaces of 'contingent contestation' that are dependent on retaining a degree of compliance with the principles of hegemonic ideology but resist key dimensions of its practice. As such these spaces posses a form conditional autonomy (Newman, 2001; Clarke, 2004).

## 5.14 Conclusion

The account offered above examined the restructuring of the welfare state, both in terms of its radicalisation and its dispersal, through its formalised rhetoric and the thoughts of its policy makers. We see the concurrent emergence of two approaches to tackling poverty (one by targeting people through the mainstream 'welfare to work' agenda and the other by targeting places through localised community development programmes). In this instance it is difficult to detect a process of state retrenchment *per se* so much as an ideological shift in the quality of state presence. These are just two elements of the current resettlement of welfare (Clarke, 2004) in line with a neo-liberal attempt at hegemony in the UK. These two arms of the welfare state do share common principles: both promoted an active model of citizenship and are intensely moralised bestowing responsibility for poverty onto poor people and poor communities. In this way poor people and poor communities were pathologised as the solutions to poverty were predominantly understood in terms of what they lacked i.e. employment. This dominant rhetorical position cast the state as moral guardian thus obscuring the economic drivers of reform. However the welfare state has both material and symbolic dimensions conferring both reward (or maldistribution) and recognition (or misrecognition): determining welfare entitlements for unemployed lone parents, coercing poor people into vulnerable work while also 'fixing' poor people and places in a stigmatised position of the undeserving. Structurally grounded inequalities that dramatically curtail the extent to which social actors are able to exploit, and indeed encounter opportunity were largely unacknowledged while meritocratic principles were normalised.

It is also important to note that it is possible to identify a disjuncture between a legitimating hegemonic ideology on the one hand and actual economic/political practice on the other as policy is partly constructed at the street-level (Korteweg, 2006; Wacquant, 2008; Lipsky, 2010; Massey, 2010). Welfare practice does not uniformly match the rhetoric attempting to establish hegemony. Along with 'biography' (Lifeliner's collection of capitals) and 'place' (the local context of Valleyside) examined in the previous Chapter the policy rhetoric examined here shaped the practice of Lifeline and the Lifeline Girls' negotiation of the social world. The Chapters that follow are embedded within these contexts. From this foundation we can explore the welfare regime as it is experienced by a group of welfare-reliant single mothers within one site of welfare practice. The origins and evolution of Lifeline are rooted in the understanding of the welfare state as a coercive force that does not acknowledge the biographies of social actors or the histories of places. The next Chapter outlines the distinctive approach adopted by Lifeline itself and its Support Workers under the auspices of the welfare state.

# CHAPTER SIX

## A Space of Contestation:
## The Therapeutic Arm of the Welfare State

Lifeline is a community education project targeting welfare-reliant single mothers. Like Jobcentre Plus it was is home to mechanisms of the welfare state tasked with generating new behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs in welfare-reliant single mothers. However Lifeline emerged from the community development sphere through the dispersal of welfare state activity and can be seen as a site of welfare governance working *within but against* the state. Specifically, it can be seen as a response to the radicalisation of the welfare state and the coercion of welfare-reliant single mothers into vulnerable labour. As such Lifeline itself existed as a 'space of contestation', designed to mitigate against the worst effects of dominant welfare state ideology and practice. It did so by reconfiguring the individualisation thesis at the heart of the welfare state's dominant conceptualisation of employability. This amounted to a re-conceptualisation of the rights of welfare-reliant single mothers: the right to escape low wage and low status employment as well as benefit from education and childcare in order to pursue 'careers as carers' (nurses, social workers, speech therapists etc). A further key element of the community education offered by Lifeline was the intensive psycho-social intervention of Lifeline's Support Workers. This support was designed to help the Lifeline Girls cope with the challenges of the everyday and develop strategies of 'getting on' in place of past strategies of simply 'getting by'.

In this way Lifeline constituted a 'space of contestation' that enjoyed a form of conditional autonomy (Newman, 2001; Clarke, 2004). This amounted to a (partial) recognition of the materially and symbolically marginalised social position of the Lifeline Girls and an adherence to alternative social constructions of need and the needy. Paradoxically perhaps, Lifeline's contestation rested on building on the 'natural' strengths of this group of caring working class women thus appealing to deeply embedded processes of misrecognition. Moreover Lifeline's contestation also rested on an extension of the individualisation thesis that underpins conventional employability initiatives: Lifeline was indicative of an emerging therapeutic state

focused on healing the *damaged selves* of the poor. The therapeutic interventions of Support Workers were a key mechanism deployed by this site of welfare practice to generate new behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs. Through such interventions Lifeline promoted the self-reflexive, self-fulfilling social actor who could negotiate the social world successfully. This remained the case even while the successful pursuit of strategies of 'getting on', i.e. the accrual of capitals was often founded on the collective practices of the Lifeline Girls.

A form of contingent contestation in this context constituted an attempt to negotiate and modify institutional practices relating to family and employment as we see:

> power and resistance play themselves out in social situations that are invaded by economic and political systems. They highlight ... the colonization of the lifeworld by the system ... [but we can] also explore resistance to it in the forms of negotiated orders, alternative institutions, and social movements (Burawoy, 1991: 1-2).

This Chapter outlines the principles guiding Lifeline and the complex and contingent nature of its contestation is its key theme. It also highlights how the principles of Lifeline reflected recognition of the significance of biography and place in determining the strategies the Lifeline Girls were able to adopt to negotiate the social world (Rees, et al., 1997). The Chapter introduces the Lifeline Support Workers Amy and Jessica for the first time, as well as several more of the Lifeline Girls themselves.

## 6.1  The origins and evolution of Lifeline

The dispersal of the welfare state facilitated the emergence of divergent strategies of reform to those advocated in the dominant 'welfare to work' paradigm. Specifically, welfare state restructuring, and particularly the resurgence of state sponsored community development, enabled 'spaces of contestation' to neo-liberal reform to emerge. The potential for 'spaces of contestation' rested on a key tenet of the community development approach:  the assumption that poverty can be attributed to both the deficiencies of communities themselves *and* deficiencies in the state institutions that serve communities (Shaw and Martin, 2001). Moreover the emphasis on grassroots innovation and the lack of prescription inherent within the approach created opportunities for counter-hegemonic representations and practices. Lifeline,

by virtue of its *reconfiguration* of the conventions of the employability thesis was one such site of counter-hegemonic constructions and practices.

An account of the origins and evolution of the project goes some way to explaining its emergence as a site of contestation. Lifeline's origins lie in an Action Research project (based at a local University and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)) focused on tackling health inequalities in Valleyside and a piece of employability research commissioned by the WAG and the European Social Fund. Its roots in Action Research meant Lifeline had an established grassroots dimension - as a result its Support Workers consistently highlighted the importance of responsive practice. Jessica, one of the health inequalities project's original community-based, Action Researchers and a Lifeline Support Worker, explained:

> I follow those principles of finding out what people want and then tweaking the action so you are always guided by what people actually say they want, or what needs doing and their own opinions on things. It's assuming that people in communities are the experts on their own lives and the experts on their own issues, and they are. So they live it, they breath it every day and we are just following their views on how things should be tackled (interview).

The original health inequalities, Action Research project successfully engaged a number of Valleyside's single mothers with a healthy living programme for families. It also exposed the community-based, Action Researchers in Valleyside to the counter-hegemonic discourses that can be found within Universities. In particular the emphasis on responding to the participants' needs meant that when some women developed an interest in pursuing further education (and employment) opportunities, practitioners were keen to act. Jessica's account of this time described the origins of Lifeline in this context:

> Obviously these people are skilled, they are bright... but cannot access the jobs because of the lack of qualifications... you have got to have a qualification... I was just in this quandary... I was half thinking to myself well I don't know if I can go on anymore... I have reached a point where I can't do anything more for these people cos we are hitting upon this, and there doesn't seem to be any solution. Lucky for me... I went to a seminar... on a tranche of research around employability... I said "look, what you are talking about here... I know I have got a group of women who are ready for this now" (interview).

The seminar was organised by a local community development/Action Research charity that had carried out the research Jessica mentioned. This research had a real impact upon Jessica because it considered employability directly in relation to conceptions of quality of life. Specifically, the researchers emphasised the importance of lifting people out of in-work poverty and securing labour market opportunities beyond those of precarious employment. The social mobility they spoke of was to be achieved by targeting gaps in the labour market and achieving the necessary level of education.

Thus Lifeline adopted a model of employability that incorporated alternative education and labour market opportunities. Amy, another Support Worker explained the project's ethos to me:

> Minimum wage jobs, great, some people with these welfare changes they have no option. But we see it that especially for ... the community in which we are based there are an awful lot of people here who have so much more potential. Why should they settle for a job, which can offer ten grand a year for life when by taking a couple of years out, get the education to get to where they need to be, they would then be on a job that would offer them twenty to thirty thousand a year? (interview).

Jessica similarly commented:

> With the sort of change in government policy now - seeing all the time that people are being encouraged to go back to work - what we say to people is: "well take your destiny into your own hands, do something about it before you are forced into a situation where you are going to have to take that on. Be a bit canny, come to us, we will help you, so your destiny is going to be in your own hands, you are going to get a better job because you have used your time wisely". ... So that's ... what we are trying to do, is to avoid the situation where people are being forced into minimum wage jobs. ... The children won't be cared for so well. ... So I don't know who would be looking after the children because we have actually looked at the jobs that are available to people in Merthyr. Not that many are child friendly hours. The figures just don't match so I don't know what they are gonna do about that especially with this change coming in, in October with single parents (interview).

Lifeline was putting in place the mechanisms to enable its participants to adopt a strategic dimension to their navigation of the social world.

Early research conducted by Lifeline itself revealed 'a high number of jobs at minimum wage on the new retail park down town' (field note). However a further analysis of the local labour market also identified shortages in the field of health and social care some of which were often being filled by migrant workers, for example, speech therapists, nurses and youth workers. These were identified as the careers that could be enjoyed by the participants of Lifeline. This reflects the picture of the local labour market drawn in Chapter Four in relation to a disproportionately high level of vulnerable labour market opportunities, together with a heavy reliance on the public sector employment. On this basis the Department for Work and Pensions' commitment to lifelong learning was criticised for neglecting training for those on benefits beyond a National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) Level Two and creating a low skills trap. In contrast Lifeline's learning strategy focused on the educational progression of its learners well beyond NVQ Level Two, ideally to University level, and put enhanced labour market choices and opportunities at the heart of its practice. In this way it attempted to put women on pathways of 'learning and achieving' (field note) offering them the possibility to create 'a new life' (field note) for themselves. As a result there was an almost tangible sense of hope for the future in the day to day life of Lifeline.

Lifeline's commitment to enhanced employability meant that while it was embedded with the current welfare state its principles equated to contestation of welfare state practice (in the words of Amy 'if they are going to have to work, let's make this as positive an experience as possible for them' (field note)). As such Lifeline's contestation of the new welfare regime was not based on an attack on a model of citizenship premised on the work ethic[25]. Moreover structural unemployment, the legacy of deindustrialisation and job creation were not the focus of critique, rather it was the inadequate provision of support for individual transitions into education and 'aspirational' employment that concerned the Lifeline Support Workers. Many of Valleyside's community development practitioners cast the welfare state as a force of

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[25] It should also be added that Lifeline's practitioners had private concerns over the extension of the work ethic to single mothers. One occasion when this was apparent was when a Support Worker commented to me that 'being a good mother is not enough for them'. On another she said 'it is not just about getting them through qualifications and into nursing, it's about keeping them on track and there are many tracks' (field notes). Here she was referring to the volunteering and private caring roles of the Lifeliners.

social control, constraint and coercion and claimed that Lifeline in contrast offered a new kind of 'choice' to women (interview, community development worker). Its existence was justified by the deficiencies of the dominant welfare state aims and apparatus. Lifeline therefore is best understood as a 'space of contestation' that worked both *within but against* the welfare state and possessed a form of conditional autonomy (Newman, 2001; Clarke, 2004). Here Support Workers are understood not as revolutionary opponents to, or unwitting managers of, current welfare policy but as pragmatic mitigators against its worst effects. This was apparent in feeling amongst community development workers in Valleyside that Lifeline was 'battling against the tide' (field note).

Lifeline offered welfare claimants a means of escape from the intensifying gaze of the welfare state. As one Support Worker, Amy, said of the typical Lifeline learner 'she appreciates the fact that by doing this it will give her a way out' (field note). However for some deviation from the particular pathway condoned by Jobcentre Plus was simply not possible. Amy's account of her attempt to persuade one recruit to attend Lifeline conveyed this clearly:

> One was really concerned about how Lifeline was going to effect her benefits. she said, you know, "I am really, really worried. I said "look it isn't a problem, I've actually written letters for the Girls to the Social and they have never ever you know", and they haven't. I wouldn't lie. But ... cos we are not an official educational body ... so when they have gone to *Work Focused Interviews* ... the Social will say to them "well I will need proof that you are going, that you are attending that course". ... So just a small letter, yes they are attending, they attend full days on blah blah and they will be subject to the offer and hopefully they will get a place, you know, send them on the right career path, education pattern in the end. She couldn't, she wouldn't have any of it at all. ... It's really quite daunting Hel, cos it really opens your eyes to the fact, even though, you know, I reassured her, Jessica reassured her, the Girls reassured ... the other Girls from the years before. But somewhere in her mind she was really worried that she was gonna end up committing some sort of a fraud (interview).

The power of the gaze of the welfare state to evoke anxiety and fear in welfare claimants is clear. However this passage is also telling in regard to the legitimacy of Lifeline itself. There was a sense that Lifeline itself skirted along the edges of legitimacy (in the above extract we learn Lifeline is not an 'official body; and the letter Amy writes for learners to Jobcentre Plus is 'just a small letter'). This partial

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legitimacy stemmed from Lifeline's reconfiguration of the employability thesis that asked participants to remodel their strategies for navigating the social world to an extent that might be questioned by the dominant welfare state. This fundamentally challenged the hitherto anticipated trajectory of the Lifeline Girls through the social world (both in the eyes of the state and those of the Girls themselves) and constituted a re-conceptualisation of their rights (if not their responsibilities). However as see in more detail below the Lifeline approach was also concerned with adopting a pragmatic approach to securing social mobility that drew on entrenched processes of misrecognition.

## 6.2    The path of least resistance: caring careers

The aim of securing the mobility of the Lifeline Girls was to be met by building on the existing collection of capitals they already possessed. In this context both the literature produced by the project and the accounts of Support Workers highlighted the asset that the life histories of the Lifeline Girls prove to be in the pursuit of careers in health and social care. As the Support Worker Jessica explained:

> When I sort of looked at the Girls then, and they were sort of telling me, I could see from the way that they were living their lives with their families, the kind of support they were giving people, the drugs problems they were handling, children with special needs, behavioural difficulties, looking after elderly people in their own family, as a matter of course. Caring took up a big chunk of their lives (interview).

By participating in Lifeline welfare-reliant single mothers were entering a field that valued the kind of capital they had inherited. The project identified the potential of their 'everyday caring roles, which can be put, to use' (field note) as experiences of meeting challenging care needs now worked to learners' advantage. Lifeline reinterpreted the private care work of welfare-reliant single mothers as a valuable skill-set, which they could transpose in to the public realm. There was an assumption that such experiences were proof of their capacity to go to enjoy successful professional lives as 'career carers' as the Girls could 'build on their strengths' (field note). Here 'caring' was identified as a form of cultural-emotional capital which learners have in abundance. The use-value capitals of care, which single mothers typically drew upon to (dis)identify with social and gender position (Skeggs, 1997),

were now valued by Lifeline for their perceived convertibility into, and foundation for the accrual of, cultural and economic capital in the future. Such strategies of mobility represented a 'path of least resistance' as Lifeline mediated between those social and cultural resources that Girls had acquired through their biographies and the labour market opportunities available to them.

Such strategies appealed to occupational gender stereotypes that generate and are generated by processes of misrecognition. The recognition of maldistribution (evident in the contestation of poor women's coercion into vulnerable labour) was matched by compliance with broader cultural imperatives that construct emotional labour as one of the few ways working-class women can prove their respectability (Skeggs, 1997) and increasingly, given the radically altered welfare state, their *responsibility*. Lifeline institutionalised the 'naturalness of caring' for women and learning and working identities were constructed around the Lifeliners' 'natural' predispositions to care. In the words of one Support Worker, 'it's naturally what they do, it's what they have been doing all their lives' (field note). This knowledge is legitimate, in that it has value and power, and it is likely to continue as long as capitalism has an interest in making profits by offering motherly love for sale in the nursery. This type of misrecognition is a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001): imperceptible to those who suffer it, but ensuring their subordination nonetheless.

A wealth of critical Feminist research has explored the tendency for women to enter the labour market in intensely gender-stereotyped occupations or 'women's work', which is commonly valued as inferior (see for example, James, 1989). As such it is claimed that the gender divisions of labour have been modified rather than transformed in recent years (Crompton, 2002). Yet, for the Lifeline Girls roles as career carers would mark significant mobility (indeed many of the Lifeline Girls were happy to pursue 'careers' in childcare, which was a significant 'step up' from the work in retail and caring for the elderly or cleaning they had come to expect). While women in general are expected to care for others, it is working class women who are expected to undertake the more arduous caring tasks such as caring for the elderly.

Studies of working class women on 'caring courses' (see for example, Skeggs, 1997) argue that they prevent working class women from slipping further downwards, and

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only succeed in putting a floor on their economic and cultural circumstances. However this was not the case for the Lifeline Girls as they had nowhere further 'to slip to' except, that is, to face the sanctions of the welfare state for non-compliance with the work ethic. Lifeline offered a degree of mobility that allowed its participants to 'trade up' and the 'choices' available to the Girls, albeit limited to the field of health and social care, were broadened through their participation in Lifeline. In this way contestation of economic structure, somewhat paradoxically, drew on the inequalities of the status order. Lifeline contested one element of the dominant welfare regime that ensured the "gendered and class-based polarisation of the labour market – embedding low-skilled, poorly qualified single mothers into low-paid jobs" (Smith, et al., 2008: 237). This amounted to an attempt to further reconfigure Pateman's (1989) assertion that for women a choice must be made between becoming a 'lesser man' or a 'lesser citizen' (Pateman, 1989) by re-conceptualising the rights of welfare-reliant single mothers.

## 6.3    Re-conceptualising rights (to education, to childcare ...)

Lifeline re-conceptualised the rights of welfare claimants: *firstly*, by extending to the Lifeline Girls an entitlement to an education; and *secondly*, by acknowledging the barriers that exist to education and making provision for overcoming them. In doing so the project incorporated alternative constructions of poverty that acknowledged the structural relations that learners are born and locked into. A 'second chance' (field note) at education was incredibly important for the single mothers I met and talked with and while 'catching' future participants was not always easy for the Support Workers the initial draw for most women participating in the project was twofold. Sarah described the moment when she decided to participate in these terms:

> Amy rung me and she said "I have got a course that's starting, it's a year's course, are you interested?". She said "we'll sort out childcare for you", she said "you will get qualifications at the end of it" (interview).

The re-conceptualisation of citizenship lay at the heart of the draw of Lifeline as 'catching' learners was dependent on the hooks of qualifications and childcare. In this way Lifeline looked to engage those, with older children, wishing to escape the immediacy of coercive welfare state practice as well as those, with younger children,

who wished to escape the drudgery of a domestic routine, while also keeping an eye on their futures.

Lifeline typically engaged ten learners and had a workforce of two Support Workers (one of whom was always on hand in the classroom, sitting in on lessons and taking breaks with learners). The project worked in partnership with the local organisations like the Further Education College, and the Workers Educational Association to offer qualifications on the 'first rung of the ladder' (field note). Participating in Lifeline was constructed as a process of 'learning how to learn', and it was seen as an 'Access to Access' (field notes) course preparing people for University entry-level qualifications. This soft entry to the academic world was reflected in the expectations Support Workers made clear to learners they had of them:

> We explained what we were about. We explained that we would expect commitment. Yes it is very sociable, yes it is very relaxed ... but we do expect them to achieve things and we want them to achieve things so that they can move on (interview, Amy).

In this setting, students worked towards a range of Open College Network qualifications including Maths, English, Study Skills, Sociology of the Family, Sociology of Crime and Deviance and Women's History. Other subjects leaned towards the therapeutic and included a Creative Writing module that encouraged putting 'emotions into words', as well as Personal Development, which looked at self improvement and how to make positive decisions and Confidence Building modules.

As a consequence of the Action Research approach the Lifeline's Support Workers focused on the 'needs of learners' and emphasised the importance of acknowledging and overcoming the barriers to education that exist. Practical measures therefore included good quality, free childcare and free transport to and from the community venue. This reflected an understanding of the challenges faced by welfare-reliant single mothers. As Amy explained:

> I think the beauty of Lifeline as well is that we try and make it as cheap as possible. If I haven't got any money I don't mind coming to work cos no bugger else has got any money either. But when I was in Uni ... I knew that I had to have so much money to get me back and fore on the train and the bus

and I had to have so much to buy myself lunch. If you didn't then you looked out of the way, you know. I could never have gone to University with no money and yet the beauty of here is they come here with no money all the time and if I haven't got any money I don't even think about it because, nine times out of ten, the Girls haven't either (interview).

To come to Lifeline cost very little - there is no canteen and there are no post-college pub rituals. Support Workers picked up some learners who needed or wanted lifts, others arrived in buses or taxis, the fares of which were reimbursed. What ran through the ethos of the project was an understanding of the realities of life for a single mum living on benefits who enjoyed as one Lifeline Girls Sarah stated 'no extras, no savings' (field note). Support Workers, also knew for themselves what it meant to live off little money and so they did 'try to make sure coming to Lifeline costs nothing' (Amy, field note). Support Workers realised that small but essential items for Lifeline and later college could easily be overlooked. For example the purchase of scientific calculators could make the difference between attendance and non-attendance and so were provided free of charge.

Perhaps most significantly Lifeline recognised and made provision for the fact that its participants were mothers and it was the first project in Valleyside to run a crèche to support a learning activity. Lifeline's practitioners understood that while childcare provision was often cited as a key partner to UK government welfare policy in this community and the surrounding area provision was particularly poor. As Jessica said:

> One big thing ... is child care ... especially when we were working with something called *EQUAL*. ... How can these women access things on an equal basis when there is no childcare? It's alright for the government to say but the reality is very different. ... There is no point in having this course unless we can get quality childcare. We have got to have quality childcare for people coming on the course (interview).

In Wales there are 3,600 registered childcare places for 0-8 year olds (this figure includes childminders, day nurseries and holiday or after-school clubs). This means there is one registered childcare place for every seven children. In the most disadvantaged communities the reality is worse and in Merthyr Tydfil there is one place for every twelve children under the age of eight (Bevan Foundation, 2005).

Lifeline' Support Workers were highly critical of the service provision in the community:

> Childcare is a nightmare. Always, always a nightmare ... because it is a poor area we have got Flying Start ... but ... Flying Start doesn't cater to us because it runs from like half past nine in the morning 'til half past eleven, which is no good to us, and then it runs from like one 'til three. ... So what do you do with kids in the middle? (interview, Amy).

In contrast Lifeline offered a space that acknowledged the challenges that poor mothers face in accessing education but also a space to reflect and 'take time out' (field note) without their children. Motherhood was not marginalised within Lifeline and recognition of the demands placed on single mothers specifically was integral to its ethos. This was perhaps exemplified by the Summer School that the project organised. Designed to ensure that the commitment and engagement of learners is maintained during the summer holidays this aspect of the project involved the Girls children and families as they learnt together.

Taken together these practices amounted to an extended understanding of fostering learner identities that contested the view that non-participation in lifelong learning in its conventional form is irrational (Ecclestone, 1999). These practices were created through alternative constructions of both need and the needy making Lifeline an alternative to the conventional supply-side solutions to unemployment advocated by Jobcentre Plus for the women of Valleyside. Moreover this chimed with sentiments amongst many community development practitioners across Valleyside that 'aspirations cannot be raised in the abstract' (field note). Here individual attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours were not severed wholly from their structural contexts through the *practical* measures of Lifeline. If the right to education, as determined by Lifeline is to be enjoyed, barriers such as childcare and tight purse strings must be overcome if strategies of aspiration focused on reward and recognition are to be pursued. However a further significant element of the approach concerned the therapeutic dimension of Lifeline practice, which is the focus below.

## 6.4 An extension of a therapeutic state - no rights without responsibilities

The aim of Lifeline was to develop the dispositions of learners with a view to re-orientating their commitments from private family caring responsibilities to caring responsibilities in the public world of employment. While the curriculum of Lifeline itself was not devoted to teaching students how to care *per se*, it was devoted to teaching students how to better cope with everyday challenges as well as nurturing new learning identities. For Lifeline, while a particular classed and gendered disposition to care together with a re-conceptualisation of rights were necessary to secure mobility, they were not in themselves sufficient: intensive therapeutic support was required for the Lifeline Girls to successfully pursue strategies of 'getting on'. The project therefore provided community-based psycho-social support as well as more traditional academic tutoring. The emphasis on the therapeutic was designed to build learners' confidence and self esteem. Katie, one Lifeliner, described this below:

> Cos it's not just, obviously, adult learning. It brings your confidence up cos it's like right I am doing something and then they bring your confidence up, tell you how good you are doing, bring your confidence up. Do you know what I mean?... You know someone is there for you (interview).

Support Workers nurtured learners through interventions beyond those conventionally expected in an adult learning setting. This meant they exceeded learners' expectations as they adopted a novel role, in the words of one Lifeliner 'beyond the call of duty' (interview, Teresa), and in another's 'always advice and help there if we need it' (interview, Bethan). The Girls and Support Workers alike highlighted the therapeutic support that Lifeline provided both inside and outside the classroom as a determinant of success.

On entering Lifeline what was striking was its warm, welcoming and comfortable atmosphere (quite a contrast from the University I encountered daily and the schools that generated often negative experiences of education amongst the Girls). Lifeline's community setting allowed for an informal approach to education, with less rigid practices than either the classroom or the lecture hall. This was most important at the beginning of a term as at this point Lifeline was concerned with 'those sort of first steps I would say, soft entry learning things where it is come along have a cup of tea

and a chat, get out of the house, come and meet people in friendly atmosphere' (interview, Jessica). This atmosphere is essential because for many this is a nerve wracking experience. Sonia described to her first experiences of Lifeline to me:

> Oh I was a wreck, Hel. I am telling you now I was a nervous wreck ... couldn't believe it, I really was. But then I think it come so naturally because they were so calm, and just so welcoming (interview).

Similarly Lynne said:

> It was in a nice place, a cosy place, and there wasn't loads of us. ... It wasn't going into anything too quick. ... I think you need that, especially if you have been a single mother in the house. ... It is homely then. It is like a family ... and I am glad that I found out about it and done it that way (interview).

The rhythm of learning that followed was relaxed, structured relatively loosely with fluid boundaries allowing for unexpected phone calls, a late arrival or an early departure. Cups of tea and perhaps a cigarette consistently punctuated the life of Lifeline, allowing learners to take a breather or respond to a fellow learner's difficult day. The warmth found within this setting was experienced as a time of incubation, in which the Lifeline Girls were slowly encouraged to 'find their feet at their own pace' (field note).

Lifeline became a safe haven to turn to for the support often absent from existing social networks. Typically time in the classroom saw learners draw on each others' strengths (Sarah was great at the maths and Sonia could be depended to help people with the English, all turned to Bridget when it comes to handing in their final assignments because her file was always perfect). There was also the 'safety net' of the Support Worker as one of the Girls, Sarah explained:

> Well Amy, she was brilliant... Amy would say like "Girls try it on your own and if you can't do it, if you genuinely can't do it, I will help but you have genuinely got to try and do it like" and like she would like ring us up, "you know assignments have got to be in tomorrow" and things like that. So I think it was the fact that you didn't want to let her down either (interview).

