

# **Work Activities of Older People: Beyond Paid Employment**

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## Abstract

In recent years much has been made of active and productive ageing policies, with the attempt to promote a more positive image of ageing. Despite this, negative representations of ageing and conceptualisations of older people as a 'burden' persist. This thesis presents an argument that these negative images are intertwined with common understandings of work, the frequent equating of this to paid employment within the field of social gerontology, and the reliance upon cessation of work in determining the beginning of old age. With reference to the wider literature in the sociology of work, an argument is presented that determines why it is essential to challenge those taken-for-granted assumptions about older people and work. Reflecting upon the findings from an exploratory and qualitative research project, which focuses upon the perspective of the older people themselves, attention is given to the detail of what should be encapsulated into new understandings of work.

Within the thesis it is argued that there are many activities undertaken by the older person, which should be thought of as work, including (but not limited to) paid employment, volunteering, care, attendance at social clubs, undertaking sport and physical activity. Some of these activities might more intuitively be thought of as acts of leisure. However, it is evidenced within this thesis that there are fuzzy and blurred boundaries between leisure and work - older people leisure at work and work at leisure. The recognition of these blurring boundaries is one aspect that must be incorporated into re-conceptualisations of work. The thesis demonstrates how the work of older people transcends different socio-economic spheres and there are multiple interrelations existing between different activities. Whilst this last point resonates with the approach of some authors in the sociology of work, they have never been incorporated within the field of social gerontology. Through this analysis, and promoting a new way through which the activities of older people might be incorporated within the rubric of work, it is hoped that ageism might be challenged in a similar

vein to the way in which feminist researchers once challenged sexism in relation to work and housework.

This thesis reflects upon how we need to identify and conceptualise the third age in light of the findings. It highlights how the working lives of older people are shaped through a process of negotiation between social expectations within current political and economic contexts, influences from key historical events and social changes, and the desire for freedom, autonomy and choice. Age period cohort is crucial in determining the world of work, and more generally how ageing might be experienced.

Through its unique approach, and the lessons learnt within this thesis, a theoretical framework is provided to assist in future comprehensive studies of both work and ageing. Overall, this thesis makes significant contributions to understandings of work and ageing following the consideration of two schools of thought (i.e. sociology of work and social gerontology), which previously have been infrequent companions.

# Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: REPRESENTATIONS OF AGE</b> .....	<b>11</b>
DEFINITIONS OF THE OLDER PERSON .....	11
REFLECTIONS ON BEING OLDER.....	15
SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF OLDER PEOPLE .....	16
SUCCESSFUL, PRODUCTIVE AND ACTIVE AGEING.....	18
REPRESENTATIONS OF AGEING IN SOCIAL POLICY.....	22
UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT OF OLDER PEOPLE IN ‘PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY’ .....	33
CONCLUSION.....	34
<b>CHAPTER 3: AGE AND WORK</b> .....	<b>36</b>
MODERNISATION THEORY.....	36
INDIVIDUALISATION THESIS.....	39
POLITICAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE .....	43
EXPERIENCES OF WORK – A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....	46
<i>Retirement Policies</i> .....	48
DEFINING WORK.....	53
<i>Understanding Value</i> .....	57
LESSONS FROM THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK .....	60
CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	67
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>69</b>
METHODOLOGY .....	70
SELECTION OF RESEARCH METHODS .....	73
INTERVIEW FORMAT AND DESIGN.....	74
DESIGN OF INITIAL INTERVIEW .....	75
DESIGN OF FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW .....	77
SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS.....	78
<i>Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria</i> .....	78
<i>Identifying Potential Participants</i> .....	79
DATA COLLECTION: UNDERTAKING INTERVIEWS .....	83
UNDERTAKING INITIAL INTERVIEWS.....	83
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS .....	85
STORAGE AND HANDLING OF INTERVIEW DATA .....	87
DATA ANALYSIS .....	88
<i>Stage 1 - Identifying Activity and Work Activity</i> .....	88
<i>Stage 2 – Identifying reasons and objectives for engaging with work activities</i> .....	90
<i>Stage 3 - Understanding the interrelations between different activities</i> .....	91
<i>Stage 4: Developing Illustrative Vignettes</i> .....	92
<i>Stage 5: Identifying New Knowledge and Recognising the Implications for Understanding Age</i> .....	93
CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	94
<b>CHAPTER 5: INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS – WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY DO</b> .....	<b>96</b>

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS.....	96
ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN .....	98
<i>Paid Employment/Self-Employment</i> .....	98
<i>Independent Study and Learning</i> .....	99
<i>Volunteering</i> .....	100
<i>Housework and Gardening</i> .....	101
<i>Supporting/Caring for Children and Grandchildren</i> .....	101
<i>Supporting/Caring for Elderly or Ill Relatives</i> .....	101
<i>Attending Social Clubs</i> .....	102
<i>Arts and Crafts</i> .....	102
<i>Reading, Theatre/Cinema and Listening to the Radio/Watching TV</i> .....	103
<i>Sports and Physical Activities</i> .....	103
<i>Socialising</i> .....	104
<i>Summary of Activities Undertaken</i> .....	104
UNDERSTANDING THE REASONS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN ACTIVITY.....	105
<i>Maintaining Good Health</i> .....	106
Norman .....	109
<i>Personal Ambition and Learning</i> .....	111
<i>Enjoyment and Pleasure</i> .....	118
Morag.....	119
<i>Friendship, Social Networks and Belonging</i> .....	120
Brenda.....	124
<i>Giving Back and Helping Others</i> .....	125
Heather .....	129
<i>Meeting Needs of Others, Obligation and Expectation</i> .....	130
<i>Economic Rationale and Work Beliefs</i> .....	136
Economic Reasons.....	136
Evelyn .....	139
Malcolm .....	140
Work Beliefs and Work Ethics .....	141
CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	145
<b>CHAPTER 5: RETHINKING WORK - MY WORK ISN'T WORK AND I WORK AT LEISURE .....</b>	<b>148</b>
RECOGNITION OF NEW <i>WORK ACTIVITIES</i> .....	148
BLURRING BOUNDARIES .....	152
RECOGNISING WORK CROSSES SOCIO-ECONOMIC BOUNDARIES.....	157
RECOGNISING INTERCONNECTIONS .....	164
CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	170
<b>CHAPTER 7: AGE MATTERS – REALISING THE IMPORTANCE OF AGE .....</b>	<b>172</b>
AN AGE OF SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS.....	173
THE LEGACY OF THE PAST .....	175
A THIRD AGE OF GREATER AUTONOMY? .....	180
UNDERSTANDING THE THIRD AGE.....	186
CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	189
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION – THE BENEFIT OF CONSIDERING WORK AND AGE .....</b>	<b>191</b>
WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE UNDERTAKEN BY OLDER PEOPLE AND WHY? .....	191
HOW CAN WE RETHINK THE WORK OF OLDER PEOPLE AND WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF AGE? .....	193
WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF REFLECTING ON WORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AGEING? .....	196

AGE WORKS: A NEW THEORETICAL APPROACH .....	198
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	201
<b>CONCLUDING COMMENTS.....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>226</b>
APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH DESIGN.....	227
APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF KEY INTERVIEW APPROACHES CONSIDERED .....	229
APPENDIX 3: INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	235
APPENDIX 4: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE (ORIGINAL).....	236
APPENDIX 5: INVITATION LETTER.....	237
APPENDIX 6: INFORMATION SHEET .....	238
APPENDIX 7: CONSENT FORM.....	242
APPENDIX 8: GENDER AND AGE QUESTIONS.....	244
APPENDIX 9: CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS.....	245
APPENDIX 10: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE (AMENDED).....	246

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Different Systems of the Economy (based on Pearce 2003: 25) .....	55
Figure 2: Modified TSOL considering unpaid work in the public sphere (taken from Taylor 2004) .....	63
Figure 3: Summary of participant characteristics .....	97
Figure 4: List of Occupations.....	99
Figure 5: List of Volunteering Activities .....	100
Figure 6: Sports and Physical Activities.....	103
Figure 7: Summary of Activities Undertaken .....	104
Figure 8: Keeping Physically Fit.....	106
Figure 9: Enjoyment and pleasure associated with different activities.....	118
Figure 10: Friendship, social networks and belonging.....	121
Figure 11: Positioning newly identified ' <i>work activities</i> ' into different socio-economic spheres .....	152
Figure 12: Care and Support Crosses Socio-Economic Spheres.....	158
Figure 13: Learning Across Socio-Economic Spheres.....	162
Figure 14: Diagrammatic Representation of Interrelations.....	169
Figure 15: Age Works - A New Theoretical Approach.....	199

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In nearly all European countries, population structures are changing (Murray 2008) and almost all developed economies have ageing populations (Johnson and Falkingham 1992; OECD 2007). In the United Kingdom (UK), the number of people over the state retirement age outnumbered those aged under 16 for the first time in 2007 (HM Government 2009). In 2008 in Scotland, the percentage of the population over state pension age was 19.7% compared to 17.7% of the population being under sixteen years old (General Register for Scotland 2009a)<sup>1</sup>. This ageing population is explained by two principal factors: increased life expectancy and lower birth rates (Select Committee on Economic Affairs 2004), although migration also plays a role in the age structure of a population (Scottish Executive 2007a). In the UK, life expectancy at birth in 2009 was 77.53 years for men and 81.74 years for women (Office for National Statistics 2009). In Scotland, life expectancy has increased from 69.1 years for men and 75.4 years for women in 1981 to 75 years for men and 79.9 years for women in 2007 (General Register Office for Scotland 2009b). This trend of increased life expectancy is occurring as birth rates decrease. In the UK, there has been a general trend of decreasing birth rates throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception of two “baby booms” – one following the Second World War and a “secondary peak in the 1960s” (Hicks and Allen 1999: 6). In Scotland, the birth rate in 2009 was just over half of what it was forty years earlier: 11.6 live births per 1000 population compared to 20 live births per 1000 population (General Register Office for Scotland 2009b).

The *Select Committee on Economic Affairs* (2004) acknowledges how such short-term increases in birth rates will have a longer-term impact on the population structures over the succeeding century. Since the post-war ‘baby boom’ was followed by declining birth rates, concerns have emerged over

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<sup>1</sup> This figure takes into consideration the increase in pension age from 60 to 65 for women between 2010 and 2020, and from 65 to 66 for both men and women between 2024 and 2046. The percentage of those above state retirement age would have been greater had these not been taken into consideration.

perceived increased 'burdens' (e.g., in terms of pension entitlement, health and other social services) as this cohort of the population ages and the size of the economically active labour force diminishes (Johnson and Falkingham 1992). Old age continues to be discussed in such ways in contemporary publications (Lloyd-Sherlock 2010; World Health Organisation 2010) and there is a dominant public image that old age is a social problem and an economic burden (Stirling 2010). Such discussions of ageing populations are rooted in increased dependency ratios, which describe the number of people contributing to a pension and other social security funds in relation to those benefiting from pensions and other social funds (Duncan et al. 2000).

In the UK, the ratio of those below the state pension age compared to those above it fell for the first time in a quarter of a century as some of the 'baby boomers' reached that threshold (HM Government 2009). Murray (2008: 1) commented on how the "changing demographic profile poses political, economic and social challenges that are as important as climate change, security and globalisation". Concerns over the potential consequences of an ageing population have a long history. Indeed, in 1947 in the midst of one of the 'baby booms', Seebhom Rowntree was the chair of a survey committee that explored 'the problems of ageing and the care of old people'. In the report of those works, Rowntree (1947: 95) stated:

In recent years there has been a considerable awakening of public interest in the problems of old age, an awakening that has manifested itself in a sympathetic attitude to old people and in a widespread desire to be generous to them. The Committee are in full sympathy with this attitude, but they have felt bound to take into account another point of view, based not on any lack of sympathy with the aged but on a recognition of

the country's limited resources of wealth and labour, and on the rapidly growing proportion of old people in the total population.

Since at least 1947, and therefore for the best part of the lifespan of those born during the 'baby boom' that followed the Second World War, there has been an awareness of ageing populations and the associated 'burden' on society. The concerns of Rowntree (1947) echo those in more recent times. More specifically, in contemporary times, an idea that is "increasingly advocated" in response to the concerns associated with ageing populations (and increased dependency ratios) is to "extend working lives beyond current official pensionable ages, and particularly beyond actual ages of retirement, which are generally lower" (Taqi 2002: 108). This was also the message being promoted by Rowntree (1947: 84) who stated:

From an economic standpoint it is important that people of pensionable age should remain at work so long as they can make a worth-while contribution to the creation of wealth...There is a danger that unless persons, now regarded as elderly and of pensionable age, can contribute to the volume of wealth produced, by continuing in employment for a few years, the maintenance of the aged, will, in the not very distant future, become a crushing burden on the young and middle-aged thus forcing down the whole standard of living.

Essentially, both historical and current public discussions on the ageing population have commonly revolved around the 'need' for older people to remain in paid employment for longer. Yet such approaches to the proposed management of ageing populations must be challenged on the grounds

of underlying assumptions and, most relevant for this thesis, on the assumption that the older person can only be 'productive' through paid employment. In this thesis, I argue that such perceptions are erroneous and ultimately rest upon limited understandings of work. It has previously been observed that older people can and do contribute to the economy and to society in a number of significant ways. For example, unpaid activities undertaken by older people (i.e., care, grandparenting and volunteering) in the UK were estimated to be worth around £24 billion and equivalent to 2.9% of the UK's economic output (Age Concern 2004). Nevertheless, this contribution of older people continues to be under-valued and unobserved (Age Concern 2004).

The undervaluing of such activities is intertwined with wider definitions and assumptions of what constitutes work and what is thought of as having value. The above quotes by Taqi (2002) and Rowntree (1947) imply that work is synonymous with paid employment and only this is to be considered central to productivity. This equation of work with paid employment has been dominant since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the UK (Edgell 2006) and as Granter (2009: 11) stated:

This seems to be the prevailing understanding in our society. This prevalence derives from the fact that the discourse of economics is not simply another competing discourse, but is itself dominant; it is the discourse through which human society is understood.

The adoption of such definitions is evident in much of the literature exploring issues associated with the older person and work. In a search of the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences*, using the terms 'older' and 'work', it was discovered that the vast majority of articles discuss work as if it

were synonymous with paid employment, albeit there are a minority of articles that acknowledge other forms of work, such as volunteering or care giving. Such findings are not necessarily surprising given the emphasis placed on the dichotomy between work and non-work in defining the older person. Yet at another level, they appear to be ignorant of the developments within the sociology of work. A number of authors within this field have, over several years, emphasised the need for the re-conceptualisation of work and the need to recognise the importance of unpaid activities undertaken by females in the private domain (see for example, Crompton 1997; Glucksmann 1990, 2000, 2005). It has long been recognised that conventional definitions of work, which older people might undertake, contribute to the undervaluing of unpaid activities (Driver and Martell 2002; Edgell 2006; Levitas 1996).

Furthermore, over ten years ago, a single article by Mansvelt (1997) introduced the possibility of rethinking leisure as work as a means through which stereotypical representations of old age can be resisted and a way through which the older person can avoid the stigma of being considered a burden on society. Conventional conceptions of work (for reasons that will be explained in Chapter 2) can contribute to the existence of ageism against older people who withdraw from paid employment and engage in unpaid activities. Therefore, while challenging stereotypical images of old age, and recognising older people's true contribution to an ageing society it is important to emphasise that paid employment is not the only way in which people can contribute to society.

One of the acclaimed major successes of feminist researchers was the advances in promoting the unpaid work of women in the private sphere (Ungerson 1997). One of the key aims of this thesis is to attempt a similar significant contribution through identifying how we should be rethinking the work of older people. This need to rethink work is not only supported at a theoretical level, but is also

supported from a social policy perspective. For example, a key Scottish document on ageing – *All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population* (Scottish Executive 2007a) – does acknowledge the need for changing definitions of work and the important role older people play in the provision of unpaid activities. Similarly, the UK Government report (2009), *Building a Society for All Ages*, also recognises the contribution that can be made through unpaid activities. This report shows a progressive move in UK-wide policy to move forward from the approach described in *Opportunity Age: Meeting the Challenges of Ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* – a report published by the Department for Work and Pensions in 2005 – which continued to primarily emphasise the importance of retaining people in paid employment.

