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# Voluntary Sector Review

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

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<b>Order of Authors:</b>	Emily Lau	
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>This is a UK study of a school-based volunteering programme; an ethnography of six girls enrolled into the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) scheme at their secondary school. Building on voluntary sector research into young people's volunteering and feminist research into the systematic gender inequalities created by school structures, this research explores how young people are mandated into school-based volunteering, and how, in this case, participation was gendered. Research shows how the school's prefect group, based on relations with school leaders and teachers, were recruited into the DofE award and then divided by gendered norms that ensured the girls and boys volunteered with different motivations and were incentivised and rewarded differently. Gendered constructed identities, reinforced by school structures and practices, were evident in school duties and caring responsibilities given to the girls. . In this study rather than encourage young people's social action, school-based volunteering served to reproduce societal inequalities .</p>	
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**Girls who learn to serve: An ethnography exploring the gendered experience of school-based volunteering.**

**Emily Lau**

**University of Kent**

*This is a study of a school-based volunteering programme; an ethnography of six girls enrolled into the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) scheme at their secondary school in a deprived coastal community. Building on voluntary sector research into young people's volunteering and feminist research into the systematic gender inequalities created by school structures, this research explores how often young people are coerced into school-based volunteering, and how, in this case, the coercion was gendered. The researcher observed how the school's prefect group, based on relations with school leaders and teachers, were recruited into the DofE award and then divided by gendered norms that ensured the girls and boys volunteered with different motivations and were incentivised and rewarded differently. Classed and gendered constructed identities, reinforced by school structures and practices, were evident in gendered school duties and caring responsibilities given to the girls. This article raises important considerations for voluntary sector- school partnerships that aim to empower and improve student opportunities. In this study rather than challenge and empower young people, school-based volunteering served to reproduce societal classed and gendered inequalities.*

**Key words: young people, volunteering, gender, feminism, social structures**

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

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10 **Emily Lau**

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13 **University of Kent**  
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15  
16  
17 This work was supported by a Canterbury Christ Church University scholarship.  
18

19  
20 The author would like to thank the students and staff who shared their time and experiences,  
21  
22 as well as Professor Shane Blackman and Dr Ruth Rogers who contributed to the development  
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24 of ideas and argument.  
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32 *This is a UK study of a school-based volunteering programme: an ethnography of six girls*  
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34 *enrolled into the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) scheme at their secondary school in a deprived*  
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36 *coastal community. Building on voluntary sector research into young people's volunteering and*  
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38 *feminist research into the systematic gender inequalities created by school structures, this*  
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40 *research explores how often young people are mandated into school-based volunteering, and*  
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42 *how, in this case, participation was gendered. Research shows how the school's prefect group,*  
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44 *based on relations with school leaders and teachers, were recruited into the DofE award and*  
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46 *then divided by gendered norms that ensured the girls and boys volunteered with different*  
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48 *motivations and were incentivised and rewarded differently. Gendered constructed identities,*  
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50 *reinforced by school structures and practices, were evident in gendered school duties and caring*  
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52 *responsibilities given to the girls. This article raises important considerations for voluntary*  
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4 *sector- school partnerships that aim to inspire and improve student opportunities. In this study,*  
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7 *rather than encourage young people’s social action, school-based volunteering served to*  
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9 *reproduce societal gendered inequalities.*  
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13 Key words: young people, volunteering, gender, feminism, social structures  
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## 25 26 **Introduction**

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29 Recent reports have revealed how the voluntary sector, in the UK and internationally, suffers  
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31 from a lack of understanding and recognition of the structural and systemic inequalities that  
32  
33 continue to exist within charities (Lingayah et al, 2020, Beaton et al, 2021). Additionally, many  
34  
35 voluntary sector youth volunteering projects are carried out in partnership with schools, and  
36  
37 therefore, are subject to the school’s own structures and hierarchies, which, research has  
38  
39 shown, reproduce inequalities of class, race, and gender (Reay, 2017). Rather than enabling  
40  
41 young people to challenge the status quo, these structures and systems can ensure the same  
42  
43 groups of young people remain marginalised. Examples from fieldwork in a UK school, the St  
44  
45 Francis Academy, located in an area considered disadvantaged, show how the voluntary sector  
46  
47 partner, in this case, the Duke of Edinburgh award (DofE), was co-opted into the practices and  
48  
49 structures of the school system. This ensured it became another mechanism reproducing  
50  
51 gendered inequalities. Implicit systems of control that existed within school relations and  
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4 hierarchies acted to coerce the girls from the prefect group into volunteering, while social  
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7 constructs of femininity and identities of girlhood dictated the responsibilities and roles girls  
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9  
10 took as part of their school and DofE duties.

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12 The ethnography mainly observed six girl members of the St Francis prefect group as they were  
13  
14 recruited into, and participated in, the UK DofE award alongside their St Francis school prefect  
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16  
17 duties. An ethnographic field diary observed how the girls became involved in the DofE and  
18  
19 recorded their experiences as they volunteered at a nearby care home. The DofE is a long-  
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21  
22 established international youth programme running in schools, youth groups and community  
23  
24  
25 organisations. Students participate in different components including a volunteering  
26  
27  
28 component to achieve a series of awards, bronze, silver, and gold. In this study the girls were  
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30  
31 aiming for bronze and required to give a three-month commitment to volunteering. In 2019,  
32  
33  
34 the DofE received £3million funding from the UK government and the National Lottery to  
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36  
37 support more young people to access the award with a target of reaching an additional 20,000  
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39  
40 disadvantaged people by 2021. The students in this research were part of this target, as the  
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43 senior leader at St Francis, in partnership with the regional DofE coordinator, committed to  
44  
45 encourage more students in the year group to get involved.