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The everyday routines of Lifeline were textured not so much by academic lessons as the strong networks of support that extended amongst Support Workers and the Girls. What developed over time were close relationships of respect and affection. The Girls and their Support Worker attended lessons together, took breaks together, drank tea together, and smoked together. There was a sense that this was a collective experience, as both the burden of study and personal troubles were routinely shared and participants (paid or otherwise) cared for each other. The collective sentiment that 'we are in this together' and 'together we are stronger' (field note) ran deep.

In addition the relationship between Support Workers and the Lifeline Girls provided a new source of 'bridging' social capital (Field, 2008). An intervention by a Lifeline' Support Worker would often lend a degree of legitimacy or symbolic capital to encounters with street-level state bureaucrats. For example Support Workers would often deal with the aftermath of eviction notices or rent arrears. For example, for Sarah help was on hand for a housing transfer:

> They helped me with moving ... sorting all the forms out with council. They have wrote me letters to get from there because it was really rough up there and I wanted to be close to my mother. They wrote me a letter so I could swap. So it was partly Amy that I actually got the swap because she wrote me a fantastic reference to say that I was having a lot of trouble, I wasn't sleeping and things like that. Absolutely fab - they do give you so much support (interview).

This capacity to lend symbolic capital to encounters with the state was a conscious strategy of Lifeline Support Workers as one commented, 'when the shit hits the fan they want to come more and more, because when things go wrong they know, oh well I will take that to Amy' (field note). In time Lifeline came to be understood as an almost indispensable source of support, an invaluable new coping mechanism.

In these ways the practice of Lifeline was perceived to be distinct from conventional relationships between the Lifeline Girls and the state. Something that Lifeline's practitioners consciously wanted to generate as Jessica made clear:

> It's about ... being respectful of them because a lot of them are not used to be treated in that way, especially when they come against authority. If they have got to go to the council or whatever to deal with people that's often not the

case, and some will be job advisers even. If they are single parents getting called in for *Interviews*, they can't deal with that sort of thing well to stand up for themselves (interview, Jessica).

Theirs was a critique of street-level state bureaucrats but also a strategic labour process focused on 'catching' and 'keeping' learners, consciously and deliberately presenting Lifeline as an alternative to a mistrusted state. It was also a testament to the debasement and degradation experienced by the Lifeline Girls that the Support Workers desired to offer them some dignity. Lifeline offered the Girls a collective of comfort and support as well as new social networks with elements of 'bridging' social capital. These bonds were understood by learners and Support Workers alike to be a key element of success.

The ethos of care was integral to the approach of Lifeline. For Support Workers guiding the Girls safely through the challenges of the day to day was essential to keeping them learning but also for developing the 'right' kind of dispositions. Support Workers focused a great deal on implementing this therapeutic element of the 'curriculum' that took 'learning' beyond the academic and touched on the private lives of that are ordinarily out of the reach of the state. This meant the Support Workers were deeply immersed in the lives of their charges as Amy explained below:

> Obviously it helps if I am in the class. If I am in the class I get a good feel for who is following, who is not, who is looking completely miffed. The beauty of it is because we spend so much time together I know their children's names, I know if they have been up half the night, I know if they have been boozing the night before, you know. I have had a tutor say to me "I really don't feel that so and so is engaging are you sure that they can cope at this level?" and I will reply "actually I know they can cope at this level, they do this level for every other subject, that isn't the problem, just take my word for it, it's self preservation, I know that person needs to protect themselves from that subject". I know so much about them, obviously as the year goes on I know more and more about them and they can appreciate that I am here to help them and I will help them in any way that I can so. I think generally, most of them are very troubled (interview).

Developing close emotional bonds with the Lifeline Girls was seen by Support Workers as an essential element of the project's success. Amy portrayed the Lifeliners here as vulnerable, troubled women in need of protection and guidance. The Support Worker adopted roles of therapist-come-guardians to a group of damaged young

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women in an incredibly labour intensive intervention on the part of the welfare state. Somewhat paradoxically perhaps those who are to care for others professionally must first learn the right way to care for themselves.

Lifeline's Counselling module perhaps best epitomised the project's development of a therapeutic strategy as the principles of counselling practice were studied within the context of a group counselling session. Through Counselling, learners accrued cultural capital in the form of traditional qualifications, while simultaneously developing a form of emotional, cultural capital through participating in therapy. Prescribing a framework of appropriate feelings for women was at the heart of a process that aimed to 'resolve issues before they escalate out of control, the things that we develop into and hopefully move away from' (interview, Amy). The aim was to 'heal; the Lifeline Girls. One of the Support Workers described this process to me:

> I definitely think that counselling is a fantastic subject, even if not academically, emotionally, personally. It puts so many things in perspective, without a doubt. I mean, we have quite a few Girls who have been to prison themselves or whose partners have been or who actually are in prison, and it helps then to understand why things happen, how things happen ... puts whole general life in perspective ... people can see clearer. We got some who have rose tinted glasses where they can't understand, and suddenly they see the light and then on the other score we have some who have the darkest of sunglasses, you know. They can't imagine why on earth anyone would do anything for them. Then all of a sudden it comes very clear. You know it is an awful lot to do with how they live, and I think that's the beauty of coming here, that through this course, through sharing experiences, they start, definitely very low for whatever reason. ... I always try to make them understand how they feel (interview, Amy).

This was an approach that sought to develop dispositions that could 'see the light' through a process of support and nurture focused on fostering self-reflection. Lifeline offered its participants a new set of interpretive resources with which to view their worlds. Participants were nurtured with the hope that their dispositions would re-orient towards learning and working identities with their immersion in Lifeline thus becoming citizen-workers and citizen-learners. Conversations often revolved around the right and wrong ways to resolve conflict (controlling anger, becoming independent and taking responsibility for what 'you can control' (field note)). Lifeline operated in a disciplinary way (Foucault, 1976) drawing on a therapeutic lexicon of

redemptive citizenship to articulate this process. In this way it was hoped a rudimentary 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1977) of inclusion could be developed. 'Good' or 'appropriate' ways to behave were consistently valorised by the everyday practices of Lifeline. The clearest examples arose during discussions around relationships with ex-partners and for example the negotiation of visiting rights or maintenance payments as casual conversation regularly turned to stories of their struggles with feckless men. The most prevalent discourse was one of self-reliance and self-determination even while, as we noted above, they drew incredible strength from their bonds as a collective.

Lifeline also offered women the opportunity to care for her self. Lifeliners, were encouraged to take time to relax, and care for both their minds and bodies. Nights out with the Girls become a feature on the calendar, but Lifeline also offered spa days to relax and unwind and country walks to take time to slow down with a change of scenery. Within Lifeline the Girls were therefore encouraged to pursue this middle class commitment to the self and in some way care for the self was seen as an element of a successful strategy of 'getting on'. Interpretations of the social world that highlight the importance of the self – self-determination and self-reflection – underpin the neo-liberal reforms of the welfare state that emphasise choice and autonomy. The therapeutic impulse found within Lifeline resonates with the wider individualistic ethos evident in dominant ideological drivers of welfare reform that camouflages the causal mechanisms of inequalities by attributing poverty to the psycho-social behavioural problems of the 'social excluded' themselves. The therapeutic practice adopted by Lifeline embraced and indeed extended this thesis. This intense support had elements of a type of moral education and in this context Support Workers can be described as social pathologists (those practitioners that focus on individual adjustment rather than structural change) (Wright Mills, 1943). Lifeline practice chimed with the constructions of need and the needy found in neo-liberal welfare reforms. Yet the principles and practices of Lifeline are quite distinct from those of the dominant forms of street-level governance of the welfare state. Indeed Support Workers position themselves in opposition to Jobcentre Plus' Welfare Workers to the extent that it is believed that '*they* wouldn't understand this' (field note).

## 6.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has established Lifeline as a 'space of contestation' to the dominant ideology and practice of the welfare state. While its contestation was contingent on a compliance with the work imperative that underpinned the restructuring of the welfare state, Lifeline did contest the manner in which the work imperative manifested itself in relation to the Lifeline Girls i.e. their coercion into precarious employment. Lifeline's contestation was founded on a re-conceptualisation of the rights of welfare claimants (principally their rights to education and childcare). In this way Lifeline's participants were encouraged to become career carers. Hence what Lifeline offered was an unconventional supply side programme that aimed to raise women out of in-work poverty, while maintaining their gendered positions. In this way, Lifeline as a 'space of contestation' organised along the edges of the welfare state disputing its practices.

External forces of political economy, representative of the intensification of capitalism, invaded the practice of Lifeline and the experiences of their participants but are also the 'context' out of which Lifeline emerges. Lifeline' resistance to these forces shaped the nature of its practice (specifically they determined the way in which it reconfigured the employability thesis). Yet Lifeline's was an unconventional employability approach to the alleviation of poverty. While Lifeline was indicative of the policy paradigm of its time, and desired outcomes were consistent with New Labour's version of citizenship predicated on employment, it constituted a break with the 'welfare to work' agenda. In order to do this Lifeline strategically worked with women's biographies, the collection of capitals they possessed and structural realities of the local labour market. This attempt to transform the lives of this group of women had to take into account of the deep rooted class and gender formations in our society.

By outlining these key principles of Lifeline we touched on wider relations of inequality. Broadly speaking we see that Lifeline, and its Support Workers, understood mechanisms generating inequalities through relations of the status order to be relatively static, while relations of the economic order were seen as potentially fluid. In this sense this is not a straightforward account of contestation of dominant ideology and practice, but rather one of compliance and resistance, acquiescence and

dissent, to the processes of maldistribution and misrecognition that invade our lifeworlds. The analysis of this contestation highlights the complexity of multiple interwoven relations, mechanisms and practices that perpetuate inequalities. Many of the key themes touched on here are developed in the Chapters that follow. Specifically, the next Chapter explores the welfare state as a filter of inequalities in relation to Lifeliners' experiences of dominant welfare practices, in *Work Focused Interviews*. This enables us to contrast Lifeline, as a 'space of contestation', with dominant mechanisms of welfare reform.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## The Work Focused Interview:
## A Mechanism of the Coercive Welfare State

The Lifeline Girls, like us all, often created their identities through story telling (Riessman, 1990). In particular telling a story (chronicling what happened, who was involved and what was said) can be used to make sense of disruptive events (Williams, 1984). For the Lifeline Girls' their welfare eligibility interviews - their *Work Focused Interviews* - can be seen as such events. The *New Deal for Lone Parents* required single mothers in receipt of Income Support to attend a 'bespoke' *Work Focused Interview*. The *Work Focused Interviews* were a significant marker of the radically reformed welfare state - indeed they can be seen as emblematic of the UK's dominant approach to neo-liberal welfare reform. Designed to move single mothers on benefits into the labour market, these *Interviews* with Jobcentre Plus' Lone Parent Advisers held great significance in their lives of the Lifeline Girls. Indeed it was through interactions with Jobcentre Plus that Lifeliners' marginalised identities most clearly came to the fore. In this context, the Lifeline Girls' strategies of 'getting by' focused on full-time motherhood increasingly lost legitimacy both symbolically and materially As such, it was a mechanism grounded in the legitimacy and power of the welfare state to engender changes in the behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs of its targets.

During my fieldwork some of the Lifeline Girls experienced these encounters and spoke to me at length about them. The *ways* in which women took time to recall these experiences was striking. The *Interview* was gravely anticipated and carefully prepared for (often with the schooling of Lifeline's Support Workers) by Lifeliners. The aftermath was just as notable, as the Girls dwelled on what questions they were asked and how well they managed to acquit themselves. This was understandable: the *Interviews* constituted barriers to everyday life, which had to be overcome in the eyes of many welfare-reliant single mothers. Previous research has pointed to the importance of the role of Lone Parent Advisers in single mothers' transitions into the labour market (Finch, et al., 1999; Lewis, et al., 2000). However while the role of the

Advisers was significant for the Lifeline Girls, the relationship was not characterised by the warmth and friendliness of these previous studies. In contrast, it was clear that amongst the Girls Advisers were both well known and derided. It was for these reasons that I first undertook a close analysis of their stories. A detailed analysis of three longer excerpts from different women's accounts of their interaction with the welfare state reveals the significance of these events. We see here how three Lifeline Girls, Laura, Teresa and Bridget, made sense of their interactions with Jobcentre Plus while attempting to sustain their moral characters. This narrative analysis is then shored up and contextualised by the Lifeliner's perceptions of the local labour market.

## 7.1    Three narratives of a coercive welfare state

The *Work Focused Interview* demanded that the Lifeline Girls confront their marginalised social position: the Girls' stories constructed the *Interview* as the state's search for evidence of their citizenship and specifically evidence of their motivations to comply with the work ethic (their accounts often had judicial connotations); in turn, the Girls constructed themselves as redemptive citizens - capable of compliance and reform – thereby sustaining the strength of their sound moral character. In many ways for the Lifeline Girls the issue was how to persuade an audience "through forms of symbolic expression in ways that are rhetorically effective" (Riessman, 1990: 78). There was a sense of two audiences that needed to be convinced: myself and their Lone Parent Advisers. The Lifeliners' narratives moved seamlessly between the material and symbolic realities of life as a recipient of welfare relief and the *Interview* can be seen as a mechanism perpetuating processes of both misrecognition and maldistribution: it added "the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation" (Fraser, 1999: 46). The materiality of low waged and low status employment - the Lifeline Girls' expectations of the local labour market - was the background to the *Interviews* and the narratives the Lifeline Girls constructed in relation to a coercive welfare state. Moreover the symbolic, stigmatising power of the practices of Jobcentre Plus was apparent in the *Interview's* capacity to evoke feelings of shame and guilt or indignation and righteousness i.e. what can be the 'emotions of class' and an embedded form of reflexivity (Adkins, 2002). However when these tried and tested strategies faltered reinforcement lay in the emerging identities of redemptive citizenship they have co-constructed with Lifeline's Support Workers. The *Work*

*Focused Interview*, as a degradation ritual (Garfinkel, 1956), in this instance at least, is dysfunctional as it does not produce its intended result - to transform total identity - and coerce participants into vulnerable labour. Specifically here it was evident that the Lifeline Girls interacted with two arms of the state that were practicing distinctive forms of emotional labour. These arms of the welfare state adopted opposing principles in relation to what the Lifeline Girls should expect from the labour market: the coercive emotional labour and vulnerable employment of Jobcentre Plus; and the therapeutic emotional labour and careers as carers of Lifeline.

### 7.1.1 Laura

The first narrative is Laura's. When I met her she had been claiming Income Support for eleven years. Laura has one son, James, who was about to start High School. Laura found it relatively easy to talk through her life history and throughout our entire interview conversation flowed easily (long stretches of talk were common with little call for interjection from myself):

1.   *Helen*: So, tell me about the Job Centre?
2.   *Laura*: I go down there every six months, I went down there December, she asked me
3.   if I was staying in college and I had to write a letter saying I was staying in
4.   college full time, the hours and all the that, so they would not stop my money. So
5.   thank God for that cos they can't take no money off me because I think oh God how
6.   am I gonna manage otherwise? December I am due now any time June, July, well July
7.   now obviously to go. Cos my friend Laura had her letter last week and I always go a
8.   week or two after her so I am due any time so I got my letters ready for her to say
9.   that I have been accepted for March or that it could be brought forward to September.
10.  *Helen*: What are they like?
11.  *Laura*: Oh they are terrible. I hate them. Do you know there was one woman? Just
12.  before I came up to Lifeline right (cos they only recently started every 6 months,
13.  only recently started like that cos you are up there every six months you have got to
14.  go). Oh this one woman, one time, I come home nearly crying. I said "well I'll go and
15.  work". This was just before I come to Lifeline and I met 'Want 2 Work' Carol up
16.  here and I said to her "just get me a job, I am going" and Jessica was like "no you are
17.  not, no you are not". I said "yeah I am going". Cos she, the woman in the Job Centre,
18.  made me feel like that. She made me feel as if she was giving me the money every
19.  week for income. She made me feel so intimidated. I was thinking does she realise
20.  like I got to pay the same bills as the woman next door who have got a husband and
21.  three kids out working. Cos she made me feel like that. People think you are Income
22.  Support. Oh yes, free this free that. It is hard, like I said. I am so lucky that I have
23.  got family back up and family can help me. I couldn't have done it on my own
24.  without my mother and father behind me.
25.  *Helen*: What would have happened, what about work?
26.  *Laura*: I would probably be working part time somewhere stuck in a dead end job
27.  with no prospects really for the future and that's what I think as well. You know

28. my friend Leanne? Right, her mother, right, she raised her on her own and Leanne
29. have grown up and she have got kids herself now and her mother have had to have,
30. even her mother have had to have, two part time jobs cos in like Tesco's now and
31. Iceland and that. They don't take on full time even if you haven't got no kids now they
32. take on part time people so that means you have got to get too part time jobs, pay full
33. rent cos if you work part time you have still got to pay full rent so you have got to
34. have two part time jobs. Rose in college, have got 4 kids her mother's part time in
35. Tesco and now she is a healthcare assistant cos she have got to have two jobs to keep
36. a roof over their head. Cos they would rather give part time. Because you look at it,
37. you could go into Tesco's and look and everybody there works part time...

Laura's narrative was largely constructed around her exposure to both Lifeline and Jobcentre Plus and the way in which contesting norms in relation to work, education and care emerged in this context. Having prepared in earnest for it Laura was waiting for her next *Work Focused Interview* (the intense preparation was itself indicative of the significance of this *Interview* as a barrier to be overcome) Laura immediately structured the story of her *Interview* around a 'prop' in the form of a letter (L.3), which confirmed that she was going to move on from Lifeline and enter full-time education at the local college in the near future. For Laura this letter legitimated her status as a deserving welfare claimant by presenting her identity as one of learner and future worker. Laura hoped this letter would hold some symbolic capital within the field of the welfare state as it was evidence of her pursuit of a strategy of 'getting on'. The Lifeline letter was evidence of Laura's redemptive citizenship, which she hoped would distance her from the dominant constructions that pathologised her identity and make for her escape from vulnerable employment. By highlighting the importance of the letter's preparation Laura was beginning to make the case for her defence. Its importance was far from purely symbolic (the fear of economic sanctions should Laura's evidence of redemptive citizenship be found wanting was also apparent). Indeed the financial hardship that a suspension of welfare would bring was emphasised by Laura and there was a strong sense that she was taking a risk by entering full-time Further Education. For Laura therefore the future stood as a stark contrast to a past characterised by the security and predictability of a life lived in receipt of welfare aid.

When asked what the Jobcentre Plus' Lone Parent Advisers are like Laura embedded her response, which began with the habitual statement 'oh they are terrible, I hate

them' (L.11), within a dramatisation of a particular episode. Her narrative was then contextualised with her participation in Lifeline, which Laura saw as a pivotal point in her life (L.12), and Laura again preferred to foreground her recent education in order to set the scene for the anecdote that followed. Then, the 'beginning' of the story of Laura's *Work Focused Interview*, was immediately juxtaposed by its 'end' - her traumatised state of mind - and in this way the audience was drawn to Laura's point of view and encouraged to feel indignation on her part. Laura emphasised the emotional turmoil which arose as a result of the *Interview* and we learn immediately that after the *Interview* Laura 'come[s] home nearly crying' (L.14) and that it was her treatment at the hands of the state that evoked this strong reaction. Laura did not give voice to the Lone Parent Adviser at this point, instead what we heard was how the Adviser made Laura feel. A verbatim account of an interaction between herself and the Lone Parent Adviser followed only later.

Throughout this narrative Laura was keen to present herself as a redemptive citizen (we learn from this story that she clearly wanted to work (L.14-15). It was Laura's Lifeline Support Worker however who persuaded her not to work: it was Jessica who repeated 'no you are not, no you are not' (L.16-17) in the face of Laura's protests that she wanted to work. Laura's narrative of her *Work Focused Interview* was in a sense co-constructed with her Support Worker, Jessica since from this point she structured her account around her interactions with her Support Worker. Through her Support Worker, Laura was able to give credence to her status as a redemptive citizen trying to secure mobility in a way that retained legitimacy, despite her simultaneous resistance to the practice of Jobcentre Plus. In this way, the listener now knows it was Jessica who was also responsible Laura's contestation dominant state welfare practices, indeed Jessica articulated Laura's refusal of precarious employment.

Laura's narrative then reverted to the *Work Focused Interview* itself and Laura again emphasised how the Adviser made her feel (clear in her repetition: 'she made me feel like that', 'she made me feel as if', 'she made me feel so', 'cos she made me feel like that' (L.18-19)). It is this element of the narrative that most clearly revealed the stigma that Laura felt as a result of her position as a recipient of welfare relief. Laura went on to question this positioning: 'does she realise I got to pay the same bills as the woman next door who have got a husband and three kids out working?' (L.20-21).

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This narrative device was an appeal to the listener's sense of justice and a request that the listener understand that Laura was unjustly judged (not only for not working, but for being a single mother and not working). The *Work Focused Interview* bound Laura to the hegemonic moral values of society, forcing her to confront the ways in which she failed to meet the standards or benchmarks they set. The Lone Parent Adviser herself became a personification of this set of dominant values that underpin and are understood by society as a whole. The object of Laura's narrative thus shifted seamlessly from the Adviser to 'people' (L.21). Laura felt the stigma attached to claiming Income Support to the extent that she felt weighed and measured by this classification. A label constructed by the welfare state was seen to have subsumed her identity: 'people think you are Income Support, oh yes free this, free that (L.21-22). Income Support was a political and economic category that had been chosen for her and there was a sense here that Laura understood her position in relation to 'people', or society, only through reference to welfare state power. This moral evaluation provoked Laura to fight her corner and explain the material reality of a life lived in poverty – it was important for Laura that she presented the everyday realities of her life for what they are: 'hard' (L.22).

In the final part of the narrative Laura outlined what she could expect from the local labour market and in this way again made her case for her evasion of the welfare state's desire to coerce her into the labour market. She made clear that employment was likely to be low status and low-wage. Two stories of the working lives of two friends' mothers follow and were concluded with the listener being urged to check the veracity of her account. Laura drew upon the experiences of those around to convey the undesirability of entering the labour market and justify her decision not to work in a stretch of intensely evidential narrative (L. 26-37). Laura's stance on employment and interactions with the state were thus premised on the structural realities of a labour market. Therefore a strategy of 'getting on' in the world made sense for this redemptive citizen.

## 7.1.2   Bridget

The second excerpt comes from Bridget's life story interview. Bridget is a single mother with three children who has been claiming Income Support for thirteen years.

Bridget, found the *Interview* more difficult that Laura, and was visibly nervous at the outset. Her narrative was often disjointed and she often needed a little prompting to engage in conversation:

1. *Helen*: So what about work? Tell me what you think about working?
2. *Bridget*: Ah you always get that people say "ah well you shouldn't be doing this, your
3. kids are in full time school now you should be out working, bringing in your own
4. money". I mean I have been on benefits what? Thirteen years now. But I think that if
5. you push someone into doing a job they are just gonna hate it and that and I wouldn't
6. want to go to a job that I hate.
7. *Helen*: What options do you have?
8. *Bridget*: Retail init it really? In a shop, Tesco's probably or Asda's.
9. *Helen*: What do you think about that?
10. *Bridget*: Well it was because I went to Working Links and that Lone Parents section:
11. "we will get you out to work" and they done my CV, they said "we will get you
12. interviews", and that "we will help you do this that and that", "we will make sure that
13. the job is school hours" and then every single application form that I ended up putting
14. in weren't school hours. They were I was starting at eight, that's no good cos school
15. starts at nine, finishing later and that. So they say they will help but it's always
16. something has got to give hadn't it? I don't see why I should, let my kids down in a
17. way just for a job.
18. *Helen*: Jobs not flexible.
19. *Bridget*: and I think cos of my age as well they always tend to go for the school
20. leavers cos they have to pay them less as well, they haven't got the kids, the
21. responsibilities and all that lot so that's always against you.
22. *Helen*: Tell me more about the Job Centre?
23. *Bridget*: I absolutely hate going in there, absolutely hate it. I think the last time I went
24. round there they said "right what you doing". I said "well I am on this course, I have
25. done this many courses, I have done those many courses". I said "I am trying to set up
26. a business, I volunteer". Now, to me, doing college, setting up a business and
27. volunteering is not sitting round on your arse doing sod all. And they make you and
28. they turn round and say "have you been looking for jobs as well?" and I am thinking
29. I am doing college, I am trying to get better, I am trying to set up my own business,
30. how can I look for jobs as well? Knowing that I am trying to get somewhere and they
31. just look at you cos you are on benefits. They just look at you as if you are just sitting
32. in the house and doing nothing. So I think that does knock you back a bit as well then
33. but if you think about it with the council and all that lot, I am a burden, because I am
34. not out working so.
35. Helen: Do you feel like a burden then?
36. *Bridget*: Well you do don't you? I mean I do. I mean I am thinking I am thirty I should
37. have done this. I should be doing that. I should have my own house by now. I should
38. be out working now. As I said I can't be rushed into doing. If I don't do it in my own
39. time I can't do it.
40. *Helen*: Has how you feel changed when you go to the Job Centre though?
41. *Bridget*: A couple of months ago I think I was more confident. I mean I've been to
42. three now but each time someink else has been added to it. I mean I wasn't doing the
43. business the last time. I wasn't doing the course. So each time I am adding something
44. else on to it but that just still doesn't seem to be enough for them
45. *Helen*: Do you feel anything changing in the way they treat you?
46. *Bridget*: No I still do feel as if I am being judged, and that, because I am not working.
47. In myself I do feel a bit more sod you like I don't give two hoots and that and I do
48. feel more secure in myself now but you still do feel judged and put down ...

The construction of Bridget's narrative was consistently characterised by swings between what Bridget should be doing and what she does do. This reflected the swing between the dominant and counter-dominant values and norms that Bridget drew on to tell her story of her expectations of employment and her interactions with a coercive welfare state. Bridget opened her narrative with a habitual statement stating 'ah you always get that people say 'ah well you shouldn't be doing this'' (L.2). The perspective of 'people' or society initially displaced her own worldview, such was her perception of the importance of the dominant moral evaluations that are made of her (namely that she 'should be out working' (L.3)). By beginning her narrative in this way, we see that Bridget was acutely aware of the dominant norms and values of the society in which she lives. She was also, of course, acutely aware that she did not conform to them and this awareness was evident from the outset of our exchange at this point of the interview.

Only after acknowledging these dominant norms did Bridget orientate her audience to her personal story, by specifying the length of time she had been claiming welfare (L.4). It was once she had established how she is positioned by society, through her work and welfare status, that Bridget chose to place her own thoughts, and use her own voice to answer my question. This narrative structure showed that Bridget understood that the moral imperative to comply with the work ethic is dominant, more importantly though she recognised it, albeit reluctantly, as at least partially legitimate. Indeed by beginning with what 'people' think of work, rather than how she felt about work, Bridget pointed to her own non-conformity, something she went on to illustrate that her *Work Focused Interview* forced her to confront. In this way the opening structure of the narrative primed the listener for what to expect next: a contestation of explicit negative moral evaluation. At this point, as if to distance herself from her contestation, Bridget's narrative took a hypothetical form as we learnt that *if* Bridget was to get a job it would be because she is coerced to. Indeed she stated, 'if you push someone into doing a job they are just gonna hate it, I wouldn't want to go into a job I hate' (L.6). It is notable that this justification of her decision not to enter the labour market was couched in the third person in an attempt to re-establish herself as part of a collective who felt the same as her (L.5).