Whilst it has to be welcomed that these social policy documents attempt to acknowledge the various contributions of older people to society, they remain limited in terms of the contributions included. More specifically, the activities included are those (such as volunteering, care or grandparenting) which have had an economic value attached to them. There is less consideration of other ways in which older people can add value that are not strictly equated to economic worth. In the case of the Scottish *All Our Futures'* document (Scottish Executive 2007b) this is surprising, given that the evidence base (Scottish Executive 2007c: 37) noted that valuable contributions were made through “activities including voluntary work, learning activities, domestic work, caring for family members (including spouses, grandchildren and elderly relatives), helping out friends and relatives and leisure pursuits”.

Although the evidence base (Scottish Executive 2007c) shows that older people contribute in a variety of ways, the main *All Our Futures* strategy document (Scottish Executive 2007b) and its summary document (Scottish Executive 2007a), place greater emphasis on specific unpaid activities

(i.e., care, grandparenting, volunteering) than on other unpaid activities (i.e., domestic work, learning, helping out friends or leisure pursuits). The favoured emphasis on certain activities over others is something that has been characteristic throughout the history of research exploring unpaid work. Specifically, Taylor (2004) describes how there has been much attention over the years on unpaid domestic work but formal voluntary work has been relatively under-researched.

This selective attention to certain unpaid *work activities* within both social policy and social research potentially reinforces widespread stereotypical judgements of what constitutes 'work' and subsequently what is considered of greater significance and worth in society more generally. It can support the devaluing of activities that make a valuable contribution to society, and possibly promote ageist attitudes against those who choose these unrecognised *work activities* over other activities that are more likely given an economic value. Consequently, rather than being prescriptive in the nature of older people's work that will be explored, this research aims to adopt a more holistic approach. The thesis challenges widely accepted definitions of work and acknowledges the need to move beyond narrow conceptualisations of work as paid employment, as well as beyond the limited extended recognised forms of unpaid work.

Based on literature from the sociology of work, I argue that work ought to be considered more broadly as any activity that creates something of value to others; with value not being limited to economic benefit. Through adopting such definitions and looking to the perspectives of the older person, this qualitative and exploratory study aims to inform a rethinking of older people's work. It will emphasise the extent and range of *work activity* that is undertaken by older people, explore

why people engage with these, and determine what factors shape or influence their involvement.<sup>2</sup> The determination of the appropriate tenets for a re-conceptualisation of work is to be founded upon that information elicited through the exploration of the aforementioned. Yet with a specific focus upon older people's work, it is also necessary to consider what, if anything, makes the findings specific to older people. Therefore, in this thesis, there will also be consideration as to why age matters in understanding work, as well as consideration of how the findings impact upon understandings of age. Overall, the research will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What activities are undertaken by older people and why?
2. How can we rethink the work of older people and what is the importance of age?
3. What are the implications of reflecting on work for understanding ageing?

In addressing these research questions, the information presented within this thesis will make significant contributions in both the field of the sociology of work, and in social gerontology.

## Structure of Thesis

To aid with navigation through the thesis, this section provides a detailed overview of the structure. Chapter 2 explores key representations of ageing within the literature and within social policy. It defines what is meant by 'older person' and highlights some representations of ageing. In chapter 3, further attention is given to theoretical explanations of the different representations of age. It highlights the importance of work in constructing negative images of ageing, and consequently illustrates the need to rethink the work of older people.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *work activity* is utilised here to represent all those activities considered as work for the purposes of this thesis but which might not be encapsulated under conventional definitions of work.

Chapter 4 then discusses the methodology and methods that were utilised to collect data. The research involves in-depth interviews with 23 older people (i.e., those over the age of 50 years) and assesses how different methods of interview have influenced the design. The chapter further provides an overview of ethical issues considered in the design of the research. Finally, it provides a detailed account of the data analysis undertaken.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to a presentation of a detailed description of those activities in which older people engage and which they feel have value to others. It looks at the reasons and motivations for engagement, as well as what underlie those reasons/motivations. Finally, the chapter looks to the interrelations that exist between different work activities. To provide a greater sense of the types of participants included and typical blended experiences of activity this chapter includes some composed vignettes. It is this chapter, which is key to addressing the first of the two research questions.

Chapter 6 draws upon the content of chapter 5, and looks exclusively at how best to further the understandings of work in light of the consideration of the activities of older people. It demonstrates why there is now a blurring of boundaries between work and leisure, and provides an argument for the wider definitions of work; noting specifically those acts of older people that should be encompassed under the term *work activity*. Although much of the content in chapter 6 seems age-unspecific, chapter 7 explores exactly why it is important to consider matters of age when understanding *work activity*. It looks at how older people see their lives as being shaped within social expectations, yet paradoxically at the same time, by greater autonomy and choice. It reflects upon how older people's lives are further influenced by the legacy of the past, key historical events and social changes. Overall, chapter 7 emphasises how age period cohort is essential in understanding

work. Yet this chapter also looks to how we should be thinking about the third age in light of the findings discussed within both chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 8 provides a conclusion to the thesis that summarises the key points in relation to the research questions. It highlights the importance of this research, and introduces a theoretical framework that might be applied to future research on ageing and work before specifying the nature of potential future research. It concludes that this research has not only added to the knowledge in two disciplines but that it also provides the rethinking of work and should be utilised to challenge ageist attitudes within society.

## Chapter 2: Representations of Age

Research on the older person requires consideration of the societal representations of age because, as Featherstone and Hepworth (1995: 357) note, “the experience of old age is thus shaped not simply by processes of biological change but through the power of the image of ‘burden’ to shape our perceptions of growing older”. This chapter will explore further the representations of the older person within contemporary society. Through consideration of existing literature and through relevant policy documentation, this chapter will demonstrate the ambivalent nature of these images. In advance of this, however, there is need to acknowledge how the term ‘older person’ is defined within this thesis.

### Definitions of the Older Person

Age is generally perceived in chronological terms (Laz 1998) and as such this is a good starting point for discussing definitions of the older person. The *World Economic and Social Survey* (United Nations 2007) acknowledged that in demographic analysis, people are generally considered as ‘older’ when they reach 60 years. Similarly, Thane (2000) acknowledges that throughout history and since medieval times, old age has frequently been defined, without justification or discussion, as beginning at 60 years. However, this is neither a static nor a universal definition and the chronological definitions of the older person do vary. Historically, chronological definitions of the older person have been understood as differing according to the job or wealth of the individual. For example, male labourers were considered old at fifty years and richer males were considered old at sixty years (Thane 2000). There are also gender differences in the chronological definition of old age because, as Giddens (1998) suggests, often it is fixed at the retirement ages of sixty for women and sixty-five for men. Definitions of the older person are potentially intertwined with retirement ages that are set within social policies.

Defining old age in line with retirement age is, according to the *World Health Organisation* (2008), common in most developed countries, as well as in many developing countries. Therefore, definitions of the older person are not determined by chronological age per se but by changes in social circumstances (i.e., retirement). The *World Health Organisation* (2008) suggests that meeting a specific change in social role (i.e., retirement) is the predominant way in which the start of old age is defined. The role of retirement in the definition of age becomes even more stark when we consider the terms associated with different stages of old age. In 1974, Neugarten first made the distinction between the 'young-old' and the 'old-old'. Powell and Wahidin (2007) suggest these categories of old age are usually discussed in terms of the 'third age' and the 'fourth age'. The latter is associated with a period of dependency upon others and the former, which was first used in relation to older people in 1973, relates to the period when people cease to be in paid employment (Glendenning 2001). Glendenning (2001) notes how the term originally referred to those over the age of 60-65 years, but since the 1990s, this has been applied to people over the age of 50 years, because of increasing redundancy and early exit from the labour market. This further demonstrates how conceptions of age are fluid and changing, emerging within, and reflecting, the political economic environment.

With the national pension age set to increase in the UK (Thurley 2011) it might be expected that there will be a related increase in retirement age<sup>3</sup> and subsequently the chronological age at which people are seen to be older. Yet quite paradoxically, social policies specific to ageing and the older person are being aimed at those much younger than future retirement ages, and even lower than the current national retirement age. For example, the key policy document in Scotland - *All Our*

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<sup>3</sup> The retirement age relates to the age one is expected to leave work. It is not the same as pension age, which is the age that one can start to draw their pension (Thurley 2011), albeit in reality there may be parity between retirement and pension ages.

*Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population* (Scottish Executive 2007b) – relates to those over the age of 50 years old. The justification given for this criterion is:

...because for many it is a point at which life circumstances start to change in ways that have implications for the future. For example, many people start to change their working patterns, some leaving the labour market completely. Grown-up children may leave home, and parents have more time and possibly more money. People take on caring responsibilities perhaps for the first time, for example for elderly relatives. People also gradually become more likely to develop long term health conditions, such as diabetes and arthritis, which they may have to live with for many years. We stress that people's experiences will vary greatly, but in population terms, the events and changes above are more likely to happen in the over 50s. [Scottish Executive 2007b: 2]

What is significant about the above view is that older age is not dominated just by retirement but by the increased likelihood of experiencing a whole range of life events. As the Scottish policy context conceptualises people over the age of 50 as being fit for consideration within their ageing population policies, then is it not justifiable for research on the older person in Scotland to reflect this definition? I argue for the purposes of this thesis that this is the most appropriate definition of the older person. This is not only because it is that adopted within key policies, but also because there are a number of inherent problems with equating old age with retirement.

The use of retirement in such a definition seems illogical in countries or regions where no formal retirement age or benefits exist (World Health Organisation 2008). Even where formal retirement

exists, this method of defining old age has to be questioned. Even where there are formal retirement ages, many people will retire from work or withdraw from the labour market earlier or later than the formal retirement age. As Bowling and Ebrahim (2001: 225) note, defining old age in this way “is arbitrary and increasingly blurred with the increase in early retirement and unemployment among older workers”.

Furthermore, could it justifiably be said that a successful entrepreneur, or other, who has enough wealth and decides to retire at the age of, for example, 40 years, be considered an older person? In such an instance, it could be argued that retirement need not necessarily equate to old age. One could also consider the individual, who has never worked within the formal labour market and therefore cannot (by definition) ‘retire’; are they thus never to be considered an older person? What of a person aged 70 or 75 years who remains in employment – would others not see them as an older person? These situations highlight the problematic nature of defining the older person in relation to retirement, and the ambivalence and ambiguities that surround ‘old age’. Finally, as will be discussed in great length below, considering the older person as somebody retired from the labour market can reinforce stereotypical assumptions of the older person as being a burden on society, especially where there is such an emphasis on the value attributed to undertaking paid employment.

Subsequently, this thesis will not consider the older person as being somebody who is retired from paid employment or who has reached the national default retirement age. Rather the term ‘older’ will be used henceforth (unless noted otherwise) as those over the age of 50 years – as it is within key social policies, and has been in previous research relating to the older person. This age is highlighted within social policy as being a point where common life changes are experienced.

Although the realities of ageing are likely to be varied and it is not possible to consider this older people as a homogenous group; however, previous research provides some indication of common reflections on the ageing experiences of the over 50's.

## Reflections on Being Older

Victor (2005) suggests one important aspect of the individual self-images of the older person is subjective age identity i.e., the individual's own perceptions of how old they are and the broad age group to which they think they belong. At an individual level, it is interesting to note that many people over the age of 50 years (therefore considered an older person in this thesis) do not necessarily consider themselves as older. As Abrams et al. (2009) highlighted, people over the age of 50 years and below retirement age (i.e., 60 and 65 years), reported a mean age of 64.9 years as the start of old age. As people get older, the perceived start of old age increases, with around 68% of those over 80 years old reporting old age starting after 70 years (Abrams et al. 2009). There is a discrepancy between the definitions of old age and the older person assumed by social policy and research, and how individuals perceive themselves. Furthermore, as Demakokas et al. (2006) observed, around 75% of people above the age of 52 years consider themselves as old. Demakokas et al. (2006) also highlight some perceptions of older persons relating to ageing and being old. Around half of all people over the age of 52 years consider the ageing experience as positive and only around 8% consider it negative (Demakokas et al. 2006). Nevertheless, people in this age group frequently consider themselves as conforming to both negative and positive images of getting older.

In terms of negative perceptions, a third of people over the age of 52 years considered being older was associated with being more lonely and a time for loneliness; around half considered old age to be associated with ill health; a fifth considered older people to be generally grumpy and miserable

and two thirds considered older people to be not respected within society (Demakokas et al. 2006). In contrast, however, 90% considered that others can learn from the older person; three quarters considered that retirement was a time for leisure; and around two fifths reported that they would continue doing the same activities when they were older as they did when they were younger (Demakokas et al. 2006).

It appears that the older person's perspective of getting older is an ambivalent blend of both positive and negative experiences. Yet to understand this perspective fully, there is a need to consider those representations at a wider societal level because, as Sijuwade (2009) highlights, the self-image of the older person is shaped and influenced, in some part, by interactions with others and by the commonly held stereotypes of ageing prevalent within society.

## **Social Representations of Older People**

The stereotypes and societal representations of older people are somewhat intricate, with a mix of positive, negative and often opposing factors. On a positive level, and in contrast to the findings of Demakokas et al. (2006) noted above, older people are reportedly considered more friendly than younger people (Abrams et al. 2006). They are also thought to be more moral and warmer than younger people (Abrams et al. 2009). In contrast, however, older people might be thought of as being less competent, lonely, old-fashioned and weak (Cuddy and Fiske 2004). Bond and Cabrero (2007) suggest that many of the negative representations of the older person are associated with beliefs of dependency upon others, and as was noted in the introduction of this thesis (see pages 10-11) such images of ageing are often associated with understandings of work.

With this in mind it might be argued that ageist attitudes are more aligned to those who are more dependent (i.e., those considered to be in the fourth age) and retired from paid employment rather than younger older people or those defined as being in the third age. Certainly as Powell and Wahidin (2007) postulate, the re-conceptualisation of the older person into two categories (i.e., younger/older-old, or third/fourth age) has meant that there is less focus on negative images of the younger/less dependent older person and rather, the focus of negativity of the older person is on those who are older and more dependent. Nevertheless, it has to be borne in mind that the younger-old or those in the third age will also be subjected to the full range of positive and negative images. This can easily be illustrated through looking at the literature on the older person in paid employment.

In employment, older people can be seen as inflexible (Loretto and White 2006; Nusshaum et al. 2005; Parry 2006), resistant to training (Loretto and White 2006; Parry 2006; Taqi 2002), having outdated skills (Third Age Foundation 2002), less likely to accept new technology (Brooke and Taylor 2005; Parry 2006) and less productive (Nusshaum et al. 2005; Parry 2006; Taqi 2002). They might also be seen as having diminished physical, mental and intellectual performance and being more vulnerable to ill health or injury than younger workers (Taqi 2002). In contrast, older workers can be seen as being reliable (Brooke and Taylor 2005; Loretto and White 2006), loyal, having good interpersonal skills (Loretto and White 2006), taking pride in their job and being a good return on expenditure (Brooke and Taylor 2005), having more life skills and experience, as well as having wider transferable skills (Third Age Foundation 2002).

From this perspective, it is clear that the young-old or those in the third age are also subjected to stereotypical assumptions and are represented in both positive and negative manners. As was

identified above, these widely accepted views within society will have an impact upon how older people themselves are regarding the ageing process. The representations will also play a role in an older person's quality of life, willingness to live and (possibly) health behaviours and longevity in life (Levy et al. 2000). According to Sijuwade (2009), some older people will react to societal images of old age by making themselves look younger or lying about their age or by challenging and trying to change these assumptions. Others, however, will react by acting out the stereotypical behaviours even where this is contrary to their personality, or by isolating themselves from others (Sijuwade 2009).

From this, it can be interpreted that representations and images of the older person (in particular those of a negative nature) can have deleterious impacts upon the experience of being older. However, these negative stereotypes or images can also have wider implications. For example, the negative representations of ageing have been associated with reducing the number of people within the labour market. Consequently, challenging such negative images in employment has become something of a focus within British social policy (Duncan et al. 2000) (a factor that will be discussed later in this chapter). Widespread growing concerns over ageist attitudes have been associated with the development of concepts such as successful, productive and active ageing.