46  
47 The purpose of this article is to show, through field diary data, how the young people in this  
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49  
50 school study were mandated to participate in the DofE, and additionally to focus on how their  
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53 participation was gendered. The first section draws on current and international literature from  
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56 voluntary sector studies that looks at the notion of mandatory and service approaches to  
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59 volunteering, and how these are framed as critical for young people and their educational  
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62 success. Research also shows how systems continue to be controlled by hierarchies that  
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4 reproduce identities of femininity and masculinity, with feminist literature that explores  
5  
6 concepts of girlhood and caring. The second section outlines the methodology, showing how  
7  
8 building a relationship with the girls allowed for the collection of detailed data. The third  
9  
10 section highlights key examples from the field diary and sets out the implications concluding  
11  
12 with how the voluntary sector, by taking a critical approach, could challenge and tackle the  
13  
14 ways their programmes contribute to the reproduction of gendered norms.  
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### 23 **Mandatory approaches and Service Volunteering**

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26 Current research suggests how young people in schools are mandated to participate in  
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28 volunteering rather than choose voluntarily (Helms-McCarty, 2013), or be signed up for  
29  
30 volunteering as an *'act of service'* (Rochester, 2006). In this study the students were signed up  
31  
32 to the volunteering as a prefect duty, and given very little option to opt out, which is why their  
33  
34 experience is aligned with the concept of mandatory service volunteering. By service  
35  
36 volunteering, the study refers to the rise in the way charities and education policymakers have  
37  
38 increasingly talked about developing *'service- orientated citizens'* through volunteering (Dekker  
39  
40 and Halman, 2003). Indeed, this is an international trend with growing research studies  
41  
42 investigating mandatory volunteering across Europe, the United States, Australia and Asia  
43  
44 suggesting the concept of service volunteering has led to an increase in young people involved  
45  
46 in compulsory programmes (Kim & Morgul, 2017, Kuti, 2004, Sikora & Green, 2020, Yang,  
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4 It has been argued that these approaches are linked to neoliberal conceptualisations of  
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6 individualism that present volunteering as a mechanism to increase employability and have  
7  
8 compromised more human, altruistic motivations (Dean, 2015, 2016). Programmes such as the  
9  
10 UK National Citizens Service, it is argued, have reframed youth volunteering to fit with  
11  
12 neoconservative ideologies of the compliant, 'good' citizen (Murphy, 2017, Mills and Waite,  
13  
14 2016). Youth volunteering within education, attached to citizenship and character policy  
15  
16 initiatives, has also been influenced by policies to tackle youth political apathy and reengage  
17  
18 with 'troublesome' young people (Strickland, 2010, Gaskin, 2004). Within these agendas, the  
19  
20 relationship between young people and volunteering has been shaped by this policy framing  
21  
22 and incentivising (Kelemen et al, 2017, Moore et al, 1996). The UK based research of Taylor-  
23  
24 Collins (2019) at inner city schools concluded that the main motivation behind the girls'  
25  
26 participation in the NCS project was what she termed '*hope labour*', participating in  
27  
28 volunteering to gain their ticket to a place at a competitive university or the means to achieving  
29  
30 their dream job. Taylor-Collins (2019) also found that other caring responsibilities the girls were  
31  
32 engaged in at school or at home did not feature on their CV or applications as this was seen as  
33  
34 everyday 'helping' and devalued alongside formal activities they had done as part of school-  
35  
36 based volunteering.

37  
38 Eliasoph (2011) highlights how volunteering projects for young people considered  
39  
40 disadvantaged are often supported through mixed funding sources and how youth charities are  
41  
42 seen as '*morally magnetic*' missions (Eliasoph, 2011:2). She suggests that donors are drawn to  
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44 organisations which can claim to be supporting disadvantaged youth and therefore  
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46 organisations align themselves in this way allowing the young people in their programmes to be  
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4 collectively identified as disadvantaged. For Eliasoph (2011:1) this an example of a '*criss-crossed*  
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6  
7 *mission*', leading to an inaccuracy in the labels that become attached to young people and  
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9 projects. Young people, who may be motivated volunteers, become labelled as '*needy youth*',  
10  
11 which paints a misleading picture about the contributions of young people.  
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15 In the context of this study based on the requirements of the funding of the DofE in South-East  
16  
17 England, the programme became all about expanding and reaching 'disadvantaged' groups of  
18  
19 young people, This led to a focus on targeting schools in areas of low socio-economic  
20  
21 communities and finding ways of signing up those considered 'hard to reach'. Identified as a  
22  
23 school with a high intake of disadvantaged students, St Francis was approached by the new  
24  
25 DofE regional lead. The new Head at St Francis, who had created a three-year plan, had set  
26  
27 ambitious targets for the school's extra-curricular programme, including volunteering  
28  
29 opportunities and DofE, aiming for the participation of more of the school community. He, and  
30  
31 the new regional lead, soon began discussing expanding to a whole year group. Shortly after  
32  
33 that, the DofE lead became a St Francis school governor as part of his role as South-East  
34  
35 coordinator for the organisation. As part of the funding aims, the regional lead had been tasked  
36  
37 with engaging as many schools and students as possible. It was obvious once he was governor  
38  
39 that he would not expect St Francis to opt out of DofE. The school was committed to increasing  
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41 numbers, despite a warning from longer serving members of staff that the programme had only  
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43 ever attracted small groups in the past.  
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## 53 54 55 56 57 58 **DofE and the policy context** 59 60 61 62 63 64 65