Bridget then discussed her expectations of the local labour market in more detail. Retail was the only form of work she saw as available and she drew her listener in to agree with this assessment (L.8). Bridget then elaborated on this view by alluding to the series of 'promises' made to her by the Jobcentre Plus outreach initiative Working Links: 'we will get you out to work...we will get you interviews...we will help you do this ... we will make sure that the job is' (L.11-13). Bridget's repetition here emphasised the way in which her failure to enter the workforce was a failure of employment support services and she attempted to position herself as blameless. In this respect Bridget constructed herself as a victim of a series of broken promises in relation to an inflexible labour market. Moreover the street-level welfare workers failed to acknowledge and accommodate the importance Bridget placed on her role as mother. Bridget, in contrast, highlighted her commitment to her mothering role, which she saw as a justification for not taking many of the jobs offered to her ('they say they will help but it's always something has got to give hadn't it?' and 'I don't see I should let my kids down in a way just for a job' (L.15-17)). The justification for not working rested on a residual set of moral imperatives to both work and care to those of the state. Bridget saw the roles of mother and waged worker in conflict and a coerced working identity was constructed as less worthy than a traditional mothering identity (after all it's 'just for a job' (L.17)). Here Bridget showed clearly that "there are different sources of value and respect" (Sayer, 2005: 159) based on classed, gendered and spatialised commitments in relation to institutions of family and employment.

Following my prompt, Bridget then conveyed how vehemently she felt animosity towards Jobcentre Plus and the *Work Focused Interview* itself: 'I absolutely hate going in there, absolutely hate it' (L.23). Bridget left her audience in no doubt as to the strength of her feelings and she went on to construct her narrative around the format of the *Work Focused Interview* itself. This account had connotations of a trial, with Bridget cast as the defendant providing proof of her legitimate active citizenship. The *Interview* constituted the state's search for 'evidence' of her redemptive citizenship (L.24). Here Bridget again broke with the assumption that entering the workforce is the sole route to citizenship and by listing her identity as learner, volunteer, and potential entrepreneur she attempted to highlight the range and worthiness of her activity outside of the labour market. This alternative construction of active citizenship was contrasted then by Bridget's perception of the state's

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positioning of her inactivity, 'sitting around on your arse doing sod all' (L.27). The dialogue between the Bridget and her Adviser comes to represent a dialogue between Bridget and the dominant cultural norms circulated by the state and society. Bridget asserted that she is an active citizen despite the state's insistence that active citizenship is synonymous with labour market participation, but the Adviser asked 'have you been looking for jobs as well?' (L.28).

However despite her moments of belligerence, Bridget understood her activity was not enough even though she was 'trying' 'to get better' and to 'get somewhere' (L.29-30). The repetition of 'trying' was an attempt to convince the listener that Bridget was on the path of redemptive citizenship, someone capable of reform. The implication is that through the state Bridget saw herself as in some way deficient and she was tied to an image of herself as static or immobile if she continued to rely on welfare relief. The narrative was characterised by contradiction as though posited the value of her activity as mother, volunteer, learner etc she then immediately understood herself to 'nowhere' (L.30-32) living a static existence. Here we get a real sense here of the *Work Focused Interview* as an unsettling event. You feel in the day-to-day Bridget was able to successfully construct her identity as mother, volunteer and learner and thereby (dis)identify (Skeggs, 1997) with her stigmatised position. However the *Interview* disrupted this process as Bridget's sense of self was overlaid and infiltrated by her 'state identity' of welfare-reliant single mother. We learn that the *Interview* 'does knock you back a bit' (L.32) and strategies of 'getting by' based on complying with an ethic of care, and 'getting on' through participation in the Further Education wavered in the face of the Lone Parent Adviser. In this relation to this mechanism of welfare practice the state was understood by Bridget as punitive and coercive rather than enabling and supportive.

Bridget's frustration was clear as she had to keep the dominant moral evaluation 'in play', despite her belief that the way in which she herself is positioned by the state was unjust. Indeed this was the root of her contradictory narrative. Bridget felt the evaluating gaze of the state, reiterating 'they just look at you' (L.31) and her identity was clearly formed in part by this relationship with the state. It is in this context that she understood herself to be a burden (L.33), an onerous weight for the state and society to bear. Indeed Bridget used dominant values as touchstones at this point of

the interview, inviting the listener to understand the view of the state by itemising the things she 'should' be doing, such as owning her home and working (L.48-50). Yet again however Bridget was keen to present her redemptive citizenship drawing the listener back to her active roles by stating 'I mean, I've been to three now but each time someink else has been added to it, I mean I wasn't doing the business the last time, I wasn't doing the course' (L.42-43). Bridget's narrative was an attempt to set the record straight and to contest the dominant moral evaluation of her identity. Her motivation remained sustaining her moral character, yet in this context she was forced to concede that her account lacked legitimacy (it 'still doesn't seem enough for them' (L.44)). Her moral telling was based on a counter-cultural identity of citizenship that was resistant to the judgement of the state. However the power relations embedded within the *Interview* itself made the lack of symbolic power wielded by Bridget clearly visible.

## 7.1.3   Teresa

The final excerpt is from Teresa, who had been claiming Income Support for eight years, and has two children when we met. Teresa, very much like Laura, felt comfortable during our interview and the conversation flowed easily:

1.  *Helen*: So what about work?
2.  *Teresa*: It's not just for the money it's for your own dignity I think cos you are
3.  treated differently when you haven't got a job in you? Jjust another statistic for the
4.  social. Like when I go for my *Work Focused Interview*, treat you like shit they do. Last
5.  time I went I said I was doing humanities and all that she said then, she had a point I
6.  have done quite a few courses, and she said "don't you think it is about time now you
7.  put your skills to use" and that was the attitude. I am glad Jessica have
8.  given me support and this and that because she showed us it is not like, it don't have
9.  to be like that. She [Jessica] said "in the long term they are benefiting from what you
10. are doing now because you are not going to be back and fore signing on the dole and
11. having money off them". She said "your job will probably be long term". She said "you
12. won't have to go back there again". She said "it's better cos if you listen to them you
13. would go out and get a job probably last ten minutes". She said "few months, back in".
14. *Helen*: Tell me more about the Job Centre.
15. *Teresa*: Well I said like before when I used to go down there they used to speak to me
16. like that. They used to put me on a downer like I built all my confidence up going
17. down there, done this and I done that, and they would knock it all back down like. So
18. the last time I went I told them, I said "well in the long run" I said, I said "I am gonna
19. be better off". I said "I am not gonna have to sign back on the social". I said "I am
20. gonna have a job for a long time". I said "I haven't got to rely on the government's
21. funding or money then have I?". I said "so to me that is the right choice".
22. *Helen*: What did they say then?

23. Teresa: Oh well the woman changed her attitude.
23. then. She spoke to me tidy. She wished me good luck. She said she would see me in six
24. months, I had a letter yesterday saying I got an *Interview* Friday, next Friday.
25. *Helen*: This was 6 months ago then. Do you always see every six months?
26. *Teresa*: Once a year, sometimes twice a year.
27. *Helen*: But you noticed the difference? You feel like you are handling it differently?
28. *Teresa*: Different now yeah because when you think about it. Someone in authority
29. and they know better and all that and well now I don't look at them in that
30. way. I feel as if I am just on the same level as them now.
31. *Helen*: More confident?
32. *Teresa*: More confident in speaking to people, putting my point of view across and not
33. being shy cos before I would just sit there and take it and then walk out. But I said
34. now if I got something to say I will say it. I know what they were gonna ask me
35. anyway "what you been doing? What courses? What dates? How long? What do you
36. think you have gained from it?". ... Like even though it is not against the law not to work
37. whilst your child is under the age of eleven they make you feel as if you don't, if you
38. don't, they can stop your money. It's like bribery like I know now they can't stop my
39. money. They can only stop my money if I didn't turn up for the *Interview*. But I said
40. they don't put it across that. It's like "oh well, you know if you don't make like the
41. effort to go to work you know your benefits could be cut". It's like a threat ...

Teresa began her narrative of her *Work Focused Interview* with what work meant to her (L.2). Her desire for dignity - to be an honourable and responsible *working* citizen - framed the narrative that followed. This desire was contrasted by Teresa's awareness of her current lack of dignity. Moreover her status of welfare claimant meant Teresa saw herself as 'another statistic for the social' (L.3-4). Here Teresa, like Laura, clearly constructed her identity as marginalised to a category created by the state and her narrative was dominated by this relationship to the state. Without prompting Teresa then turned to her *Work Focused Interview*, which marked an obstacle in her life that she overcame by adopting a notion of her 'genuine' case for exemption from the gaze of the welfare state.

Teresa's narrative of her *Work Focused Interview* was premised by a habitual statement that described the way the street-level Advisers of Jobcentre Plus treated her ('like shit' (L.4)). What followed was a verbatim account of her interactions with the state that, as we might expect, was structured to draw the listener into the event on Teresa's terms. This exchange saw the Lone Parent Adviser impatiently ask 'don't you think it is about time you put your skills to use?' (L.6-7). The Adviser here was constructed as a coercive entity, the enforcer of the work imperative. Teresa then confirmed that this question epitomised the approach she encountered: 'and that was

the attitude' (L.7). She then drew on the voice of Jessica, her Lifeline Support Worker, to counter this 'attitude' (L.7-13). Teresa, in a similar vein to Laura above, cast herself in a passive role. Her story was structured through the opposing forces of the Jobcentre Plus Adviser and the Lifeline Support Worker with each representing a distinct set of moral imperatives. She repeatedly drew upon Jessica's statements to articulate her resistance to coercion into vulnerable labour: it was Jessica who said, 'you are not going to be back and fore signing on...your job will probably be long term... if you listen to them you would ...last a ten minutes...back in' (L.9-13). By incorporating the words of Jessica into her account to the extent that she did, Teresa was effectively co-constructing her identity with Jessica. It is through Jessica that Teresa contested the practice of the welfare state. Jessica was cast in a heroic role: 'I am glad. Jessica have given me support and this and that because she showed us it's not like that, it don't have to be like that' (L.7-9) and we see clearly the contrasting roles of the two state instruments with which Teresa has contact: Jobcentre Plus and Lifeline. The manner in which Teresa tells this story, her presentation of a verbatim account, perhaps best displays here the sense of a 'double interview'. It was clear she was not merely recollecting her encounter with the state, but attempting to persuade me of the value of her strategy of 'getting on'. We follow this theme as it continued throughout the narrative below.

In the next section of narrative Teresa described the preparatory psychological work 'to build' her confidence she undertook before her *Interview* (L.16) as she readied her defence for the event to come. This defence consisted of what was effectively Teresa's record of active citizenship (the things she has 'done' (L.17)). The *Interview* was in this sense understood as Jobcentre Plus's search for evidence of her status, at the very least, as a redemptive citizen. Teresa used contrastive rhetoric to show how she perceived the role of the Advisers: they would 'knock' all her preparation 'back down' (L.17). Only, when it was perhaps most clear that citizenship was synonymous with entering the workforce, did Teresa use 'her' voice to assert herself. Yet it was striking that she continued to echo the reasoning of Jessica outlined above ('in the long run... I am going to be better off...I am not gonna have to sign back on the social...I am gonna have a job for a long time, I haven't got to rely on the government funding' (L.18-21)). Teresa's narrative was therefore a 'before and after' tale in which the pivotal event was the intervention of her Support Worker. This intervention leant

legitimacy to her position of resistance to dominant welfare practices and led Teresa to conclude that she was making 'the right choice' (L.21).

Towards the end of her narrative the disempowerment felt by Teresa during past interactions with Jobcentre Plus became apparent. She felt her voice lacked legitimacy and that some kinds of 'knowing' or 'being' were 'better' than others (L.28-29). Knowledge itself was understood to be embedded within power relations and hierarchy. Teresa however quickly moved on to assert that now she felt what she 'knows' or 'thinks' is as worthy as what those in authority know: 'I feel as if I am just on the same level as them now' (L.30). The interaction with the Jobcentre Plus was becoming merely a bureaucratic procedure as her new-found strategy of 'getting on'. Teresa's capacity to co-construct her identity with a partially legitimate partner became part of a successful strategy of mobility in relation to a disadvantaged class and gender position. However Teresa continued to cast this arm of the state as punitive and coercive, capable of 'bribery' (L.38) and 'threat' (L.41). Indeed the activity of this arm of the state was cast as potentially illicit and menacing. Like the narratives of the other Lifeliners these constructions were used to make the listener understand how it 'feels' (L.37) to be in receipt of state support. The symbolic stigma of receiving welfare aid was clear in this distinct affective dimension that stemmed from a particular form of emotional labour.

## 7.2    Getting behind the *Work Focused Interview*

The Lifeline Girls' participation in the *Work Focused Interview* meant everyday strategies of 'getting by' and 'getting on' (created through cultivating identities as carers, volunteers, and more recently as learners) were disrupted. Indeed the *Interviews* made it apparent that, in the eyes of dominant state ideology and practice strategies of 'getting by', reliant on welfare relief, were losing legitimacy and increasingly less tenable both materially and symbolically. It was evident that the space for such performances was being 'squeezed'. Even strategies of 'getting on', founded on the accrual of cultural capital, could only be articulated by drawing on the words of the Lifeline Support Workers. The dense point of power relations that the *Work Focused Interview* represented did not allow the Lifeline Girls to (dis)identify with their social position as they might in the everyday (Skeggs, 1997). As such,

interactions with Jobcentre Plus' Advisers were characterised as the state's attempt at moral authorisation and legitimisation (creating a boundary of inclusion/exclusion in relation to citizenship) that was implicated in both material and symbolic relations of inequalities. This knowledge, together with their exposure to a 'space of contestation' Lifeline, prompted these Lifeliners to attempt to 'set the record straight' (field note) and propose an alternative morality to that, which would see them enter the workforce in precarious employment. Often stories of encounters with the welfare state were therefore a kind of moral telling as these narrators incorporated and contested dominant social understandings to (re)moralise their positions.

## 7.2.1   Getting behind the *Work Focused Interview*: stigma

The Lifeline Girls recognised here that the "classifying of themselves depends on the classifying systems of others" (Skeggs, 1997: 74) and in this context often found themselves wanting. As recipients of state support the Lifeliners experienced the stigma of character associated with the inferiorities and deficiencies of their social position (Goffman, 1968) and each of the Lifeline Girls acknowledged the incongruity between themselves and the "normals". The *Work Focused Interview* represented a disruption of their careful identity work that necessitated their confrontation with this incongruity. Through these encounters their established roles as mothers and community volunteers (and to a lesser extent their new roles as learners) were systemically devalued. This was perhaps most evident in Teresa's understanding that by not working she felt as if in some way she was committing an illegal act. In this way the Lifeline Girls were suffering from the shame associated with stigma because they interpreted the way in which they negotiated the social world as an infringement against the "norms of identity" (Goffman, 1968: 152). This feeling of shame associated with claiming benefits was anticipated by one Lifeliner, Sarah:

> I didn't go on benefits straight away I was living off my savings. So I spent my savings and then I went on benefits. I hated doing the forms and everything and I was a bit ashamed of being on benefits (interview).

Jobcentre Plus itself can thus be seen as a contemporary panoptican (Foucault, 1995) - an instrument of state surveillance - that for the Lifeline Girls that evoked powerful emotions of stigma: Teresa felt 'like shit' because of the state, Laura felt 'intimidated'

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by the state and Bridget felt 'hatred' towards the state. These interactions evoked these 'emotions of class' not only in relation to Lifeliners' behaviours but also their values, attitudes and beliefs. Affective responses to symbolic value judgements were articulated through the habitual narrative statements deployed to frame stories of *Work Focused Interview*. The *Interview* itself was an example of an interactional context, where social actors strove to cope with stigma by performing a 'normal' way of life. As such, each narrative suggested there was a need to provide evidence of normality, of redemptive citizenship.

The *Work Focused Interview* was a predictable, ritualised interaction aimed at degrading the status of welfare-reliant single mothers with a view to securing their participation in the labour market. In this capacity the *Interview* put into place a symbolically powerful set of standards of preference, to which the stated actions of participants were compared and evaluated (Housley, 2009). The *Interview* was a ritual of judgement, which questioned not only the Lifeline Girls' behaviours but their motivations. The aim of the *Interview*, like any degradation ceremony, was to transform the total identities of subjects who have suspect motives underlying their behaviour (Garfinkel, 1956). In this instance the Lifeliners' 'workless' state was attributed to a lack of motivation: laziness (or 'sitting on your arse all day; in the case of Bridget) while enjoying a comfortable lifestyle (or 'free this, free that' in the case of Laura). This was the knowledge that informed the reasoning and practice of Jobcentre Plus Advisers. The Adviser's concern then became executing a transformation of a total identity in relation to the welfare regime by re-orientating welfare claimants to the institutions of family and employment and creating citizens. This kind of control is characteristic of a "disciplinary mode of rule used to govern those who are constructed as unable to exercise their own freedom" (Power, 2005: 649). As a modality of power, the *Work Focused Interview* therefore followed a US tradition of punitive welfare rituals identified by Piven and Cloward (1971).

However, the *Work Focused Interview* in this instance was a dysfunctional degradation ceremony. While recent US research (Korteweg, 2006) on welfare-reliant mothers' participation in 'workfare' programmes found that with repeated interventions of street-level welfare state workers mothers did eventually embrace a (precarious) worker citizen identity this was not the case here. That the Advisers of

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Jobcentre Plus have the capacity to generate changes in behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs is evident, but the Lifeline Girls were able to dispute the state's judgment that they lacked the motivation to comply with the moral imperative to work. Rather, taking their lead from the principles of Lifeline, the Lifeline Girls were able to forge new learner identities and strategies of 'getting on' predicated on evading the gaze of the dominant state. Indeed the Lifeliners began to wield some power in this field. Laura's letter, for example allowed her to make a more robust defence and escape coercion into vulnerable work; a defence that Teresa has already made successfully as we saw when she described her Lone Parent Adviser 'talking tidy to her'. Moreover Bridget, explicitly considered her motherhood to be a key part of her active citizenship. In these ways the Girls were not wholly complicit in their victimisation as other studies of welfare claimants have found (see for example, Piven and Cloward, 1971). This can be attributed to their exposure to Lifeline. These degradation ceremonies were only partially successful because of the capacity of the Lifeline Girls to co-construct counter hegemonic narratives with their Lifeline Support Workers. Support Workers bestowed a degree of legitimacy to these attempts to create redemptive selves in alternative ways.

## 7.2.2 Getting behind the *Work Focused Interview*: coercion into vulnerable labour

Though this account highlights the stigmatised identities of the Lifeline Girls, their narratives juxtaposed these experiences with the material realities of the local labour markets. The *Interviews* were thus embedded within in processes of misrecognition, but also those of maldistribution. It has been long recognised in the US that the function of the welfare state is to "enforce work, especially very low wage work [though this] runs counter to the popular belief that relief agencies shelter and encourage the indolent and slothful" (Piven and Cloward, 1971: 123). However it is a more recent phenomenon in the UK that the targets of such welfare practices are single mothers. At the heart of the above narratives was an understanding of the welfare state as a coercive force and the Lifeline Girls explicitly understood the *Work Focused Interview* as the state's attempt to coerce them into precarious employment. Accepting vulnerable labour was not only constructed as a moral obligation, but as a fast approaching reality if it could not be escaped through the pursuit of a strategy of

'getting on' (indeed in the words of one Lifeliner, Beth 'they are only going to get tougher' (field note)). Qualitative studies show that while many single mothers do want to work, there are complex factors that single mothers have to think about in making transitions into the labour market (see Finch, et al., 1999; Lewis, et al., 2000). A Lifeline Girl, Lynne, explained the realities of the making the transition from 'welfare to work' within the Valleyside locality:

> Cos I went for a job just before I found out I was pregnant on Lucy (hotel cleaning and working in the kitchen) and I went to a Lone Parent Adviser and when she worked it out I would have to find childcare for the weekends cos I had to work weekends as part of the job offer and by the time we worked it out I was working all week and all weekend for an extra ten pound on top of the benefits plus I would have had to have paid more or less I think it was 6 pound less rent than what other people would have to pay (interview).

Lynne felt that the work Jobcentre Plus was offering would not pay enough to make up for the sacrifice of not seeing her children on the weekend. Another of the group also described the kind of precarious labour offered by Jobcentre Plus: 'the jobs are shit, absolutely crap, oh yeah, I think the Job Centre they just give you the crap on the bottom' (interview, Kim). Finally, Sarah commented in a similar fashion:

> but I want to make sure that I have got a good career that I am going forward and not just stuck in a job that you can't get nowhere. Do you know what I mean? That's what I don't want. Well when I went down to Want 2 Work and they did an estimated statement of what I would get if I had a certain job and it was literally £5 more than what I get but that was after paying my rent and my poll tax and you know, what's £5? and then with that I'd have to find somebody to pick Jamie up, take Jamie to school in the morning. ... I mean you know who is going to do that? (interview).

Financial planning tools were part of the Lone Parent Adviser's 'kit' to help single mothers think through and plan changes in income sources. Indeed a key underlying assumption of the radicalisation of the welfare state was that women will achieve economic independence through their participation in the labour market. Yet, the above extracts show that the Lifeline Girls were often relegated to a gender-segregated labour market offering only low wage, low status and, somewhat ironically, inflexible opportunities. As such it was hard to see how work was the "best route out of poverty" (see for example, Timms, 2009) for many single mothers living in communities like Valleyside. It is clear in the above excerpts that the Lifeline Girls

saw this type of employment as undesirable and as, Katie, a fellow Lifeliner, commented 'I used to think this is how high up I am going to get into job, I didn't think I would go to be a nurse, people hide in these jobs' (interview).

While as we saw in Chapter Five the justification for welfare reform was typically moral, the mechanism of the *Work Focused Interview* served a clear economic function. The moralising practice in place endorsed the subordination of welfare relief to market incentives and the needs of flexible labour markets. This meant pressure is placed on individuals to find work in the local labour market they happen to find themselves in (Peck and Theodore, 2000). Whereas in the past, groups like single mothers were sheltered from the labour market, the logic of contemporary welfare reform was to disavow and abolish such sheltering. The central emphasis of welfare reform was driving target populations into the local labour market regardless of local conditions such as childcare provision, child friendly hours and transport links. As welfare practices consolidated the existing set of organizational and institutional arrangements that construct women (and particular unskilled women) as cheap labour (Rubery, et al., 1998). Many women are part of a secondary labour market, characterised by what can be termed hyphenated employment - low-paid, part-time, non-unionised, short-term (Beynon, 1997) - that fails to provide a living wage. Indeed the growth in women's employment has, for the most part, taken this form, particularly for those who return to the labour market after childbirth (Jacobs, 1997). Therefore welfare practices were clearly "tied to the demands of restructuring labour markets for feminised and flexible workers" (Haylett, 2003: 771).

## 7.3 Conclusion

The *Work Focused Interview* was an encounter to be feared for the Lifeline Girls, constituting as it did a site of social interaction pervaded by a symbolic boundary that made relations of marginalisation visible. The *Interview* itself was a dense point of power relations and a point in time and space where inclusion/exclusion in relation to citizenship was evident. Indeed this welfare practice denied the women that I met and spoke with the status of 'normal' partners in social interaction. However, while the primary focus here perhaps has been on stigma this welfare mechanism focused on

generating changes in behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs is strongly implicated in *both* process of misrecognition *and* maldistribution.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu might be useful in helping us grasp the significance of the welfare eligibility interviews the Lifeline Girls underwent. His account of habitus noted that:

> the habitus tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions (1990a: 61).

In relation to the *Work Focused Interview* the state can be seen as set on breaking or invading habitus. In turn, habitus adopted a strategic dimension to counteract the work of the state and protect itself from the crises and challenges precipitated by state interventions. There was a recognition and contestation of exploitation - of contentious practices (Holland and Lave, 2001; Clarke 2004) - that was only possible through the pursuit of new strategies of 'getting by'. Through such strategies the Girls aimed to escape their 'destiny' of entering the workforce as vulnerable labourers. If strategies of 'getting on' were successful they would evade Pateman's (1989) choice between that of becoming a 'lesser man' or 'lesser citizen'.

There were two arms of the state at work in the context of the *Interview* and the nature of the Lifeline Girls' interactions with each was clearly distinct. Here we explicitly see how welfare states might be more than one thing at once (Clarke, 2004). Lifeline encouraged its participants to pursue strategies focused on 'getting on' and in itself this necessitated contestation of the dominant welfare practice and its key mechanism for generating change the, *Work Focused Interview*. Lifeline was instrumental in ensuring that the Lifeline Girls encountered unexpected opportunities, or opportunities that were not foreseen by Jobcentre Plus and its Lone Parent Advisers. It was clear that, particularly without Lifeline, this group of women had severely limited access to both the economic and cultural capitals that would secure reward, recognition and representation in contexts wider than their own community. Indeed their own resources in the face of the dominant institutions of the welfare state served only to stigmatise and marginalise them as victims of inequalities, inadequate in the

face of society's institutional markers. In this context Lifeline was perceived as a source of refuge and that Support Workers offered a comforting form of emotional labour. The next Chapter focuses on the emotional labour of Support Workers that contrasts starkly with that of the Lone Parent Advisers highlighted here. As we saw above contemporary welfare practices involve changing who people think they are (as mothers, workers and carers) in relation to a changing welfare regime and Lifeline is no exception. However the emotional labour process of Support Workers is exceptional

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## The Emotional Labour of the Support Worker:
## A Therapeutic Practitioner

*"Every trade has its code of ethics, a set of rules and stipulations that define proper character, conduct, and intercourse to and amongst its members. In some occupations, this code is formalised, recited, even sworn to. In others, it is a loosely strung assemblage of norms and guidelines, learned and deployed in the very process of going about one's business"*

*(Wacquant (1998b: 47))*

Many of the women participating in Lifeline attributed their success directly to their relationships with their Support Workers. In this respect the sentiments evident in one Lifeliner's comments were typical:

> If it weren't for Jessica I wouldn't be where I am now. Even when she took me for interview in April, we were going down to the Uni and I was like, "I won't be going here Jessica if it weren't for you", "yeah you would", "no, I wouldn't" I said, "I wouldn't, cos how would I be going down here?", "because you would", "I wouldn't, I can't thank you enough". This going down to the interview ... "I can't believe I am going down here", even in the care, "I can't believe I am going down here, me, going down here". Jessica was "yes", and I was like "I can't believe it" (interview, Laura).

The role of the Support Worker in fostering the 'transformations' of the Lifeline Girls was seen by them to be crucial: without them the transitions that the Lifeline Girls have made and hope to make were considered impossible. This Chapter explores the professional ideology (see James, 1989; Colley, 2003; Bolton, 2005) that organises the norms and expectations of the particular sphere of labour of these Support Workers. Within Lifeline the labour process had two core elements: *firstly*, Support Workers were tasked with generating a particular form of emotion work from Lifeline learners; *secondly*, in doing so Lifeline generated control over the emotion work of Support Workers themselves. Therefore Lifeline shaped not only the dispositions of those laboured upon but also the labourer herself. This Chapter explores each of these aspects of the labour process in turn by drawing on Hochschild's seminal work (1983)

on the concept of emotional labour, and the later, partly derivative work of Sharon Bolton (2005).

## 8.1 Theorising emotional labour

For emotional labourers the skilful management of emotion is the essential tool of their trade (Bolton, 2005). Their labour process is focused on the cognitive realm and attempts to "change images, ideas, or thoughts in the service of changing the feelings associated with them" (Hochschild, 2003: 96). The way in which emotional labour is practiced is part of its product: "in processing people, the product is a state of mind...[It] requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983: 6-7). Therefore emotional labour is intertwined with emotion work, which "refers ... to the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing, feeling in oneself" (Hochschild, 1979: 266) that occurs as an everyday phenomenon both in the workplace and beyond. The concept of emotion work allows us to explore how people manage their own emotions and how they are capable of feeling what is appropriate in the situation they find themselves in. Emotion work can be performed in varied ways: "emotion work can be done by the self upon the self, by the self upon others, and by others upon oneself" (Hochschild, 2003: 96).