## **Successful, Productive and Active Ageing**

The concepts of successful, healthy, productive and active ageing all promote the importance of the physical and mental well-being as people age (Buys and Miller 2012). According to Buys and Miller, the most well known of these concepts is that of successful ageing, which is rooted in a medical model of ageing and which was originally developed by Rowe and Kahn (1987). Rowe and Kahn

(1987: 148) suggest that the focus of successful ageing is to ensure “the maintenance of full function as nearly as possible to the end of life”. The notion of successful ageing dispels the disengagement theory on ageing: that is an assumed inevitable withdrawal from society as one ages (Victor 2005). Rather (Victor 2005: 21) suggests that activity theory is a “prescriptive view of ageing which argues that activity and engagements offer the path to successful ageing”. Activity theory postulates that quality of life is positively related to social integration and involvement in social networks, and is negatively affected through lost social roles that might occur with events such as widowhood and retirement (Victor 2005). Some authors suggest that continuity across the life-course is important in the successful adaptation and negating of such detriments to social roles (see for example, Alford-Cooper 1998) and others suggest that as people age they will seek both internal continuity (e.g. of ideas, preferences and skills) and external continuity (e.g. of the physical and social environment) (for example, see Tanner and Harris 2008).

Although it is possible to discuss activity theory in relation to successful ageing, it is important to note that the two are rooted within different foundations. As noted earlier, successful ageing is primarily founded upon the medical considerations of ageing, but as Buys and Miller (2012) noted, disengagement, activity and continuity theories are more concerned with the psychological impacts of ageing. Yet productive ageing, another representation of ageing, is focused neither on medical nor psychological impacts of ageing but is instead embedded within economics and the potential contributions of older people (Buys and Miller 2012). Whilst successful ageing and the aforementioned theories of ageing focus on the individual ageing experience, productive ageing is more concerned with the role of the older person within society (Hudson 2009).

The central tenet of productive ageing, according to Estes et al. (2003), is that older people should

contribute to social change and economic growth. This is seen as a way to meet health care and pension costs (Walker and Maltby 1997). Productive ageing thus argues for the participation of older people in the labour market on purely economic grounds (Estes et al. 2003). Yet it can also be observed from the literature that the concept of productive ageing has the potential to transcend paid employment through consideration of unpaid productivity. As Morgan and Kunkel (2006: 171) stated, “productive ageing focuses on the overall productivity (both paid and unpaid) of the older population and the potential to tap unused productivity through broadening opportunities for paid, volunteer and familial work”. It is through statements such as these that we can begin to see how unpaid activities are beginning to be seen within a similar light as paid employment. Despite this, and as was evidenced earlier in terms of a search of relevant databases, the social gerontology literature continues to speak predominantly about work as being synonymous with paid employment. Such conceptualisations of work are a real challenge to the productive nature of these other activities being realised because, as was noted in the introduction within capitalist societies, it is those things seen as work that are seen to hold the most value. Furthermore, it is well established within the feminist literature (this point will be elaborated upon further in chapter 3) that those activities not recognised with work will be undervalued within society. Effectively, whilst productive ageing approaches might aim to try and promote changed attitudes towards the contribution of older people, they are ultimately flawed due to their failure to recognise the parallel necessity to challenge traditional conceptualisations of work as paid employment.

Although wider definitions of work are more widely recognised within the sociological field, there is good reason why these might have been overseen within social gerontology. Essentially, it was emphasised earlier within this chapter that definitions of the older person are intertwined with retirement from paid employment, or ‘work’ as it is often referred to. Through recognising the need for widened definitions of work, there are potential complications in taking for granted and without

question, widely accepted conceptualisations of old age. Of course, the need for a re-conceptualisation of older people's work has previously been recognised. Within Scotland social policy documents (Scottish Government 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) note the entry to old age as a time characterised by numerous lifestyle changes. Furthermore, a recent review of future key questions in ageing research (FuturAge 2011: 15) stated that there was a need for a new paradigm which:

would also reflect the need for a life course approach to ageing (in science, policy and practice) which transcends the traditional age segregation into three life stages – education, work and retirement – and adopts an age-integrated approach in which all three concurrently span much of the life course.

This report further suggests that there is a need to move “away from a narrow focus on employment and towards a consideration of all the different factors that contribute to well-being”. It determines that the most prevalent and appropriate approach to ageing is not productive ageing but the concept of active ageing. Active ageing argues that older people will continue to participate in their traditional activities (including paid employment) for as long as is physically possible (Estes et al. 2003). The concept is based on the idea that people should be allowed to enjoy an active life (Avramov and Maskova 2003). Active ageing is possible for many in today's society but it is less practical for some. For example, older people in lower socio-economic classes will have fewer resources to facilitate the choice of active retirement than older people in middle socio-economic classes who are more likely to fulfil the active ageing image (Featherstone and Hepworth 1990). Nevertheless, some suggest that since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century across Europe, discourses associated with age-related social policies have reflected an active ageing approach (Avramov and Maskova 2003). With a more holistic approach than previous frameworks of ageing well, the active

ageing concept according to Buys and Miller (2012), is positioned ahead of the others in investigating and understanding the quality of life and well-being of older people. Yet these concepts of both productive and active ageing can also be seen to be reflected within social policy representations of the older person. These images of ageing will elaborate and augment pre-existing social representations, which Moscovici (1973) sees as important in assisting individuals to negotiate through the social world.

## **Representations of Ageing in Social Policy**

The population is ageing, and the level of people leaving the labour market early has sparked concerns amongst governments throughout Europe about the future dependency ratio (Duncan et al. 2000). In light of these concerns and the current political and economic situation, social policy directions have increasingly incorporated positive images of older people and their role in work. In general European social policies relating to ageing are based on and promote active ageing principles, yet still, the specific content of policies are country or nation specific. For example, Naegele and Walker (2002) highlighted that both Germany and Britain incorporated principles of active ageing into age-related policies but they differed about the types and number of public initiatives that would encourage social participation. Even within the UK it is likely that social policies relating to age will differ in the devolved counties. A report by Trench and Jeffrey (2007) not only highlights that there are differences in age-related social policies, but the idiosyncratic nature of devolution in the UK means that the responsibilities of each devolved administration varies in relation to age-related issues. In Scotland, the responsibilities relating to the older person in work (where wider definitions of work are assumed) is divided between the devolved parliament and the UK parliament because issues relating to paid employment and pensions are reserved to the UK, whereas Scottish devolution influences those elements associated with unpaid work (e.g., care,

volunteering, etc.) Given this research was conducted in Scotland, there is a need to consider both UK-wide and Scottish social policies relating to older people.

Within Scotland, the key policy document relating to age is the *All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population* (Scottish Executive 2007a: 2007b: 2007c). The then Minister for Communities, Rhona Brankin, suggested that this was introduced “in the context of a changing world and an ageing population” where “relying on our current actions and achievements will not be enough” (Scottish Executive 2007a: 1). Essentially, the strategy has been constructed on the premise that society is changing, that current policies are inadequate in this changing society, and that social policies should be created or modified to embrace such changes. As identified earlier, age-related social policies across Europe have been created with similar underlying assumptions. Scotland’s approach claims to be founded upon active ageing principles (Scottish Executive 2007b). However, it also claims to adopt the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (e.g., independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity) (Scottish Executive 2007b). Furthermore, it also appears to be founded in yet another discourse – productive ageing (although the strategy does not claim to do so). The *All Our Futures* strategy (Scottish Executive 2007a) acknowledges an increasingly important role in the economic prosperity and future of Scotland. Two examples of statements from the strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b: 7), which could be considered as reflecting a productive ageing discourse, are shown in Extract 1.

**Extract 1: Examples of productive ageing**

“Our future vision for Scotland is of a confident society that values and empowers people of all ages to use their knowledge, talents and skills to make the most of their lives, to help build up the fabric of our society and to contribute to Scotland’s future success.”

“We want our older people to help build thriving local economies”

It is clear that *All Our Futures* (Scottish Executive 2007b) has been constructed in such a way that it incorporates approaches that have been accepted by international bodies such as the European Union. Sections of the strategy, and in particular those relating to public service reform, have been developed on assumptions about a cohort of older people coined the 'baby boomers'. The following relates to this cohort of older people (Scottish Executive 2007b: 23):

The baby boomers are and will continue to be more assertive than any other generation in demanding quality services...Such rising expectations, coupled with the fact that people are living longer, add to the impetus for public service reform.

It is further suggested that the baby boomers will no longer expect freedom from work, but rather, expect a freedom to work in any way they want. Based on these assumptions, the *All Our Futures* strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b: 30) aims to promote a culture whereby "people aged over 50 are enabled to work for as long as they want or need to, and in ways that suit them best". The evidence provided in the *All Our Futures* strategy to support this position comes from an American paper, *The Washington Times*. The appropriateness of using this evidence has to be questioned because the concept of the older person and their role in work may differ between America and Scotland. Nevertheless, Huber and Skidmore (2003) do provide some UK-based support for the perception that baby boomers want to have the freedom and flexibility to choose the way they 'work'. As Huber and Skidmore (2003: 54-55) state:

As they enter later life, baby boomers are likely to be deeply hostile to any attempt to encourage them to work longer unless it works with the grain of their desire for

flexibility in the way work is organised to dovetail with other activities and responsibilities.

However, there is also evidence to support the idea that older people do not want freedom to work; instead they want the freedom to retire. For example, MacNicol (2006) suggests that men reaching the age of 60 years considered themselves free to retire because the welfare state would support them when they reach retirement age. Yet the role of the older person, as portrayed within contemporary social policies is not centralised solely on the involvement with paid employment. The *All Our Futures* strategy also promotes the value and contribution of unpaid activities of the older person; thus, I would argue that any productive ageing principles in these social policies reflect those discussed by Morgan and Kunkel (2006) i.e. that older people can be productive in the undertaking of both paid and unpaid activities. Furthermore, the representations within Scottish social policy appear, in part, to adopt what Martinson and Minkler (2006) refers to as a “civic engagement perspective”. This approach appears to counter the “apocalyptic demography scenario” often presented and exemplifies how the older person can be seen as a “resource” that will contribute to civic activities within their community. Overall, representations of the older person in social policy within Scotland seem to symbolise a positive contributory role within society.

In terms of *All Our Futures* (Scottish Executive 2007b: 47), we can see the emphasis on the importance and value of the care undertaken by older people:

Carers provide health and social care and play a vital social and economic role in society.

It is essential that this contribution is adequately recognised and supported...Unpaid

care is likely to grow in importance as people live longer and receive more care at home.

It also recognises the importance of grandparents caring for their grandchildren (Scottish Executive 2007b: 59):

The Executive recognises the key role that grandparents play in supporting families with young children. The first report from the Growing up in Scotland survey shows that, in the families included in the project, grandparents were the single most common type of childcare provider being used. Two-thirds of families with babies and half of families with toddlers used the child's grandparents for regular childcare. They have a particularly important role in families in the most deprived areas...The Executive will consider further how grandparents and other informal child carers can be further supported.

In this respect, the Executive goes beyond acknowledging the importance of older people in engaging in these activities and considers how they could be supported in conducting them in the future. A similar situation can also be seen in relation to the role of the older person as a volunteer. The *All Our Futures* strategy considers that volunteering by older people has great benefits for volunteers and their communities. It recognises – in a way that is consistent with conventional measures of value – the economic benefits. In 2007, the total number of hours for which Scottish people over 50 years volunteer, equated to 34, 000 full-time jobs with a monetary value of around £467-564 million (Scottish Executive 2007b: 41). Despite this, the Scottish Executive considers that older people face barriers to volunteering: namely, they do not know they can volunteer, and they

have concerns about regulations, expenses and the impact of mobility/disability. Subsequently, the strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b: 41) suggests there is a need for the Scottish Executive to support and enable older people to “volunteer for as long as they want in ways that suit them best”.

Crucially, however, the value of volunteering promoted in *All Our Futures* extends beyond an economic value. The strategy acknowledges that there is a non-economic value to volunteering as it improves intergenerational links, which are a component of community safety. It further suggests that there is a value in the transference of knowledge from one generation to another. Essentially, the *All Our Futures* document acknowledges that there is a social value in older people undertaking unpaid work, which extends beyond the market economy. Nevertheless, in the main, this value is discussed in economic terms. In addition, the strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b: 7) promotes an image that it is desirable for older people to engage with these activities:

We want our older people to help build thriving local economies; to contribute to the work of the voluntary sector; and to participate in sport, culture and the arts in every capacity.

Nevertheless, encouraging older people to engage in these activities poses a challenge to a key aim of the *All Our Futures* strategy – i.e., to change the negative image of the older person to a positive one. Where only paid employment is seen as work of value, and where older people do not engage in this to the same extent as others but rather engage in unpaid activities (not afforded the same value within society), the systemic negative views of the older person may be pervasive. Essentially, the common equation of work to paid employment could contribute to negative attitudes towards

older people. Subsequently, in order to positively change the image of older people, whilst promoting engagement in unpaid activities (such as care, childcare and volunteering), social policy must simultaneously aim to change the way in which society views and understands work. This could be achieved through challenging conventional definitions of work, and embracing an alternative definition that acknowledges the range of activities that might constitute work.

To some extent, the *All Our Futures* (Scottish Executive 2007b: 38-39) strategy does recognise a need to promote a change in the way society views work. Yet this is not founded upon raising the kudos of such work but rather is associated with enabling greater involvement in unpaid activities at the same time as engaging in paid employment. Essentially, new definitions of work are sought to allow the merging or blurring of, for example, volunteering and care with paid employment. It would appear that the redefinition of work (which includes the blurred boundaries of volunteering and paid employment) is founded upon the desire to increase volunteering opportunities. As the *All Our Futures* document (Scottish Executive 2007b: 40) states:

Developments to redefine our concept of work and work-life balance could create significant opportunities for volunteering and increase the participation of highly skilled workers in this sector.

A key challenge to reconceptualising definitions of work and the role of the older person in work is, in part, influenced by social policies which, in the case of employment, pensions and benefits, are the responsibility of the UK government. Changing definitions of work are therefore likely to require synergy between social policy discourses throughout the UK including Scotland. In 2005, the Department for Work and Pensions published a key strategy relating to older people in the UK – *Opportunity Age: Meeting the Challenges of Ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. This policy, unlike the *All Our*

*Futures* strategy, seems to be rooted in productive ageing principles. This is demonstrated through the following extract from page xiv of the *Opportunity Age* report.

Demographic change presents challenges. We believe these can be managed, and they can be transformed into opportunities, if we plan effectively. Longer lives should not be seen as a threat and the UK is in a good position to respond to the range of issues presented by an older society...As we take decisions for the future, we must – in fairness to all – balance the interests of today’s older people with those of younger generations. We must balance the rights older people can expect – security, an adequate income and decent housing – with a continuing and growing contribution from them as citizens and as elders of society.

It is implied in this passage that the underlying ethos is associated with economic stability and concerns over dependency ratios – this is supported by the discussion on balancing the needs of older people with younger generations. Throughout the strategy, productive ageing certainly appears to have been accepted and promoted by the policy makers. This is in contrast to the *All Our Futures* document (Scottish Executive 2007b), which is specific to Scotland and would appear to be more aligned with active ageing policies. However, as discussed previously, to a certain extent, it adopts and promotes a productive ageing discourse. The same is true for the inclusion of active ageing discourses within *Opportunity Age*; indeed, Chapter 3 of the strategy is entitled ‘Active Ageing’. On pages 31 and 32, the strategy highlights how consultations with older people identified the government’s role in expanding the opportunities for older people to experience active ageing. However, it is suggested that the underlying principles are not akin to those of active ageing but rather associated with those of productive ageing. This can be highlighted with the following extract

(Department for Work and Pensions 2005: 31), which clearly relates the provision of these opportunities to the older person's need to have a productive role within society:

As well as rights, older people are citizens and as such have responsibilities like all of us to contribute to society. They can do this in many ways, not least by taking sensible steps to look after their health and by sharing their wisdom and experience with the generations that follow. We will continue to support and encourage older people to seize these opportunities.