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4 Increasingly, school-voluntary sector partnerships are impacted by the marketisation of the  
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6  
7 voluntary sector amid the huge funding changes charities and organisations have faced over  
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10 periods of austerity and changes in government (Cushman & Milbourne, 2015, Sullivan et al,  
11  
12 2013). Many organisations have had to pivot their projects and change their income models to  
13  
14 reflect a lack of available funding and a need to diversify their income streams (Sepulveda et al,  
15  
16 2011). Youth organisations have tried to streamline their offer both to reduce costs and appeal  
17  
18 to donors and supporters, and the DofE, itself, has different delivery models. At St Francis,  
19  
20 traditionally, the school had hosted the DofE but with the local authority as the DofE licence  
21  
22 holder and facilitator. As a result of cuts to local authorities, many local authorities no longer  
23  
24 hold the DofE licence. In this way, St Francis was asked to take on the licence, trialling a new  
25  
26 model based on different school staff members taking on the responsibility for different  
27  
28 components. While the licence fee was covered by donor funding, the running of the new  
29  
30 model relied heavily on the school staff's voluntary contributions.  
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39 In the South-East of England, ensuring a high number of student sign ups, as well as obtaining  
40  
41 both teacher and school staff volunteers and parent buy in, was problematic. The DofE lead  
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43 visited all the schools with high numbers of students identified as disadvantaged from the start  
44  
45 of the academic year but struggled to get projects off the ground. In the early days of my field  
46  
47 work I visited a lot of schools where the programme was being trialled, but I waited a long time  
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49 for a cohort to begin. An interview with the first school lead who tried to get it off the ground  
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51 reported low student numbers, despite regular assemblies and the incentives of a funded place.  
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57 In another school in the South-East of England, the DofE was implemented as 'an alternative  
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59 curriculum' for students who were sitting the career-related programme of the International  
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4 Baccalaureate, an alternative qualification to A levels or BTEC. Whereas traditionally the model  
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7 of DofE had always stipulated all components should be off-timetable and extra-curricular,  
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9  
10 students at this school were targeted and offered the chance to complete DofE as part of their  
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12 weekly lessons. St Francis, where I completed my research did not provide DofE as an  
13  
14 alternative curriculum, but it did mandate that the school's prefect students were to  
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16 participate. The way DofE ran in each school was down to the school cultures and practices and  
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18 this links to the next section about the way schools each have their own social systems, which  
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20 can be gendered as discussed below.  
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### 29 **Schools and Gender**

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32 Feminist literature has long been examining the ways school reproduce gender including  
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34 various school studies such as Reay (2018) and Arnot (1987, 2004), among others. Schools can  
35  
36 reproduce gendered norms in different ways through constructs of gender and through  
37  
38 socialised concepts of masculine and feminine identities. Constructs of gender are reinforced in  
39  
40 the everyday rituals, habits, and practices of society, Butler (1990) argues that as individuals we  
41  
42 are entrenched in societal learned performance of gendered behaviour. Schools are an  
43  
44 important example of an institutional context where gender identities are fixed and maintained  
45  
46 through the everyday practices of school life. Examples of this include the structures of school  
47  
48 leadership and the way teacher responsibility is delegated. Other studies show how school  
49  
50 structures are upheld through the selection of prefects and the way student duties can be  
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52 structured by gender, (Kessler, 1985, Dunne, 2007).  
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4 Taking a feminist approach in this study allowed me a way of exposing structural inequalities  
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6 within a voluntary sector project that would not usually be seen. Feminist theoretical  
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8 perspectives begin with a view of society that is dominated by patriarchal power and control,  
9  
10 with an understanding that knowledge and analysis are a product of this unequal system  
11  
12 (Maynard & Purvis, 1997). The research begins with a belief in, and an understanding of, how  
13  
14 women's experiences are marginalised and hidden by the current social system. Taking a  
15  
16 gender perspective allowed me to explore the girls' experiences giving me an important  
17  
18 purpose through my analysis and discussion. New knowledge generated in this study can be  
19  
20 used to challenge inequality.  
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28 Taking a feminist perspective, the conceptual work of Taylor (2004) challenges the exclusion of  
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30 the concept of volunteering from understandings of work and labour. Taylor (2004) states how  
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32 volunteering is devalued by a failure to include its contributions in understandings of paid and  
33  
34 unpaid labour . Taylor's case study examples show how women interviewed did not rate or  
35  
36 value their voluntary contributions when they entered discussions about work and labour.  
37  
38 Taylor's (2004) argues that it is women who are the ones making these unseen contributions,  
39  
40 and this is supported by the findings of Martinez et al (2011) and Warburton & McLaughlin  
41  
42 (2006) who explore what they call examples of informal volunteering. Applying this  
43  
44 understanding of volunteering and exploring women and girls' contributions, gave me insight  
45  
46 into the ways that the school structure rested on gendered expectations of the informal help  
47  
48 girls give and their unseen roles. In addition, it provided an understanding of the way the girls  
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50 themselves accepted and identified themselves by the roles they carried out as part of their  
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52 daily duties and school practices.  
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4 Identities of girlhood inform the way the girls perceive themselves and control their  
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7 relationships and behaviours within the school. Contemporary discourses of girlhood fix female  
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10 identity into different categories including what researchers have defined as ‘the good girl’, ‘the  
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12 bad girl’, ‘the academic girl’, and ‘the rebel’, among others. Adolescent girls grow up constricted  
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14  
15 by these constructed identities (Harris, 2004), (Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005). McRobbie has  
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17 called modern discourses of girlhood, “*the double entanglement; the co-existence of neo-*  
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19  
20 *conservative values... and processes of liberalization*”, (2004:3). Simultaneously, girls are told to  
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22  
23 be strong and independent alongside conservative ideas that remind them of their vulnerability  
24  
25 as girls and the ways they should be protected and rescued (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005).  
26  
27  
28 Gilligan and Mickel Brown (1992) report a ‘crisis’ in adolescent girls’ development, a stage when  
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30  
31 they began to edit out their true feelings and opinions and feel they must censor and control  
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33  
34 their feelings in order to fit in.  
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### 39 **Gender and moral thinking**

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42 The psychological perspective of Gilligan (2002) also provides a theory that enables us to  
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44  
45 understand the way girls and boys often respond to moral problems in different ways with  
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47  
48 distinct types of power attached to their decisions, and consequences for how their decisions  
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50  
51 lead them to be positioned in the social order. Gilligan (2002) builds her theory around the idea  
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53  
54 that women have a different moral voice. Other research studies have found that in a crisis-  
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57 type scenario, girls display more empathy and care for the individuals affected by the crisis than  
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4 boys, who, the research suggests, often respond by focusing more on ways of solving the  
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7 dilemma (Skoe, 2010, Karniol et al, 2003).  
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10 While these studies do not claim boys are incapable of empathy and care, their findings  
11  
12 strongly suggest that girls focus more on taking on a caring responsibility for the emotional and  
13  
14 relational impacts of a crisis. Feminist theory helps us understand how this caring- focused  
15  
16 approach has led to less power and agency for the girls who take it (Tronto & Fischer, 1990).  
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18