In relation to this within Lifeline Support Workers encourage learners to undertake the two broad types of emotion work: "*evocation,* in which the cognitive focus is on a desired feeling that is initially absent, and *suppression*, in which the cognitive focus is on undesired feeling that is initially present" (Hochschild, 2003: 95)). Each society is structured by a dominant "configuration of feelings" (Heller, 1979: 177) and while feelings are commonly perceived to be natural they are to some extent socially regulated and historically situated. The extension of the work ethic to welfare-reliant single mothers meant the allocation of tasks in relation to the division of labour in the prevailing mode of production dramatically changed and with it, the dominant configuration of feelings. Emotion work and emotional labour emerged within Lifeline in this context of a radically altered welfare regime as changes in the institutions of family and employment meant changes to the world of feeling (Heller, 1979) for the Lifeline Girls (and indeed their Support Workers). The impact of this on

the Lifeline Girls is the focus of the next Chapter. Here however we focus on its implications for the emotional labour of Lifeline's Support Workers.

## 8.2 An extraordinary labour process

The extraordinary nature of the labour process found within Lifeline necessitated the development Bolton's (2005) theoretical framework, which is itself a development of Hochschild's (1983) earlier conceptualisation of emotional labour. Bolton identifies four dimensions of emotion management in relation to emotional labour, two of which are particularly relevant to this discussion: *prescriptive* emotion management, according to organisational/professional rules of conduct; and *philanthropic* emotion management, according to general social feeling rules. The extraordinary emotional labour of the Lifeline Support Workers stemmed from its conflation of these two dimensions of emotion management as the prescriptive was deeply embedded with the philanthropic. For Bolton (2005) philanthropic feeling rules come to the fore when prescriptive feeling rules are relaxed and an unmanaged space is created whereby actors can evade institutionally prescribed feeling rules:

> the freedom to 'give that little bit extra' comes under the category of *philanthropic* emotion management and is a special case in that is denotes extra effort has been invested into offering a sincere performance as a gift to those around us (Bolton, 2005: 139).

However, the labour process of Lifeline, as a 'space of contestation', sees its prescriptive emotion management (i.e. its professional rules of conduct) 'borrow' from the philanthropic realm. The conflation of these types of emotion management underpinned Support Workers' professional motivations and dictated the feelings rules that indicated to Lifeline Support Workers *how to be* (Bolton, 2005). The Support Workers of Lifeline practiced this extraordinary form of emotional labour by drawing on their private worlds of feeling with a view to generating the correct emotional responses from the Girls in relation to the imperatives of work and care.

This form of emotional labour was at the heart of Lifeline and was carried out for the most part by Lifeline's Support Workers (Jessica and Amy). Like social workers, their emotional labour was "imposed on the most vulnerable, impoverished and damaged in society" (Jones, 2001: 549). However, the emotional labour of Support Workers was

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extraordinary: more intensive in focus and extensive in scope than the state's established social pathologisers (Wright Mills, 1943). Indeed Lifeline's practitioners made therapeutic interventions into the most private spheres of the Lifeline Girls' lives, securing a degree of access to the lives of welfare claimants that traditionally the state has not sought. Psycho-social therapeutic interventions were the foundation of the Support Workers' emotional labour. Their roles were focused on 'coaching' the Lifeline Girls through the challenges they faced in to the day to day as well as generating the performances of responsibility that were to form strategies of 'getting on'. In essence their job was to heal the damaged identities of a group of welfare-reliant single mothers.

This understanding of the nature and scope of the 'problem' to be tackled and the 'solution' to be administered was predicated on securing a degree of access to the private lives of the Girls that had significant implications for the development of the professional ideology of the Support Workers. It necessitated the imposition of therapeutic feeling rules, traditionally found in their private worlds, into the public realm and Lifeline. The nature of these feeling rules reflected the power of the professionals who ran the scheme, a power that was exercised through control of their knowledge and expertise. In the case of Lifeline 'getting the job done' was predicated on the altruistic intentions of Support Workers and their commitment to the ethos of Lifeline itself. However their expertise derived from their status as 'insiders'. As such the personal worlds of Support Workers were heavily invested in their work: *who* they were defined *how* they laboured. Their 'insider' status allowed them to be what the state was normally for not the Lifeline Girls, and this was a characteristic feature of the dispersal of the welfare state in this instance. Each of these themes is touched on below.

### 8.3    Emotional labour: making the right kind of self

Here we examine the keys aims pervading the Lifeline labour process. At the heart of Lifeline was a focus on the reinvention of self. The project's Support Workers frequently talked of Lifeliners' behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs in terms of their malleability. Indeed the aim of Lifeline was to deliberately transform the dispositions of the Lifeline Girls through the repeated practice of Lifeline itself.

Within Lifeline making the right kind of self was synonymous with making the right choices in relation to the dominant imperatives to work and care. The role of Lifeline's Support Workers was to engender this reformation: reinventing selves 'fit for purpose' under the gaze of the welfare state. As a result the emotional labour of Support Workers was orientated initially to 'catching and keeping' the Lifeline Girls and dispelling the sense of unease they experienced on entering the unfamiliar setting of the project. Later, it was devoted to building the Girls' resilience to the knocks and setbacks that threatened their status as redemptive citizens in the present and their status as responsible citizens in the future. Therefore the role of the Support Worker was to ensure learners 'settled in' and 'got on' (field note).

The reinvention of self demanded by Lifeline was seen as no easy task as one Support Worker, Amy, explained: 'it is so much easier to fail and in that respect it's awful... you try to make life as easy as you can for those who want to succeed, because it is so much easier to fail ... that sums up my job in a nutshell' (interview). Much of this work of 'making life easy' was concentrated on making the unfamiliar, familiar and breaking daily routines structured around cleaning and caring duties. Kim described this below:

> I was in this routine of cleaning, sorting the kids and what have you then. I had to get it done. But then I can remember Jessica saying to me "well it's just getting into another routine now that's all" and I did. I just got into another routine (interview).

Although Kim made light of this adjustment this was often a traumatic experience for Lifeliners as one Support Worker noted:

> We have Girls who would have been in their pyjamas all day, the house will be a tip and they don't actually do anything. But... if you want to be here then you have got to get up, you have got to get dressed, you have to be organised, you have to have done something about your house... I know that definitely from some of the Girls... that that was really trauma (interview, Amy).

It is striking that while Kim emphasised her past life created around performances of caring Amy, her Support Worker, dismissed and indeed doubted the authenticity of these performances. Yet they both agreed on the need to break with this past and

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embrace a new kind of future that necessitated the adoption of new habits and routines. For the Girls, Lifeline was typically experienced as a pivotal biographical moment and participating in the project was seen as the first of many 'big steps' they will take into 'the big bad world' (field note). The Lifeline Support Workers anticipated and made provision for the sense of unease the Girls experienced when making this step and as we saw in Chapter Six generated a warm and welcoming atmosphere for newcomers. The Lifeline Girls quickly came to appreciate the presence of Support Workers as calming and comforting.

Lifeline's principles explicitly incorporated a psycho-social dimension targeted at creating mobile and self-fulfilling social actors. An important element of this approach was *making* reflexive selves. One of the Support Workers, Jessica described this process to me:

> We start going down a process of coaching them through situations themselves. ... We have got to sort of put them through experiences and build their confidence so when they come against that again they don't get that knock back. It might be a temporary, they might think about it, but it doesn't ruin their whole week. So we are forever sort of bolstering their self confidence... So things you and me would take for granted, other people, because they have been at such a low ebb they can't. Tou know what I mean? Everybody is out to get them, and it's really, really hard to try and turn that around, that it doesn't have to be that way, and that is a big challenge (interview).

Here we see the Lifeline Girls are positioned as incapable of dealing with life's knocks and negotiating the social world successfully. The emotional labour of Lifeline's Support Workers was built on the premise that the Girls did not have the appropriate dispositions to successfully negotiate the social world independently. There was a sense that by constructing the women participating in Lifeline as unable to cope, Support Workers were often infantilising their charges. This construction of a powerless self unable to command sufficient agency to negotiate the social world informed the way in which Support Workers labour.

The labour of Support Workers worked on the feelings of women locked into a disadvantaged social location who were struggling to determine their own destinies. Support Workers understood that a life lived in poverty was hard, that knock backs were frequent for the Lifeline Girls and that years of degradation and debasement had

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taken their toll. Support Workers were in place to equip learners with the skills to rally as Jessica made clear:

> Through the course of the year we are trying build up their resilience. I think what I am getting up is their resilience to life's knocks so that they can brush themselves off and carry on and that's the most important things we do for people. ... They don't realise we are doing it, and we ... don't have to manufacture occasions ... because we know these things will happen. As they come through the process of change with us, they come against lots of things ... We know they are going to happen. It is just one of those natural things, but we laugh about that and say "oh it's you this week, it happened to her last week" (interview).

Similarly Amy commented:

> So if they are thinking of dropping out and we are aware of things that are going on, we've get them through it ... and we do it in a way that sort of empowers them. It is a part of the course that we empower them over the course of the year to be able to overcome these challenges and issues themselves (interview).

The challenges they faced were predicted by Support Workers and more often than not light heartedly dismissed with humour and an appeal to an acknowledgement of the collective nature if their predicament. In this context Support Workers looked to generate new forms of emotion work from the Girls.

Much of their role was focused on the control of emotion and appropriate reactions to challenges that invariably meant suppressing any frustration, anger and aggression that the Girls felt at life's injustices. The focus here is on building resilient selves rather than progressive, resistant selves. The knocks that arise from wrangling with the fathers of their children or in dealings with a state threatening eviction for example are dealt with by developing a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1977) rather than challenging injustice *per se*. The Lifeline Girls were now asked to demonstrate restraint and in relation to this restraint a particular kind of spirit and toughness. They were also encouraged to evoke determination and pride in relation to new identities constructed around their future independence and their capacity for self-determination and self-fulfilment. The therapeutic practice of Lifeline generated a focus on reflexivity and making 'good' choices through both everyday messages of positive

reinforcement and 'formal' engagement exercises that asked learners to rate their progress and talk through their feelings. In the words of one community development practitioner in Valleyside it was the responsibility of the Support Worker to ensure the Girls made 'better choices' (field note). The key goal, articulated by Support Workers, was to keep learners on 'the straight and narrow' and ensure they made further transition through education, to employment. Thus through their Support Workers the Girls were encouraged to understand and regulate their emotions in order to move on with life in the desired way.

In this way Support Workers also adopted roles as healers of the damaged identities of their charges. Indeed their titles as *Support Workers* made the therapeutic element of their role clear and here we can clearly identify the practice of a therapeutic state. You are far more likely to find a Support Worker in a mental health setting than an adult education environment. Indeed Support Workers are typically found working with vulnerable adults (those with physical, mental or learning disabilities, those facing substance misuse issues or ex-offenders). However in a similar way to mental health practitioners the labour of Lifeline's Support Workers was focused on helping the most marginalised live independently by caring for their particular needs. Within Lifeline the employment of Support Workers as opposed to adult educators or community development practitioners defined the nature and scope of the 'problem' that they were to tackle i.e. the deficiencies of the vulnerable.

Just as the Lifeline Girls understood that the project was active well beyond the academics of the classroom, Support Workers understood that their role extended well beyond that of the conventional street-level bureaucrats of the welfare state. Indeed the intensity of the interventions in the lives of its participants that Lifeline provided was in stark contrast to those of mainstream street-level bureaucrats. Support Workers were deeply involved in the day to day lives of the Girls. As one Lifeliner Sonia said, Amy was 'fantastic on anything and don't just know me but my son and my mother, my brothers and my sisters' (field note). Another, Teresa also explained this to me:

> you don't see her as this woman and um she's like down to earth and friendly, approachable. She gets involved, she's like ... she is involved not just with me but with my whole family and supportive in that way as well. Like I said, she is still there now ... she have always been here, she is always at the other end of the phone if you need her, even if it is good or bad (interview).

Similarly Support Workers understood that they were able to 'appreciate the concerns of the Girls, because [they] ... are that much closer to their lives, and understand their needs' (field note). As we saw in Chapter Six, in time Support Workers became a valuable source of social capital for the Girls. Emotional support was often coupled with practical help in relation to issues like threats of eviction and debt relief and Support Workers were trusted problem solvers (they would often make telephone calls or write letters on a learner's behalf, acting as advocate or character reference). One of the Lifeline Girls, Sonia's comments made this clear:

> I got ... the answers to everything I need now... I don't think I am going to go that low again cos every time something goes wrong for me ... I know I got the people to turn to, I know I got the answers I am looking for, I got somebody to talk to, I got places to go, do you know what I mean? Whereas before something goes wrong for me I think right I have got nobody to talk to, who can I turn to? I would have just hit rock bottom but now if anything goes wrong I just pick up the phone ... and she is there do you know what I mean? She seems to have all the answers, all the pieces are there like (interview).

Lifeline's Support Workers acted as a source of support for any issue, at any time, in any place, often seemingly filling in a void in Lifeliners' lives. As such Support Workers were always 'on call'; and within Lifeline, they were always, 'at work'.

In providing this kind of intensive psycho-social and pragmatic support the Lifeline Girls commented on how Support Workers became 'friend', 'mother', 'sister' and 'mentor' (field notes) as they guided, comforted and inspired. Their labour process was subtle and nuanced, and often went undetected as labour by those it was practiced on and notably they were never referred to as 'counsellor'. These intimate *working* relationships were particularly visible at times of stress for the Girls. For example during my time with Lifeline, Support Workers 'coached' two of the Girls through acute problems with the fathers of their children – one imprisoned, another battling heroin addiction. It was also evident that these relationships of 'friend', 'mother', 'sister' developed intensely at times of strained relationships with kith and kin. Problems in this respect were often triggered by the changing routines and aspirations that Lifeline generated and what was potentially perceived as pretension by their fellow community members. Generally those Girls with the most troubled backgrounds relied on the prop of the Support Worker the most and in many ways

Support Workers addressed the deficits of the disadvantaged social networks of the Lifeline Girls. The kind of help and support offered by Lifeline Support Workers was certainly not available for the majority of the Lifeline Girls elsewhere.

Support Workers became a source of social capital vital to developing strategies for 'getting by' as they attempted to inculcate learners with the emotional capacity to become self-determining, self fulfilling people in the future. In this context Support Workers became a dearly valued source of comfort. They offered the Girls a valuable and hitherto unprecedented source social capital that was in turn targeted at engendering further forms of emotional-cultural capital to ensure the Lifeline Girls coped better with everyday challenges, achieved qualifications and secured their mobility both materially and symbolically. The presence of Support Workers in the lives of the Girls highlighted the importance of the relationships between different forms of capital. The form of social capital they provided was significant because of its anticipated relationship to emotional, cultural and economic capital. It was hoped with the help and guidance Support Workers the Lifeline Girls will lead lives similar to those of Support Workers i.e. as career carers.

Support Workers were welcomed into the private worlds of this group of welfare-reliant single mothers. They were seen to be very different to intrusive social workers and had both a more extensive and intensive focus on their private worlds than health visitors. The professional ideology of the Support Worker was built around this access into private worlds. As such Support Workers constructed themselves as 'insiders' in relation to both Valleyside and Lifeline Girls. Support Workers made claims to a privileged access that stemming from their own biographies that enabled them to create professional barriers with those they perceived to be 'outsiders'. The special nature of their access into the lives of the Lifeline Girls meant that Support Workers were also able to strengthen their status as working *within but against* the state. Their status as 'insiders' was clear in the Support Workers' code of conduct.

## 8.4   The Support Workers' code of conduct

The Support Work of Lifeline was structured around an emerging set of para-professional norms, which drew on a code of conduct that borrowed from associated

professions like those of the community development worker, the Action Researcher and the social worker. The Support Workers did not undergo lengthy periods of formal training and occupational socialisation, rather they borrowed and reshaped the folk symbols of more established and allied para-professions to construct their own professional ideology (Bolton, 2005). For example, Jessica often articulated the ways in which her current role retained elements of her previous role as Action Researcher once stating that she was 'still carrying out still the Action Research methodology really but without turning it into a piece of research' (field note). On another occasion she explained how her role has an ethos akin that of a community development worker:

> Some of the key principles of community development ... for engaging people are more around the principles of community development and I think that's about openness, honesty, integrity, doing the job for the right reasons ... being able to build up trusting relationships and unless you have got those sort of qualities going on people won't engage with you full stop (interview).

It is clear here that Jessica drew on her past work experience to construct her current role and endow it with a para-professional status. In this extract she also pointed to the essential personal qualities and attributes one must have to become a Support Worker and practice this kind of emotional labour. Jessica understood her role in relation to the human qualities it demands of those who practice it (openness, honesty and integrity). These qualities became imbibed in the prescribed feeling rules of the Support Work profession, which brought with them assumptions concerning the nature of those engaged in emotional work and labour (Bolton, 2005). Within Lifeline the expertise of the Support Worker were predicated on her naturally caring disposition. The feeling rules of Lifeline made assumptions about the characters of those best suited to the role of Support Worker to construct ideal types of personality, rather than a more conventional 'skill set' they possessed and could demonstrate.

However the Support Work of Lifeline had its own distinct set of prescribed feeling rules derived largely from the private domain of care. These feeling rules were in keeping with this institution's instrumental demands and specifically its aim is to generate the reinvention of self through therapeutic practice. The professional feeling rules governing Lifeline (like the 'path of least resistance' it advocated as we saw in

Chapter Six) drew on stereotypical notions of a feminine caring self that is equipped for a caring occupation, such as Support Work. Just as Lifeline aimed to endow its participants with dispositions in keeping with an ideal of femininity, the devotional dispositions of Support Workers were constructed around an ideal of feminine nurture and care. This was the case to the extent that Support Workers' dispositions become constructions of an ideal of employability for working class woman and she was a purveyor of the moral good and a sound role model. For the Lifeline Girls it was clear that Support Workers were a source of inspiration and admiration: in the words of one Lifeliner a Support Worker was 'someone to look up to as well, I think she is so happy in her job and I think well ... you can be happy in your job, she is a prime example' (interview, Teresa). We see here that professional feeling rules cannot be separated from the collective historical and societal structures that reproduce women as 'better' emotional labourers (Bolton, 2005). These caring identities drew on collective social constructions of emotion work that are coded according to both gender and class relations and lead us to understand that 'to care' is the 'natural' preserve and strength of a woman (Bolton, 2005). This was further reflected in the understanding of *who* you are and not *what* you are, as the foundation of occupational identity for Support Workers.

The emphasis on *who* you are within their professional ideology meant that the type of emotional labour practiced by Support Workers rested on their capacity to present a sincere performance (Bolton, 2005). Indeed the aim of the therapeutic intervention first and foremost was to evoke feelings of comfort and trust and as such perceptions of sincerity were key to the success of these interactions. That this was achieved was clear in this extract from an interview with Sonia on the importance of Support Workers:

> There is somebody out there that knows that we want to learn and that we need the support. Yeah cos I don't think I got to be honest I don't think any of us Girls would have stuck it out if we didn't have that support behind us. Definitely not. We would have been out the first week. Definitely. I would have anyway. Definitely (interview).

We see that Sonia, like many of the Girls, attributed her success directly to her relationship with her Support Worker and we see clearly how important this

relationship was be in the eyes of the women participating in this study. The capacity of the Support Worker to practice emotional labour 'sincerely' is identified by learners and workers alike as attributable to the composition of her biography and the capacity to construct an identity of 'insider', which reinforces Lifeline's status as a 'space of contestation' within a dispersed welfare state.

### 8.4.1   The Support Worker as 'insider'

Support Workers used their biographies to define and justify the ways in which they practiced emotional labour: it was the life history of the Support Worker that made her qualified for the position. The Girls' perceptions of Support Workers' sincerity and authenticity was often achieved through the understanding that the Girls saw their Support Workers as 'insiders'. As Katie explained of her Support Worker, Amy 'She's like one of us, she *is* one of us' (field note). Similarly the Support Worker Amy said 'the Girls have disclosed to me that they already feel very comfortable because they see me as them, you know ... that is exactly how I want them to feel because to me *I am* one of them' (interview). Therefore this relationship was not constructed through a hierarchy of power instead the Girls typically commented that Support Workers 'are on the same level as us' and in 'the same league as us' (field notes).

Support Workers crafted these relationships through their biographies by constructing a dichotomy around Valleyside insiders/outsiders to establish their professional credentials (i.e. to explain how they were able to labour effectively). Through their biographies they were able to present themselves, both to the Lifeline Girls and myself as constituent members of the local community, which in turn endowed them with the capacity to support the development of the Lifeline Girls. As such professional performances in this field were conducted by 'insiders', by people 'who understand the culture', 'who have similar experiences', 'who have not always had it easy themselves', and 'have experience of overcoming challenges' (field notes). Support Workers located their biographies in their professional identities and in so doing indicated notions of belonging as a key feature of their expertise.

Lifeline Support Workers also drew on their relationship with the culture of Valleyside and similar communities to demonstrate their expertise. One Support

Worker highlighted how important a longstanding relationship with Valleyside was for her as follows:

> I was born and brought up on the... estate. Grew up in the local schools in the 60s and 70s... and I have daughters who still go to the same local schools here ... and I have still got family who live on the estate. ... Obviously working in, with community regeneration ... it's a big plus to be from where you working. From the community's point of view because obviously I understand innately why they think the way they do, what the culture is, why people attend certain things and not others. But also for myself it is very pleasing because I am getting to sort of see the results of my work on a community that I care about (interview, Jessica).

Jessica's connections to Valleyside were key to establishing her professional credentials and through them she constructed a symbolic boundary of privileged cultural sensitivity, which only 'insiders', like herself, could permeate.

Similarly, Amy drew on her lived experience of the material realities of poverty to produce the performance of an 'insider':

> I knew that if you didn't have money it changed, you know. I am not saying that having money made your life perfect but, if you didn't have it, it was a damn sight harder and I think from day one I appreciated that. ... From where I was growing up I knew very early on that money was important and without it life was very, very hard' (interview).

Experience is the basis of knowledge and expertise within Lifeline. The implication of this was that to help people out of poverty, you must have experience of poverty yourself. Amy's entire interview was striking because unprompted she consistently oscillated between an account of her current role as emotional labourer and her past experiences as a non-traditional learner herself. For Amy her capacity for empathy, stemming from her past life, lay at the heart of her ability to get the job done. The extract below epitomised this quality within Amy's interview:

> An awful lot of these Girls are on the journey where I started... An awful lot of their situations are things where I have been... I was twenty two with three babies under the age of three. I had a mortgage through the roof, which I couldn't afford to pay and my house was repossessed... I have lived within a very abusive relationship. I have been on Prozac for quite a while. I had horrendous post natal depression. I have had a baby later on in life, when I

least expected or wanted to be honest. I know how hard it is to juggle quite a demanding partner, a demanding family ... my mother and father expect an awful lot, or did, expect an awful lot of me. I know how it is to live when finances are really tight. ... I know how it feels to really, like you have let everybody down. I know how it feels to leave school with very few qualifications. I know how it feels to try to re-enter education. I know how hard it is to sit there listening to people speak to you and they could be speaking Spanish cos you can't understand a word they are saying. I hope that through my life experiences I can make theirs better... I am not saying that someone maybe who has had a perfect life can't come in and do just as good a job but that's what I feel really, you know.

This account of her personal experience of overcoming adversity to become a responsible working mother was infused with Amy's typically positive energy. Here we see how Amy, through her own life experiences, that other professionals do not possess, made a case for her privileged position in this workplace. Common experience defined what it meant to be an 'insider'. This experience underpinned the ideology of professional expertise (and also constructed the Support Worker as a mentor of redemption and moral correctness). While this analysis has focused on the Lifeline Support Workers it should be noted that the establishment of credentials through 'insider' status is pervasive within the field of community development practice, both in Valleyside and beyond. This was a key theme running through many of the interviews I conducted with community development professionals and comments like 'it definitely helps if you know the area, the people, otherwise it's hard to get people' (field note) were commonplace.

A professional ideology created through an 'insider' status meant that for the Support Worker her private life was bleeding (Bolton, 2005) into her public life as a member of the workforce. This bleeding was perhaps most clear in the way Support Workers, by virtue of *who* they were, felt a strong commitment to their labour market obligations. Lifeline's feeling rules were powerful and Support Workers were highly motivated to comply with them because they identified with the project's principles. There was a sense that their working lives meant more to them than the mere pursuit of reward and recognition. This commitment stemmed not only from their belonging to Valleyside and the Lifeline Girls but also in a belief in the ethos of Lifeline. However it was this commitment that to a large extent ensured the boundary between Support Workers' private and public identities blurred.

## 8.5 Bleeding boundaries: emotional labour and a private/public self

A key theme of this analysis is the blurring of the private/public realms evident in the emotional labour of the Support Worker. As we saw above Bolton's (2005) analysis of emotional labour argues that philanthropic feeling rules come to the fore only when prescriptive feeling rules are relaxed and an unmanaged space is created. However Lifeline *routinely* demanded of Support Workers the *extra* emotion work commonly recognised as gift (Bolton, 2005). In fact this was an integral element of the prescriptive feeling rules Lifeline advocated in its everyday practice of emotional labour. Support Workers did not evade, ignore or amend institutionally prescribed feeling rules in offering what is understood as philanthropic emotional labour, but complied with them. The goals of the organisation were achieved by extending prescriptive emotional labour to the philanthropic realm. Support Workers were not free to "give that little bit extra" (Bolton, 2005: 139) rather it was asked of them as a routinised element of their labour process.

While "there are no definitive divides between the public and private worlds of emotion" (Bolton, 2005: 3) the emotional labour process found in Lifeline blurred the boundaries between the roles we occupy in the private and public spheres. Within Lifeline the Support Worker occupied a space in her working life where she presented her self through performances of 'integrity' and 'honesty' and adopted the roles of 'mother' 'sister' and 'friend'. The Support Workers were 'used' as a source of comfort, nurture and support – of care (field note). Such relationships often exceeded the early expectations of the Girls and what they understood to be the norms of professionalism. Indeed Katie, one Lifeliner, made it clear that there was a feeling amongst the Girls that Support Workers went 'beyond the call of duty':

> She gone beyond the call of her job… Cos it's like if someone don't turn up, she think they got problems she will knock their door, 'come on, put the kettle on'. You know someone normally, like if it is an employer, they wouldn't do that would they?… So that's not in her job detail I wouldn't expect, not chasing you up all the time. Even now with Carrie. Carrie's finished college you know a good few months and Jessica still haven't given up on her: "oh I will give her a ring see what she is up to and if I can't help her that way I will help her another way". She don't have to… like Carrie left (interview).

However working beyond the 'call of duty' *is* in a Support Workers' job detail and no Girls was 'lost'. If they left the programme Jessica and Amy were still looking out for them, still trying to engage with them. Going the 'extra yard' is what Lifeline expected of its Support Workers, indeed this was perceived as a key to its success.

To some extent the discretion Support Workers had to invoke through the gift of emotional labour in reality *was* negotiated on a daily basis, though by the standard of conventional welfare state interventions the capacity to generate gift seemed boundless. As one Support Worker said, 'whatever they require in their lives, if I can provide it I will ... in any shape or form that we can, you know' (interview, Amy). Making home visits and being at the end of the phone twenty four hours a day, seven days a week were seen as 'part of the job' (field note). While the commitment in time alone was striking there was also an incredible commitment in terms of the intensity of the labour process. Sharing the emotional burdens of the Lifeline Girls was commonplace as this following extended interview extract made clear. Here Amy discussed one example of the kind of tasks she could be expected to undertake as part of the job. This example is of her work with one Lifeline Girls, Sarah in particular:

> The beauty of this it goes much, much further. If they are not here it is my job to find out where they are. Why? What's happening? I often end up in one of their homes. I go in and have a drink and have a chat and we will talk things through. Sometimes it can be just some time to have a bitch because you know, their mother has upset them or they have no one who they can "argh", you know. I can be used for that... One issue with one of the Girls ... she had a phone call to say to go to the hospital... She gathered it wouldn't be good news. She didn't feel that her mother was a massive support... I went with her. She finds out she is pregnant. We go for a scan and the baby is dead... Obviously then it is my role to support her any way that I can so as a result it is my job to go with her to explain to her mother. If it makes life easier for her then that's fine. ... I should have asked for triple time for that. ... That day, was probably one of the most horrendous days I have ever lived through because her emotions were so erratic it was unbelievable. ... You go through a process of shock. I can't say anything else, she was completely and utterly shocked then. We went through the processs ... while they were explaining the technicalities to her. At this stage she is not even, "yeah, yeah, yeah", but hasn't actually grasped the situation. ... She has gone, she has knocked off now, she knocked off two hours ago, she knocked off when she was lying on that bed and they are saying to her "are you aware that you pregnant and there is no heartbeat?". At that point she's gone. It's then my role to say, "right, well, come on, that's awful, but where do we go from here?". Because

obviously my main objective is to get her back on the straight and narrow as soon as I can so that she's obviously going in the right direction (interview).