More specifically, *Opportunity Age* (Department for Work and Pensions 2005) encourages older people to participate in activities such as volunteering, lifelong learning and leisure activities. The strategy acknowledges not only the benefits to the individual (e.g., better health and enjoyment) but also recognises the way in which these activities increase social and community involvement. Yet the discussion of the value of these activities appears to be less comprehensive and in-depth than that provided within the Scottish policy. Furthermore, whilst promoting the involvement of older people in unpaid activities, it is possible to argue that the emphasis of *Opportunity Age* is on increasing the involvement of older people in paid employment. *Opportunity Age* (Department for Work and Pensions 2005) acknowledges the desire to encourage older people to remain in employment, stating that government would like to see an additional one million older people employed. This desire is associated with a belief that paid employment would benefit the "productive economy" and that ignoring the "lower than average" proportions of older people in employment would be a "waste of potential for the individual and society" (Department for Work and Pensions 2005: 15). A more recent UK strategy published by HM Government in 2009 (*Building a Society for All Ages*), draws on the *Opportunity Age* document by further promoting the need to encourage older people

into employment. Page 30 indicates that a drop in work rates for men over the age of 50 years was estimated to have cost the economy between £16 and £31 billion each year in lost gross domestic product. The strategy also supports an earlier than anticipated review of the default retirement age in light of the changed economic situation. It highlights how, if the retirement age was increased by just one year the UK Gross Domestic Product would increase by approximately 2%. This emphasis on increasing involvement in paid employment is associated with an underlying belief that older people who do not engage in paid employment are not contributing their full potential to society. Such messages reinforce value as an economic concern and relate to the market. They are also likely to reinforce existing beliefs about the contribution by older people through unpaid activities.

This position is contrary to that stated elsewhere in the policy and other strategies i.e., that older people can and do contribute to society in various ways. Changing attitudes towards their involvement in other forms of work will (for reasons already mentioned) likely require these activities to be associated with a meaningful value. Nevertheless, the UK-wide strategies appear to adopt conventional approaches to value. The strategies also try to impute economic remuneration for some of these 'valuable' unpaid activities. For example, the *Building a Society for All Ages* acknowledged that, in 2011, the Government (who were in power in 2009) intended to provide national insurance credits towards the state pension for grandparents who provided care for grandchildren under the age of 12 for at least 20 hours each week. The strategy (HM Government 2009: 24) suggests that this is "in recognition of the valuable contribution they make to society". In effect, the approach recognises the economic value and opportunities for grandparents who provide childcare to leave the labour market early without adversely impacting the state pension. There is little elaboration on the justification for this, but it would appear that such an approach is contrary to the overall approach detailed in these UK-wide strategies; that is, welcoming changes in employment and retirement policies, which keep older people in paid employment for longer.

Although the Scottish direction is similar to that of the UK administration, it is clear to see some divergence between understandings of older people's work. The UK-wide strategies suggest that work is understood in the conventional sense (i.e., as equating to paid employment). Furthermore, it appears that at the UK level, social policy discourses are such that they emphasise the privileged importance of the older person in paid employment over and above unpaid activities. This is in stark contrast to the Scottish Government's perspective, which acknowledges a need to reconceptualise work. Furthermore, the *All Our Futures* document (Scottish Government 2007b) recognises that value transcends the economic and can be found in unpaid activities. Rather than valuing one form of work over the other, the emphasis is on promoting integration and flexibility to enable older people to engage in different types of *work activity* concurrently.

It is evident from the above discussion that there are a number of differences between the Scottish and UK-wide policies, which are relevant to the older person and work. These differ not only in the underlying ethos but also in their acceptance of conventional positions on value and work. It is therefore not surprising that the strategies also differ in terms of what they say about the involvement of older people within work. The UK-wide policies acknowledge the value of unpaid *work activities* but encourage older people into paid employment. In contrast, the Scottish strategy encourages older people into both paid employment and a range of unpaid activities considered to be work. It does not explicitly favour paid over unpaid activities but rather acknowledges how, through for example, flexibility, the older person might be able to engage with a whole range of activities. Yet what activities do older people in Scotland actually undertake and how are older people rationalising their involvement in these different activities?

## Understanding Engagement of Older People in 'Productive Activity'

There is some existing literature, which can provide some answers to these questions. For example, there is a growing amount of literature exploring the older person's engagement in activities, such as volunteering (see for example Baldock 1999; Hank and Stuk 2008), care of elderly or ill relatives (see for example Arksey and Glendinning 2008; Masuy 2009) and care of grandchildren (see for example Wang and Marcotte 2007; Wheelock and Jones 2002). The literature provides some insight into the reasons why people engage in or disengage from these activities. For example, the wealth and economic resources of an individual might have some bearing upon their involvement in unpaid activities, such as volunteering (McMunn et al. 2009). People's resources are also relevant to paid employment; some people will remain in paid employment for economic reasons (Flynn 2010), while more older people with private pensions may leave the labour market when they are around 50 years, unlike those without private pensions (Banks et al. 2002). It could therefore be argued that individual wealth may have some bearing on the involvement of individuals in paid employment.

Economic reasons are not the principal factor in decisions to leave or retire from paid employment, however. As McNair (2006) indicates, many people choose to stay in paid employment even though this is not a financial necessity. There are other factors that might be taken into consideration when deciding to engage in or disengage from paid employment, e.g. enjoyment (Flynn 2010). Health is another factor that influences involvement in paid employment. In particular, poor health can influence retirement decisions (Pond et al. 2010) and is the principal reason for people leaving the labour market before the age of 55 (McNair 2006). The desire for better health can also influence the decision to leave paid employment (Pond et al. 2010) or to engage or not engage in unpaid *work activities*. Yet it is not only the health of the individual but the health of those around them that

influences people who engage in or disengage from work. For example, Masuy (2010) comments on how those providing care for relatives will withdraw from paid employment if and when combined responsibilities are too demanding. Subsequently, it can be considered that the care responsibilities of individuals will also play a role in decisions relating to involvement in *work activities*.

Although the aforementioned research provides some indication of the activities experienced by the older person, most of these studies have focused upon single or pairings of activity. The previous considerations of older people's experiences seem to be characterised by a distinct absence of any study adopting a holistic and all encompassing approach, which looks to the total blend of activities that older people undertake and which looks beyond those activities often noted as having economic value. Our current understanding of the experiences of older people engaging in different activities are therefore only a snapshot view, focusing through a narrow lens that ignores the potential influence and interrelations of factors and activities beyond those being studied. The possibility of such interrelations and the acceptance of the importance of these are brought to light through consideration of the sociology work literature, and in particular that of Miriam Glucksmann who looks at the total social organisation of labour (this will be discussed at greater length in chapter 3).

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the complex, polarised nature of the representations of older people (defined in this thesis as those over the age of 50 years old). Throughout history, older people have been seen both positively and negatively concurrently within the same cultures, same environments and the same eras. In recent years, at some levels the changing demographic scenarios and fears of

dependency ratios have been associated with views of the older person as a 'burden'. Yet on another level, there has been an emergence of productive, successful and active ageing principles, which illustrate more positive views of ageing. These principles are inherent within social policies, which promote the older person or those that might be thought of as in the third age as having a vital role in both paid and unpaid activities. The chapter has observed how previous research explored, to some extent, the involvement of people within these roles. It also explored how people manage their time between two or more different activities. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is still need for further consideration of these matters and in particular, for the undertaking of a study, which adopts a more holistic and encompassing approach to the activities undertaken.

It is evident from this chapter that whilst social policies are promoting positive approaches to ageing, they at the same time are founded upon concerns over ageing populations and the possibility of older people being seen as a 'burden'. Furthermore, the ambivalent reflections on older people and ageing are systemic throughout society, with both those in the third and fourth ages being seen sometimes in a positive manner and sometimes in a negative manner. Whilst acknowledging that positive images of ageing do exist, the persistence of negative representations is particularly concerning given that constructions of ageing are influential in the way that older people see themselves (Lane 2011; Sijuwade 2009). Furthermore, ageism has recently become recognised as the "most widely experienced form of discrimination", with more than 164 million people experiencing serious consequences from this in Europe (Age UK 2011: 3). In order to assess future directions in the tackling of the pervasive negative images of the older person, it is beneficial to consider the theoretical perspectives aiming to explain social representations of age. The subsequent chapter will focus upon this very issue, clarifying the interrelation between images of age and commonly accepted notions of work, thus illustrating the importance of considering work when understanding age, and *vice versa*.

## Chapter 3: Age and Work

Despite there being claims that social gerontology research has often been criticised for failing to give consideration to theoretical issues (Baars et al. 2006), the late 1990s saw the expansion of the range of age-related theoretical publications (Powell 2001) with a 12% increase in the use of theory over the decade up to 2004 (Alley et al. 2010). To begin with, this chapter aims to introduce the pertinent theoretical considerations about age and ageing. Towards the middle of the chapter, the focus will be upon theories of the ambivalent images of ageing. Yet as will be demonstrated within this chapter, when explaining ageism, it is not sufficient just to draw upon the field of social gerontology but rather there is also a need to look to theoretical considerations found within the sociology of work literature. Therefore, this chapter will blend theories from both fields to explain the social representations of ageing. More specifically this chapter will include discussion of modernisation theory, the individualisation thesis, and the political economy perspective. Leading on from this there will be a discussion of how social policies situated within specific political economic environments have been influential in shaping older people's experiences of work. Towards the end of this chapter, there is a discussion on definitions of work and the need to rethink the work activities of older people.

### Modernisation Theory

Proponents of the modernisation theory would consider that societal changes influence the status and role of the older person (Moody 2000). It is founded upon an assumption that as society 'progresses' and 'develops' the status of the older person diminishes. As Baum and Baum (1980: 22) suggested, there is "no comparable demand" for older people following modernisation because there is reduced stability and increased fluidity in the roles adopted by individuals in society and this

means that there is less of a reliance on and demand for knowledge and wisdom that might have traditionally been held by the older person. There is some limited support for the theory (see, for example, Avramov and Maskova 2003; Nelson 2005; Pain et al. 2001) that older people in pre-modern times (ending around the 16<sup>th</sup> century) were often held in high regard by others in society. As Nelson (2005) suggested, older people then were considered wise and were respected for holding knowledge about the traditions and history of the society within which they lived. The memories of older people were sometimes held in such high regard that they would be utilised and regarded as legal evidence of ancient custom (Thane 2000).

Authors such as Nelson (2005) acknowledged that the high regard for older people associated with possessing knowledge perhaps began to diminish following the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century because of the potential for knowledge and customs to be passed down through the generations in written format. However, it might also be argued that the possession of wisdom and knowledge became further devalued with the movement into post-modern times. Although power in post-modern times was thought to be associated with the ownership of knowledge, there is an abundance of knowledge and “nothing stands still long enough to be identified” (Benton and Craib 2001: 169). The traditionally valued knowledge of the older person (e.g., histories of societal customs) would no longer be worth the same as it once was because contemporary societies are ever changing and fluid. Thus, modernisation theorists argue that the image of the older person is also likely to have changed. Furthermore, Nelson (2005) stated that during the industrial revolution (late-18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), the image of the older person went through further change. During this time, there was a greater demand for flexibility in the location of employment and the older person was less suited to this change (Nelson 2005). Thus, the number of extended families diminished as the number of nuclear families grew (Victor 1994).

This loss of the extended family, alongside increased migration of younger people to urban areas for employment, resulted in older people becoming socially and geographically isolated, not only from their family but also from other younger members in society (Victor 1994). It is likely that this growing division between old and young would have led to the older person being thought of in a negative light because, as Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2005) reported, the social segregation of older people in society is, in turn, associated with increased negative images, stereotyping and ageism. In addition, others have argued that industrialisation and technological development have changed the nature of employment, with jobs becoming less labour intensive (MacNicol 1998) and more suited to younger workers (Nelson 2005). It has also been argued that this process means that the skills of older people have become devalued within the workplace (Victor 1994).

The writings of these authors provide some weight to a modernisation theory approach. However, it is difficult to know whether they present a historically accurate description of such changes or whether they rely on overly nostalgic accounts. Certainly, some authors (see for example Moody 2000: 7) have commented on how the modernisation theory has been criticised for being oversimplistic and for relying upon the assumption that pre-industrial Britain was a “golden-age” for older people. Such assumptions can be challenged because historically, there were some older people who were not held in high regard (Moody 2000). For example, older people who owned land were more respected than those who did not own land and not all older people during these times were welcomed for the knowledge they held (Thane 2000). As Thane (2000) elaborated, in some situations, older people with knowledge of medicine or midwifery would be ostracised, stoned or punished because it was believed that they were witches. Gender played a role in whether the knowledge of the older person was perceived by others as positive or negative, while knowledgeable men were often held in much higher regard than knowledgeable women (Thane 2000). A further limitation of the modernisation theory in explaining images of the older person is that even after the

aforementioned periods of “modernisation”, some older people may have continued to be regarded in esteem and, as has been highlighted previously, there are numerous instances where older people are regarded in a positive way. Modernisation theory, in effect, does not fully explain the ambivalent and diverse range of representations of ageing and older people.

## Individualisation Thesis

The more nuanced representations of ageing presented within the previous chapter are potentially understood through consideration of the individualisation thesis. These perspectives have, according to Smart (2007:24) “injected debate and excitement into the field of families, intimacy and relationships in a way achieved by feminist theories some twenty or thirty years previously”. Furthermore, as Phillipson (2003: online paper) observed, “the new social construction (and contradiction) of ageing is on one hand, the focus upon growing old as a global problem and issue and, on the other hand, the individualisation of the various risks attached to the life course”. There is no denying therefore that we should give some thought to individualisation when considering representations of ageing and the older person.

The experience of greater individualisation is something which authors such as Giddens (1991), Bauman (1992) and Beck (1992) suggested are closely linked to industrial change and the perceived development of a risk society. According to the individualisation thesis, in the absence of pre-determined roles and in light of the aforementioned societal changes, we are all forced to make our own choices and determine our own life paths. As Beck (1992: 135) stated:

Individualization means that each person's biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her hands, open and dependent upon decisions. The proportion of life opportunities which are fundamentally closed to decision-making is decreasing and the proportion of the biography which is open and must be constructed personally is increasing. Individualization of life situations and processes thus means that biographies become *self-reflexive*; socially prescribed biography is transformed into biography that is self-produced and continues to be produced.

It has previously been argued that individualisation has been associated with a "disintegration of citizenship" (see for example Bauman 2001: 49). Yet such elements of the individualisation thesis must be challenged given evidence from Birchall and Simmons (2004), which demonstrated engagement in civic activities will take place for both individualistic and collectivistic reasons. Furthermore, older people (as was evidenced in chapter 2) make a significant contribution through undertaking volunteering, activities that authors such as Wheelock et al. (2009) have determined to be indicators of citizenship.

This contradiction in previous research findings might of course be explained if we are to think of individualisation as being less pertinent to the older person than other age groups. After all, it was detailed in chapter 2 that an 'appropriate' biography of old age is commonly portrayed within social policies and there are widely held societal representations of old age, which Featherstone and Hepworth (2005) and Sijuwade (2009) suggested can shape ageing experiences. Yet the acceptance of this is potentially challenged through consideration of the existing literature within social gerontology. It has previously been noted (see for example Ray 2005) that those in the third age, like other age groups, are being exposed to greater individualisation, with some (see Vickerstaff and Cox

2005) claiming that this stage of the life-course might be considered the prime time for “agency, choice and reflexivity”. If older age is a time for choice and diversity, it is perhaps not surprising to also see diverse images and representations of the older person.