19 Taking a feminist perspective on moral development, Gilligan (2004) suggests that notions of  
20  
21 caring have become a feminine virtue and demonstrates how this is problematic in a modern  
22  
23 patriarchal society. Gilligan describes how, over time, a capacity for empathy in women has  
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25 been romantically idealised, often with descriptions of women as almost angelic, yet,  
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27 simultaneously devalued.  
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34 Gilligan (2002, 2004) argues that current gender binaries ensure that those that speak with a  
35  
36 more caring voice are considered weaker and not given equal power and agency. This has led to  
37  
38 a lack of caring voices within modern society's decision-making, and a gendered split between  
39  
40 ideas of justice-orientated decision-making on the masculine side and caring approaches  
41  
42 associated with femininity. It has prevented the ideas being used alongside each other (Gilligan,  
43  
44 2004). Karniol et al, (2003) using Gilligan's theories, looking specifically at girls in adolescence,  
45  
46 indicate that adolescent girls may feel their opinions do not count as much as those taking a  
47  
48 'whole picture' view.  
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## 59 **Methodology**

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4 This fieldwork is a collection of ethnographic observations, interviews, and focus groups with  
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6 the girls, boys, and staff within the school, collected over a year-long period totalling about 300  
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8 hours of field work time. I met with the prefect group once a week for an afternoon, usually  
9  
10 over a three-hour period. The prefect group at St Francis was a large group made up of about  
11  
12 eighteen girls and six boys. The numbers involved in my research fluctuated as prefects took on  
13  
14 different roles within the school, and after a month, my core research group became six girls.  
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16  
17 Each week I took detailed field notes, I recorded sessions and transcribed short group  
18  
19 discussions, and spent time analysing the field notes initially spending around five hours a  
20  
21 week. This rose significantly as I began working with the six girls and sharing transcriptions and  
22  
23 rose again as we started volunteering together at the care home on Wednesdays. Field notes  
24  
25 included observations and discussions collected as we walked to the care home as well as field  
26  
27 notes taken inside observing the girls as they were interacting with the residents.  
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36 As the relationship and the number of participants changed over the course of the research, the  
37  
38 sessions changed. At the beginning, I mainly recorded observations in my field diary; these  
39  
40 changed to informal interviews where I created a series of loose questions to explore with the  
41  
42 girls, but the discussion was led and directed by them. Towards the end I carried out more  
43  
44 formal group interviews to explore a particular perception or experience with the girls. As I  
45  
46 reflected on the data I had collected from the girls, I set up four formal interviews with the boys  
47  
48 in order to compare the girls' and boys' perceptions of volunteering and duty. In the beginning I  
49  
50 also spent time informally interviewing the school lead for DofE and prefects, Mr D, who also  
51  
52 agreed to be recorded and I spent time transcribing his responses. In time, this moved to  
53  
54 observations as I recorded how Mr D interacted with the prefects when he facilitated the  
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4 prefect group meeting, or when he talked to other staff within the school, senior and members  
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6  
7 of his team, as well as the way he presented himself to the DofE lead and the way he interacted  
8  
9  
10 with me, as a researcher.

11  
12 Mr D was both my gatekeeper as well as the most important contact for the prefects. He  
13  
14  
15 consistently had an important impact on the relations within the school; the power structures  
16  
17  
18 and identities of the girls and it is important his values and position are understood. Mr D is the  
19  
20  
21 Head of RE, as well as having responsibility for multiple leadership roles. He is wedded to the  
22  
23  
24 school and its progress; he has been there for over twenty years since he started his teaching  
25  
26  
27 career. In the local area, he is well-known as a teacher and leader within the school. He has an  
28  
29  
30 informal relationship with both the girls and boys, his relationship with the students is based on  
31  
32  
33 self-deprecation and sharing stories about his family, and humorous banter ensuring he is a  
34  
35  
36 popular teacher. The six girls who are dominant in my study identify as female and are white.  
37  
38  
39 Verity, Bea, and Kate align themselves with a Catholic Faith, while Etta, Annie and Freya say  
40  
41  
42 they have no religion. They were aged thirteen and fourteen when I started the ethnography,  
43  
44  
45 Etta and Annie were fifteen by time the ethnography finished.

46  
47 All the names of places and people have been anonymised in this article. Ethical clearance for  
48  
49  
50 the study was applied for and obtained, and letters of consent were obtained by participants,  
51  
52  
53 and their guardians. I observed with an awareness of the hierarchical power between  
54  
55  
56 researcher and those researched. My ethnography was a way of looking beyond the labels that  
57  
58  
59 are given and stick within the education sector, these include labels such as 'disadvantaged,  
60  
61  
62 under-achieving' and 'hard to reach'. The stigma associated with being labelled disadvantaged  
63  
64  
65 is to be viewed in deficit and less human ways, (Shelton, Alegre, & Son, 2010), it presents a view

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4 of difference as deficit and dictates that young people labelled in this way will be seen and  
5  
6  
7 communicated with in a particular lens by teachers and practitioners, (Hargreaves et al, 1975).  
8  
9

10 While developing a relationship with the girls I adopted different questioning styles to create a  
11  
12 non-hierarchical rapport. Volunteering alongside the girls, rather than only observing them,  
13  
14 played a role in gaining that access to their perceptions and understanding. Adopting what  
15  
16 Blackman, (2007) has termed 'crossing borders' as part of the hidden ethnography, I built a  
17  
18 friendship with the girls, and deliberately chose to reveal parts of my own life. This is, as  
19  
20 Blackman states, accepting the role of emotion and attachment in the research process; the  
21  
22 girls were an important part of my life. The intimacy that we developed led them to reveal open  
23  
24 and honest thoughts about their experiences and relations at St Francis, their homelife and  
25  
26 peer relationships, with members of the school and volunteering staff and with people in their  
27  
28 community. I gave them access to my field diary at several points in the ethnography to ensure  
29  
30 they felt the transcriptions represented their thoughts accurately. I allowed them to edit  
31  
32 extracts and add comments, which I kept a detailed record of.  
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## 45 **Findings**