The first part of the account simply highlighted that the labour of the Support Worker took place to a large extent beyond the classroom. While making note of the Girls' hospital appointments is routine, the incident Amy described above was beyond the routine and yet was still considered to be part of the normal responsibilities of a Support Worker. The example Amy offered was of course, an extreme case, yet we are left in no doubt that Amy did consider this type of intervention as within the realm of what Lifeline expected of her (albeit at a rate of triple time!). In this instance the role Amy adopted was implicitly closest to that of mother or friend as the type emotion management performed was in keeping with what we would ordinarily understand to be social feeling rules. The extent to which the public world of work and the private world of self blurred here was clear as at times it was difficult to discern Amy's identity from that of Sarah's. Indeed there was a sense in which Amy 'did self' for Sarah, because Sarah 'has gone', 'she has knocked off now'. It was at this point that Amy's role as Support Worker really took hold as she suppressed her initial horror and focused on her goal of keeping Sarah on the 'straight and narrow' and 'going in the right direction'. The boundaries of Support Workers' prescriptive emotion work were therefore not formally delineated but renegotiated on a daily basis depending on the circumstances of the moment.

The role of Support Worker was familiar and well rehearsed because the social feeling rules played out in the private sphere were transposed to the world of employment. Most often the role was compared as akin to mothering roles for example, Support Workers commented 'they do need this constant, almost like bringing up a child, you know attention wise you need to be paying them attention all the time' and 'definitely a nurturing role, I would say even a mothering role, there is something childlike in terms of the support they need' (field notes). Such performances were indicative of an emotional style that required Support Workers to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983: 6-7). However this was not uncomplicated and moments Support Workers experienced tensions and uncertainties that derived from the incorporation of the feeling rules of the private domain into public domain in relation and the bleeding

of the private and public worlds of emotion management. These tensions were exacerbated because blurred boundaries stemmed from the instrumental necessity of meeting the aims of Lifeline. Thus Amy once commented, 'I do become their friend... an awful lot of my job is being their friend but I also remember that it is my job and can't become emotionally involved too much anyway' (field note). It was the intensely emotional nature of Support Workers' interventions that led to confusion over the nature of their role in this way. The bleeding between the private and the public domains did not occur without a cost as this form emotional labour required significant emotion work on the part of Support Workers themselves.

## 8.6 Matching face with feeling?

The feeling code of conduct that underpinned Support Workers' emotional labour was an example of the "sincere performance of prescriptive emotion management resulting from... altruistic... motivations" (Bolton, 2005: 95). For the most part Support Workers engaged in what "deep acting": "a natural result of working on feeling, the actor does not try to *seem* happy or sad but rather expresses spontaneously... a real feeling that has been self-induced" (Hochschild, 1983: 35). This is as opposed to "surface acting": the "body language, the put-on sneer, the posed shrug, the controlled sigh" (Hochschild, 1983: 35). However the feeling rules governing the Support Workers of Lifeline in the workplace lead to rare but acute moments of emotional dissonance i.e. a mismatch between what one feels and what one knows one ought to feel. In such cases emotion work "becomes an object of awareness most often, perhaps, when the individual's feelings do not fit the situation, that is, when the latter foes not account for or legitimate feelings in the situation" (Hochschild, 1979: 96). In routinely offering the Lifeline Girls that 'little bit extra' the Support Workers had to work on their own feelings and dispositions in order to labour effectively in Lifeline.

While commitment to Lifeline was deeply felt by its Support Workers there was a sacrifice that came with this form of labour and it was common for Support Workers to feel as if the roles of the workplace and home life were conflated and confused. Remarks like 'I have a family at home' or 'it can be like having more kids, you know, I have my own kids at home' (field notes) were not uncommon. These responses were

indicative of a type of emotional labour that encroached on the self of the Support Worker, epitomised in comments like 'they do require an awful lot of support, but there is one of me' (field note). Support Workers were not so sincerely attached to the image of professionalism that the effort of maintaining their image was "hardly seen as hard work at all" (Bolton, 2005: 123). Instead instances of emotional dissonance between feeling and face (Bolton, 2005) were experienced. While these were only rarely glimpsed by myself, Support Workers did talk of the toll of such intensive labour, of moments when they worked hard to evoke the appropriate emotions and suppress the inappropriate. This was evident when Jessica said 'it's a job, it is draining, they think of you as a friend, a mother, but you are not those things' (field note). At such times, while empathy with the Girls was felt so was the tension that emerges as a result of the bleeding between the private and the pubic realms.

The prescription of 'gift' at the heart of Lifeline meant there was only limited space for professional feeling rules to can act as a "shielding mechanism" or "veneer that protects the self from the emotional demands of the job" (Bolton, 2005: 123). For Jessica, new strategies of coping opened up when Amy joined the project: as she explained, 'it is easier now I have someone else to lean on ... it is draining, it is good to have someone to talk things over with, get some support from Amy' (field note). Out of necessity the Support Workers created occasional spaces of 'escape' when they came together to offer mutual support and took time to recharge batteries and highlight causes of concern (although this kind of de-briefing meant they were still 'at work'). However such opportunities were few and far between as journeys to and from work, coffee and lunch breaks were taken with the Girls. Even the Lifeline office was a space open for use by both the Girls and Support Workers alike. This meant the labour process was intense and there was very little 'down time' for Support Workers. Yet, to my knowledge, they were always successful in ensuring the Girls perceived that their feelings matched their faces largely because more often than not they did. This is in stark contrast to the common finding that the sympathy of state workers is in act often perceived as condescension (see for example, Sennett, 2003). In contrast Lifeline, under the auspices of a dispersed welfare state, was viewed as a safe haven, a source of refuge for the troubled young women who thrived in its embrace.

## 8.7 Conclusion

The dispersal of the welfare state to the community development sphere meant new forms of welfare governance emerged. One such site of welfare governance was Lifeline. Lifeline was an extraordinary site of welfare governance largely because of its labour process. The practice of emotional labour evident within Lifeline was indicative of an emerging therapeutic state. As such Lifeline had a distinctive 'emotional culture', which while taking its lead from the dominant ideological assumptions of the employability thesis, was very much shaped by the Support Workers themselves. It was in part through the practice of a particularly intensive and extensive form of emotional labour that Lifeline created its status as working *within but against* the state. However as we might expect of any site of welfare governance Lifeline's Support Workers were tasked with making the right kinds of selves for the Lifeline Girls. The Girls were to become self-reflexive, self-fulfilling, responsible citizens. Yet the Lifeline Girls were positioned by Support Workers as amongst the most vulnerable of our society. As such their redemption necessitated an extraordinary labour process offering much needed intensive and extensive support. In time Support Workers were to become invaluable and trusted therapeutic problem solvers for the Lifeline Girls, as they adopted the roles of mother, sister, friend and mentor.

The vocabulary of motive that Support Workers drew upon around an insider/outsider dichotomy served to establish their professional expertise and credentials. Support Workers positioned themselves as 'insiders' by referencing shared biographies, both in relation to the culture of Valleyside and the experiences of the Lifeline Girls themselves. In turn the Lifeline Girls themselves confirmed their Support Worker as 'one of us' and they were welcomed into the private lives of the Girls. Such perceptions meant Support Workers were well placed to generate the emotion work necessary for the creation of the right kind of self in a Lifeliner. We see here that the dispersal of the welfare state has created new types of relationships between welfare claimants and street-level state bureaucrats. In this case these relationships are constructed as highly privileged and guarded intensely by the Support Workers that foster them. The deployment of this particular type of emotional labour meant emotion work that took the form of gift was at the heart of Lifeline's prescriptive

labour process. While an altruistic commitment to Lifeline to a large extent outweighed the emotional cost of this transposition of a private world of feelings to the public sphere Support Workers did experience a tension between their public and private selves.

Participation in Lifeline and encounters with Support Workers came to be seen by the Girls as triggering pivotal moments in their life histories by expanding their perceptions of the horizons of possibility available to them in the social world. These pivotal biographical moments are the focus of the next Chapter. Specifically it examines the emotion work the emotional labour of the Support Workers induced in the Lifeline Girls in more detail. We explore Lifeline's self-reflexive subjects with reference to the structural relations they are locked into paying particular attention to the restructuring of the welfare state and the changing perceptions of employment.

# CHAPTER NINE

## 'Getting On': A Life a Little More Ordinary

*'I didn't think I would try to be anything,*
*I didn't have any,*
*I didn't think I would try to be anything'*

*(interview, Lifeliner)*

For the women I met in Valleyside, participating in Lifeline was a revelatory experience, a pivotal biographical moment promising a new, more ordinary life. Lifeline enabled them to negotiate the social world with new strategies of 'getting on' through a set of relations to education and labour market opportunities far different to those previously conceived. For the Lifeline Girls, escaping their highly restricted social position was seen to be a real possibility for the future and this group of women began to construct themselves as redemptive, responsible citizens. Lifeline offered mobility from a stigmatised class identity as well as the material realities of the experience of poverty. The advent of welfare reform meant the Lifeliners' strategies of 'getting by' were increasingly less legitimate both symbolically and materially in the eyes of the welfare state. Indeed the terrain on which old strategies of 'getting by' were pursued had dramatically altered. Within Lifeline strategies of 'getting on' were developed under a particular set of conditions, including the "conventions, rules and systems of meaning" (Sayer, 2010: 112) that underpinned its practice.

Here the vocabularies of motive (Wright Mills, 1940) that the Lifeline Girls routinely drew upon to articulate their futures are examined. The Lifeline system of meaning validated 'meritocracy' and 'choice' and was one mechanism within Lifeline that generated changes in behaviour, values, attitudes and beliefs. A future of full citizenship was constructed through a new found vocabulary of liberation and fulfilment. The Lifeline Girls engaged in a form of reflexivity whereby their past selves were characterised as passive, static figures in contrast to the active and mobile selves of the future, who embraced 'the meritocratic allocation of recognition and

reward. However the Lifeliners' 'escape' was highly circumscribed, constrained by structures of class and gender that remained key in determining 'choices' in relation to future labour and education market trajectories. How the Girls 'chose' to comply with the work imperative revealed how their class and gender position related to the institutions of family and employment in new ways. Here we move from vocabularies of motive (Wright Mills, 1940) to the structures that shape (and are shaped) by them.

## 9.1 Lifeline: a revelation and a reinvention of self

Most sociological accounts of class identities and relations focus on a dispossessed working class marked by acquiescence to the realities of an unequal social order (see for example, Charlesworth, 2000; Skeggs, 1997). Seemingly in contrast, the narratives of the Lifeline Girls emphasised hope for future mobility constructed through their self-fulfilling and self-reflexive selves. Although born into structures of inequality that severely circumscribed their movements through the social world, the Girls through their participation in Lifeline, accrued capitals, which would enable them to pursue strategies of social mobility and 'getting on'. In doing so they also zealously embraced the meritocratic myth. They emphasise working class passivity, immobility and stasis but also pain as class position "troubles the soul and preys on the psyche" (Reay, 2005: 924).

For the Lifeline Girls recollections of their own pasts followed in the vein of the acquiescence noted in the studies above. As such they were often couched in apologetic chagrin at opportunities missed and lost hope of a life a little more ordinary. In the words of one the Lifeline Girls: 'I didn't think I would try to be anything, I didn't have any, I didn't think I would try to be anything' (interview, Bridget); and another: 'I was getting in a rut and I said 'I don't want to live like this, I want to have proper money, I want to be able to afford to take the kids on holidays and just pay the bills' (interview, Teresa). Past lives were weighed, measured and found wanting in light of new, and until recently inconceivable, futures as there was a steadfast resolve to steer a new course: 'I just can't go back to doing what I used to doing, I just won't' (field note). Here we see how the Lifeline Girls' recollections of their pasts chimed remarkably with Charlesworth's (2000) assessment of working class life: one of the Girls, Bridget remarked:

I think I was probably just more like a robot then. Just living, well shall I say existing. ... I think I am living now. That's the best way to describe it ... I think I was just drifting along, existing. Now I think I am actually living my life now. so, yeah that's the best way I can describe it (interview, Bridget).

Similarly in his study of working class life in Rotherham, Charlesworth stated:

They may be biologically alive but they do not have access to the resources, symbolic as well as economic, to have a life. They are the zombies that British culture has created by condemning them to a living death of a stigmatised, abject being (2000: 160).

It was perhaps no wonder then that the Lifeline Girls eagerly grasped new identities as learners and newly accrued capitals, together with the promise of more, were increasingly put to work in performances of responsibility as well as respectability. This was a testament to the value of the qualifications they worked towards both in the fields of education and the labour market. A corollary of the celebration of the present and future was a dismissal of what had gone before and reflections on progress made through Lifeline were typically focused on 'moving on' and 'breaking with the past' (field notes). This was clear in Bridget's account above but also in the response of, Sarah, to my request for a life history interview with her: 'what life? I didn't have a life until now' (field note). The literature on returners to education is replete with such examples of women seeking to leave aspects of their lives behind, both metaphorically and literally, in order to have a better perspective of the future (Hughes, 2002).

As such Lifeline was seen by the Girls as a revelatory, life changing experience. Comments like 'life has changed beyond all recognition, it is much better now, much, much better' (field note) were not uncommon. For many of its participants Lifeline created 'a different world... fabulous' (interview, Sonia) marked by 'incredible' and 'surprising' 'changes' as the Girls 'come on so brilliantly' (field notes). Lifeline promised both reward and recognition of that reward from wider society, something the Girls craved as Kim, one Lifeliner explained:

I want them to you know she worked hard even though she didn't do very good at school. She worked hard. She sorted her life out. She brought her kid or kids up well and you know she got a roof over her head. The kids have all

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got clothes on their backs you know and she worked for it. Do you know what I mean? (interview).

What Kim desired was the capacity to redraw and shore up the moral boundaries that positioned her, a desire that was indicative of the anxiety that her social position gave her. This was a common feeling amongst the Lifeline Girls and there was awareness of their occupation of a social location defined by what it lacked both materially and symbolically. Within Lifeline the Girls were encouraged to display dispositions of self-scrutiny and self-improvement. In the words of one of the Girls who was commenting on her motives for attending Lifeline, 'I come here to better myself' (interview, Katie). This kind of sentiment stemmed from reflections on a life lived as Other and an attempt to become simply ordinary (see Savage, 2001). In our conversations it was clear hopes for the future had put down strong roots as statements like 'I am not that much higher because I still have a long way to go' and 'I'm not gonna be happy until I find the right job' (field notes) made clear.

Seemingly entrenched views of personal capacities for learning, working and mothering were dramatically revised as confidence in securing both reward and recognition in the future grew. Indeed a key dynamic of the Lifeline experience was the unexpected boost in self-esteem that it generated. This was evident in the Girls' statements attesting to achievement like, 'I proved myself wrong more than anybody definitely' (interview, Lynne), and there was a feeling that Lifeline was a safe haven where women dared to hope for a different future. However having dared to hope, the thought of failure sometimes weighed heavily on the Lifeline Girls. Sonia's anguish over taking the next step and moving on to the local college made this clear:

> It's big step for me. I am so nervous. But I keep telling myself that this is the reason why I done this year to get where I want to go today. I think I have got the choice to go now. Do I stay or do I go? I am so nervous I really do wanna stay (interview).

'Getting out there' (field note) and making the next step was often spoken of in wary tones with an awe-like quality. There was a feeling that for this group of women 'to hope', 'to want' and 'to try' was to be brave. This was because in doing so they were effectively breaching their social position and drawing on an aspirational discourse

that potentially marked them as different (and pretentious) to their family and friends. After all, perhaps these imagined futures were not theirs to pursue and striving for them was in some way misplaced. As one Lifeliner, Teresa said:

> I know the government don't begrudge people going into education because they wouldn't give the funding in the first place. That's my opinion. They can't set up things and then begrudge you from doing it. Like in the local offices and that they put it across as if they begrudge you doing it. ... I think it's basically it's to do with like some parents got to pay for kids to go to Uni and there is people like me who get grants and I suppose they do get a bit stuck up about it don't they? (interview).

Similarly a community development practitioner working in Valleyside commented of the project 'there are those people who say these people do not deserve this opportunity, do not deserve to have money spent on them' (field note). There was a feeling that as welfare-reliant single mothers they were not deserving of, or entitled to, the choices they were making because securing social mobility meant accessing fields and capitals not meant for them. We see here how it is possible that in the face of deeply embedded inequalities, resistance may be more painful than compliance (Sayer, 2005). This is all the more true if strategies in pursuit of mobility are unsuccessful.

## 9.2   Redemptive citizenship

In attempting to become self-determining and self-fulfilling social actors, the Lifeline Girls were engaged in an act of reinvention. The political message that participation in the labour market should be a fulfilling and defining aspect of every adult's life has been taken on board by the Lifeline Girls, just like other working class women (Braun, et al., 2008). Indeed through employment they hoped to escape, in both a material and symbolic sense, a highly restricted position to a less oppressive one associated with a very different lifestyle. Making the decision to take the path advocated by Lifeline, as opposed to that of the Jobcentre Plus, was seen as a choice that would bring both recognition and rewards. This choice promised redemption: the imperative to work was keenly felt and the possibility of compliance meant a great deal. Hence Lifeline was populated by converts, 'morally correct' selves who spoke with a quasi-religious sense of purpose. Kerry conveyed this conviction to me:

I think to myself basically in the long run I don't want to be in and out of jobs. I want a secure job. ... I wanna make something of my life. I wanna be to able to say "look at me I done it". People like to look down at me, "you can't do it"... but deep down in my heart I know what I want to do and I am not going to give in (interview).

The zeal with which redemption was sought was striking though perhaps not surprising in a social world that venerates education advancement and economic success. Increasingly sophisticated strategies of aspiration were developed to demonstrate responsibility – compliance with the work ethic – as well respectability. Indeed the manner in which working class women relate to the value of responsibility as opposed to respectability is one manifestation of the restructuring of the welfare regime.

Demonstrating responsibility through compliance with the work imperative began to mean more to the women of Lifeline than past performances of respectability through care. The enthusiasm with which future compliance with the work imperative was seized is not to say that the practices of the past are easily dismissed as entirely worthless. Rather they become more difficult to sustain under the restructuring of the welfare state as they are increasingly less legitimate (this is examined more thoroughly in the next Chapter). The capacity of Lifeline to rejuvenate the dreams for lives a little more ordinary - dreams that reflected a desire for a lifestyle of more than 'just coping' for both themselves and their children – was at times incredibly moving. How much this meant to the Girls became clear to me during the Lifeline Graduation ceremony and to gain a better understanding of this and the distinctive nature of the Lifeline approach an account of this ceremony follows below.

## 9.3 Graduation

Perhaps what was most moving about Lifeline was its capacity to rejuvenate the Lifeline Girls' dreams of a lifestyle of more than 'just coping' for both themselves and even more so for their children. This was no more apparent than in the events of Lifeline's Graduation ceremony. I attended Lifeline's second Graduation night, an event designed to celebrate the achievements of the most recent cohort of Lifeline Girls as well as highlight the progress of the project's Old Girls. The event was marked in calendars weeks in advance. Some of the Girls eagerly anticipated the

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event, others were 'cooler' and adopted a more nonchalant reserve but were excited all the same. I was invited to stay the night with one of the more excited Lifeline Girls - 'you have to come, you can stay at mine' (field note) - I happily accepted. The lead up to the event was all you would expect for a night to remember. Speeches were planned and agonised over, dresses were bought especially, hair was styled, and nails were painted. Pre-ceremony jitters were settled with a few early evening Smirnoff Ices that went down very well, thank you very much. The venue, a function room in a local pub, was nothing flash but marked the night out as a special occasion all the same. Each of the Girls invited close family and friends, and the Support Workers invited some of the local 'great and good'. And although too many of them let Lifeline down, both Girls and Support Workers alike refused to let it shake them, the gloss of the night remained intact. As the ceremony got underway so the smiles full of pride began to beam. Certificates were happily received with exclamations of 'I can't believe I passed that, I never thought I would' and amidst the enthusiastic cheers and rousing applause of a small but steadfast band of supporters. At last hard copy proof of achievement! These certificates were juggled with scrabbling children on knees. The nervous anticipation of those hopeful of success was soon displaced by a cherished pride as Jessica and Amy made sure no one would be let down – none of the Girls need have worried that they would leave without prizes. Speeches were made all nerves and giggles, a few well chose words that thanked Lifeline for all it had done for them. Finally, the roll of honour was extended to the Lifeline Old Girls. Presented as mentors as their achievements since Lifeline were highlighted as examples of what was possible (Laura enrolled in nursing, Teresa enrolled in social work, Kim enrolled in ...). Their easy manner spoke of greater assurance and more self-confidence.

This night gave me my first opportunity to talk with the Old Girls at length, and an encounter with one of them gave me pause for thought. One trip to the ladies revealed that, Teresa, having recently studied Sociology at college was happy to discuss the stigma associated with her place in the cultural and economic order. To my surprise, as I checked my mascara, and very much in contrast to empirical research of class identity (Savage, 2001), Teresa openly confronted her place within the underclass: 'well, that's me in it at the end of the day, that's all of us'. This was an unusual moment, a moment when the desire to escape a materially and symbolically marginalised position above all else was not the foundation of a performance of class

and gender. I concluded that perhaps strategies of (dis)identification (Skeggs, 1997) with class position become less important, easier to both abandon and confront, when pathways marking escape are clearly mapped out and graduating from the underclass a real possibility. Or perhaps, 'getting on' necessitated confronting social location. However my feeling at the end of this conversation, and at the end of Graduation Night, was that if this strategy of 'getting on' doesn't work out, if Teresa does not become a social worker, then this process might have done more damage than good. Of course that in itself could be an incredibly patronising thought.

## 9.4   Lifeline 'the journey'

Through Lifeline the Girls were able to visualise a new world of possibility. As such their accounts frequently made use of the metaphor of sight: of seeing differently, with greater clarity or more widely. The visions that the Lifeline Girls held of the future were fundamentally revised when the project 'opened up eyes' (field note). A number of the Lifeline Girls described this effect:

> I could see my plans ahead of me. I could see if I went to college and finished that course and then I could go to Uni if I wanted to or then I could go out and get a job that I would enjoy doing (interview, Laura).

> Now I want this. I can see myself going on placements with social services. I can see myself ... working in social services. ... Whereas before I used to think "ah I could never do that" (interview, Teresa).

> I look at things totally different now. I used to think to myself "I will get a job now. I will have to get a job now". But now I think to myself, "no I am not going to take whatever job comes my way. I am going to get a job I think I am going to be happy in". I do look at things a lot differently. I like my life differently now. I look at my life differently now (interview, Sarah).

There was a passion for the future, which stemmed from a new found capacity to re-visualise what life offers. The Lifeline Girls' renewed visions of the world were spoken of with a new found confidence and determination. This was part of a reflexive process of re-appraising their identities and re-positioning themselves within moral boundaries in relation to the institutions of family and employment. Compliance with the work imperative and becoming the 'right' kind of self was

embraced (though not at the cost of vulnerable work). Reflecting Lifeline's mandate, to mitigate against the harshest effects of welfare policy, a career began to be seen as an entitlement. This marked a further form of individuation for the Lifeline Girls as entitlement to welfare relief - the shelter and protection of the state - as single mothers no longer perceived as legitimate. Rather entitlement to welfare was displaced by the entitlement to a career as they began to conceive of themselves as independent citizens rather than dependent welfare claimants.

This contestation of the dominant mechanisms of the welfare state was couched in terms of a protracted process of epiphany. The development of new horizons of possibility was often experienced and articulated as a psychological or emotional 'journey' (field notes). The term 'journey' encapsulated a wider phenomenon of contemporary culture that emphasises the importance of self-discovery and its corollary the revelatory nature of this experience and a shifting psychological or emotional state. The 'journey' is a positive experience in popular culture, which often apparently bears little relation to the objective social position a person occupies. Rather through the 'journey', the individual is better placed to deal with adversity and to work on their emotions of disappointment, anger and frustration. The 'journey' in this context effectively explained 'how far the Girls have come' (field note) in making their way towards redemptive citizenship and compliance with dominant imperatives of work and care. In many ways this represented a psychological phenomenon that related to a state of mind, rather than a material shift in circumstances of the Lifeliners. However the implication was that in making the 'journey' the Girls were better placed to 'get on', in fact they were 'getting on'. While there was an accrual of capital that accompanied this process (notably the development of a learner identity and cultural capital that would allow them to progress to Further Education), the emphasis was often on the psycho-social experience of the Lifeline Girls. This experience was articulated through a therapeutic vocabulary and Lifeline as an institutional setting was an example of the way in which the therapeutic increasingly frames everyday experience (Furedi, 2004).

## 9.5 Lifeline and the ethos of meritocracy

The reinvention of self rested on a particular system of meaning found within Lifeline that validated 'meritocracy' and 'choice' - the belief that everyone can achieve what they want should they choose to. For the Girls their time with the project was therefore characterised by 'trying' and 'wanting', as Katie stated, 'I want to do more to try my best now' (interview). Similarly when I asked about Bridget if she saw herself as part of the underclass, she referred to endeavour as an important touchstone replying 'no, not anymore, not anymore, I mean I am trying, I am trying to make something of myself' (interview). For Bridget therefore there was a relationship between endeavour and social position, and her strategy of 'getting on' was built on the trust that reward and recognition would follow her increased efforts. As Bridget went on to say 'now I believe that, if you study something, if you really concentrate on something that you really want, in your mind you can get it' (interview). Old doubts were cast aside with the strong endorsement of a meritocracy that highlighted the individualisation thesis that lay at the heart of hopeful strategies of 'getting by'. Lifeline inculcated a meritocratic ideology in keeping with the variants of both neo-liberalism and liberal Feminism (Baker, 2008). The overarching message of these ideologies was taken on board: that success and failure were determined by individual virtues and shortcomings.

While it was rare to hear the Lifeline Girls express a sense of injustice in relation meritocratic principles doubts of the efficacy of this system did occasionally occur. Although on these occasions 'the perpetrator' was quick to revert to compliance with the meritocratic ethos. This was indicative of the complex and occasionally contradictory nature of data as we saw in Bridget's account of her *Work Focused Interview* in Chapter Seven. Here Kerry, while acknowledging that privilege was an accident of birth, recoiled from seeing herself as victim of injustice and as such potentially entitled to more that her 'lot':

*Helen*: Were you expecting your life to turn out like this?

*Kerry*: Oh no, not at all. I was going to have a lush house, lush job, lush partner. It's a fairy tale int it like? When you are a kid. It don't work out like

that unless you parents are minted like. Unless you are born with a silver spoon in your mouth you can't.

*Helen*: Do you feel pissed off?

*Kerry*: No, not really cos I don't mind working for what I get. I am not funny like that. I don't want things given to me on a plate but then I wouldn't mind just some help now and again.