Gilleard and Higgs (2007) however, commented that understanding the fragmentation of old age is also explained through considering the era within which those currently in the third age have lived. It is the period from the 1950s which saw changes that are often associated with the move out of modernity (Gilleard and Higgs 2007), which is subsequently at the heart of the individualisation thesis. According to Skelton (2005), the case for the individualised individual presented by Beck and Beck-Gernstein (2002) is brought about through three key societal changes: firstly, the demise of social class; secondly, redefining of gender roles; and thirdly, changes in the nature of work. Gilleard and Higgs (2007) suggested that it was during the 1950s and 1960s that the class and gender divisions began to disintegrate and be replaced by generational divisions, which was central to the development of a third age. In their words “a new class was emerging, defined by different parameters based upon outlook, style and, particularly youth” (Gilleard and Higgs 2007: 16). The ideologies of youth (e.g., choice, autonomy, self-expression and pleasure) are, according to Gilleard and Higgs (2007), most important in contemporary society. Defining older people as the other who are not characterised by these virtues, helped to define those now in the third age as a group (Gilleard and Higgs (2007). We see here how, as Beck and Beck-Gersheim (2002: xxi) proposed, the process of individualisation can be seen to elicit communities no longer based on “solidly established traditions, but, rather on a paradoxical collective of reciprocal individualization”.

Essentially the varied experiences of ageing might be explained from two angles of the individualisation thesis. Firstly, it could be argued that people will be forced to create their own

biographies rather than act out a predetermined role associated with their age group. Such consequences of individualisation are recognised in other social groups, with Banks and Milestone (2011) for example, highlighting how this has enabled individual freedom from fixed male or female identities. Yet the changes associated with the transformation of modernity, which underpin the individualisation thesis, have themselves created the opportunity for the development of a third age and a culture where those ageing will strive for choice, autonomy, self-expression and pleasure. What both these arguments indicate is that the experiences of the ageing are diverse in nature and will vary between individuals. With greater individualisation and the possibility for variance, it is clear to see why there are so many different images of the older person.

Consideration of the individualisation thesis alone is, nevertheless, an inadequate explanation for the ambivalence of old age that other authors have discussed in pre-modern societies. In such times where the role of the older person was predetermined and set, would the images and representations not be consistent? Furthermore, this theory considered in isolation, fails to acknowledge, or pay sufficient attention to, the continued directions and formally set out images of ageing, which are evident within social policies and fluctuate according to socio-economic conditions. Tillsley and Taylor (2001) recorded that the economic state of the country would influence the representations of ageing with particular reference to work. This is because, during economic recession, the role of the older person in employment is not favoured as much as the role of the younger person. Similarly, Humphries (2006) noted that during economic growth, the role of the older person in employment is encouraged. This fluctuation in social expectations of older people is better understood from a political economy perspective.

## Political Economy Perspective

Powell (2006) describes the political economy perspective as a grand theory that draws on Marxian perspectives. Those adopting the political economy perspective, which is often associated with the 'structured dependency theory', associate the meaning of old age with the political, economic and social structures within a given society (Walker 1999). Some have considered how capitalism and other social structures play a role in the construction of age (Powell 2006) and, according to Phillipson (2005: 503), the research is informed by the perspective that focuses upon

...understanding the relationship between ageing and economic life, the differential experience of ageing according to social class, gender and ethnicity, and the role social policy plays in contributing to the dependent status of older people.

This perspective has been described as "one of the most important strands" in the critical approaches to ageing (Estes et al. 2003: 20) and is still influential in gerontology (Powell 2006). However, as Hooyman and Kiyak (2008) noted in recent years, the political economy perspective has been reframed as critical gerontology (Hooyman and Kiyak 2008; Phillipson 1998; Powell 2006). As a theory of ageing it has been open to criticism and challenge. For example, Gilleard and Higgs (2002) indicated that the negative image of the older person is not associated with the political and economic structure but rather with individual ignorance and moral ineptitude. However, it could be argued that this is not independent of the political and economic situation. To substantiate this point, it is worthwhile to look at the example of individual stereotyping, which Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2005) associated with social segregation. The segregation of different age groups is partly located in social structures in the Western world where age-based rights and exclusions are

influenced by social policies and laws that are themselves a reaction to the political and economic situation. As Walker (1999: 367) states,

Any society's social policies on ageing are located in the context of the economy (national and international), the state, the labor [*sic*] market, and the class, sex, race and age divisions in that society. It is within this framework of institutions and rules that the meaning of age is manufactured.

In this context, social policies (that are constructed in terms of the current political and economic situation) are intertwined with and reinforce social segregation, and this can lead to individual ignorance of the reality of ageing and ultimately a negative image of the older person. This illustrates the potential role of the political economic context and the social policies in the establishing and/or the reinforcing of negative images of the older person. Yet it is important to emphasise that this is not meant to imply that this is the only route through which images of age and the older person are constructed. Indeed one criticism of the political economy perspective is that it is over-simplistic and does not consider properly the role of agency in the development of attitudes or images of the older person (Walker 1999). These criticisms are however, flawed and according to Walker (1999) emerge from a misunderstanding of the perspective. Estes (2001) comments that the political economy perspective takes into consideration the macro-level (societal), meso-level (organisational) and micro-level (individual) factors that contribute to the constructed image of old age. Furthermore, as Green (2009: 183) stated:

The explanatory schema of the approach has three levels. It begins with causal determinants lodged in the economic structure of a society (more exactly, a nation-

state), then moves through cultural categories of consciousness to individual level images, perceptions, and definitions.

Essentially, the contemporary political economy perspective (or critical gerontology perspective as it has been reframed) does not see older people as bystanders in the creation of social representations of their age group. Nevertheless, the ability of individuals to contribute to the widely held images of the older person is limited in comparison to those in positions of power e.g., policy-makers (Estes 1979; Walker 1999). Social policy elaborates and augments pre-existing representations accepted by policy makers, and in turn might contribute to the construction of opportunities for the experiences of work, as well as the widespread taken-for-granted societal representations of the older person.

According to Moscovici (1973), these social representations create an order or structure that assists the individual in negotiating their way through the world, whilst simultaneously acting as a code for communication and classification. Furthermore, social representations, or widely accepted images, have a significant role in constituting the reality that is experienced (Howarth 2006; Moscovici 2000). Essentially, explaining why (as was noted in the previous chapter) social images of ageing are often absorbed and fulfilled by the older person and highlight the potential importance of structural elements in shaping the older years. To illustrate further the importance of the political economic position and corresponding social policy approaches to the shaping of the experience of ageing, the next section of this chapter will look at the historical image of the older person's role in work.

## Experiences of Work – A Historical Overview

In the 1930s – a time characterised by mass unemployment – there was increased discussion about the older worker being “worn-out” and less able to do the job they would have once done (MacNicol 2006). MacNicol (2006) described how this view coincided with older workers being encouraged to withdraw from the labour market and the belief that the older people who remained in work might actually contribute to the depression. The legacy of these negative representations of the older person in work were to continue as the economic recovery began, with employers focusing their recruitment on younger workers (MacNicol 2006). It was only during the Second World War and because of military call-up and increased heavy manufacturing and agricultural production that older people began to enter the workforce (MacNicol 2005). In doing so, “older workers proved themselves fit and healthy enough to perform quite physically rigorous jobs” (MacNicol 2006: 149-150). Nevertheless, the literature produced in the early 1950s indicates that there was, at least among some people, a lingering attitude that the health of older people was such that they were not suited to work. For example, in the published findings of a study undertaken in the late 1940s (Zweig 1952: 61) the following description of a ‘typical’ older worker in Britain is provided:

His [*sic*] strength and speed are gradually giving way, his limbs and senses are beginning to fail him. He gets lighter and lighter jobs with less and less money. He stays longer out of a job. If he loses his job, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find another one, and the feeling of insecurity is beginning to prey on his mind. His children have left one by one and with them have gone their wage packets. He can no longer afford to buy cigarettes and he often turns to making his own cigarettes, systematically cutting down his smoking allowance. He can no longer afford a good booze, and restricts himself to

one or two pints. Instead of a booze he goes to the cinema where he can sit a couple of hours and only spend a shilling or two. He spends hardly anything on clothes. More often than not he stays at home, or sits quietly in the park watching over others extravagance. His view on life becomes more and more philosophical and resigned.

This quote demonstrates not only the representation of the older worker at that time, but also the potential consequences on employment and lifestyle. Yet these perspectives were no longer associated with the social policies of the late 1940s and early 1950s – a time where concerns emerged over ageing populations. MacNicol (2005) described how, at this time, older people were being encouraged by political leaders to remain in employment and to delay retirement for as long as possible. As noted in the introduction, Rowntree (1947) suggested that this was associated with concerns over ageing populations and the perceived increased burden on the “young and middle-aged” and an overall decrease in the standard of living.

Nevertheless, the promotion and encouragement of the older person in employment was relatively short lived and by the mid-1960s, an alternative position emerged in association with the introduction of social policies and general assumptions about what was regarded as best for the British economy. More specifically, in 1965, the Redundancy Payments Acts was introduced (MacNicol 2006). The main stipulation of this Act was to provide for those who had been made redundant with severance pay (Daniel 1985). At that time, there was a consensus that a major weakness in the British economy was lack of adaptability, with workers being reluctant to change, especially where that change was between employers or sectors (Daniel 1985). The Redundancy Payments Act was founded on this assumption and aimed to support the redeployment and mobility of workers and, in particular, workers over the age of 41 (Yeandle 2003).

In addition to this primarily economic aim, the Act also served to meet a social need – to compensate workers who were to lose their job through no fault of their own (Daniel 1985). MacNicol (2006: 80) described how the Act acknowledged that “‘property rights’ were vested in a job and length of service would thus determine redundancy compensation”. More specifically, the Redundancy Payments Act meant that those over the age of 40 would receive one and a half week’s pay for each year of service; those between 22 and 40 would receive one week’s pay for each year of service; and those between 18 and 21 would receive half a week’s pay for each year of service (Daniel 1985). Whether intentional or not, the Redundancy Payments Act was to have an impact upon the involvement of older people in paid employment for two reasons: Firstly, older people were more likely to volunteer for redundancy because of the higher payments that would be received; and secondly, employers were more inclined to dismiss older rather than younger workers under the scheme (MacNicol 2006). At this time, there was another common perception held by many government officials, trade unions and employers – that the modernisation of British industry required the exit of older people from paid employment (MacNicol 2006). Furthermore, trade unions would often support an ideology that older people should exit the labour market and that their jobs should be given to younger people (MacNicol 2006). These beliefs had led previously to some employers introducing initiatives to encourage the older person to retire from paid employment. It is possible to see here the emerging link between the cessation of paid employment, being older and the relation of this to the socio-political context. This can further be illustrated through consideration of specific retirement policies.

## **Retirement Policies**

Occupational pension schemes were one strategy that was developed to encourage older people to move from employment into retirement. As MacNicol (1998: 19) stated:

Retirement on an occupational pension was one way of removing older staff who might block channels of promotion and inhibit the ambitions of their younger colleagues.

Although occupational pension schemes were offered by some employers as a means to remove older people from the workplace, it could be considered that historically, the extent to which this happened was minimal because the number of people who were offered the schemes was relatively small; at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only 5% of workers had been offered such schemes (Hannah 1986). Yet there was great support from employers for the introduction of state pensions (MacNicol 1998). MacNicol (1998) described that support for state pensions was based on two common assumptions: Firstly, the assumption that industrial efficiency would be improved with the removal of older people from the workplace; and, secondly, the assumption that state pensions would relieve working-families from the expense of providing for retired relatives. However, after the introduction of the Pensions Act in 1908, many of those who received a pension continued in paid employment (Hannah 1986). MacNicol (1998) suggests that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, very few older people would retire from employment and most would continue to work as long as they were able. Hannah (1986) suggested that this decision was related to the modest level of pension payments that were available. Yet it is also true that during this time, retirement was seen as a negative event (Thane 2000) and something that many older people resisted (Hannah 1986).

However, views were not static, and, just as views of older people in employment have varied over the years, so have general attitudes to retirement. In the 1970s, the magazine *Retirement Choice* played an active role in trying to change the way that older people viewed retirement. As

Featherstone and Hepworth (1995: 32) described, the magazine's commentators thought the image of retirement could be changed:

For too long, retirement had been associated with a useless and passive old age and it was now the responsibility of society to transform retirement into an active stage of life.

It is difficult to identify the exact impact that media like this would have had on the desirability and actuality of older people to take up retirement from paid employment. However, it is plausible that this influenced the creation of a positive image of retirement and could have been associated with more people deciding to retire. An alternative explanation of the rise of retirement was provided by MacNicol (1998) who suggested that a declining demand for older people in the workplace was associated with the increase in retirement. As MacNicol (1998: 11-12) stated,

As advanced industrial economies become more specialised, with a greater emphasis on technology-intensive production methods, and hence skill and adaptability, so older workers will be forced out of the labour market and marginalised into economic uselessness and a consequent loss of social status...older workers are progressively 'de-skilled' and thus 'de-industrialised'. In such a society, increasing emphasis in the labour market will be placed upon youth (mirrored by the emphasis of a 'youth culture' in society at large). This is precisely what began to happen in Britain from the 1890s.

Retirement from paid employment as a result of the circumstances mentioned above can easily be

thought of in terms of the political economy perspective or indeed modernisation theory. Yet it must be noted that although MacNicol (1998) suggested increasing retirement was associated with changes happening in Britain since the 1890s, in the same book he suggests retirement was unpopular even in the 1920s and 1930s.

Although the older worker could be favoured less in the labour market during economic recession, this did not necessarily coincide with early retirement. MacNicol (1998) stated that the number of early retirements was stable until the 1970s – a time of diminishing employment opportunities and record numbers of young people entering the labour market, coinciding with the promotion of more positive discourses on retirement. The Job Release Scheme was introduced during this period (Taylor and Walker 1997) in an attempt to regulate employment for younger people (Tillsley and Taylor 2001). The scheme, which ended in 1988, meant that people who were within one year of state retirement age could retire and receive allowances if their employer gave their job to a younger person (Taylor and Walker 1997). In addition, in 1981, policy initiatives meant that men aged between 60 and 64 were eligible for income support if they removed themselves from the unemployment register (Taylor and Walker 1997). The Job Release Scheme would reinforce the assumptions of many trade unions and employers (mentioned above) – that older people should exit employment and in doing so, create opportunities for younger people. It resulted in an increase in the number of retired people within Britain (Tillsley and Taylor 2001).

It could be argued that modernisation and the political economic situation were not the only influences on the older person's role in, or retirement from, paid employment. The social policies relating to older people in work (introduced within particular political economic climates) also affected the wider discussions about retirement and paid employment, and were ultimately

associated with older people's experience of work. By way of summary, this subsection has illustrated the influence of historical social policies in relation to the reality of work/retirement of the older person. It has also demonstrated how these social policy discourses are associated with images of older people in employment. At times of economic recession, the older person has been encouraged through various agencies including, social policies (and trade unionists etc.) to withdraw from the labour market, either temporarily or permanently. On the contrary, more positive messages about older people in employment were promoted during economic growth or when there was a need to retain older people in employment for longer. The latter reflects more closely contemporary social policy images of the older person (which were discussed in chapter 2). These representations within social policy however, not only shape the images or realities of older people in employment/retirement, but they are integral to the construction of wider societal images of the older person and ageist stereotypes because they are involved in shaping the reality of work/retirement. The often taken-for-granted association between older person and cessation from work (or more accurately paid employment), and the fluctuating stance of this in different socio-economic contexts, is integral in understanding the wider representations of older people held within society.

Flynn (2010: 422) acknowledged that the concept of retirement could be the "driving force" in the development of ageism within society. When increased numbers of people retired, following the introduction of the Job Release Scheme, older people were no longer seen as being "productive members of society" because fewer people were engaged in paid employment (Tillsley and Taylor 2001: 314). As this occurred, older people were seen as "less central to the social fabric" than younger people (Wilkinson and Ferraro 2002: 346) and subsequently the image of the retired person was to change from one of "the deserving poor" who were unable to work, to one of "greedy geezers" who were unwilling to work (Schulz 2001: 146). Such attitudes perhaps, are dependent

upon two critical components. Firstly, they are likely to be associated with a commonly accepted consensus about the role of the older person in employment that is shaped partly by social policy. Secondly, however, there is an underlying assumption that to be productive in society there is a need to be in paid employment. These definitions of work will be challenged in the next section of this chapter. It is argued that challenging the definition of work and acknowledging the total extent of activity undertaken by the older person, which is of value to others within society, is a significant step towards changing widely accepted negative images of the older person.