### 46 ***Students were coerced into volunteering through the school structure and practices.***

47  
48 From the beginning there was a difference in the expectations of the headteacher and DofE  
49  
50 lead, who expected sign ups to come more easily and Mr D's knowledge of the students and  
51  
52 likely behaviours. This extract is from my first observation of Mr D as I was introduced to the  
53  
54 school team by the DofE lead and is taken from the field diary:  
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8 *There is a long silence however when the Head asks Mr D for the numbers, and he is very*  
9  
10 *disappointed to hear only nine students in year 9 have signed up. He clearly feels a bit*  
11 *embarrassed at these numbers after his commitment to involve the whole year group.*  
12  
13 *He puts Mr D on the spot asking whether he thinks 9 is aspirational enough number after*  
14 *a week of recruiting, Mr D looks uncomfortable but says it is not far from what he*  
15 *expected and much better than previous years. Despite Mr D's reservations a decision is*  
16 *made to open it up to Year 10 and Mr D is to ask House Leads to relaunch it. The DofE*  
17 *lead cheerfully offers to come back and give another DofE assembly.*  
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32 Field diary observations record Mr D navigating a difficult space between the expectations of  
33 the senior leader and DofE lead, while managing complaints about the extra workload from his  
34 own team of house leads. The house leads believed there was a lack of understanding about  
35 how many sign ups they could achieve; despite numerous assemblies, uptake in the Year 9 and  
36 Year 10 students remained low. As time went on and the start date had been pushed back  
37 several times, Mr D made the decision to call upon a group of about 18 Year 10 students, who  
38 had applied to be prefects. This was based on his knowledge that he would be able to ask the  
39 prefects to do it with less opportunity to opt out.  
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53 I soon realised that as part of their application to be a school prefect, they had been required to  
54 participate in several things, these included Youth Alpha (a course for young Christians), St  
55 Francis prayer and door duty, and other volunteering tasks in the community. Most of the  
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4 prefects reluctantly signed up to DofE, but at various points tried to drop it across the year,  
5  
6  
7 until all the boys except two had dropped it. This was not the same with the girls. Each time  
8  
9 they tried; Mr D persuaded them to continue. This led to negative feelings from the girls  
10  
11 including this reflection from Annie, who felt she had no choice but to continue because she  
12  
13 was a prefect. From the field diary:  
14  
15  
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20

21 *Annie: I mean I do like being a prefect, I mean I like it, I just don't like ... I mean we get*  
22 *our own room, and we do get to have certain freedoms, but even with those freedoms*  
23 *there are like pros and cons, pros are like we get our own rooms and other benefits and*  
24 *stuff, but cons are like we literally are like the school slaves, and it's like oh you need to*  
25 *do something, oh just get the prefects to do it, or do you need this to happen, just get*  
26 *the prefects to do it, and it's like I know, we do have to do some of it but sometimes they*  
27 *ask everyone and other people do it, but then just ditch it and no one says anything to*  
28 *them.... Like on Friday we get to go in late if you've done something, but then people*  
29 *haven't done it, but they still go in late. They ask everyone to do stuff, but then other*  
30 *people can say no or drop out, but if we try to drop out, we can't because we're prefects.*  
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47  
48 Compulsory approaches to participating in volunteering produced negative feelings about  
49  
50 volunteering and DofE. On one occasion when the girls had asked to drop the DofE award, they  
51  
52 told me that they did not want to stop visiting the elderly residents, they just wanted to stop  
53  
54 volunteering with the DofE. This was mainly because they did not feel that they had any choice  
55  
56 or agency about whether to participate. They did want to volunteer but for different, and  
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4 arguably more altruistic reasons. They were not motivated by the rewards of the DofE award.  
5  
6  
7 This point raises challenges dominant deficit narratives about young people and their  
8  
9 inclinations to volunteer as well as questions about the discourse that suggests young people  
10  
11 need rewards or mandatory approaches to be involved. The girls' involvement was based on  
12  
13 their sense of making a difference.  
14  
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20

21 ***Girls and boys were coerced in different, gendered ways.***  
22

23  
24 The field diary observations from the prefect group show important differences in the  
25  
26 relationship between Mr D and the girls and Mr D and the boys, all which impacted their  
27  
28 volunteering choices and experiences. While both boys and girls had a close relationship with  
29  
30 Mr D, there were gendered differences in the way he talked to the girls and boys about their  
31  
32 prefect responsibilities and duties. The way Mr D called on the girls in my study to participate  
33  
34 rested on gendered ideas of girls as more compliant which has been explored in classroom  
35  
36 studies of Jones & Myhill, (2004). Mr D often used the girls' sense of empathy as a motivation  
37  
38 to help him out.  
39  
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45  
46 Field notes record a similarity in how Mr D referred to his own hopelessness when requesting  
47  
48 help from both the prefect girls and his female house leaders. He tried to flatter the girls and  
49  
50 his other female staff by telling them how reliable they were, how he depended on them and  
51  
52 how he could not do the task without them. In this way Mr D was using the girls' moral sense  
53  
54 of responsibility and care. When the girls talked about duties and volunteering they talked  
55  
56 about supporting Mr d who was their favourite teacher as he was dedicated to all students. For  
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4 the girls, they often felt conflicted between their own inclinations and a reluctance to let Mr D  
5  
6  
7 down, which supports Gilligan's (2004) study and her description of how care and responsibility  
8  
9 become part of girl's identities . From the field diary:  
10

11  
12  
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14  
15  
16 *Etta: So, the school set something up and they try and sign people up and when it looks like*  
17  
18 *it might not work, they say, 'Oh well you are prefects so you can do it too...' and we can't say*  
19  
20 *no and even if we do they say 'No, come on'.*  
21

22  
23  
24 *Annie: I said I didn't want to do it and everyone said just keep on for now ... I don't know*  
25  
26 *about you guys but for me it is about feeling bad.*  
27

28  
29  
30 *Verity: Yes, if I say I don't want to do it anymore then Sir has to go all through that*  
31  
32 *work.*  
33

34  
35  
36 *Etta: I'm the type of person who cannot say NO.*  
37

38  
39 *Annie: Mr D is so kind, he's the kindest teacher in school. All agree... Bea: he's my most*  
40  
41 *favourite teacher in school*  
42