Any injustice felt by Kerry was soon subordinated to meritocratic principles and she was keen to point out that she was willing to enter the workforce for her rewards. Yet while she, like others in her position, was minimising her status a victim of injustice (Baker, 2008) she was allowing it to seep through. Kerry was asking that life be just that little bit easier. Moments, such as this one, that acknowledged and resisted exploitation were rare and often couched within more legitimate mores. Most significantly, and as is the case in the above extract, this was done by drawing on the desire to comply with the moral imperative to enter the workforce. However, on the whole, despite an intuitive awareness of the arbitrariness of inequalities, the Lifeline Girls were far more likely to emphasise their freedom to choose the life they wish to lead in the future than express dismay or anger at perceived injustices at the hands of processes of maldistribution and misrecognition.

The Lifeline Girls' accounts of future citizenship were constructed by women seemingly unconstrained by their class and gender, their biographies and the place they live. In so doing they revered their powers of self-determination, autonomy, freedom etc. Performances of redemptive citizenship were accomplished by drawing on this vocabulary of choice as the Lifeline Girls were free to choose their own destiny. Laura described this when she relayed to me a conversation she had with her cousin:

She said to me ... "the world has got to be your oyster now, you can be whatever you want to be, people say you can't do this, you can't do that, the world is your oyster you can do whatever you want", and you can, you can ... you can. You know the world is your oyster and it is what you make of it. It is (field note).

Laura's recollection of her conversation with her cousin, and her affirmation of its sentiment, articulated clearly the way in which she felt a new world of opportunity and choice was open to her. The Lifeline Girls' talk of the future was peppered with assertions of this ilk, like 'I think this is what I needed, to ... choose where I wanted to go' (field notes). Kerry's feelings were exemplary:

> Yeah it's like life's choice innit? Life you choose. I will choose. To me now it's like I will choose. The way I see it now I choose the path that's gonna make my life better quality or I don't (interview).

Given the reinvention of self advocated by Lifeline the elevation and endorsement of choice in relation to self-fulfilment becomes an appealing discourse. Its credibility stems from its seductive capacity to persuade individuals that they have the capacity to shape their lives.

The perpetuation of the myth of meritocracy and choice within Lifeline in this way was an example of reflexivity as an instrument of social regulation. Indeed the self-reflexive subject of Lifeline was closely aligned to neo-liberal modes of governance that perpetuate "the ideal and privileged subject of neo-liberalism" (Adkins, 2002: 123). Here reflexivity is a capital implicated in power relations enabling mobility and privilege, a vehicle rather than an outcome of social change. In this context of welfare governance 'reflexive thinking' arises as a form of regulation and reproduction. Hence within Lifeline reflexivity was generated as a tool for understanding, developing, asserting and articulating the self. Indeed for Lifeline developing particular forms of reflexivity was seen as a cultural capital worthy of pursuit in creating selves *capable of* self-fulfilment and self-determination. Here reflexivity emerged as a neo-liberal technology of governance incorporated into the everyday reproduction of social structures as a form of social regulation (Adkins, 2002; 2004). As such the reflexivity of the Lifeline Girls was not necessarily an authentic transforming practice but a situated process constitutive of structural inequality that maintained class and gender distinctions rather dissolved them (Adams, 2006). As such this form of reflexivity was implicated in power relationships and the reproduction of inequalities. The practice of Lifeline ensured that the Lifeline Girls first recognised that the pursuit of citizenship was worthy in itself, and as such that they should enter the workforce. They then acknowledged that they must assume

responsibility for their workless state and develop strategies for rectifying this. In the first stages this was through the development of resilience to life knocks, a form of reflexive-emotional capital, in latter stages through the accrual of cultural capital. As Haylett (2003: 776) found of workfare programmes in the US, at the core of the approach was a type of "psychological training in self-blame and self-belief". The Lifeline Girls thus graduate at least mimicking the attitudes of society's 'go getters'.

By the same token, the ethos of meritocracy meant reasons for past failures were understood as the fault of an under-performing self. As such, one Lifeline Girl Sonia commented 'I thought well I can do it, do you know what I mean? There is nothing wrong with me that I can't do it, do you know what I mean?' (interview). Past failings were understood to stem from personal inadequacies and past decisions not to pursue caring careers were seen to be 'all our own fault' (field note). Similarly, the rhetoric of choice was also used to distinguish themselves from the community around them. A reified belief in meritocracy meant that the poverty of their community was represented as the choice of those around them. As one Lifeline Girl, Sarah said, 'there is loads of opportunities, they are just not bothered, most of them are not bothered like' (interview). Another, Laura also commented:

> I am not big headed or nothing, I am not, but when I look at people and I see 'em and "I think I am better than you". Do you know what I mean? I see people walking in the street and you look at them and I think "Oh my God what are you doing with your life? You are not doing nothing" (interview).

This Othering of their community and its culture was achieved through a collective character assassination of its lack of aspiration and apathy, of a history of refusing opportunity and rejecting redemption. Here the Lifeline Girls use "moral... evaluative distinctions not only to draw boundaries between themselves and others but to discriminate among behaviours across and within class and other social divisions" (Sayer, 2005: 141). Othering is commonplace within 'undeserving' communities as a means by which members can:

> regain a measure of dignity and reaffirm the legitimacy of their own status' and they 'typically overstress their moral worth as individuals ... and join in the ... denunciation of those who undeservingly 'profit' from social assistance programs, *faux pauvres* and 'welfare cheats'(Waquant, 2005: 150).

However the Lifeline Girls now had a greater, more sophisticated, more 'legitimate' capacity for Othering. Current learning transitions and future working trajectories were utilised to bestow virtues for themselves and vices to others. Although some adopt a more benign view to set themselves apart by thinking of themselves as setting an example of good citizenship for those around them the effect of Othering remained: 'I could influence other people to think 'oh if she can do it, I can do it as well', you know, whatever they wanted to do' (interview, Teresa) and similarly 'I hope that people look at me and think well if she can do it I can do it, give other people to know that they could be wherever' (interview, Laura). Here while there may not be empathy there is hope for Others. The way in which the rhetoric of choice was invoked in the context of Othering further highlighted the way in which it camouflaged the lack of structural constraint on agency.

## 9.6 Lifeline and choice

While Jobcentre Plus was seen to take choices away from the Girls, Lifeline offered choice. Moreover this shift was not purely rhetorical and through Lifeline the Girls did enjoy a greater capacity to exercise agency on their own terms than that proffered by Jobcentre Plus, albeit on strictly delimited trajectories. There were very real choices afforded to the Lifeline Girls. However the manner in which the Girls intently pursued strategies of 'getting on' denied awareness of a society in which life chances are related to class and status structures. The purpose here is not to suggest that the therapeutic ethos and the meritocratic myth it sustained were not valuable in offering comfort, hope and indeed dignity to the women participating in Lifeline but that in so doing it masked structural determinants of domination and exploitation. This was evident in the ways this group of welfare-reliant single mothers 'chose' to comply with the imperatives to work and care. Indeed as Willis (1977) argued in 'Learning to Labour' in relation to The Lads, and later Skeggs' (1997) argued of the Care Girls, manifestations of choice reflected the reproduction of relations of inequality. The perceptions of the 'naturalness of caring' for women were validated by Lifeline as a means of securing the path of least resistance to learners' successful entry into Further Education and the labour market (it was after all 'what they have been doing all their lives' (Jessica). Indeed perhaps the key element of the Lifeline Girls' strategies of 'getting by' was their naturally caring dispositions. This type of soft domination was

secured through consent to an unchallenged social order, the effectiveness of which was secured by the ease with which it was deployed (Bourdieu, 1990a; 2001). As such, it was not surprising that Sonia quickly dismissed becoming a mechanic and Kerry becoming an architect or graphic designer because when preferences "'transgress the norms of femininity ... the valorisation of individual choice falters and such choices are treated as suspect" (Baker, 2008: 61).

Many of the Girls' life stories focused on their caring roles and comments like 'I have always looked after people' and 'I naturally help someone if they are in trouble' peppered their narratives (field notes). Simply, for the Lifeline Girls like many women, the "experience of caring is the medium through which ... [they] are accepted into and feel they belong to the social world" (Graham, 1983: 30). Laura's assessment was typical:

> I am a very caring person. ... If someone is upset or upsets me then I like to comfort them ... I like to take on people's problems. But I am deep down, I am a very, very caring person, if I can help someone then I will (interview).

The Lifeline Girls were complicit in women's naturalised and normalised responsibility for caring. In the past caring for others and working towards a domestic ideal was the only 'strategy' available to them. Intensive cleaning routines were often joked of despairingly with many laughingly referring to their 'obsessive compulsive disorder' ('ironing bed sheets every day' or 'painting the house in an ongoing cycle from room to room, that never stops') (field notes). They cared for their children and those around them and they cared for their homes - caring was traditionally a performance of dignity and respectability that enabled them to value themselves and disassociate with a stigmatised social position (Skeggs, 1997). However this 'useful' feminine cultural capital of self-sacrifice in the domestic sphere had little 'exchange value' in the pursuit of reward and recognition. Moreover in light of the radicalisation of the welfare state it had increasingly less 'use value'. Yet the Lifeline Girls built on these extensive biographies of care and few rejected the premise of the project, namely that they will make good carers in the labour market. Even Bridget, who would like to work in forensic science, constructed her reason for doing so around the caring ideal: 'my mum says I am always a people person, I am always trying to help

people so that way I am helping, helping the dead find their way, and that' (interview).

Through Lifeline this group of women, like many working class women, were to bring their private domestic worlds to bear in the public world of work *because* 'caring is something that come naturally' (interview, Lynne). The way in which the Lifeline Girls' roles were gendered in this instance therefore remained largely static as there has been "no real change" (Crompton, 2002: 538) in the gender division of labour. Moving caring performances from the domestic to the market sphere simply means there is a shift from caring for people you love to caring for people you don't know. What was accomplished was in fact is less about caring than entering the labour market and in all likelihood what were once genuine emotional practices will become rational and de-humanising. Moreover the desirable features of caring become increasingly offset by negative features of loss of autonomy for the carer the more caring he or she has to do (Sevenhuijsen, 1998).

The circumscribed nature of the choices available to the Lifeline Girls was also clear in the impact that the age of their children could have on their decisions to pursue particular careers. Those with older children were better placed to aspire to careers that required a University education like for example, nursing and social work. In contrast, those with younger children tended to focus on shorter, less intensive college courses for example, childcare or health and beauty often with a view to starting a business in the future. Both routes were seen to demonstrate responsibility and so both were seen to be more effective strategies of 'getting on' than past strategies of 'getting by', or taking the most vulnerable work in the labour market. Kerry made the choice to study childcare and explained her reasoning to me:

> The next best thing after the nursing would be working with children. ...
> Because with her now I would probably have to wait a year or two now and it
> would still probably be awkward because you have to go to Uni to do nursing,
> you got to do a year in college and then three or four years in Uni, and like I
> couldn't afford to do it with childcare so I would have to wait (interview).

It is clear that the age of the Lifeliners' children had a significant impact on the choices available to them. Those with older children found they were more likely to

be able to move from Lifeline, to the Access course in college and then onto University. Those with younger children tended to opt for shorter transitions into the labour market like nursery nursing. Jobs in these fields were also seen as 'careers' and time was spent emphasising this (despite the considerable differences in earning power compared to nursing or social work). Childcare, for example, was preferable to care for the elderly or cleaning work and was considered a 'better' upper-working class job. However while there are hierarchies within the working classes, the jobs that the Lifeline Girls could expect "are some of the lowest paid in western economies" (Lewis, 2006: 18). Indeed the occupation of childcare is perhaps emblematic of the bivalent nature of gender as a social relation - it is women's work that is poorly paid and poorly valued.

Here the mechanisms of welfare are interacting with wider social processes to shape the subject. The reflexive practices of the Lifeline Girls that so readily privileged 'freedom' were clearly embedded within particular normative framings of choice and moral imperatives to make the 'right' reflexive choice comply with the 'right' moral imperative. The prevalence of the 'right' kind of choices indicated why it is often problematic to conceive of self-reflexivity as capable of drifting free of its cultural, social and historical moorings (Adams, 2006). The practice of Lifeline appealed to one of the most the clearest and well documented forms of misrecognition, the stereotypical gender roles that naturalise and normalise femininity. The gender reflexivity evident here should not be confused with a "liberal freedom to question and critically deconstruct the rules and norms which previously governed gender" (Adkins, 2004: 191). There was no diminishment of the power of social structures (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992) instead changing structures particularly in relation to institutions of employment and family demanded a new form of reflexivity from the Lifeline Girls. However the Lifeline Girls' capacity for self-determination and self-fulfilment was broadened by Lifeline. The therapeutic setting of Lifeline saw reflexive practice devoted to the reinvention of self and the development of new strategies of 'getting on' in the place of past strategies of 'getting by'. In this context, reflexive capabilities from a highly restricted class position did work as an impetus for hope and mobility even if heavily circumscribed by the bivalency of gender.

## 9.7 Conclusion

Lifeline was experienced by many of its participants as a transformatory experience that opened up new horizons of possibility promising reward and recognition. This Chapter has focused on one aspect of the particular system of meaning found within the Lifeline setting that enabled the Lifeline Girls to develop strategies of 'getting on' and hopefully secure future social mobility. Specifically it examined the endorsement and validation of the myth of meritocracy and its concomitant assertion of the agent's capacity for freedom of choice. An important element of a strategy of 'getting on' was the rhetoric of meritocracy that the Lifeline Girls drew upon to articulate their perceptions of their new found freedom (and distance themselves from both their pasts and the community around them). The Lifeline Girls drew on a variant of a neo-liberal discourse that emphasises the pursuit of self-interest and an allied morality predicated on the extension of the work ethic. The concept of full citizenship was attached to employment as an emotional experience of freedom, fulfilment and indeed entitlement. The emphasis placed on reflexive practice that articulated the meritocratic ethos was one mechanism through which Lifeline generated changes in behaviour, attitudes, values and beliefs. Through this analysis of the Lifeline Girls vocabularies of motive and specifically the reflexive practice of Lifeline, we were able to move from the site of situated action and meaning making of Lifeline to the structures that shape (and are shaped) by them.

However, for many of the Lifeline Girls, the 'transformations' generated by Lifeline were not always experienced with ease. The shifting welfare regime, the changing configuration of the relation of family, employment and state, was connected to a growing unease surrounding the contemporary gender regime, at the core of which were the changing responsibilities of men and women's roles with the home and the labour market. The tensions that have arisen as a result of these reconfigurations, and specifically the Lifeline Girls' strategies of 'getting on' predicated on entering the labour market as career carers, are explored in the next Chapter. In particular the Lifeline Girls' changing commitment to motherhood is examined in relation to the re-evaluations at the heart of welfare reform. This analysis makes it clear that responsibilities advocated by the welfare state are not just abstract moral principles but at the heart of our everyday experiences of family and working life. It also makes

clear that for the Lifeline Girls the rhetoric of self-fulfilment though welcomed is not sufficient in easing the tensions that emerge as a result of the changes they must make to their mothering practices.

# CHAPTER TEN

## Multiple Allegiances and Fractured Selves: Labouring for Love

*"previously I believed when you have a kid you shouldn't go out and work, you should stay in the house at least until they are in school and now I don't. I think you should get on with your life and kids ain't the be all and end all of everything, just because you have a child don't mean you have to stop everything"*

*(interview, Lifeliner)*

It is well-established that "women in different class positions, different household arrangements and living in different localities negotiate their respective responsibilities and moral obligations for caring and earning" differently (McDowell, 2005: 273). Studies of working class women and employment in the UK have consistently emphasised the way in which they prioritise mothering over paid work (see for example, Duncan and Strell, 2004; Irwin, 2005). It was certainly true that many women in Valleyside were more 'traditional' in their attitudes to motherhood and employment. Increasingly however, particularly amongst the Lifeline Girls, women's roles as mothers centred in the home were seen as a defining feature of life as it was led in the past, and something that was in tension with contemporary arrangements. Indeed within Lifeline traditional constructions of motherhood were being reconfigured in favour of new ones of future, full citizenship. There was amongst the Lifeline Girls a wish to become a 'better' mother and a 'better' citizen i.e. a mother who participates in the labour market. This marked a fundamental change in the way the commitment to motherhood was pursued for the Lifeline Girls.

The recent restructuring of the welfare state, has meant that a new welfare contract has emerged and repositioned single mother welfare claimants within new symbolic and material constraints. While some earlier studies diminish the role of the welfare state (see for example, Duncan and Edwards, 1999) in determining commitments to motherhood, it was clear from the Lifeline Girls' experiences of the of the mechanisms of the welfare governance that a commitment to time intensive, 'being there' motherhood was increasingly difficult to sustain as it increasingly lacked

legitimacy. In the past the often poor material rewards of paid work and the lack of provision of available and affordable childcare contributed to the preference of many working class mothers look after their own children, rather than work outside the home (Crompton, 2006a). However, within the contemporary welfare regime this was an increasingly illegitimate and untenable stance as the structural conditions under which choices relating to family and employment have altered (see Braun et al., 2008; Power, 2005).

## 10.1 Welfare, motherhood and multiple and contradictory meanings

The restructuring welfare state, and its concomitant shifting dominant constructions of what it means to be a good mother, meant the moral imperative to be work was deeply felt and fraught with tensions for the Lifeline Girls. The prospect of complying with the work ethic necessitated that the Girls adopted a new set of moral rationalities in relation to motherhood. In doing so the women dismissed their past roles as mothers in the home and highlighted their future roles as mothers in the workplace. This was not always a comfortable transition and a tension emerged between the reward and recognition associated with the labour market and their commitment to motherhood - constructions of good mothering. This tension was experienced by what can be termed a fractured or divided self (Bourdieu, 1999).

What troubled this divided self was her awareness that the onus to be a responsible moral self was marked by conflicting allegiances to both residual and dominant (Williams, 1989; Hughes 1998; Clarke, 2004) constructions of good motherhood found within the contemporary welfare regime. Being a good mother was a key element of the Lifeline Girls' identities yet when I met the Girls the question of how best to pursue this commitment was a source of confusion that arose from an allegiance to multiple and contradictory moral rationalities (Duncan and Edwards, 1999). The tensions between moral rationalities was exacerbated by the Lifeliners' need "to construct a morally adequate account of oneself as mother" (Vincent and Ball, 2006: 72) and consistently present the prioritisation of their children. As a result, the Lifeline Girls engaged in a particular form of reflexivity generated by a crisis (see McNay 1999; Bourdieu 1999) that was stimulated by the restructuring of the welfare state and their movement across fields, from the home to the worlds of education and

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employment. Hence the rhetoric of liberation and self-fulfilment surrounding the active-citizenship model of welfare was insufficient in justifying these mothers' return to the labour market. Instead the Lifeline Girls built their participation in the labour mark through their commitment to motherhood.

## 10.2 Motherhood and residual community meanings

While it is important to conceive of communities as internally differentiated (Cohen, 1985; Sayer, 2005) within Valleyside there was a deeply felt common understanding of 'what we do around here' (field note) in relation to family and employment. It was clear that Valleyside retained the traditional values associated with the male breadwinner family often found in employment based communities, whereby the responsibility for caring for children falls disproportionately to women. This remained the case despite the collapse of the male wage economy and high rates of male unemployment. This confirmed Braun et al.'s (2008) contention that traditional attitudes to motherhood are more prevalent in homogenous communities with a depressed local economy like Valleyside. In this context, the decision of single mother welfare claimants not to enter the labour market was articulated as a moral consideration informed largely by the localised attitudes to family and employment that exist in their community. Choices in this context were "social moralities [that are] geographically and historically articulated" (Duncan, 2005: 73).

The importance of community meanings relating to the family was clear in the way in which the Lifeline Girls I met and talked with connected strongly with is termed a primarily mother identity (Duncan 1999; Duncan et al., 2005). This meant adherence to what was described by the Girls as a time intensive 'being there' model of motherhood: in the words of one of the Girls, past practices of mothering focused on 'being at the school gates, being able to drop everything if needs be, always being there' (interview, Sarah). While the purse strings may have been tight this group of mothers could afford to devote their selves to their children. This was clear in Bridget's reflections on her life history:

> I weren't living. I was like existing, you know? You might think I am stupid but when I think back I think I was like bloody Cinderalla. That's the way I thought of myself ... like doing the same thing day in day out day in day out I

look back and I think my God how could I. I do wonder I weren't on the floor with all the things. Put it this way I was doing for everybody else except for myself, do you understand what I am saying? I was doing everything for the kids ... I was pleasing everybody, that's the way I can look at it, I was pleasing everybody ... as long as they were alright I was happy, does that sound stupid? (interview).

The Lifeliners' performances of their previous mothering practices emphasised self-sacrifice, exemplified here by Bridget's Cinderella. Typically these young women subordinated their own needs in favour of their children. Mothering practices that were devoted to expressions of love through normalcy - ensuring that children felt they were loved and 'fitted in' (Gillies, 2006) - came to the cost of the Girls themselves. Sonia explained: 'you have got to give them treats ... you don't want to see them without so there is a lot that you go without as well to give them' (interview). In the past trips to Woolworths and Macdonalds were important expressions of love even if they put a strain on financial resources and for some led to pleas for help from ex-partners and an undesirable dependence on extended family for special occasions. Perhaps because it was often difficult to do so providing treats becomes one of the primary ways the mothers participating in this study expressed love. As Sarah explained the day to day financial demands of children were exacting:

> I mean school trips alone are a bomb today. You think oh my God like and sending them to school it's like a pound a day just you know for her to go to school ... I mean it is all money. So you want to make sure she has got that as well (interview).

Self-sacrifice was a key element of a primary mother identity for the mothers of Valleyside who put their lives 'on hold' for their children because it 'seemed like the right thing to do' (field notes). Prior to engagement with Lifeline practices of mothering focused on 'being there' and 'selflessness' were appealing because they were successful performances of respectability and the basis of a strategy to (dis)identify with a stigmatised social position (Skeggs, 1997).

Recent social change in relation to employment and the family (including the collapse of the local economy, the demise of the family wage and the breakdown of the male breadwinner family) has not resulted in a concurrent shift in the values underpinning the gender regime prevalent in Valleyside. There has been little adjustment in

community expectations of women's responsibilities in relation to caring and the family. Many in Valleyside (and of course beyond) continued to adhere to traditional values in relation to mothering practices. Many Lifeline Girls experienced hostility or resentment from ex-partners, family, friends and even community acquaintances to their new found desire to learn and become part of the workforce: careers for mothers who are getting 'ideas above their station' were not necessarily condoned. One Lifeliner Kerry described this hostility in relation to her then ex-partner's complaints regarding her participation in Lifeline:

> He said "at the end of the day we had the baby, you agreed that you weren't going back to work" was his basic theory behind it, "so why should you go out and do courses? You shouldn't. You said you were gonna stay in the house" ... But I told him "well I should do what I want to do". I started actually standing up to him, cos previously I just sort of said "ah yeah alright fair enough" and then just done what he told me basically but now I tell him "if you don't like it ta ra, I can cope without you" (interview).

Kerry's adoption of one set of moral imperatives over another (the shift from adherence to community values to those of Lifeline) met with hostility from her partner. Sonia described this phenomenon in relation to Valleyside generally: 'it is bad right because ... it is so old fashioned but they still think that it is the woman who should look after the kids, and that is that like' (interview). The values of the community were constructed here as residual values, out of step with contemporary society.

In the context of family life, there were no claims of gender-neutrality and equivalency between the behaviours of women and men. The (single mother) family retained its status as a known site of patriarchy, whereby inequality was naturalised. Sarah explained further:

> I was sat in History and I was thinking still a man's world. What really has changed? Still a women who has to do everything definitely, may have more opportunities still then men benefiting. Look in people's houses, go and find that house. The women are in the houses, one hundred percent a man's world. ... Women haven't really got a choice. If you are a single girl, this is a man's community, old values round here, men get away with a lot more. A man can walk away at any time and nothing gets said, we are the ones holding the babies (interview).

Here Sarah was performing a type of reflexivity that McNay (1999, 2000) understands as arising at moment of crisis i.e. when there are radical reforms in the principles of a field or social actors make an unexpected movement between fields. For the Lifeline Girls in this instance such reforms and movement were evident in the prospect of a loss in entitlement to welfare relief and participation in Lifeline and the labour market. Such changes in circumstance generated new spaces for reflexivity and the "lucidity of the excluded" (McNay, 2000: 54) could be witnessed when the Lifeline Girls challenged the traditional gender regime found in their community. It was in this context where men can 'walk away at any time' *without* censure from the wider community that Lifeline encouraged its participants to assert their independence through their active citizenship. Fruitful ground indeed, for an ideology of self-fulfilment and self-determination.

Gender reflexivity emerged when the women through Lifeline questioned their tacit presuppositions of their community's gender regime and reflected on its "ambiguities and dissonances" (McNay, 2000: 107). However theirs was a fragmentary form of authentic reflexivity that arose "unevenly from embeddedness within differing sets of power relations" (McNay, 2000: 110). Thus while conventional constructions of femininity were challenged this emerged not from "a greater array of alternative images of femininity but from tensions inherent in the concrete negotiation of increasingly conflictual female roles" (McNay, 2000: 110–11). The fragmentary and uneven nature of the Lifeline Girls 'authentic reflexivity' was evident in the way in which caring in the home was emotionally and materially disputed as women's work while women's work in the labour market was embraced. But also in the way in which Lifeliners were not encouraged to seek justice from the men in their life. Thus messages gleaned from Lifeline's Women's History module were that women *from Valleyside* were victims of processes of inequalities and that the world beyond Valleyside was a world of unprecedented choice, freedom and equality for women. Here we see that social policies that try to "institute gender-neutral social rights can actually lead to distinctly gendered forms of citizenship" (Korteweg, 2006: 334) that are implicated in processes of symbolic violence.

For many of the Lifeline Girls the fathers of their children were only sporadically part of family life and were not a reliable source of security either emotionally or

economically. Some fathers, unable or unwilling to provide for a family, adhered to a reconfigured culture of machismo which meant they shared neither the fruits of labour (if there were any) nor the burden of care. In this respect the power and advantages men have over women were a common point of discussion and often the Girls could only reconcile themselves to this with a determined 'we are better off without him' or a dismissive 'what was I thinking?' (field notes). Sarah's story goes some way to conveying this reality. Before Sarah fell pregnant, her job at the local social club was an important part of her identity (a time she associated with an income of her own and the freedom to enjoy nights on the town, new outfits, holidays etc). When she 'caught', she felt the pressure to comply with Valleyside's expectations of motherhood and the father of her child reassured her that this was for the best:

> When we were still together ... he said to me 'well you will have to finish but don't worry about it because I am going to be working'. So I didn't worry. I just assumed that everything was hunky dory. ... You know, things happen. I was just left and I was just thinking ah shit what am I going to do? (interview).

Though her partner was in employment the battle for child support has left Sarah disillusioned:

> He had a child too you know, not just me. ... I am struggling to make sure that she has got absolutely everything... He works but he doesn't give me nothing. ... He was going to Las Vegas for the boxing and I was really pissed off cos I thought gambling all that money now when you have got a kid in the house that needs it more. ... When it comes to money he will not part ... I will ring him up and say "look I am really on my arse like, can you please get her a jacket or something?". ... I do everything, everything ... he is not even worrying (interview).

While Sarah's case is not intended to be representative of patterns of family life across Valleyside it did point to some important shifts in the family as a site of patriarchy. What survives of the model breadwinner family is the burden of emotional care that falls on women. Moreover in addition many women must now support their children financially alone. Sarah perceived this kind of male fecklessness to be endemic within this community:

> All his mates, each and every one of them have done exactly the same to their partners as what he done and they are all in it together. One huge big group of

people going to Las Vegas when their kids are in the house. One girl was taking her boyfriend, her ex-boyfriend, to court and he put cockroaches through her door. ... Oh you wouldn't believe, they are really like that, you wouldn't believe it. Honest to God I am not lying to you, that is the God's honest truth, and his own child, his little boy, was there in that house (interview).