## Defining Work

Over thirty years ago, Anthony (1977: 4) reflected on work and noted that:

...this most universally performed activity has received scant attention directed at the examination of its surrounding beliefs and its fundamental values. Perhaps it is *because* work is so general and commonplace that we believe it to be a matter of common sense and general agreement; our assumptions about it are so basic that we do not even recognize them as assumptions.

Ten years later, Daniels (1987: 403) suggested that in Western societies, work was seen as synonymous with paid employment and more recently Granter (2009: 11) commented on how “this seems to be the prevailing understanding in our society”. Such a notion of work was central in the development of industrial capitalism (Domash and Saeger 2001), but it can have negative implications on the value attributed to non-paid activities undertaken within the private and public domain. As Beck (2001) proposed, only activities recognised as work within a capitalist society will

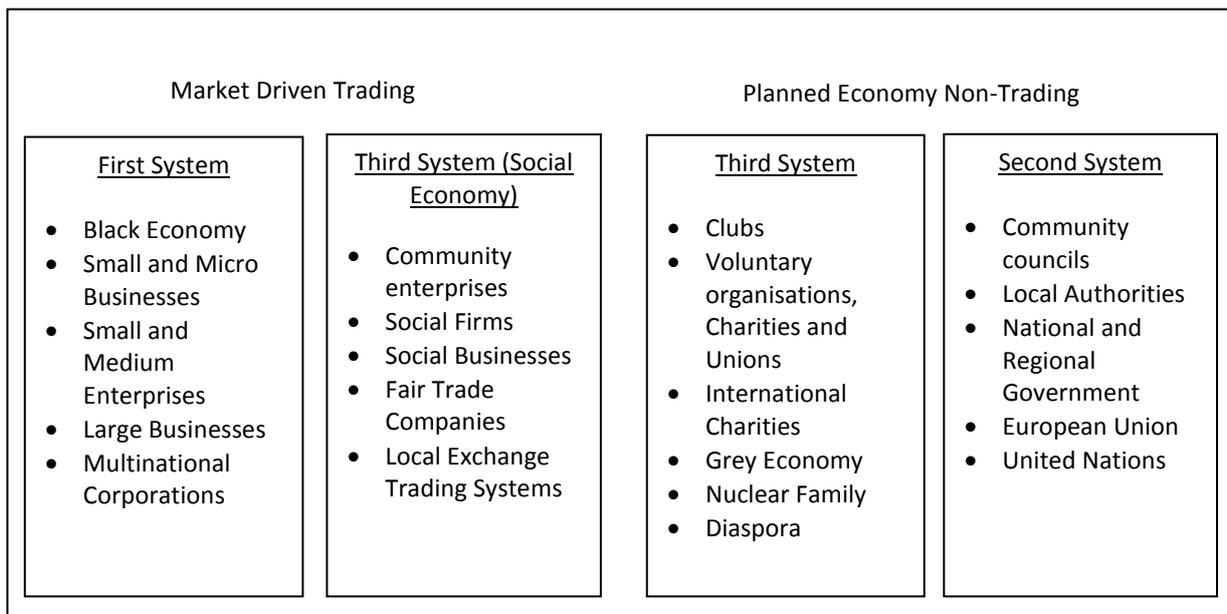
be valued. In this respect, where 'work' is seen as paid employment, unpaid activities are considered to hold less value. Those who abstain from paid employment are thus likely to be seen as having a lower status and be viewed more negatively (Aitken and Griffin 1996; Gott 2005).

Feminist researchers have challenged such conventional definitions of work to highlight the importance of labour undertaken within the home, and as a "critique of work that undervalues unpaid work" (Edgell 2006: 154). This research traditionally focused upon unpaid domestic work (e.g., housework, childcare, etc.) but more recently it has also focused on other forms of unpaid activities like volunteering (Edgell 2006). Whilst feminist research has emphasised the value or contribution to society by women undertaking these tasks, the same approach does not appear to have been followed in the majority of research exploring the work undertaken by older people. This is perhaps not surprising given that definitions of the older person and of the third age seem to be reliant upon a distinction between paid employment and retirement from paid employment.

The sentiments of Anthony (1977) are still very much relevant today and reflect the position of those focusing on the older person and work. This is illustrated through the results of a search of the *International Bibliography of Social Sciences* using the terms 'older' and 'work', where the term 'work' is used to refer primarily to paid employment. Although such conceptualisations are taken-for-granted within social gerontology, and indeed might be intertwined with definitions of the older person, the acceptance of this should be of concern to those interested in tackling or minimising negative images of the older person. As Tinker (2000: 112) noted, in many instances, where older people are considered a "burden" on society, the significance of unpaid work conducted by the older person has not been recognised or valued. In challenging negative images of older people, there is a need to explore and acknowledge the unpaid work they undertake.

Swiebel (1999: 11) observed that unpaid work occurs “outside the official labour market” and is carried out for the benefit of an individual’s “own household or for others”. This can include a variety of activities including volunteering, raising children, caring for ill relatives or friends (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council 1986) and housekeeping (Gupta 2000; McLennan 1996). Much of this unpaid work takes place in the ‘third system’ or sector of the economy. Pearce (2003) describes how there are three different systems to the economy, each of which are associated with a particular underlying ethos. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic representation of these different systems and the likely organisations that lie within each system.

**Figure 1: Different Systems of the Economy (based on Pearce 2003: 25)**



The first system of the economy is considered to be profit-driven and is “based on the capitalist principles of maximising return for private shareholders and, at worst, ruthlessly using human and natural resources to achieve that end” (Pearce 2003: 24). The second system of the economy is based on the principle of public services and is where local authorities or countries are responsible for the provision of services. In contrast, the third system is about individual citizens working together to provide and meet their own needs or the needs of those around them (Pearce 2003).

As illustrated in Figure 1, the first system of the economy is market driven and the second is entirely non-trading in nature. Yet the third system of the economy can be divided into two parts: One part non-trading, the other part market driven. Pearce (2003) described how the third system of the economy has traditionally received less attention than the other systems, and even when the third system has been considered, it has been argued that it should be limited to only the market-driven element of that system (i.e., the social economy). As Pearce (2003: 26) stated:

...many commentators would argue that the social enterprise 'wedge'...should really be seen as a subset of the first system, leaving the remainder of the third system with little or no recognised economic influence or importance.

These commentators proposed that activities in the market-driven segment of the third system have greater economic importance than those in the other part of the system where much unpaid work is undertaken (e.g., care of family members, volunteering, etc.) This reinforces the devaluation of these activities and those undertaking them. Such a privileged consideration of the market is evidenced more widely in contemporary writings of the sociology of economic behaviour (Fevre 2003). This is contrary to the classical writings on this which gave thought to non-economic meanings and values to "uncover the hidden dimensions to economic behaviour" (Fevre 2003:3). Limiting such considerations to the market, and therefore primarily paid activities, is a "serious omission" because without such activities, the formal economies "would cease to function" (Watson 2005: 1). It is of utmost importance that research exploring the older person and work adopts an unconventional definition of work, which acknowledges unpaid activities. Yet what alternative definitions of work can be used that allow consideration of these unpaid activities?

Watson (2008) proposed that work should be considered as the undertaking of activities that allow people to make a living. Furthermore Watson (2008) argued that work should only be used in those activities that can be assigned an economic value, whether or not they are undertaken for remuneration of a wage or not. However, others have not limited their understanding to those of economic value but have suggested even wider definitions of work. For example, Chester and Grossman (1990: 2) argue that work is “the production of goods or services that are of value to others”. Similarly, Andersen and Taylor (2006: 487) suggested that work is a “productive human activity that creates something of value – either goods or services”. These wider definitions emphasise that work must produce something of value to other people. Yet there is little elaboration in these texts, or indeed in other texts that adopt such definitions of work, as to what is meant by ‘value’.

## Understanding Value

Despite being rooted in the Latin phrase *valere*, meaning strong and worthy, the principal definition today is often associated with economics and the exchange of commodities (Waring 2003). Waring (2003:229) described a “very narrow path” of meaning, which is associated with the term value and suggested that Adam Smith was the first to discuss value in terms of the market economy. Adam Smith (1852: 12) discussed how the wealth of humans is determined by the “extent to which he can afford to enjoy the necessaries, conveniences, and amusements of human life” and how “the far greater of them must derive from the labour of other people”. According to Smith, the ‘real value’ of commodities exchanged between different people is associated with labour. For the person who possesses the commodity, the value equates to the “quantity of labour which it enables him (*sic*) to purchase or command” and the extent to which that person can save himself from the “toil and trouble” that might be associated with obtaining other commodities (Smith 1852: 12). Although

Smith (1852) considered the real measure of value is labour, he acknowledges that more often than not, value is measured in terms of wages, which is a nominal measure of value. It is argued that the wage of an individual equates to the level of the associated contribution to the total output (Johnson and Falkingham 1992).

If value is so often associated with wages or the market, then what value can be attributed to unwaged or unpaid work? Valuing unpaid work is often achieved by attributing a monetary or economic value to the work, which reflects its market-place value (MacDonald 2003) and thus immediately gives it a reduced status associated with non-market. This further stresses the dominance of the market when conceptualising work. Such methods have been used to explain unpaid *work activities* undertaken by older people. For example, a report by Age Concern (2004) highlights how unpaid work done by older people in the UK has an estimated value of £24 billion each year – this includes unpaid care worth £15.2 billion, care of grandchildren worth £3.9 billion and volunteering worth £5 billion (Age Concern 2004).

These figures are understated in comparison to the calculations of others. For example, Egerton and Mullan (2008) value volunteering at around £20 billion per year and Koslowski (2009) report grandparenting to have an economic worth of between £3.8 billion to £220 billion. These calculations differ starkly from those reported by Age Concern (2004). Indeed, Age Concern (2004) itself acknowledged that its figures were conservative estimates of the worth of unpaid work undertaken by older people. The calculations by Age Concern (2004) focus primarily upon care, grandparenting and volunteering but these by no means reflect the real variety of unpaid *work activities*. For example, they do not include housework or care of your own children, which have

previously been noted as unpaid work. These measures of value are further limited because the value of unpaid work extends beyond that of direct market value, as Gupta (2000: 73) comments:

The pursuit of good health, the acquisition of knowledge, the time devoted to fostering social relationships, the hours spent in the company of relatives and friends – all are worthwhile activities, yet they carry no price tag.

The emphasis appears to be on those activities, which are easily attributed economic value. This equating of value to the economy and market has become ingrained in our thoughts and seen as important for over a century. This can be illustrated in thinking about Marx's (1887) writings on capital. Marx (1887: 99) acknowledged that "capital is money; capital is commodities" but the value through exchange of that capital is only realised in association with labour-power. As Marx (1887: 112) stated:

Otherwise with capital. The historical conditions of its existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. It can spring into life, only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence meets in the market with the free labourer selling his labour-power.

Although the importance of the economy and market-place are long-standing and systemic, in more recent decades they have been open to challenge and critique. For example, Bourdieu (1986: 242) stated the following in questioning the economic representations of capital:

It is in fact impossible to account for the functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory. Economic theory has allowed to be foisted upon it a definition of the economy of practices which is the historical invention of capitalism; and by reducing the universe of exchanges to mercantile exchange.

Furthermore, Jevons (2009) suggested that the term capital needs to encapsulate the aggregate of commodities that enable or sustain people in paid employment. The importance of looking beyond the market place, and looking to how labour is distributed throughout socio-economic spheres, is something that has previously been observed in the works of Miriam Glucksmann (2000; 2005). Therefore, the focus of this chapter will move to looking to the work of Miriam Glucksmann and other relevant literature from the sociology of work.

## **Lessons from the Sociology of Work**

Glucksmann (2009) describes how the sociology of work has focused on three different areas:

1. The division of labour or the way in which tasks and skills are allocated to different groups of people.
2. The connections across the instituted economic process or over the entire process of production of goods and services.

3. The total social organisation of labour (TSOL) or the way in which labour is undertaken in different socio-economic spheres (i.e., formal/informal, paid/unpaid, market/non-market).

The latter is most pertinent to this research, as it aims to explore the work of older people undertaken in different socio-economic domains (paid and unpaid) and the interrelations that might exist among them. The TSOL is “the manner by which all the labour in a particular society is divided up between and allocated to different structures, institutions and people” (Glucksmann 2000: 19) and has been described by McDowell (2005) as one of the most comprehensive ways of describing the interrelations between different forms of work. Glucksmann (1990) in her book, *Woman Assemble*, first explored the relation between work conducted in the domestic sphere and that done in the public sphere during the inter-war years. Her theoretical stance was further developed in *Cotton and Casuals* (Glucksmann 2000: 156-157) to incorporate other factors, such as “informal economic activity and exchange, intergenerational and intragenerational change, temporality and spatiality”. Glucksmann thought these changes necessary as the study into the labour activities of weavers and casual women workers highlighted these new aspects not incorporated by the original approach (Glucksmann 2000). Further modifications were described by Glucksmann in 2005 in *A New Sociology of Work*. These changes were to make the TSOL more suitable for the consideration of the organisation and distribution of *work activities* across different economic spaces.

This modified TSOL acknowledges four dimensions that are present in any work/labour process and will interact with each other in a specific factor (Glucksmann 2005). The first dimension is that every process will have different stages relating to production, distribution, exchange and consumption. The second dimension is that the work conducted in relation to the stages above could take place in

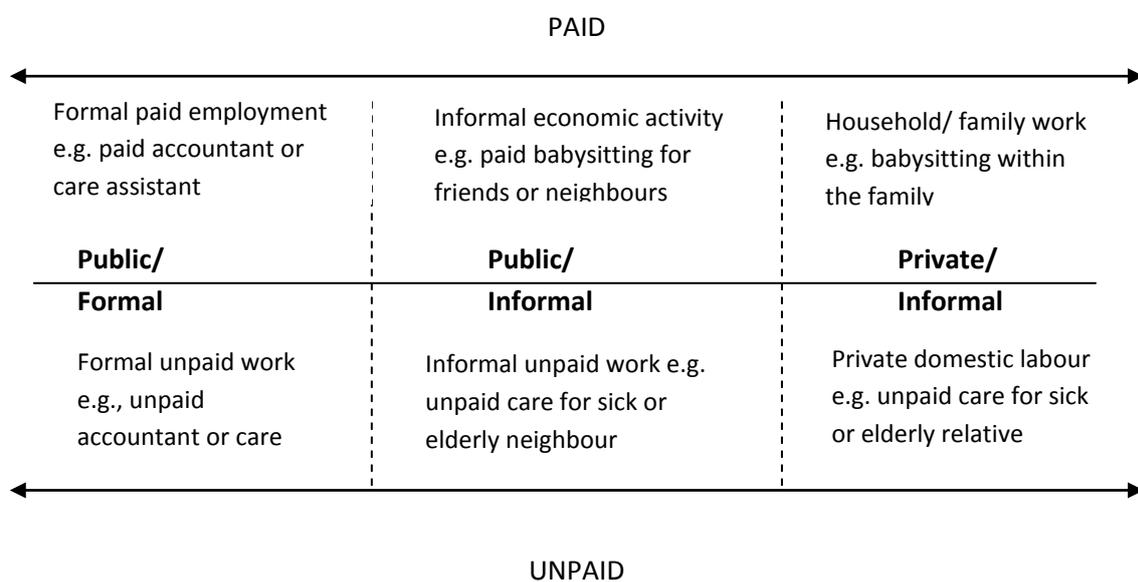
different socio-economic modes like formal and informal sectors, market and non-market, paid and unpaid. These activities might be undifferentiated from activities undertaken within particular human relationships such as some forms of care) and might therefore not be socially classified as work. These articulations of work and non-work form the third dimension. The final dimension represents the differing temporalities that exist in work and the importance of temporality in each of the other dimensions (Glucksmann 2005).

These latest versions of the TSOL have been used to explain how the production or provision of goods and services extends across different socio-economic spheres. For example, they were used by Lyon and Glucksmann (2008) to explore care work across Europe. Although more recent research by Glucksmann has focused on the interconnections within an entire process of production, this was not the original aim and is not the approach most relevant to this thesis (which is not limited to a single work activity). The most relevant aspects of the TSOL work here are in the earlier works, as Glucksmann (2005) comments, the original aim of which was to inform explorations of *work activities* undertaken in different socio-economic spheres.