43  
44  
45 *Annie: So, I feel bad if I know I am disappointing him.*  
46  
47

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51  
52 Yet this loyalty to Mr D ensured that often the girls engaged in duties and volunteering that  
53  
54 they did not want to do and gave their time reluctantly. It led to a lack of power and agency  
55  
56 within the decisions and duties they participated in.  
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7 ***Rewards and incentives were offered to boys based on their relationships with teachers.***  
8  
9

10 In comparison, observations of the conversations between Mr D and the boys showed he did  
11 not use empathy and duty as a motivation to engage them in volunteering. Mr D incentivised  
12 and rewarded the boys for their voluntary contributions by giving them opportunities to lead,  
13 for example he made them responsible for the delegation of door duty to the other prefects  
14 and asked them to monitor the prefect room. These additional responsibilities included more  
15 public recognition, such as presenting at assembly and attending meetings with senior leaders.  
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25 One day as the girls and I entered the prefect room it had been reorganised, the head boy and a  
26 couple of other prefect boys had arranged and done it after school with Mr D. The girls started  
27 to notice a difference in the way Mr D divided up prefect duties among the group. From the  
28 field diary:  
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41 *Annie: The boys are basically head boys already...*

42  
43  
44 *Freya: The boys have so many connections with the teachers, and they are always here*  
45 *after school...*  
46  
47  
48

49  
50 *Bea: They come every day after school, like they are the head boys, but they were doing*  
51 *it before, for example they moved all the computers in here, they're redoing the room,*  
52 *they just do it on their own, but in conversation with Mr D.*  
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4 *Annie: They know stuff that we don't know, and they won't always tell us. They tell us,*  
5  
6  
7 *the day after or the day they're doing it*  
8  
9

10 *Freya: All the teachers go to them because they always feel that they are already the top*  
11  
12 *of the leader of prefects and so they get told everything first*  
13  
14

15  
16 *EL: Do you mean the teachers treat the boys like leaders?*  
17  
18

19 *Bea: Don't know but the thing about the boys is that they have kind of like (Fi: –*  
20  
21 *connections) but kind of position and I don't blame them because they do work*  
22  
23 *extremely hard, they stay behind after school, they help with homework club, and so I*  
24  
25 *don't blame them, if they want to be that responsible that's fine, less pressure on me.*  
26  
27  
28  
29

30 *Fi: It's not because they're boys... at least I hope it's not.*  
31  
32

33  
34 *EL: Do you think the boys work harder than you?*  
35  
36

37 *Fi: I'll be honest, me and Verity don't do anything for prefects we just turn up and do the*  
38  
39 *duty – the boys do everything for us, they sort out the door duties, then if I have a*  
40  
41 *problem I will go to boys*  
42  
43  
44

45 *EL: Why do you think the boys do extra work?*  
46  
47

48 *Verity: Because they like being in charge maybe*  
49  
50

51 *Fi: They like to be helpful...*  
52  
53

54  
55 *Bea: they like to be the loudest voice that's heard...*  
56  
57  
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4 *Fi: they are just very much leadership personality and they like being in control of*  
5  
6  
7 *everything...*  
8  
9

10 *EL: Do you like being leaders?*  
11

12  
13 *ALL: Nooooo!*  
14

15  
16  
17 *Fi: I'd rather be told what to do and I'll do it...*  
18  
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21  
22

23 While this extract records the girls' perceptions of how the boys are treated, other examples  
24 from the field diary also suggest an inequity in agency and power. Several times the boys, Mr D  
25 and other teachers made decisions without involving the prefect girls, for example the date and  
26 arrangement of the prefect assembly. Decisions made without consultation across the whole  
27 group, removes the agency of the girls, leaving them invisible. Interviews with the boys also  
28 revealed different motivations for volunteering, one boy stated: *'I want to make the school a*  
29 *better place. I wanted to make sure that I was going to change all the bad things in the school.'*  
30  
31

32 This motivation fits with Gilligan (2002) idea of gendered moral reasoning and justice-based  
33 positions, it also contrasts from the girls and the way their motivation is aligned to Mr D.  
34  
35

36 Within voluntary sector studies there are also theories of gendered notions of volunteering  
37 duties within communities as identified by Einolf et al (2011), their paper discusses how the  
38 social norms around gender roles and duties are reflected by women and men's choices in  
39 volunteering:  
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4 *Some types of volunteering have strong gender norms, with men dominating the staffs*  
5  
6  
7 *of volunteer fire and rescue squads and women making up the majority of hospice*  
8  
9 *volunteers. (2011:1094).*

10  
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15  
16 These gendered differences are reinforced by the way St Francis girls were offered and chose  
17  
18 caring roles such as working with the primary children and elderly. In contrast an opportunity to  
19  
20 marshal at a nearby heritage site was participated in by boys. These choices reflect the  
21  
22 gendered societal choices within volunteering.  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
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29

30 ***The girls formed their identities around constructs of femininity and girlhood.***  
31

32  
33  
34 Early in the ethnography I observed how the girls formed their identity around both their class  
35  
36 and gender (Skeggs, 2005). The girls' selective grammar school sits opposite their school and  
37  
38 the girls at St Francis identify themselves as non-academic. In this research the girls also talk  
39  
40 about how they formed their identity by challenging rather than conforming to constructs of  
41  
42 girlhood. From the field diary:  
43  
44  
45  
46  
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49

50 *Kate (talking to Bea about her Head Girl application): When you are HEAD girl you will*  
51  
52 *be the best girl in the whole entire school and you will have the best hair, just like*  
53  
54 *that...(As she is talking, Kate finishes a picture she has been drawing on the white board*  
55  
56 *of a girl with straight hair, very long legs and eyes with long eyelashes and they all start*  
57  
58  
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4 *laughing). I check, and Bea is laughing too, she talks a lot about her hair and the way it*  
5  
6  
7 *does not behave and never does what other people's hair does, and sometimes she says*  
8  
9 *that bothers her but other times it makes her feel different, and that is a good thing.*

10  
11  
12  
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15  
16 Field notes show the girls understand how girlhood forms their identity by referring to their  
17  
18 belief that they were not the 'expected' girls who usually became prefects:  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24