Anger towards the men of Valleyside, who were understood to be deviant, behaving in distinct ways to the rest of society, was deeply felt (predominantly on behalf of children). Many of the Lifeline Girls found themselves solely responsible for the care of their children with fathers cast as figures only worthy of sympathy, frustration, derision and disgust. The fathers of the Lifeline Girls' children at worst were struggling with substance misuse issues, imprisoned, or physically and verbally abusive; at best the worst that could be said was that they were in precarious labour or on the dole. Men were frequently constructed as absent, immobile, without purpose or value and yet the 'macho culture' of Valleyside, a 'tough place' (field note) persisted. The (partial) accounts of the Lifeliners, and indeed community members more generally, often cast men as savage, selfish creatures in contrast to the caring women. Older residents of Valleyside spoke of the shame of their community's 'missing men' who abandon women to make a 'fist of it' alone (field note). This stood in stark contrast to the reflections of Sennett and Cobb (1973) that described how working class men, suffering from 'injured dignity' turned to their families as a means of recovering lost pride of the workplace. The scathing attacks of the men of Valleyside were indicative of a working class masculine identity in crisis. The appeal to men of elements of the traditional gender regime made it clear that in some ways the world the men of Valleyside wish to live in is a world that no longer exists[26].

It became evident during my time in the field that the Lifeliners' had begun to explicitly contest residual or community meanings and conventions relating to family and employment with a view to 'getting on'. Many of these women intended to become the only breadwinner their children would know and a feature of family life once considered essential and largely inevitable, the *male* breadwinner, was to be rendered obsolete. In taking the decisive step to attempt to develop learning and

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[26] Though it is important to caveat this with the knowledge that I met only one of the Lifeline Girls' partners and very few of the men of Valleyside.

working identities, it is perhaps not surprising that some displayed no small degree of vitriol at the expense of the fathers of their children, and on/off partners. Teresa described one such exchange: 'I like winding him up ... I will say 'I put bread on this table but you can't', I don't mean to say it but afterwards then I can't take back ... because deep down I know somewhere I mean it' (interview).

## 10.3 Lifeline and the dominant meanings of motherhood

In recent years parenting has become a public issue and there has been a topical emphasis on parents' responsibilities and their accountability for the behaviour of children (Gillies, 2006; Braun, et al., 2008). In particular it is working class parents who have become the subject of this debate (they are understood to be in particular need of direction with regard to the appropriate parenting practices to ensure the good conduct of children). Many of the Lifeline Girls took part in parenting classes prior to their participation in Lifeline (for these returners these classes were often their first step back to education). The everyday practices of Lifeline reflected this trend and participation in Lifeline was felt by the Girls and Support Workers alike to be advantageous because it also meant developing their mothering skills. In particular Lifeline emphasised the importance of taking the opportunities to spend quality educational time with children. For example Lifeline's Summer School offered the Girls and their children a series of educational but fun activities (off to the greenhouses to sow seeds, work with a sculptor to make something beautiful, down to the local pool for swimming sessions). Developing this type of cultural capital were part of the Lifeline Girls' strategies of 'getting on' directed towards conforming to middle class norms around motherhood.

However, somewhat paradoxically, perhaps the most prominent parenting intervention for those with younger children was the professional childcare that the Girls benefited from during their time with Lifeline. Professional childcare gave 'mum a break and an opportunity to learn' but was also seen as 'important for many just in terms of child development' (field notes). One learner Sonia attributed the improvements in her son's speech directly to the professional childcare he received: 'he has come on loads, I can't tell you the difference' (field note). While "many mothers.... place a high value on their own caring and nurturing labour which they

may regard as irreplaceable and non-substitutable by other forms of care" (McDowell, 2005: 373) for the Lifeline Girls this was beginning to change. Most significantly the provision and elevation of professional childcare chimed with the principal assumption that informed Lifeline practice: that to be a good parent was to enter the workforce. While Support Workers were not always comfortable with this belief and covertly disputed its meaningfulness, the work imperative retained its dominance[27].

As we touched on in the previous Chapter within Lifeline compliance with the work ethic was often cast as a force of liberation of the self and through their participation in Lifeline the Girls 'just realised that I was important as well' (field note). Economic citizenship became an integral element self-fulfilment and appropriate mothering practices were embedded within this ideology. This notion of liberation through employment was entwined with the reconfiguration of priorities in relation to family life. One of the Lifeline Girls, Laura, explained the nature of this experience to me:

> I feel as it I have won the lottery sometimes even though I haven't got the money there. I feel as if I have made something of myself and I am not just Laura Jones who have got a son Harry anymore. I am gonna be something, you know. I feel as if I have achieved loads and I am just going to keep achieving, achieving, achieving like that (interview).

Like the participants of Braun et al.'s (2008) study, the Lifeline Girls began to talk about the way education and the prospect of work provided them with an independent sense of self. In Lynne's words, 'Lifeline come along and I just feel myself now, he has enough, now it is time for me, work is time for me' (interview). Interactions with Lifeline meant decisions were made by the Lifeline Girls to go to college and look to forge new careers that fundamentally altered the manner in which they pursued their commitment to motherhood.

A strategy of 'getting on' necessitated devaluing the self-sacrificial mothering practices of the past and the Lifeline Girls' reflexive work presented the past as respectable, but lacking personal fulfilment. In contrast a career represented an escape from a routine of isolated, domestic drudgery and motherhood. If learning and

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[27] It is important to note that this assumption did not sit easily with Support Workers who did suggest for example that the welfare state did not value traditional mothering practices enough.

working were seen as fostering, nurturing and even enabling self, motherhood was now seen as negating self:

> You have a baby ... and it was just, oh, totally mind blowing. It was absolutely totally mind blowing. I couldn't believe it. ... You know, its, it's not you no more. This is about a baby so your life is gone really. It's out the window then (interview, Kim).

> I got in such a rut of doing the playgroups and like volunteering then in playgroups and I just totally forgot about work. I forgot about myself really. It was just all like, all Sam then, so things do change (interview, Sarah).

This was also clear in Lynne's account of her experiences of motherhood: 'he was my life, I think I was living just for him' (interview). Past performances of mothering were constructed as the antonym of self-fulfilment and traditional mothering practices of 'being there' were constructed through immobility as unhealthy and damaging to the self. The gendered disposition of the self-sacrificing feminine self was no longer attractive to the Lifeline Girls. Past performances of motherhood were reinterpreted and found wanting.

## 10.4 A divided self

However despite such repeated dismissal and diminishment of past mothering practices, the Lifeline Girls experienced a conflict between the moral imperatives of community and those of the state. New strategies of aspiration that specified future compliance with the work imperative clashed with the established tenets of community culture. This clash was experienced through the heightened reflexivity of what became a divided self as adopting the strategies of 'getting on' that displaced those of 'getting by' came with a cost. This reflexive self was "divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence" (Bourdieu et al., 1999: 51). The Girls' reflexive practice in this context reflected multiple allegiances to competing value systems and continued to be bounded by social structures. The fractured self emerged because the principles of the welfare have radically altered thus precipitating a crisis that, in this instance, arose for the Lifeline Girls in the prospect of losing entitlement to welfare relief, their future as a member of the workforce and the implications of this for motherhood. When we encounter a social

world of which we are product we are like "fish in water" and so do "not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127). However when we encounter a world with which we are not familiar while we may experience change and transformation, we also may experience disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty (Reay, 2005). Heightened reflexivity emerged at from this mismatch between Lifeliners' dispositions and the social worlds they encountered.

The cost to self of this crisis was evident in the complex and occasionally contradictory thoughts and feelings that emerged as the role of motherhood began to be redefined. Encouraged by Support workers, the Lifeliners engaged in reflexive activity focused on resolving this tension and reconciling the 'good' mothering rationalities of the past with those of the future. As such, a career as a carer began to be seen as an integral element of demonstrating the duty of a responsible mother. However anxieties were born of this uneasy conversion as the Girls were transgressing their community norms and they discovered multiple allegiances to residual and dominant conventions relating to the institutions of employment and family, as such they were destined at least for the moment to experience a fractured self (Bourdieu, 1999).

The fractured selves of the Lifeline were perhaps most visible in the intense emotion work, "evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing feeling" (Hochschild, 2003: 95), that the Lifeline Girls undertook in order to effectively comply with the changing "conventions of feeling" (Hochschild, 2003: 87). The Lifeline Girls were unusually aware of the emotion work they carried out in this context because their feelings did not fit the situation they found themselves in i.e. their feelings concerning their own historical commitment to motherhood failed to chime with its dominant meanings, customs and conventions. Reconciling past commitments to motherhood with those of the future meant adapting to a new set of prescribed feeling rules as the extension of the work ethic to single mothers brought with it shifting conventions of feeling generating the necessity for such emotion work.

The Lifeliners' descriptions of their past mothering practices conveyed the nature of this emotion work as they were often couched in a guarded defensiveness that in itself

pointed to the difficulty of adhering to a new set of feeling rules. Sonia offered one such account in regard to her decision to stay at home:

> I was like this single parent, with an ill baby. ... Well she was my child and she was sick anyway so I wanted to be with her. ... I was expecting to go back to work. ... I was expecting to go back to work but then after having Martha I think everything totally changed because I didn't want to go back straight away. I wanted to be with her. ... You want that little bit of freedom of going to work because you know that would be brilliant but it doesn't happen that way. I mean, your feelings get in the way. You think, "oh well I don't really want somebody else raising my child", I mean, you know (interview).

The 'freedom' of work was understood by Sonia to be undesirable in the face of the emotional attachment she felt for her child, yet this attachment was also seen as a barrier, an obstacle to be overcome. Here Sonia felt she must defend her decision to stay at home and focused on how despite 'good' intentions her 'feelings got in the way' of the 'right' and 'rational' decision to enter the workforce. Although Sonia was explicitly trying to alter her state of feeling, at this moment she was only partially successful.

The anguish generated by the prospect of complying with the moral imperative to work and what this meant for mothering practices was also clear in Katie's account:

> I realised, you know, that I was making life harder for myself by doing nothing rather than doing something. So I did start changing my views about things and I did start becoming, I didn't become less of a parent I just realised that I was important as well ... and that I still got a life. Even though she is still here I can do things without being a bad parent. So I mean that is always in your head as well that you can be a bad parent if you do this. You are going to be a bad parent if you do that, you know. So then I just realised that no, you know, you are not a bad parent, as long as you are there when she needs me then I can still do things before it gets too late, you know. So, everything do change, from wanting to be with Carly, wanting to do everything with Carly (interview).

There was a clear fault line running through Katie's reflections above between 'good' and 'bad' mothering: the terrain of moral boundary drawing in relation to motherhood has changed and being 'good' or 'bad' was at the heart of Katie's conversion to redemptive citizenship. Her commitment to motherhood was at the heart of her sense

of self and yet how to pursue this commitment was both the subject of intense deliberation and a source of turmoil.

Reinterpreting past practices of motherhood and reconfiguring future ones was often a painful process. Many of the Lifeline Girls dwelled on what it meant to be a 'good' and 'bad' parent, and many reacted emotionally to the thought that they may now be neglecting their children: Laura felt guilty that because of her education she had overlooked her son's mental health - 'my son is depressed and I don't even know it, I have been too busy'(field note)) - this was deeply felt because her family berated her for her lack of care; in the same vein, Bridget felt that by working she would not be providing her younger children with the same quality of mothering as her older children. This sense of anguish was difficult to discard and many could not help but see their current education and future work as in some way jeopardising their relationships with their children. For the Lifeline Girls, like all social actors doubts abounded when they felt the manner in which they negotiated the social world and pursue their commitments fell short of conventional standards and benchmarks. These experiences of doubt were the result of the pull of multiple and contradictory allegiances in relation to family and employment and the lack of clarity about what the 'right' feeling rules actually were (Hochschild, 2003). In this instance residual community meanings and conventions clashed with dominant welfare state ideology. The cost of redemptive citizenship, at least for the moment, was this experience of the 'duality of the self', the conditions of which were created by the welfare state.

## 10.5 Reconciling rewards and recognition with commitment

Given that Lifeline's mothers were confronted by two moral imperatives: to be a good mother and to be a good citizen, we would expect reconciling them to each other to ease the tension experienced by the Girls. Indeed the painful tension that arose in relation to changing commitments to motherhood did ease when the Lifeline Girls were able to view their new mothering practices as an investment in the future for both themselves *and* their children. Thus, through new moral rationalities they were adopting what Edwards and Duncan (1999) term mother/worker integral identities. Thus securing improved life chances for their children through economic citizenship began to lie at the heart of motherhood. One of the Girls, Lynne, explained this

clearly: 'I wanna have a good job, you know, have a bit of intelligence, and help him, so basically I want to do well for myself now so I can help him more' (interview). Therefore for the women I met developing new mothering practices were in part concerned with offering children something that they themselves have never had. In the words of one Lifeliner: 'I want for him to do well, I want more him that I have had' (field note). Many of the Lifeline Girls described this to me:

> Yeah I suppose I want normal thing in it. Buy my own house, have a job, give them everything they need and literally give them the chance to do it as well. Cos I think if they see me just sitting there not doing anything, they are just gonna think well she is not doing anything I can just sit there, doing nothing. So give them the push to go that bit further (interview, Bridget).

> So I don't want her to come out of school thinking I don't have to work I can just go on benefits you know. I don't want her thinking that like. So, I want to get back to work and I do want to show her like there is more to life out there (even though she has got the best life ever) (interview, Sarah).

> I don't want them to think, truthfully, I don't want them growing up in this community thinking well there is nothing better than this. Do you know what I mean? I want them to have an aim or a goal. ... I'm not just doing this for myself. I want to do it for them as well. I don't want them to ... leave school and go straight on the Social, and think well settle down have kids, don't worry about a job cos that's the way it is around here at the moment. Not for everyone obviously but a percentage of people (interview, Teresa).

Each of the above extracts highlights that the hopes the Lifeline Girls had for their children that revolved around a set of expectations beyond those that they felt predominated in Valleyside. The foci of these accounts were the indicators of deprivation (i.e. disproportionately high rates of welfare aid, young motherhood, social housing, poor educational attainment etc). However, these community members, unlike those of Wacquant's (2008: 29) study do not feel that they and their children have "little chance of knowing a future other than the poverty and exclusion to which they are consigned at present". There was a strong desire to want more for their children than they themselves have, and an increased likelihood of its realisation. It was this hope of becoming a 'better' mother that was purposely positioned as the core of a set of expectations focused on mobility and aspiration. The extracts above also point to the new importance for Lifeliners of role modelling for their commitment

to motherhood that enabled strategies of 'getting on'. We see Lifeline learners, like many working single mothers believed that "setting a good moral example by working outside the home, and thus being a self-disciplined, self-governed citizen, [was] equally as important as assuming independent economic responsibility for her children" (Power, 2005: 654). Role modelling was important because it was exemplified the wish of (or indeed necessity for) Lifeliners to integrate the roles of 'good' worker and 'good' mother. These 'integrations' allowed the Lifeline Girls to reconcile the tension between the dominant, community expectations of them in the past and the dominant welfare state expectations of them in the future.

By integrating the roles of worker and mother the Lifeline Girls were in a sense voicing a desire to take control, deploy new capitals, and move away from the "alternative value system" (Gillies, 2006: 287) that shaped past mothering practices. It was certainly the case that they no longer professed the level of anxieties we might expect over how best to help their children do well in a school environments dominated by middle class values as other working class women (Reay, 1998). For Lifeline Girls the difficulty of accessing educational goods appeared diminished and many embraced the dominant populist and political discourses relating to the education of children. Indeed the Lifeline Girls explicitly identified with and performed the 'good' mothering practices associated with 'middle class' educational values and practices. Specifically, the Girls spoke of reading with their children, helping with their homework and talking to teachers who were no longer intimidating. Mothering was now firmly focused on 'quality time' with children and such practices were often firmly rooted in the Girls' regrets over their own experiences of compulsory education. Thus past practices that included making sure 'whatever he wants, he has' (interview, Lynne) were at least partly displaced by new ways of mothering: 'I like to sit with him and read now' (interview, Lynne); 'I never really thought of that before, but helping with the homework, now with Lifeline I can help, so that's another thing. We can learn together then and enjoy learning together' (interview, Sarah); 'when she gets work she can't do from school, I can show her even if the teachers can't, so I am hoping I will be able to help her' (interview. Katie). This was often simply because the Girls had more confidence in their own basic skills. Therefore creation of new learning identities was useful in the creation of new

mothering identities. However, again this was not a straightforward process as Sarah's reflections on her participation in Lifeline made clear:

> When I did this course, even though I said I am doing it for her, really in my head I knew that I was doing it for me. Only I thought, well it is doing it for them, seeing me back in work anyway, it is, and it did help them with maths as well you know. So I mean it wasn't totally for me. It was helping them as well. But it wasn't a selfish thing to do neither, it was like I can still be a parent (interview).

The transition to citizenship was often painful, as Sarah's contradictory and confused account conveys. Indeed it was very much the case that personal self-fulfilment was an insufficient justification for the Girls' compliance with the work imperative. Like many in-work mothers, the Girls increasingly identified with a moral rationality that emphasised paid employment as integral to being a good mother.

Much of this account has focused on the relationship between the reward and recognition found with participation in the labour market and the implications of this for the commitment to motherhood. This analysis of shifting mothering practices is an analysis of the pursuit of one commitment, motherhood. For Sayer (2005) a commitment is something that is valued in and of itself (regardless of the reward and recognition is brings). How social actors pursue their commitment is related to their objective social location (hence the above discussion refers to what are typically 'working class' and 'middle class' mothering practices). However the intensification of capitalism, and specifically the extension of the work imperative to those traditionally not expected to participate in the labour market, has fundamentally changed the manner in which welfare-reliant single mothers are able to pursue their commitment to motherhood. There is a sense in which the pursuit of the *commitment* to mothering was effectively displaced, or at least came to be embedded within the strategies focused on the accrual of *reward* and *recognition*.

## 10.6 Conclusion

The practice of Lifeline encouraged particular mothering practices associated with the dominant ideology of welfare reform: specifically, the contention that a 'good' mother was a mother who participated in the labour market. In this context the Lifeline Girls

exhibited a fragmentary but authentic reflexivity (McNay, 1999) as they contested the residual elements of the patriarchal gender regime found within Valleyside and conformed to dominant constructions of good mothering. Hence community attitudes to family and employment retained only residual significance, while interactions with the welfare state were key in determining behaviours, values attitudes and beliefs. However this switch of allegiances from residual to dominant mores surrounding motherhood was painful. Indeed this displacement was experienced by the Lifeline Girls' fractured selves as the tensions between community and state meanings and practices in relation to motherhood meant the Girls held multiple and contradictory allegiances in relation to their commitment to motherhood. The targets of welfare reform were pulled in incompatible directions and that rapid social change was taking place was evident in the Girls' emotion work in relation to new configuration of feelings (Heller, 1979). Performances of motherhood, always motivated by the desire to be a good mother, oscillated between past and future practices of motherhood, (between residual and dominant knowledges of motherhood) that reflected doubts of moral self-worth.

The Lifeline Girls resolved this tension by integrating working and mothering identities. In this context the 'being there' practices of motherhood, that typified the way in which the commitment to motherhood has historically been fulfilled by the Lifeline Girls were increasingly displaced by new practices advocated by Lifeline, such as spending quality time with children and role modelling. Existing literature has found that a mother's attitude to mothering tend to reflect her behaviours (Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004). An in-work mother is likely to believe being a working mother means being a good mother, whereas an out-of-work mother will believe the opposite. However the Lifeline Girls were adopting the attitudes typical of women already participating in the labour market. In this way there were preparing for their own entry into the workforce. What the women of Lifeline were experiencing was a change in the nature of their commitments and a subsequent need to redraw their position within moral boundaries. These activities formed part Lifeliners' strategies of 'getting on' and reflexive selves were generated not through "a *lack* of social structures which establishes itself as the basic feature of the social structure " (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 51) but through radically altered social structures. The restructuring of the welfare state meant new rules for managing feeling. Within

Lifeline meanings and conventions developed around an ideology of the self-fulfilling and self-determining social actor pursuing a strategy of aspiration. Appropriate mothering practices were embedded within this ideology.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## Reflections

*"The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule"*

*(Marx (1974: 600-601))*

Having identified the mechanisms of welfare restructuring that generated the changing behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs of the Lifeline Girls this final 'Reflections' Chapter looks to draw out critical elements of this research to make linkages with relevant ongoing popular, political and academic debate. At the heart of these reflections is the subversion of the individualisation thesis that underpins contemporary dominant welfare ideology and practice. It argues that a neo-liberal paradigm driving the work imperative in policy debates and initiatives focused on moving single mothers into work, fails to include discussion of various types of social, cultural and economic capital that mediate decisions in relation to family and employment and the multiple meanings of the moral imperatives to work and care. To this end having reiterated the key components of the thesis, several inter-related themes of discussion will be touched upon: *firstly*, the theme of the changing same (Hill Collins, 2009) is explored in relation to patterns of resistance and acquiescence and the perpetuation of structurally grounded inequalities; *secondly*, the theme of 'moving on' (by acknowledging the importance of the biographies of people and the histories of places in considering the perpetuation of structurally grounded inequalities) considers the kind of society, and specifically the model of welfare should have if we wished to ensure greater equality.

However the extent to which we can apply knowledge of the mechanisms of power detected in this case study more generally is limited and in taking the Extended Case Study method to its conclusion it is wise to be cautious. We cannot assume the necessary relations found amongst the Girls within Lifeline in Valleyside exist elsewhere and are widely distributed. Indeed the extent to which this is the case would

need to be empirically tested. On some terrain we may feel more comfortable when speaking of generality than others, though we must always be mindful of the importance of this spatio-temporal context. That said even the analysis of the unusual (and distinctly unrepresentative) 'case' reveals general processes and structures laying bare structures and mechanisms that are normally hidden (Sayer, 2010). As such the case study approach is an important way of making linkages between experiences of the practice of street-level welfare governance and on associated existing debates in the public sphere as well as identifying extra-local and historical structural determinants of action taking and meaning making. Most significantly the approach proved useful for studying *dynamic* class and gender processes associated with the restructuring of the welfare state as we extracted "the general from the unique" (Burawoy, 1998: 5).

## 11.1 'A Second Chance at Life': Labour, Love and Welfare

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of the restructuring of the welfare state on one group of welfare-reliant single mothers. This group of mothers, the Lifeline Girls, experienced this restructuring in two distinct ways: *firstly* through the dispersal of the governance of welfare to the field of community development evident in the community education project, Lifeline; and *secondly,* in terms of the radicalisation of welfare, through its extension of the employment imperative to those traditionally assumed to be outside the labour market, in this instance single parents. This restructuring amounted to rapid social change that radically altered the material and symbolic constraints positioning this group of women as they negotiated the social world. In this context the Lifeline Girls' movement through the social world was both heavily circumscribed *and* indeed enabled by the new welfare mechanisms in place to reform their behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs. The Lifeline Girls' interactions with these key mechanisms of welfare governance were the focus of this research. Welfare restructuring meant the terrain on which the Lifeline Girls developed and implemented their strategies in pursuit of reward, recognition and commitments, had dramatically altered. Encounters with welfare state mechanisms revealed the Lifeline Girls' past strategies of survival were increasingly less legitimate symbolically as well as less tenable materially. Hence past strategies of 'getting by' founded on performances of caring and domestic respectability in the private realm

were displaced by strategies of 'getting on' built on public performances of responsible citizenship through participation in the labour market. In this respect the welfare state was re-shaping the discursive and concrete spaces the Lifeline Girls were able to inhabit and the room they had to manoeuvre.

In order to understand these processes of class and gender formation the 'biographies' of both the Lifeline Girls and the community in which the Lifeline project was based, Valleyside, were examined. Both Valleyside the place and the Lifeline Girls were identified as victims of processes of maldistribution and misrecognition. Valleyside has experienced each of historically rooted the structural logics that together fuelled an era of capitalism characterised in part by the type of spatialised polarisation epitomised by this community (Wacquant, 2001; 2008). Briefly, *firstly*, Valleyside failed to reap the rewards of the recent era of prosperity. *Secondly*, Valleyside witnessed the contraction of its labour market accompanied by the emergence of new forms of precarious employment and the increasing vulnerability labour. *Thirdly*, in this context, Valleyside became identified a community stigmatised for the deprivation found within it. *Finally*, and building on these elements, the impact of a radically altering welfare state in keeping with neo-liberal reform, was beginning to makes its presence felt in Valleyside. Given this context it is perhaps unsurprising that the Lifeline Girls themselves occupied distinctly disadvantaged social positions characterised by the nature of the strategies of 'getting by' they adopted to navigate the social world. The paucity of capitals the Girls inherited were often a reflection of negative experience of the compulsory education system, bleak employment prospects, and disadvantaged networks of kith and kin. In this context, like many working class women, performances of respectability through care for those around them and care for their homes was the sole means by which the Girls that could value themselves (Skeggs, 1997). However these life experiences led some of the Lifeline Girls to subjectively define themselves and their peers within the underclass.

Locating the policy context was also important in aiding our understanding the way in which the Girls' interactions with a restructured welfare state generated significant changes in their behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs. There were two key points of contact with welfare state apparatus that were particularly significant: Lifeline itself and Jobcentre Plus. Each represented a distinct means of tackling poverty: Lifeline

emerged from the devolved community development sphere in Wales and a policy programme focused on tackling poverty by targeting *poor places*; Jobcentre Plus in contrast was the key instrument of the dominant welfare state machine and part of a policy framework that aimed to tackle poverty by targeting *poor people*. An analysis of the rhetoric of these policy spheres revealed that they shared one key assumption. Through a strong moralising discourse that served to mask the economic drivers of welfare reform, both subordinated family and community life to the economic realm and employment 'for all'. In doing so both fields of policy constructed solutions to poverty as a private trouble rather than a public issue determining both the problems and solutions of poverty as the concern of the social actor herself. Policy rhetoric of this type attempted to render single mothers who are not members of the workforce as a burden and threat to society.

Significantly, the analysis of policy rhetoric also revealed how the "competences, capacities and responsibilities involved in providing welfare are differentially distributed – functionally, hierarchically and spatially" (Clarke, 2004: 18). Specifically it identified the dispersal of welfare state governance to the community development sphere and the subsequent capacity for divergent strategies of reform emerging under the auspices of the welfare state. This reading of the restructuring of the welfare state meant that 'spaces of contestation' to the dominant ideology and practices working *within but against* the state were conceivable. In this way the existence of both coercive and therapeutic mechanisms of welfare practice at work under the auspices of a more broadly conceived welfare state was theorised. Each instrument of welfare state power, Jobcentre Plus and Lifeline, exerted a distinct and contradictory pressure on welfare-reliant single mothers, and therefore represented divergent strategies of welfare reform and practice.

In the case of the coercive arm of the welfare state, Jobcentre Plus, the Lifeline Girls experienced an attempt to compel them into the low waged and low status employment. The most prominent mechanism of Jobcentre Plus was the *Work Focused Interview*. This *Interview* was constructed by the Lifeline Girls as something akin to a dysfunctional degradation ceremony (Garfinkel, 1956). It constituted the welfare state's search for evidence of the redemptive citizenship and the Girls' willingness to comply with the imperative to seek employment. As such the Lifeline

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Girls mounted their 'defence' in response, disputing the practices of Jobcentre Plus by co-constructing their 'good' moral selves with their Lifeline Support Workers. In Lifeline we saw the contrasting development of a locally responsive initiative to tackle the poverty of welfare-reliant single mothers. Lifeline as a 'space of contestation', re-conceptualised the rights of the Lifeline Girls to an entitlement to education and good quality employment as career carers. This re-conceptualisation of rights enabled the Lifeline Girls to potential reconfigure their trajectories through social space to those anticipated by dominant welfare state practitioners. Lifeline possessed a form of conditional autonomy (Newman, 2001; Clarke, 2004) in relation to the dominant welfare state and as such its partial legitimacy stemmed from its position at the edge of the dominant welfare practices. A theme that ran through this analysis was the capacity for these different instruments of the welfare state to evoke in the Girls both shame and anxiety as well as pride and comfort.