The TSOL appears to be useful for the exploration of work in paid and unpaid spheres and therefore, could be considered appropriate for using in research that examines work undertaken by older people in Scotland. However, the TSOL was originally used to explore more limited types of paid and unpaid work than might be considered in this research. For example, in *Women and Work in Modern Britain* (Crompton 1997) the central aim claimed was to explore the relation between paid and unpaid work but what actually was explored was the interrelations between paid employment and domestic labour of women. This highlights, what might be considered, a limited focus on unpaid work that has emerged through feminist considerations of the labour in the private sphere (Edgell

2006). Taylor (2004) suggested that unpaid labour can occur within the public sphere but this form of work was steadily omitted from the majority of empirical and theoretical texts about work throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Taylor (2004) developed the TSOL further, incorporating a range of six socio-economic spheres within which work can be undertaken (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Modified TSOL considering unpaid work in the public sphere (taken**



With this approach it is possible to consider unpaid *work activities* that take place in the public sphere (e.g., volunteering) and also paid work that may take place in the private sphere. This modified approach (with its wider understanding of the different socio-economic spheres in which work can take place) is better suited to this research. Adopting an approach, which takes on board the principles of Glucksmann’s TSOL and Taylor’s modifications will allow a wider consideration of older people’s work than has previously been seen within social gerontology.

However, in light of what is also known from the literature in social gerontology, it is clear that this theoretical framework is not entirely complete for understanding issues related to the older person

and work. The works of Glucksmann and Taylor do not adequately represent how opportunities for work, as well as the images of the older person in the world of work, are influenced and shaped through current political economic situations and social policy (all of which have been discussed earlier in this chapter). General notions of the role of the older person in work are socially constructed and any theoretical approach adopted within this research needs to reflect this. This was a key element in the epistemological position adopted within this research.

At this stage, it is worthwhile considering the epistemological assumptions held by myself because, as Crotty (2003) suggested, these will influence any theoretical stance adopted. The epistemological position that is adopted in this research is interpretivistic in nature. It assumes a similar stance to Schutz, who, as Zaner (1970: xii) highlighted, adopts an epistemological stance where knowledge is “a system of constructs of its typicality” where these constructs are taken-for-granted within society. Schutz considered that the key epistemological challenge is to understand these constructs and to “make explicit precisely what is implicit and taken for granted by the very nature of common sense life” (Zaner 1970: xii). Berger and Luckmann (1966: 15, original emphasis) adopted a similar position and argued that

The sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for ‘knowledge’ in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such knowledge. And in so far as all human ‘knowledge’ is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted ‘reality’ congeals for the man on the street. In other words, we contend that *the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality.*

This research shares some of the underlying tenets of the stances of Schutz and Berger and Luckmann. There is an assumption that there is no one 'true' version of knowledge but rather that knowledge taken-for-granted as 'reality' has to be understood as socially constructed. Coleman and Sharrock (1998: 100) note that the use of the term social construction has at times been "seriously confused" and as De Koster et al. (2004) propose, it has often been confused with constructivism (which focuses upon the biological and physiological characteristics of perception in the construction of knowledge). Subsequently, it is worthwhile clarifying here what is meant by the term social construction.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), who first introduced social constructionism, suggested that in thinking about the sociology of knowledge, there is a need to consider the way in which knowledge becomes established as reality. It focuses on how knowledge develops through social interaction and is taken as reality. As Pouliot (2007: 361) describes:

It is based on three tenets: first, that knowledge is socially constructed (an epistemological claim); second, that social reality is constructed (an ontological claim); and third, that knowledge and reality are mutually constitutive (a reflexive claim). Accordingly, the social construction of knowledge and the construction of reality are two sides of the same coin.

The position I adopt assumes that widely accepted representations of ageing and the taken-for-granted knowledge are shaped predominantly through macro level aspects. Macro-level elements

will influence what opportunities are available for older people in terms of work, and also the understandings and ultimately the decisions made by older people regarding work in general. However, this does not deny the role of individual action in shaping reality and micro-level aspects must also be acknowledged. The role of both macro and micro is encapsulated nicely in the following comments from Schutz and Luckmann (1983: 4-5):

No doubt only the agent himself, and no one else, can decide with ultimate certainty whether he had planned something that is now happening thus or otherwise, or whether the events in question are taking place without being planned. He alone knows the purpose – if any – for which the occurrence was planned. But it must quickly be added that although in principle – i.e., both theoretically and morally – the agent has ultimate authority in this regard, however, in practice, namely in everyday reality, what matters is the appearance of action (though not a deceptive appearance but rather one that is an average reliable). For the actor does not live all by himself, but rather in a social world. Both his actions and his inaction has considerable effects for the agent. Action, a subjective performance of consciousness, is at the same time *the* precondition for the construction of the social world.

Whilst it is acknowledged that social representations and taken-for-granted knowledge might be influential in the decisions of engagement/non-engagement in work of older people, there is a further assumption that individual preferences and factors will also have some influence. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, health and wealth of individuals might also be important in such decisions. Furthermore, individuals might have memories or nostalgic thoughts about historical events that might play a role in shaping their experiences of work. Overall, the constructed

experience of age is likely to be amalgamated and shaped through multiple aspects of structure and agency. Any study of involvement with work needs to be as open and holistic as possible to enable a full understanding of what factors are influential in shaping the world of work.

## Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some of the theories that are often discussed in explaining the images and experiences of the third age. Some theorists argue that as society has undergone a process of modernisation older people are afforded greater opportunity to create their own biographies, and as part of this process, the third age has emerged as a concept, which sets out the younger-old from the older-old. Whilst this theory provides some indication and explanation for the images and experiences of ageing, it is limited in its capabilities to explain the multiple images of ageing in pre-modern societies, and it is inadequate in its reflections of the fluctuating roles of older people within work. In explaining the images of ageing, there is a need to also consider the political economic position and the subsequent roles of older people in work/retirement. Understandings of work are important in tackling discrimination of older people because those acts deemed as work will be afforded more value within society.

The argument presented here is that by rethinking work, it is possible to raise the awareness of older people's work. Just as feminist researchers challenged sexism through rethinking work within the private sphere, there is scope to realign images of the older person through rethinking the work they undertake. Much of the development on conceptualisations of work that have emerged from that significant research have had minimal impact within gerontology. There is no doubt that the need to rethink older people's work is real and just. Not only for the aforementioned reasons, but also

because this has been highlighted in key social policies of ageing – as is noted in the *All Our Futures* strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b: 38), “**We need a new concept of work and of workplaces**, based on creative thinking and innovative practice”.

An innovative and new thinking of work will also be of potential importance in understanding age. As was highlighted in chapter 2, our current understandings of age are intertwined with the concept of retirement from work, or more correctly paid employment. However, just in the last year, FuturAge (2011) noted that there is a need to move away from an approach to ageing focused upon the distinction between education, work and retirement. Furthering the understandings of work is one potential vehicle through which this might be achieved, and as such this research will also strive to consider the importance of any new thoughts on work in understanding age. In the following chapter, the precise research questions to be addressed within this research will be observed, along with the methodological approach taken to seek the answers to those questions.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

Throughout the previous two chapters, information has been presented about issues, which warrant further attention and which might be addressed through research. The need to rethink the work of older people has been emphasised at a number of levels. Firstly, assumptions of work are fundamental in the constructions of the negative images of ageing. Challenging conventional definitions could afford the opportunity to challenge ageist attitudes in the same way that such an approach introduced by feminists helped to raise the awareness, and study of, the work of women in the private sphere and challenging ageism. Secondly, key policy documents in Scotland have called for a new understanding of work, with the purpose of developing greater interrelation between paid employment and other activities such as volunteering and care. Thirdly, much of the development on conceptualisations of work that have emerged from the sociology of work have, as yet, had minimal impact within gerontology. Essentially, a re-conceptualising of the work of older people might be a route through which it is possible to rethink and enhance understandings of age.

This research will therefore explore how thoughts on older people's work might be evolved and the implications of this on understanding age. To inform this process, the research will explore what older people are doing, their underlying motivations for engagement, and how different activities interrelate. More specifically, it will adopt a holistic, qualitative and exploratory approach to address the following research questions:

1. What activities are undertaken by older people and why?
2. How can we rethink the work of older people and what is the importance of age?
3. What are the implications of reflecting on work for understanding ageing?

Within this chapter, there will be a detailed overview of the adopted methodology in order to address the above research questions. Attention is also given to the ethical issues in the design of the research, while a further overview of these issues and the measures incorporated into the design are presented in Appendix 1. The chapter contains a discussion of the selection of the research method (interviews). This is followed by information on the format and design of the interviews before a description of the sampling and recruitment of participants. The chapter then discusses the process of undertaking the interviews, followed by an overview of how data were stored and managed. Finally, it provides an overview of the analysis. Throughout the chapter, and to adopt a reflexive approach, there is reflection on the methods and some of the challenges encountered.

## Methodology

The term 'methodology' is used here to refer to the overall approach undertaken. It reflects the theoretical approach and key assumptions that were discussed in Chapter 3 and represents most closely a social constructionist perspective. Research that adopts a social constructionist stance explores the process through which people describe and explain the world within which they live and articulates the variety of understandings and experiences they have (Gergen 1985; Willig 2001). The research described in this thesis shares these goals and aims to further understand work as experienced by older people. It is for this reason that the process of developing a methodology for the research began with a consideration of social constructionist methodological approaches.

According to Burr (2003) social constructionist approaches are opposed to positivism. Research that adopts social constructionist perspectives requires a qualitative methodology, which allows for consideration of the "nuances of experiences" (Darlaston-Jones 2007: 25). It must consider the various understandings of reality that are held by the participants, as well as the context within which they occur and the historical processes that are influential in the development of those

understandings (Pouliot 2007). Yet there is also a need to consider that those understandings represent interpretation at one point in time – they do not necessarily represent the event or the perception of the event at the time of its occurrence (Polkinghorne 1995). It is assumed for the purpose of this research that the empirical reality of the past is not what is important but it is the current understanding of participants about those historical processes that needs to be considered. It is these current interpretations, rather than the accurate representations, which shape how the individual understands their current environment. As Boym (2001: XVI) states, “Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future”.

It is for this very reason that the methodology should elicit information about the current and past experiences as determined by the participants themselves. It should acknowledge that there is likely to be diversity between participants in relation to these interpretations. The understandings might differ from those held by the researcher. Pouliot (2007: 364) argues that the methodological stance should mean that researchers “need to refrain (within the realms of possibility) from imposing their own taken-for-granted world onto their object of study”. In contrast, others, such as Koro-Ljunberg (2008) propose that both the researcher and the researched are holders of knowledge. In the research process, there is dialogue and negotiation regarding the taken-for-granted knowledge of both researcher and researched, which itself leads to the development of knowledge (Koro-Ljunberg 2008). The argument is that the researcher and their taken-for-granted knowledge play an integral part in the data that emerges from the research process. The researcher becomes a subject of the research much like the participant (Haug et al. 1987; Ingleton 2001).

The methodology being adopted in this research favours that of Pouliot (2007) and considers that the researcher should abstain (as far as possible) from integrating their taken-for-granted knowledge into the research during data collection. This decision is founded upon an assumption that the participants themselves are experts in their own reality. At the outset, the researcher’s knowledge

about the wider world of work as experienced by the older person is limited in light of previous research primarily focusing on paid employment. In addition, it is considered that integrating any prior knowledge of the researcher into dialogue about work means that this formed part of the rich description of the experiences of the participants. Dialogues would not reflect purely the reality of work as experienced by the older person but rather, represent a coagulation of this and the prior knowledge held by the researcher. That is not to say that the construction of new knowledge should not include a priori information held by the researcher, which has been identified from previous research. Indeed, this is a necessary step in situating the findings of this research into the existing knowledge base. The position adopted in this research is to link back the findings from the data collected to the evolving theoretical perspective during analysis.

During the data collection, and on initially exploring the data, the researcher's previously held knowledge should not to be included, as far as is possible. This is consistent with adopting a "not-knowing" stance, which Jankowski et al. (2000) described. According to Jankowski et al. (2000), this stance means that the researcher does not assume a position of authority or expertise over the participant. Rather it results in a "levelling of the researcher-participant hierarchy", with new understandings emerging from the research being described as a "fusion of horizons" or a blend of both the researcher's and the participants' knowledge (Jankowski et al. 2000: 245).

By way of summary therefore, the methodological approach adopted here is that the information obtained should reflect as closely as possible the reality of work as experienced by the older person, with the prior taken-for-granted knowledge of the researcher not discussed with the participant during the data collection process. To enable the collection of rich and detailed information, it was decided that qualitative methods were most appropriate. Yet there were numerous qualitative methods that could have been undertaken, so further consideration had to be given to the specific method utilised within this research.

## Selection of Research Methods

The research described in this thesis involved one-to-one interviews. Individual interviews were selected because they were seen as more appropriate than other methods. For example, participant observation was ruled out for practical and ethical reasons. It was felt this would require shadowing older people over a specific timeframe throughout the day in order to get a true understanding of all the *work activities* undertaken, as well as the interrelations between them. This was considered to be over- intrusive for participants and therefore inappropriate.

Memory-work, a social-constructionist method, was rejected because the underlying methodology was not consistent with that identified above i.e., memory-work stresses the importance of the researcher as a subject in the research (see Ingleton 2001; Small 2007). This method would have meant data would have been obtained as a result of dialogue and negotiation of the pre-existing knowledge of the researcher rather than representing solely the older person's perspective. Furthermore, memory-work involves sessions with groups of individuals, which in itself was not thought of as an appropriate approach.

Group interviews and focus groups were rejected because the experience of *work activities* and interrelations were likely to differ between participants and it was considered that focus groups may not necessarily allow in-depth exploration of the individual experiences/meanings of work. As Gibbs (1997: 3) stated:

It should not be assumed that the individuals in a focus group are expressing their own definitive individual view. They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message.

The material that comes from a focus group is a construction from the dialogue within that group. Whilst consideration of this is perhaps interesting, it was not considered appropriate in this research because the intention was to explore the nuances of individuals' experiences, interrelations and meanings relating to *work activities*. A better understanding of these can be achieved by looking at individual cases. These accounts of work experiences were to be obtained through one-to-one interviews. This is an approach that has (reportedly) been a valid method for research aiming to understand experienced realities (Darlaston-Jones 2007; De Koster et al. 2004).

## Interview Format and Design

Once it was established that the principal research method was to be qualitative one-to-one interviews, further consideration was given to the format or style of interviewing that might be undertaken. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the different interviewing approaches that were considered and why certain types of interviewing (e.g., social constructionist interviewing, creative interviewing) were rejected for being inconsistent with the methodological approach. There were a number of forms of interviewing, which could have been undertaken. The design of the interviews does not reflect any one given method but rather draws upon elements of different approaches (e.g., oral/life history, biographic narrative, open-ended, semi-structured).

Rather than a single interview, it was decided early on that each participant should be invited to take part in two interviews. This decision was based on a number of reasons. Firstly, the complexities and extent of information being sought meant a single interview would be lengthy and demanding for the participants (i.e., it was expected this would last two hours). Secondly, two different types of data were being sought from the research – diachronic and synchronic data.<sup>6</sup> It seemed more logical to have one interview obtaining primarily synchronic data (e.g. information about current attitudes,

beliefs and experience of *work activities*) and another interview obtaining primarily diachronic data (e.g., information about experiences throughout the life course of self or others involved in *work activities*). Furthermore, the undertaking of two interviews allowed for some preliminary analysis and the opportunity to elaborate or develop issues if necessary. Essentially, each of the interviews served to provide something different in terms of the information elicited. The following subsections provide further detail on each of the interviews, their purpose and format.