25 *Bea: There are plenty of other students in our year that are like really well behaved but*  
26  
27 *they're not prefects. And that's even though they're even more well-behaved than me".*

28  
29  
30 *People are usually surprised I am a prefect. (Field notes November 2019).*  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36

37 When Bea recorded her video application for head girl, she also chose to focus on this  
38  
39 difference too:  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45

46 *Bea: Most head girls are not usually like me, they are usually intelligent, goody two*  
47  
48 *shoes, but I'm not really like that, I'm not the brightest person you'll ever meet but I am*  
49  
50 *friendly, and I care about other people's opinions, and I like working with them. That's*  
51  
52 *about it really. And it would be good on my CV. So, I might not get any GCSEs, but it'll*  
53  
54 *have head girl on it.*  
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4 The notion of not conforming, however, put the girls in a position of less power among their  
5  
6  
7 peers in the prefect group and the rest of the students. During one incident at a prefect  
8  
9  
10 meeting, the other prefect girls (who are described by my participants as 'girlie girls') and the  
11  
12 prefect boys teamed up to ostracise Bea and the girls in my study. Etta commented on this  
13  
14 saying, "*it's because we stand up to them*". Rejecting the feminine codes at school has its  
15  
16  
17 impact and leads to the girls in my study becoming outsiders within the prefect structure. Bea  
18  
19  
20 also used the notion of being caring as a counter to the fact she was not clever. This notion of  
21  
22 using care for identity forming resonates with Skeggs (2002) work. Her study of the identity of  
23  
24 working-class women showed how they perceived they were different from middle-class  
25  
26  
27 women, because they cared for their children at home.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
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33

34 ***Girls are expected to take on caring duties in and outside school.***  
35  
36

37 The roles and duties of school staff at St Francis are gendered. The senior leadership team,  
38  
39 school governance and teachers with leadership responsibilities are male. House leaders,  
40  
41 teaching assistants and support staff in pastoral and domestic roles are female. This is  
42  
43 replicated in the prefect group, most of the girls in the group are responsible for reading to the  
44  
45 primary school children next door, and the girls in my group were caring for the elderly. The  
46  
47 boys took responsibility for monitoring the door duty rota. The more I got to know the girls and  
48  
49 their lives outside school, I learned that they all had other daily responsibilities and caring  
50  
51 duties. This included babysitting and looking after elderly neighbours. Etta could never meet  
52  
53  
54 after school as she picked up younger siblings every day and had to drop them home. Bea and  
55  
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4 Kate looked after a neighbour's elderly father and children, while Verity also looked after her  
5  
6  
7 niece and nephew after school. However, this was not seen by the girls as volunteering. They  
8  
9  
10 saw these as acts of 'helping' rather than voluntary action. Descriptions of duties above are  
11  
12 heavily gendered, while domestic chores such as babysitting and caring for grandparents often  
13  
14 fall to girls. Research describes how boys may be asked to sort out the bins or wash the car,  
15  
16  
17 which conforms to gendered stereotypes (Brannen, 1995).  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

## 23 **Discussion**

24  
25  
26  
27 This article has focused on how girls were coerced into volunteering as part of the DofE and  
28  
29  
30 their prefect duties at their secondary school. The findings from the field diary also suggest a  
31  
32  
33 gendered dimension to the way they were recruited, incentivised, and rewarded. The study has  
34  
35  
36 shown how the volunteering programme became part of the gendered structures and systems  
37  
38  
39 within the school. The study raises interesting questions for both schools and voluntary sector  
40  
41  
42 partnerships, highlighting implicit ways gender inequality can be inherent in the way students  
43  
44  
45 experience programmes.

46  
47  
48 At St Francis young people did not voluntarily sign up to volunteering opportunities. There was  
49  
50  
51 not much work done at a leadership level to understand why young people did not want to be  
52  
53  
54 involved. Bea, however, referred to masculine stereotypes when asked about the low numbers  
55  
56  
57 as the reason for the low number of boys participating. She and Etta suggested that peer  
58  
59  
60 pressure was the key driver among the boys at St Francis, from the field diary:  
61  
62  
63  
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1  
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3  
4 *Bea: I think boys have a pressure to think about the way something looks ...*  
5  
6

7 *Etta: There is a boy stereotype – there are boys in our school who are like chavvy... idiots*  
8  
9

10 *... and that's being polite, and I think they might feel pressured that they might get*  
11  
12 *laughed at....*  
13  
14