An appreciation of the material and symbolic debasement and degradation of welfare-reliant single mothers saw Lifeline adopt a therapeutic ethos at the heart of its practice. Lifeline offered its targets a space of support and relief: Lifeline constituted an opportunity to evade the gaze of the dominant welfare state and its attempt to coerce poor women into vulnerable labour. However, like Jobcentre Plus, Lifeline also sought to generate changes in the Girls' behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs and to this end deployed the emotional labour of the Lifeline Support Workers. The Support Workers embodied the therapeutic ethos of the Lifeline project, which in one reading it marked an insidious corollary of the employability thesis at the heart of welfare policy: Support Workers could be described as social pathologists (Wright Mills, 1943) focused on individual adjustment rather than structural change. They were able to work within the private worlds of the Lifeliners beyond the reach of conventional street-level state workers. In this capacity there were able to encourage the Lifeliners to engage in particular form of emotion work designed to build their resilience to the everyday challenges they face and become 'good' redemptive citizens. The Lifeliners were thus constructed as unable to cope well with everyday challenges, something attributed to their emotional deficits as they were infantilised. As such Lifeline was highly prescriptive about the kind of emotions that the Lifeline Girls display and the ways in which they should display them. In doing so Lifeline was trying to foster a feel "for the game" (Bourdieu, 1977). The privileged access of

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Support Workers into the lives of this group of welfare-reliant single mothers was a defining feature of dispersal of the welfare state and a central element in the ideology of a new para-professional group. This controlled access was constructed through their status as working class 'insiders'. It was based on a connection to a Valleyside community culture and a shared biography of experience with the Lifeline Girls, and it provided the basis for both the quasi autonomy of the project and the development of therapeutic interventions.

Through the activities of the Support Workers the Lifeline Girls were encouraged to engage in particular forms of reflexivity that led them to think of themselves as self-fulfilling, self-determining redemptive citizens. They became the subjects of a seductive form of welfare ideology that promised a more complete life, a life a little more ordinary: the reflexive practice generated within Lifeline can be seen as a technology of welfare governance (Adkins, 2002). As such the Girls increasingly drew on rhetoric of meritocracy that hailed the dawning of life characterised by a new found freedom and an abundance of choice. The meritocratic myth was embraced through a future orientated conception of citizenship that reflected on their untapped potential circumstances rather than the lived realities as victims of inequalities. This anticipation of a future full of promise meant that the Lifeline Girls grasped redemptive citizenship with a zeal reminiscent of conversion. However despite the Lifeline Girls' preoccupation with their liberation their movements through social space remain locked into structural relations. As working class women they were positioned by a capitalist system in which the employment predominantly undertaken by women, is undervalued and misrecognised as their 'natural' field of (non)expertise (Bolton, 2005; Lewis, 2006). Their 'choice' to become career carers complied with broader cultural imperatives that construct emotional labour as one of the few ways for working-class women to work at proving their moral responsibility (Skeggs, 1997). In fact, it was a prime example of a form of gender oppression that Bourdieu (2001) would term symbolic violence that is likely to continue as long as capitalism has an interest in making profits by offering motherly love for sale.

Moreover the way in which the Lifeline Girls remained locked into structural relations relating to the institutions of employment and family was also clear in the way in which they re-oriented their commitment to motherhood. Once the Lifeline Girls were

repositioned by new material and symbolic constraints of welfare governance they began to reconfigure the strategies they pursued to navigate the social world. New strategies of 'getting on' motivated by the pursuit of reward and recognition meant the adoption of new practices of motherhood. By necessity the way in which they related to this commitment radically altered. However when I met and spoke to the Lifeline Girls many of them were experiencing multiple allegiances to different practices of motherhood: both those traditionally found within their community, and practiced by kith and kin; and those now advocated by the welfare state. The tension between residual community meanings and conventions and those of the dominant welfare state manifested itself in the fractured selves the Lifeline Girls experienced at this time. The restructuring of the welfare state was a process of rapid social change marked by the emergence of a reflexive self "divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence ... doomed ... to a double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities" (Bourdieu, 1999: 511). Here the rhetoric of liberation and self-fulfilment was insufficient in generating easy consciences and the Lifeline Girls only able to resolve this tension by reconciling their roles as good mothers to their roles as good employees. The commitment to motherhood was predicated on the assumption that to be a good mother was to be a good working mother and they saw their employment as labouring for love. This transition was often painful and here we saw clearly how the emotions of the Lifeline Girls were socially regulated and channelled by external forces. It was clear that contemporary welfare reform necessitates a revision of the prominence of the role of the welfare state in the lives of welfare-reliant single mothers in much research to date (see for example, Duncan and Edwards, 1999).

## 11.2 The changing same?

This research does not provide support for the individualisation thesis that disavows the enduring structurally grounded inequalities that constrain the movements of poor women through the social world. Such beliefs detach the Lifeline Girls from their biographies, the places they live (Rees, 1997) and the political and economic forces that invade them. The 'choices' of the Lifeline Girls, their meaning making and action taking, were shaped by the structural relations they were born into, and to a great extent locked into. This was clear in how the rapid social change embroiled in the

restructuring of the welfare state was experienced by this group of welfare-reliant single mothers. How the mechanisms of social change found within the welfare ideology and practice played out, related to the history of Valleyside and the biographies of the Lifeline Girls. The social actor was located by her collection of capitals, as they related to gender, class and place. In this context there were both 'pull' and 'push' factors at work: past strategies of 'getting by' were fast losing credibility; and new strategies of 'getting on' appealed to the desire to pursue hitherto unforeseen strategies in pursuit of reward and recognition. The concept of the context-less, reflexive, self-fulfilling late modern social actor that underpins the individualisation thesis clearly falters in this context of a punitive and coercive welfare state. The suggestion that neo-liberal welfare reform allows individuals (in particular women) to be free to make choices where before there were none is found wanting. Instead, through the experiences of the Lifeliners, we saw how a particular group encountered a new set of circumscribed opportunities.

How this group of welfare-reliant single mothers complied with the imperatives to work and care revealed the dynamic class and gender formations of what can be termed the changing same (Hill Collins, 2009) in relation to their resistance of or acquiescence to perpetuation of inequalities. The question of what would constitute resistance for the Lifeliners is as in many instances somewhat opaque. What is the object of their resistance?: the intensification of capitalism?; the subordination of women?; the maldistribution of economic rewards? It could conceivably be all of these or either one of these entities or a number of other entities relating to their exploitation and domination. However the matter is complicated by what form resistance to any of these objects would take: "is refusing what you are enjoined to seek but actually refused resistance or compliance?; equally, is longing for what you are enjoined to want but not allowed resistance or compliance?" (Sayer, 2005: 32). The Lifeline Girls were refusing the precarious employment that dominant welfare ideology and practices compelled them 'to seek'; equally the Girls were also able conceive of securing careers 'not meant for' for them (field note) and 'get on'. If successful, through Lifeline, they would resist multiple forces that positioned them as symbolically stigmatised and materially disadvantaged and consigned them to lives of 'getting by' predicated on low wage and low status work. Their narratives were, in a

sense, accounts of resistance to the processes of maldistribution and misrecognition that position welfare-reliant single mothers.

Moreover it would be inaccurate to say that Lifeline merely reproduced docile caregivers for the public sphere. The Girls, through Lifeline, made alternative meanings and took alternative actions to those advocated by dominant welfare state ideology and practice. This group of welfare-reliant single mothers, and Lifeline itself, actively contested the dominant practices of recent welfare reform under a form of neo-liberal governance that was narrowly focused on increasing their participation in low status and low paid employment. The forms of strategic agency the Girls engage in through Lifeline run counter to our normative expectations (academic, political and popular) of their 'prescribed' education and employment pathways and thus can be seen as significant and intentional forms of resistance to exploitation. Through Lifeline, by securing upper working class jobs the Girls would flourish and challenge their exploitation if not their domination.

Through Lifeline the Girls engaged in strategies designed to change the conditions of poverty in which they lived and there was a real sense that they were 'more' free to 'be' or 'do' than they would have been had they not encountered the project. Amartya Sen's (1999) capabilities approach to freedom is helpful here in measuring the effectiveness of Lifeline in terms of its capacity to enable the Lifeline Girls to flourish. A person's actual ability to be or do something is the key signifier of inequalities and poverty is therefore understood as the deprivation of functional capabilities. Examples of the Lifeliners' functional capabilities, or substantive freedoms, include their ability to access a good education, to have a good job, to live to a good age. The Girls' engagement with a community development project did generate access to productive capitals that led to diversifying choices and capabilities. However this approach also highlighted that actively choosing a particular lifestyle is important and as such capabilities represent the freedom to choose between alternative ways of functioning or lifestyles should people wish to. While choice is 'socially embedded' it is possible to distinguish between 'more genuine choices' and 'less genuine choices' particularly in relation to family and employment (Giullari and Lewis, 2005). The celebration of the diminishing constraints and exclusions experienced by the Lifeliners was epitomised by their zealous endorsement of a social

world characterised by meritocracy, freedom and unhampered choice. Yet there was a sense here that they were doing little more than extolling the virtues of one highly circumscribed set of choices over another. In this sense 'choice' also became a type of symbolic violence: a form of coercion that is a "gentle, invisible violence, unrecognised as such, chosen as much as undergone" (Bourdieu, 1990a: 127). Indeed as Bourdieu puts it "symbolic violence cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who undergo it" (Bourdieu, 2001: 40). The Lifeline Girls were consistently making the 'right' choices in relation to the moral imperative to work and care and as such 'choice' remains embedded in social structures (albeit radically altered structures). Their choices were secured through consent to an unchallenged social order, the effectiveness of which evident in the ease with which it is deployed.

The Lifeliners' social mobility was founded on adopting a strategy of 'getting on' built on the path of least resistance. As such, Lifeline as a 'space of contestation' appealed to one of the most visible forms of misrecognition and maldistribution: stereotypical gender roles that naturalise and normalise femininity are taken from the private sphere into the labour market. Being mindful of the danger of oversimplification, the restructuring of the welfare state for the Lifeline Girls saw the intensification of their inscriptions of gender if not class. Notably gender relations were particularly resistant to change. As Crompton (2008) has noted while the gender regime has modified with the intensification of capitalism and the private sphere it has not been transformed. The Lifeline Girls continue to shoulder a disproportionate load in relation to the care of the children that is unlikely to be redressed with their movement into the labour market. Moreover the fact that welfare reforms focus on lone parents disproportionately effected women and meant the family continues to be a source of gender inequality (Sevenhuijsen, 1998) albeit if the way in which this is the case is changing. Hence the claim that while education is consistently seen as a liberating force and a means of social mobility it is "is one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social patterns" (Bourdieu, 1976: 110) retains its value even regarding Lifeline. It can of course be argued that capitalism is not dependent on these relations of gender subordination (see Crompton, 2008; Sayer, 2005): capitalism is indifferent to the essentialist constructions of men and women that are typical in contemporary society and while gender is a key element of an individual's social location or position, it is "not necessary for capitalism to exist"

(Crompton, 2008: 150). However, in the here and now, we see that the intensification of the private sphere and the transferral of caring practices from the private to the public world of employment as a defining feature of advanced capitalism. The role of the welfare state has come to serve the intensification of capitalism i.e. those that advocate the pursuit of the extension of the work ethic to women. Lifeline is of course implicated in this process and plays its role as part of a welfare state that has become a prop to capitalism.

What this reading necessitates is a move towards a multi-dimensional approach to forces of exploitation. We saw how responses to inequalities often reinforce class and gender formations in such a way that the "durable, structural and embodied character of those inequalities" (Sayer, 2005: 186) is maintained. Thus Lifeliners' resistance was contingent on acquiescence to this form of social change. Perhaps most significantly the reflexivity of the Lifeline Girls was consistently in the interests of the perpetuation of capitalism as the work ethic itself was rarely disputed. What resistance there was, "was effective only in carving our small arenas of autonomy at the margins, enough autonomy to stymie rather than ignite rebellion" (Burawoy, et al., 2001: 31).

However at the time of writing it was by no means clear that this group of women were going to pursue successful careers and fulfil their dream of mobility-through-education. The Lifeline Girls occupy a vulnerable position whereby they fervently believe in the meritocratic system, but as victims of inequalities may well attribute any failures to their personal deficiencies rather than their inheritance of capitals and disadvantaged social location in a hierarchical society. Indeed the more they accept the dominant rationale, the more vulnerable they become to rejection by it. This is indicative of the fact that their resistance did not "take progressive forms" (Sayer, 2005: 32) and while the Lifeline Girls 'knew their place' there were few displays of authentic reflexivity (McNay, 1999) i.e. moments that identified injustices as the *arbitrary* allocation of rewards and recognition. The community development approach adopted by Lifeline was not Freirean with roots of critical liberal education that allowed its educators and learners to explore the experiences of the collective poverty as a means to enabling a challenge to oppression (Freire, 1970). This kind of emancipatory approach was not a feature of the principles or practice of a 'space of

contestation' that was dominated by economic instrumentalism tailored to the local labour market. There was little scope for the Lifeline Girls to engage with questions of social injustice and like many working class women they lacked the opportunities to critique their collective experiences of structural inequalities (Colley, 2006).

## 11.3 Moving on

There are two inter-related debates surrounding the perpetuation of inequalities that are the focus of the final reflections: the *first* relates generally to the kind of society that we do live in and therefore the kind of society we should want; and the *second* relates more specifically to the kind of welfare state that we should want.

### 11.3.1 The neo-liberal welfare state[28] and the perpetuation of inequalities

It became clear in this research that identities of welfare-reliant single mothers were co-constructed through interactions with the street-level mechanisms of welfare state governance. The Lifeline Girls' interactions with dominant welfare state practices revealed the possibility of class and gender formations continuing to be reproduced by dominant values systems at the same time as relations of exploitation are reconfigured. While de-traditionalisation of the family, labour market restructuring and welfare state restructuring have created new formations of class and gender relations for welfare-reliant single mothers this in many ways amounts to a changing same (Hill Collins, 2009). Most obviously, in terms of employment our material and symbolic valuation systems bind together within labour markets, as women take the undervalued, low waged and low status 'women's work' associated with caring. While in relation to Lifeline the picture is more complex, dominant welfare ideology and practices perpetuate gender and class inequalities. Indeed the welfare state is part of a wider set of processes of maldistribution and misrecognition that disproportionately effect poor people and poor places. The contention is to provide more comprehensive understandings of poverty and social exclusion than those proffered by dominant welfare ideology and practice. Such a understanding needs to penetrate the wider social forces at work as well as explain the meaning making and

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[28] As outlined in Chapter Five the neo-liberal welfare state in the UK emerges from many ideological influences and not least the communitarianism championed by New Labour.

decision taking processes of the social actors concerned. In this the social location of people and places is important, as are their biographies and collection of capitals they possess. Current policy that upholds the meritocratic myth fails to consider these elements.

Policies advocating the active citizenship of adult-workers are most effective in places where jobs are plentiful; in contrast they flounder in places experiencing high unemployment because of structural economic decline (Peck and Theodore, 2000). For those relegated to living in communities that were once at heart of the production of industrial wealth, the labour market offers little promise of reward or recognition. Poverty is an enduring reality of life in places like Valleyside where exclusion and isolation are features of a stigmatised existence. In this context perhaps the most glaring omission from welfare reform proposals is the total absence of any acknowledgement of the need for the creation of jobs for the men and women of Valleyside and their neighbouring communities. The understanding that localised hotspots of deprivation are due to the pathological behaviours of the unemployed themselves rather than chronic job shortages should be difficult to sustain. It is deeply unjust to place responsibilities on welfare-claimants to seek employment that is not matched the provision of opportunities for employment (Winkler, 2008). The uneven geography of labour demand undermines the contract of rights and responsibilities (Fothergil and Wilson, 2007). For Merthyr this situation is only likely to worsen as the sectors of employment that have been strongholds in recent years (for example, retail, communications and health and social work) are not expected to grow significant in future years. In contrast recent key growth sectors across the United Kingdom, such as computing services and financial and professional services do not feature highly in the area.

We can also question here how appropriate the therapeutic response to tackling poverty, exemplified by Lifeline is. After years of debasement and degradation we can understand the perception of the need for the therapeutic ethos for the Lifeliners. The selves of the Lifeline Girls were damaged and they were comforted and reassured by the presence of the Lifeline Support Workers in their lives. Moreover given the embedded structural inequalities they faced in their lives it would be unreasonable to expect them to be equipped to overcome challenges on their own. In life stories

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punctuated by experiences of debt, substance misuse and imprisonment, for example, the therapeutic ethos was difficult to critique as was the need for support from "someone to turn to" (field note). Indeed it is clear that for this group of women such therapeutic interventions provided the potential for them to fundamentally alter their trajectories through the social world.

However the therapeutic ethos will not solve the challenges Valleyside faces and the community cannot be counselled 'out of the hole it's in' (field note). It is not just that the intensive support that Lifeline offered is incredibly costly, it is state of the local labour market, simply there are not enough jobs, certainly not enough 'good' jobs, to go round even if Valleysiders were in a place to secure them. Lifeline engaged in amelioration of the worst effects of the welfare state, it is a form of social engineering, rather than the redistribution of wealth or even the opportunities to seek wealth. The ethos of Lifeline was indicative of the welfare regime within which it is embedded that fails to consider total social structures (Wright Mills, 1943). This is not to suggest that Lifeline's therapeutic ethos was not valuable in offering comfort to the women participating in Lifeline but that in doing so but was part of a therapeutic culture that masks the realities of power relations (Ecclestone, 2004; Furedi, 2004).. Focusing on individual adjustment in the psycho-social realm is conspicuous in that it silences the need for addressing structural realities camouflaging the structural determinants of inequalities. Therapeutic interventions stop at the personal and state interventions of this type constitute a facile approach to the regeneration of poor places.

When a welfare state that aims to tackle poverty does little to cushion people from poverty other than advocate vulnerable labour and the insecurity it brings this has important implications for the kind of society that we want. We can assume that most welfare-reliant single mothers will not have access to 'spaces of contestation' like Lifeline and although the Lifeline Girls may escape exploitation, and secure a degree of mobility, this is less likely in the UK than other more equal societies (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Moreover there are plans to further increase the number of single parents seeking employment. In 2011 welfare reforms will require women with children older than five to actively seek work. It was estimated that this will affect 100,000 single parents and save £380 million between then and 2015 (HM Treasury, 2010). Such changes could mean the educational opportunities available to the cohort

of Lifeline Girls I met and talked with will not necessarily be available to those of future years. These concerns were raised in 2008 in my discussions with the Lifeline Support Workers. At that time there was a perception that a process of welfare reform was in place which, when played out, would pose a barrier for those young women who wanted an education to secure a professional career.

The experiences of the Lifeline Girls of dominant welfare practices suggest that the reforms will not significantly redress inequalities experienced by poor women living in communities like Valleyside. This is especially damning given recent evidence of the effects of high level of inequalities experienced in the UK and its correlation with of a disproportionately high incidence of social ills (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Their book *The Spirit Level* points to the relatively large gap between rich and poor in the UK and correlates this with higher incidences of mental illness, substance misuse, obesity and teenage pregnancy than more equal societies. Moreover the homicide rate is higher, life expectancy is shorter, and children's educational performance and literacy scores are worse. Countries with the widest gulf between rich and poor, like the UK have the highest incidences of poorest quality of life. In the past advocates of social justice may have asked us to don Rawl's (1999) veil of ignorance. The veil of ignorance conceptualises a method of determining the morality of a given situation (for example the new constraints placed on welfare-reliant single mothers through contemporary restructuring of the welfare state). We are asked us to imagine a society where our social positions were completely redistributed and a social actor does not know which social location he or she would occupy. This situation where "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like" (Rawls, 1999: 11) enables us to visualise with greater clarity the implications of our 'moralising'. Indeed it was felt that under such circumstances our 'moralising' would perhaps lean towards greater social justice. It might be said that the findings of the *The Spirit Level* and indeed this thesis reformulate the necessity of adopting such an imagined stance. In demonstrating the relationship between quality of life and inequality the authors also documented that it is not only the poor who suffer from the effects of inequality, but society as a whole as an unequal society it is simply dysfunctional (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Rawls' thesis while still useful (the poor are of course disproportionately effected by inequalities) should be

complemented by an explicit acknowledgement that inequalities are damaging to us all. Perhaps self-interest rather than the guilty recognition of accidents of birth will motivate us.

## 11.3.2 An alternative model of welfare

The Second Wave Feminism of the 1960s and 1970s initially questioned the male breadwinner model of family life by focusing on women's activities in the home (Crompton, 2002). However movements such as Wages for Housework were quickly displaced by louder calls for equality in the workplace. These demands for equality in the labour market displayed a lack of class understanding that persists today, specifically in relation to how family and employment have different meanings for women of different classes, living in different places. As a result two distinct strands of literature emerged in relation to women, family and employment: one around why women were not working; and another around the value of work and care (Crompton, 2002). The position adopted here is firmly rooted in the latter and the wealth of literature looking calling for the re-evaluation of the welfare regime (see for example, Haylett, 2003) and specifically "re-valuing of forms of human activity" (Levitas, 2001: 449).

It is widely argued that a citizenship contract built on the premise of employment is flawed because it is not made between free and equal social actors but under conditions of exploitation and subordination (see for example, Levitas, 2001; Pateman, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Lewis, 2006). In society the caring tasks allotted to women, particularly poor women, are widely seen as an irrelevance in terms of citizenship status, if not in garnering the disapproval of the middle class gaze. Policies that aim to move women into the labour market, are however problematic: they do not address the inequalities arising from the gendered division of labour (both paid and unpaid). They do not ensure that care work in the labour market is valued and undervalue the care work of the home, which falls largely to women (Lewis, 2006). Moreover those who advocate reforms in favour of 'work for those who can' assume that the recent commodification of the domestic sphere is desirable.

Although for the Lifeline Girls it was clear there was space for resistance to dominant ideology and practices that served to perpetuate the exploitation of welfare-reliant single mothers it is likely that many welfare-reliant single mothers will have nowhere to escape to. Moreover even for the Lifeline Girls it was evident their interactions with Lifeline also perpetuated processes misrecognition and maldistribution. As we noted above while choice is 'socially embedded' it is possible to distinguish between 'more genuine choices' and 'less genuine choices' particularly in relation to choices relating to family and employment (Giullari and Lewis, 2005). In this instance making 'real choices' means re-evaluating our welfare regime i.e. the roles men and women adopt in relation to family and employment, waged and unwaged work and between market and state. This demands that we ask the question what is welfare for? Recent welfare reform this has fundamentally changed the answers to this question as the welfare state no longer offers protection and shelter for those single mothers who wish to care for their children at home. Instead the dominant apparatus of the welfare state have turned into instruments of judgement and evaluation, surveillance and suspicion searching for evidence of conversion to dominant meanings and conventions. The state's role, through its endorsement of the extension of the work imperative to those traditionally assumed to work outside the labour market, has become to prop up capitalism. As a result welfare reform "as a 'carrot and stick' package leading claimants towards employment misses the significance of the qualitative change wrought on caring activities, responsibilities, and values" (Haylett, 2003: 806). During recent popular debate of welfare reform the issue of the familial caring responsibilities did not figure in the discussions. Almost imperceptibly that contention that mothers with relatively young children should work outside the home is becoming normalised, at least for poor women who are powerless to resist. Yet during my time in Valleyside I heard more than one story of women leaving children as young as seven and eight to fend for themselves early in the morning (wake themselves up, get themselves dressed, and head off to school) so that mothers could work graveyard shifts. Implicit in such normative values and practices is a "calculation of the value of work and childrearing" (Hays, 2003: 189) that has determined that a 'working' mother, in any labour market conditions is better than a 'workless' mother.

A well-rehearsed argument for the reconfiguration of the welfare regime is briefly outlined below. Given the seemingly intractable nature of the issue this argument bears repeating (all the more so as the restructuring of the welfare state has served only to compound these issues). Perhaps the most well known of its proponents of the need to re-evaluate the ethics of work and care is Nancy Fraser (1997). Fraser argues for a welfare regime built on a universal caregiver model of welfare that calls for us to "imagine a social world in which citizens' lives integrate wage earning, care giving, community activism, political participation and involvement in the associational life of civic society" (1997: 62). This Feminist approach to the welfare state integrates the roles of breadwinning and care-giving (as well as political or community forms of citizenship) and assumes that all workers are also care-givers. The model would not only promote women's equal participation in employment, it would also promote women's and men's equal participation in care-giving.

Building on this foundation Fraser argues for a welfare regime built on a universal caregiver model of welfare calls for us "imagine a social world in which citizens' lives integrate wage earning, care giving, community activism, political participation and involvement in the associational life of civic society" (1997: 62). This Feminist approach to the welfare state integrates the roles of breadwinning and caregiving (as well as political or community forms of citizenship) and assumes that all workers are also caregivers. The model would not only promote women's equal participation in employment, it would also promote women's and men's equal participation in caregiving. The model necessitates that caring work is re-valued and financially remunerated, as well as redistributed between social actors. This model highlights the arbitrariness of the allocation of societal roles and tasks found in dominant welfare ideology and the intensification of a new form of capitalism. Here the *attempt* is made not to rate the appeal or worthiness of alternative caring and working practices but to move closer to a reality of 'genuine choice' for women (and men) and it acknowledges that women and men may feel pleasure both in caring for loved ones and in participating in the labour market. In a similar vein there have also been calls for an unconditional basic income for every citizen (see for example, Gorz; 1999; and Pateman, 2004). A Basic Income would provide every citizen with an adequate standard of living and effectively break the link between citizenship and waged work and income. Again this would allow citizens to make more genuine choices in relation

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to family and employment over the course of their lives. Such models for the welfare regime are in keeping with the bivalent theory of justice (Fraser, 1999) outlined in Chapter Two that combines calls for redistribution and recognition in a single comprehensive paradigm.

## 11.4 Conclusion

These reflections should not be read as an indictment of the welfare state. The welfare state can be (and regularly is) a force of good and the practice of Lifeline but one example of this. Indeed here we saw how the welfare state may be more than one thing at once (Clarke, 2004). However like many projects of its ilk this community education project relies on the resourcefulness of less than a handful of key people to 'battle against the tide' of welfare reform. Clearly the arguments outlined above are not uncomplicated. It is certainly the case that all societies are characterised by inequalities of both economic 'rewards' and cultural 'recognitions'. As a result claims for social justice broadly divide into two types: *first*, a more just distribution of resources and goods; and *second*, claims for equal recognition regardless of difference (Fraser, 1999). If we recognise that inequalities are generated by both material and symbolic processes an approach to social justice that incorporates both processes of redistribution and recognition is essential.

The Lifeline Girls, as welfare-reliant single mothers were victims of processes of both maldistribution and misrecognition that to a large extent filtered through dominant welfare state mechanisms. Yet through Lifeline they were making transitions that would break with their previous expectations of their future trajectories through the social world. By examining these transitions this study identified the causal mechanisms found within sites of street-level welfare governance, with particular reference to forms of emotional labour, which generate changing behaviours, values, attitudes and beliefs in welfare-reliant single mothers. As a 'space of contestation' Lifeline constituted a distinctive and unconventional welfare state intervention: it had the capacity to offer resistance to dominant welfare state practices that perpetuated inequalities. The research provided an insight into everyday practices, and associated contestation, that constituted the experiences and interpretations of 'active citizenship'. Through Lifeline the Girls were able to contest the moralizing discourses

of lone motherhood and their coercion into vulnerable labour advocated by dominant welfare. Indeed they were able to pursue strategies of 'getting on' and visualise both for themselves and their children lives at least a little more ordinary.

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