15  
16  
17  
18  
19 This links to research by Davies (2018) who suggests that the barriers to boy's participation is  
20  
21 not only gendered but classed, with volunteering portrayed as uncool activity that showed  
22  
23 weakness, which was significant for working-class boys and their identity. Gender relations at  
24  
25 St Francis are not only set by the school structures, but by the relationship Mr D has with the  
26  
27 girls and the boys. The relationship between Mr D and the girls is similar to his relationship with  
28  
29 his female team of house leads. This relationship rests on the construct of himself as 'the self-  
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31 confessed 'hopeless and disorganised man'. Just as he refers to 'his team of ladies as his  
32  
33 saviours', he often jokes the girls look after him too. The way Mr D flatters the girls about the  
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35 way they look after him is one way he encourages them to continue volunteering and  
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37 completing school duties by invoking their sense of empathy.  
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46 The way the girls were coerced through empathy and care also supports Gilligan's theory of  
47  
48 how gendered differences in moral reasoning and the way this can impact girls' sense of power  
49  
50 and agency. The girls' main motivations for remaining with DofE and completing other tasks  
51  
52 was their duty to Mr D. Their worries and concerns were that giving up would be letting him  
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54 and the school down. As the field notes report different motivations for the boys, based on  
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56 rewards and incentives, this study reveals how girls and boys in the prefect group had different  
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4 levels of agency and power at school. Despite both boys and girls having a close relationship  
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7 with Mr D, his relationship with the boys was different and involved giving them more access to  
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10 decision-making, leadership, and recognition. The girls' sense of empathy and care, as Gilligan  
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12 (2002) describes, ensured they were left with less power and knowledge and felt less able to  
13  
14 use their position as prefect to lead. This lack of agency also linked to the way the girls felt like  
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16  
17 outsiders among the prefect group, and the school.  
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21 Openly alluding to the kinds of feminine codes and constructs of girlhood described by Harris et  
22  
23 al, (2004), the girls in my study constructed their identity outside the categories of girlhood, but  
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25  
26 this left them feeling different and uncompliant. They had drifted together because they felt  
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28  
29 like they did not fit in to any of the other cliques within the school structure. In one particular  
30  
31 scene in the fieldnotes the girls and boys argue fiercely about the colour of the leaver's jumpers  
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34 and the best way to decide. Reeling from the argument, the girls were upset and doubted their  
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37 actions. Bea who had been told to lead the meeting by Mr D seemed confused by how the boys  
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39  
40 and the other girls had confronted her.  
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42 Supporting theories about the crisis of girlhood, the sense of disorientation the girls felt after  
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44  
45 speaking their minds and being involved in the argument showed the complexities of modern  
46  
47  
48 feminism. The narrative that girls can be strong-willed and determined is flawed when placed  
49  
50  
51 within a context where socialised identities of masculine and feminine code are very much at  
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54 play. Despite the girls in my study being told they should take decision-making roles, in reality,  
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56  
57 this was not received well by their peers, which left them in an uncomfortable place. In truth as  
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60 well, while the girls in my study often stated they believed in equal rights, on other occasions  
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63 they stated that "*they would rather be told than lead*". This fits with research within schools,  
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4 which have shown that generally the student population are more comfortable with boys in  
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6 leadership positions (Archard 2013).  
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10 Just as Taylor (2004) describes how formal concepts of work, labour and volunteering have  
11  
12 devalued informal work such as childcare and domestic chores, the girls also alluded to  
13  
14 differences in formalised volunteering and everyday helping, with the latter positioned as less  
15  
16 important. At the beginning of my study the girls stated they had never volunteered, and it was  
17  
18 only after getting to know them that I understood how much they were involved in what they  
19  
20 described as helping and duties. Informal volunteering or the invisible work of women and girls  
21  
22 is devalued across the world. Many research studies have shown how informal volunteering is  
23  
24 gendered, women and girls are much more likely to be participating in these types of activities,  
25  
26 without recognition, (Martinez et al, 2011). As with the coercions of teachers and school  
27  
28 structures, girls' participation in informal volunteering is done not through choice, but through  
29  
30 obligation and duty enforced by family and community. The girls in my research study all chose  
31  
32 to volunteer at a care home and this is noteworthy as the boys chose more physical tasks such  
33  
34 as community clean ups and school renovations. Without recognising it, the girls made a choice  
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36 that again, is gendered and often seen as the responsibility and natural duty of women.  
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47 The girls were also exposed to sexism during their volunteering, although they never  
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49 commented or challenged it. Each week the residents would assess the clothes the girls wore  
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51 and the length of their skirts, as well as choosing who was prettiest and asking them when they  
52  
53 would have children. Bates (2014) has talked about how women and girls are expected to  
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55 accept everyday sexism as a part of life and certainly the girls never complained about it during  
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57 my observations. It is interesting that on the one occasion Mr D came along; he was very  
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4 uncomfortable in the setting. He still encouraged the girls to go along, in fact once telling them  
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7 that St Francis students keep their commitments, however he refused to come again as he said  
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10 it was depressing and he did not like the way the women talked to him. This example shows  
11  
12 sexism within volunteering, which is something not considered by the volunteering organisation  
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15 when they set the volunteering task.  
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## 21 **Conclusion**

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24 This article contributes to knowledge about the way girls and boys experience volunteering in a  
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26 school context. First, it builds on existing literature suggesting that through different policy  
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28 agendas or through aims to expand the reach of volunteering, young people are increasingly  
29  
30 mandated to volunteer and incentivised in ways that rest on individualism and gain. This article  
31  
32 shows that coercion can come through the power and value systems of the school, where  
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35 obligation can come from a duty to the school. The data from this ethnography also suggests  
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38 negative impacts of involving young people in those ways and how coercion undermines more  
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41 altruistic reasons for volunteering.  
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46 Next, the article has shown gendered dimensions to school-based volunteering. These are  
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48 around recruitment, participation, and rewards. In this study these gendered dimensions built  
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51 on the existing systems and structures of the school. In this study the implicit gendered  
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54 practices and means of control in the school were reproduced within the volunteering  
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57 programme. Evidence in this study builds on gendered constructs around masculine and  
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60 feminine duties that are seen in volunteering. Finally, this study reinforces how important  
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4 these school and volunteering experiences are for the development of the identity of girls and  
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7 how experiences of volunteering can change the girls' perceptions of the world and their place  
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10 in it.

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12 It is important to remember that this is only a single school study, and the lack of comparison is  
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14  
15 a limitation. The study is taken from a particular UK context and therefore the findings cannot  
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18 be transferred to all school experiences of prefect systems and volunteering. The DofE  
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21 programme is a long running programme, which is often reported as transforming lives and  
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24 experiences. This study is not suggesting that every DofE volunteering experience becomes  
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27 embedded in school power structures and practices. The field diary presents very personalised  
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29  
30 examples of events unique only to St Francis, with its own socio-cultural norms that create the  
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33 school's character and shape the student experience. The participant group was predominately  
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36 white and focused on the lived experiences of their particular context.

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38 Nevertheless, the study is useful in the ways it shows how gendered inequalities can be hidden  
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41 and embedded and can be useful for thinking about other cases of how race, ethnicity, and  
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43  
44 class could play a role in the volunteering experiences of young people. Learning from this  
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47 study suggests that voluntary sector practitioners and educationalists could use their work with  
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50 young people to challenge gender inequalities, to recognise and understand where structural  
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53 inequalities come from.. Policymakers and practitioners, by pursuing a way of working with  
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56 young people that debates, discusses and challenges the inequalities of society, could ensure  
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59 that education and volunteering plays a role in helping the next generation fight societal class,  
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62 race, and gender bias. Inequalities of class and gender can only be solved by collective acts of  
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4 exposing and dismantling the structures, and this involves recognising the societal gendered  
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6 norms that maintain structures and relations.  
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