## Design of Initial Interview

A total of 23 initial interviews were undertaken. It was intended that they would collect information about the different *work activities* in which people engaged, the interrelations between them and the objectives/reasons for engaging with them. As was acknowledged in Chapter 3, no underlying assumptions were made about what constitutes a *work activity* and in the research described within this thesis, *work activities* were those that participants themselves thought of as creating something of value to others. Subsequently, these initial interviews aimed to identify the activities of older people that they considered had value to others.

Appendix 3 shows a guide that was utilised during these initial interviews. As is shown in the guide, these interviews start with an unstructured narrative format and a single question, which asks the participant to discuss a typical week and all of their different activities. The participants are given the opportunity to discuss, in as much or as little detail and without being interrupted, the activities in which they are involved. This approach reflects the biographic narrative interpretive method as discussed by Jones (2003). To be successful, it requires the researcher to assume the role of the active listener and to “cede control” of the interview to the participant (Jones 2003: 61). According to Jones (2003), it is normal practice for the biographic narrative interpretive method to build upon the narrative obtained in a second stage of the interview.

A second part of the first interview aimed to obtain further information about the activities that are discussed by participants. More specifically, this phase sought information about why participants engage in different activities, how important those activities are in comparison to other activities and whether or not they feel these activities create something of value to other people. It also aimed to understand the value to others that participants think are associated with the activities. This method, adopted in the second phase of the first interview, reflects the open-ended, in-depth interview as described by Fontanna and Frey (2000). The interview guide used (see Appendix 3) included a list of topics that were to be addressed in this section but did not include specific questions about these topics and the interviews remained flexible enough to allow for divergence to themes that the participants themselves considered important.

The design of the first interview drew upon both a biographic narrative interpretive method and an open-ended, in-depth approach to interviewing in order to obtain information about the following topics:

- The activities undertaken by older people
- Whether there was value to others associated with the different activities undertaken (this is important as the term 'value to others' is central to existing accepted wider definitions of work)
- The reasons/objectives for undertaking different *work activities*
- The interrelations that exist between the *work activities*

The information sought from these interviews was synchronic in nature and represented the understandings, opinions and beliefs of participants about those things that older people engage with.

## Design of Follow-up Interview

There were 20 follow-up interviews. This second interview was designed to build upon the information elicited during the first interview, with the aim to understand better the historical and cultural issues that had played a role in an older person's experience of work. The activities to be discussed with the participant were those that participants themselves identified from the first interviews as having value to others. Subsequently, sufficient time was provided between the first and second interviews to undertake some preliminary analysis. This preliminary analysis identified what *work activities* were to be discussed, as well as highlighted any points that might have required further elaboration or clarification during the follow-up interviews.

The follow-up interviews involved a semi-structured interviewing technique, with specific questions about each activity (see interview schedule in Appendix 4). The questions were not asked word-for-word as they are written but rather, they were modified as necessary during the course of the interview. It was anticipated that these interviews would provide a mix of both diachronic and synchronic data but the emphasis of this phase of the research was to obtain the former. This diachronic information would allow us to explore the combined historical factors that influence current situations (Polkinghorne 1995). This is important because, as Pouliot (2007) proposed, these historical processes are influential in the development of taken-for-granted realities. Only data that is diachronic in nature can provide such information (Polkinghorne 1995). In contrast, the synchronic data obtained from these follow-up interviews was beneficial for exploring the current cultural and social aspects, which participants themselves considered important.

The follow-up interviews were designed to obtain information about factors that influenced an older person's experiences of work. These were different from the initial interview, which was designed primarily to gather information about the range of *work activities* undertaken by older people in Scotland and the reasons for engaging with these activities. In summary, the research was designed so that the initial interviews and the follow-up interviews would elicit different information that could be brought together to address the research questions.

## **Sampling and Recruitment of Participants**

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

In designing the research, further consideration was given to the sample of participants that would be sought for the interviews, and inclusion/exclusion criteria were set. All participants had to be normally resident in Scotland. This decision was founded upon the fact that there are specific social policy directions within Scotland, which are in addition to those also applying throughout the UK (see chapter 2 for further information). In addition, all participants had to be over 50 years, as this is the age commonly used to define older people in paid employment. It is also the chronological age that is used in the key policy document relating to older people in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2007). There was no upper age limit for participants in the research as it was considered that people of all ages might engage in a variety of forms of work (e.g., care, childcare or volunteering). Furthermore, it was hoped that this research could obtain people in a range of age groups (i.e., younger-older people and older-older people). A mixed sample, in terms of gender and class, was sought at the outset because these factors were highlighted as important in previous literature. The sampling framework was however, put in place at the outset of the data collection regarding the inclusion of set numbers of people that had to meet specific criteria such as age band, gender, class). This decision was based on an assumption that whilst a mixed sample would allow a better

understanding of the experiences of work over a diverse group, it was not considered critical to the research aims. The purpose of this research was to embrace a rethinking of older people's work and to explore the implications of this on understanding age. It was to provide a snapshot illustration of different types of work as experienced by older people. At no point did it intend to show how experiences might vary between groups of participants matching specific criteria such as female compared to male, young-old compared to old-old, comparisons between different classes etc. It is recognised that this level of analysis could be interesting and important, but it was not within the remit of this research. Subsequently, it was decided that any potential participants would be considered as long as they met the inclusion criteria and did not meet the exclusion criteria.

Anyone deemed a vulnerable adult was not allowed to participate in this research. The definition of a vulnerable adult is based on the information provided in section 1.2.2 of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Ethics Framework (2005). As such, an individual is considered a vulnerable adult when they have a level of cognitive impairment (through physical/mental illness or learning disability). This means they have been unable to give informed consent. If individuals were identified as vulnerable, they would be advised that they were unable to participate in the research, as they would not meet the criteria for participation. All potential participants were provided with details of these inclusion/exclusion criteria before agreeing to take part in the research.

### **Identifying Potential Participants**

A purposive and snowballing sampling strategy was used to recruit participants to this research. Such an approach involves selecting a small group of potential participants at the outset of the research and then identifying further participants from the social networks and contacts of those initial participants (Bryman and Bell 2007). In this research, potential participants were identified through two routes:

1. The researcher approached people they knew and who met the criteria; they were asked if they would be interested in participating. It was acknowledged at the outset that the relationship between researcher and participant during the study might be different from the relationship they had experienced before. However, all participants were made aware, before giving consent, as to what would be involved and the role of both the researcher and participant. Each potential participant was provided with a written invitation (Appendix 5) and information sheet (Appendix 6) providing details about the research and what was expected of them if they decided to take part.

2. Participants and others known to the researcher were asked if they knew anybody else who might be interested in taking part in the research. They were then asked to forward invitation letters (Appendix 5) and information sheets (Appendix 6) to these people. The invitation letter invited potential participants to make direct contact with the researcher.

A total of 23 participants were recruited through this process<sup>7</sup> and all participants signed a consent form (see Appendix 7) before taking part in the research. Further information about the profile of participants is presented within chapter 5. Seven participants were recruited through the first method described above (i.e., they were known to the researcher) and the remaining 16 were recruited through snowballing measures. The sampling approach was modified part way through the research in an attempt to recruit more males into the study. Information sheets were distributed at a local bowling club, which was frequented by numerous older men. Furthermore, participants were asked specifically to forward the information/invitation sheets to males who they thought would be interested in getting involved. Participants spoke informally about a number of men who they thought would be interested in taking part in the research, and then agreed to forward them

information sheets/invitation letters. Nevertheless, only one male participant was recruited through this method. A further male initially agreed to take part and arranged a time for interview. However, on the day of the interview, he stated that he no longer wanted to engage with the research because he was having a stressful time at work (paid employment) and wanted to relax instead. Subsequently, he suggested that he did not want to commit to taking part in the research at all. In a further effort to increase the number of males taking part in this research, somebody known to the researcher agreed to hand out information sheets/invitation letters to a number of men they knew over the age of 50. However, no other participants came forward.

One explanation for this came from comments made by participants who had handed the information sheets/invitation letters out to others. One participant mentioned how, on speaking to their male friends about the research, they had received feedback implying that the friends did not feel they undertook enough activities of value to others to take part in the research. This was consistent with some of the feedback that was received from other participants who had passed the information sheets/invitations to male acquaintances.

Perhaps therefore, the difficulty in recruiting male participants reflects the design of the research and specifically the choice not to use the word 'work' in the information sheet but rather to use the phrase 'activities that create something of value to others'. This decision was based on the assumption that the former would have resulted in participants being more inclined to focus discussions around paid employment. Adopting a wider definition, it was hoped, would have allowed greater exploration of a greater range of work activities. There is no doubt that such an approach, was successful at this level but in hindsight it was not free from limitations and certainly appears to have been associated with the recruitment of a restricted sample.

Following analysis of the interview transcripts, it was also observed that phrasing had specific connotations for participants. For example, in response to the question, 'What do you do that is of value to others?' participant 10 stated "I am not really involved in anything directly of value at the moment, such as voluntary work". Interestingly however, such associations did not deter participants (including participant 10) from speaking about the value to others associated with paid employment.

Nevertheless, if potential participants shared these understandings of 'activities that create something of value to others' as equating to unpaid activities, such as volunteering, then by inference, it is possible to postulate that those involved in limited unpaid *work activities* may consider themselves inappropriate for taking part in this research. If such inferences are correct, it may also explain in part, the limited number of older-old people willing to take part in the research. This is reflected in the *Scottish Household Survey 2006-2007* (Scottish Government 2009), which states that the provision of unpaid help to others and organisations is lower for people over 75 years (the age at which people are considered to be the older-old) than for other age groups. It is also possible, however, that no participants in this age group were recruited because they did not receive information sheets/invitation letters through the snowballing sampling technique. Thus, it is not possible to ascertain with any certainty the reasons why certain groups (e.g., males, older-old) were not as well represented within the sample of participants taking part in this research.

A caveat of this research is that the findings apply to a specific profile of participants and inferences from the results cannot necessarily be generalised. This caveat should not however, be considered as a major limitation to this research. It was beyond the remit of this research to consider variations in the experiences of different groupings of older people and therefore it is argued there was less

need to focus on obtaining a sample with a balanced mix of demographic characteristics. Furthermore, the emphasis in qualitative research projects is not on achieving a sample representative of the total population; rather it aims to have a sample of participants that will provide information about the range of experiences or perspectives pertinent to the research questions (Ulin et al. 2005). Certainly within this research, this sample of 23 participants provides new knowledge that makes a contribution to the sociology of work and gerontology (see chapters 6 and 7).

## **Data Collection: Undertaking Interviews**

The interviews were undertaken at a place and time that were convenient for both the participant and the researcher. Many of the interviews were done at the participant's place of employment, within the university or at the home of the participant. The safety of the researcher was of paramount importance in determining the location of the interviews and the participant's home was only an option when the participant was known by the researcher prior to the commencement of the research. All of the interviews (initial and follow-up) were carried out over a seven-month period (January to July 2009 inclusive). In total, 43 interviews were completed (23 initial interviews and 20 follow-up interviews).

### **Undertaking Initial Interviews**

Prior to each of the 23 initial interviews, participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to their involvement in the research. There were no specific questions asked at this stage and many of those interviewed acknowledged that the information sheet had provided sufficient detail. Nevertheless, a verbal reminder of what would be involved was provided and it was emphasised how a break could be taken at any time during the interview if required.

Participants were then asked to read and sign a consent form (Appendix 7). In doing so, participants acknowledged that they were aware of what was expected from them during the course of the research and how the data would be stored and handled (see later in this chapter for further discussions on storing and handling of data). It was at this point that the gender/age form was completed.

On completion of these forms, the interview itself commenced. Initially, participants were asked to discuss their typical weekly activities. They were allowed to discuss these activities in as much or as little detail as they liked, and free from interruption from the researcher. The researcher took notes, which were conveyed back to the participants at the end of the first stage of the initial interview, for verification. In a couple of instances, this process highlighted omissions, which participants wished to discuss.

Upon completing the first stage of the initial interview, a break was offered. The majority chose not to take a break but rather to continue with the interview. In this second section of the interview, each of the activities identified was discussed at greater length. The discussion was relatively unstructured and the nature of the discussion varied across interviews. Nevertheless, each interview addressed the desired areas (as specified in the interview format and design section above, as well as on the interview guide provided in Appendix 3).

As with the first part of this interview, the emphasis was on listening and understanding the perspectives of the participants; subsequently, the researcher refrained from imposing previously accepted understandings of work into the discussions. Overall, this approach worked well and rich, relevant data was obtained. However, such an approach was not without limitations. One such limitation was that in the absence of a more structured approach, two participants had a tendency

to diverge and speak at length about less relevant issues, which were of interest to them. This was allowed to continue because it was acknowledged that the format of these first interviews allowed the participant to have a greater element of control over what was discussed. Whilst these interviews were longer in length and provided less focused information in terms of the research aims, ultimately the discussions did cover all relevant points.

A further limitation was that some people appeared less comfortable in discussing openly, without interruption, their experiences of work. To overcome this limitation, prompts were used to encourage the participant to elaborate on any issues. These included, for example, the following phrases, questions or actions: 'uh ha' followed by a few seconds silence; 'oh that's interesting'; 'can you tell me a little more about that'; 'are there any other reasons?'. These prompts are consistent with those identified by previous literature for eliciting further information in similar circumstances (see for example Fielding 1993). Adopting this practice resulted in further information being elicited, yet these interviews tended to be shorter in length than the others.

The overall length of the initial interviews ranged between 14 minutes and an hour and 34 minutes long, with the average length being around 35 minutes. The length was influenced by the openness of participants to speak uninterrupted, the tendency to diverge (or not) from key issues and the number of activities being discussed. In total, there is around 14 hours of data for the initial interviews.

## **Follow-up Interviews**

All participants were invited to take part in a follow-up interview. Twenty participants took up this offer, while the other three people explained that they were not able to attend because of other commitments (i.e., family visiting from abroad and commitments to paid employment/unpaid

activities). At the outset of the research, it was anticipated that these follow-up interviews would take place after the completion of all initial interviews. However, in practice, the two phases were run concurrently because the recruitment of participants for the initial phase was longer than anticipated and it was thought beneficial to minimise the gap between initial and follow-up interviews. The length of break between interviews was dependent upon the availability of researcher and participant. The shortest gap was one week and the maximum gap was seven weeks. Generally, at the start of the data collection period, there were longer breaks between the interviews because of time constraints and the recruitment process.

As described above, the follow-up interviews adopted a semi-structured approach and a guide was utilised (see Appendix 4). They varied in length with the shortest being 15 minutes long<sup>s</sup> and the longest was 1 hour and 11 minutes, with the average length of interviews at around 41 minutes.

After the first four follow-up interviews, it was acknowledged that there was a need to alter the format slightly. More specifically, it became clear that the original format, which asked participants to comment on their memories of people engaging in set activities at different stages of their life, should be changed. There were two reasons for this: firstly, two out of the four participants spoke informally afterwards about how reminiscing about different stages in life evoked some strong emotions. Whilst in these cases the emotions were not negative, it was acknowledged that there were ethical issues related to this interview format as it might cause distress. Secondly, the original format of the follow-up interviews did not provide the extent of information that had been anticipated. Through these interviews, the historical elements that influenced people's working lives were identified, but this format of interview did not provide such rich information about how more current issues (e.g., current government discourses, social attitudes, etc.) influenced their experiences of work today.

On reflection, it was identified that one way to overcome these factors was to ask about generational changes (i.e., between the participants' generations and their parents' or even grandparents' generations) rather than memories at different stages of a participant's life. An altered interview schedule was produced (see Appendix 10) and was used for the remaining 16 follow-up interviews. The approach provided the information required but did not appear to have the same emotional effect on participants as the original interview format.

## **Storage and Handling of Interview Data**

The Data Protection Act (1998) was adhered to when handling the data obtained during this research; data was treated in the manner agreed by participants. All participants were advised (information sheet, Appendix 6) about how data from the interviews would be recorded and stored. Furthermore, the consent form (Appendix 7), which was signed by participants, ensured people would acknowledge and confirm the way in which their information would be treated.

All the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and with consent of the participants. As soon as possible after the interview, the audio files were made anonymous through digitally removing identifiable information or through replacing this information with computer-generated speech (e.g., replacing actual names of places with pseudonyms made audible through computer generated speech). This process was done using WavePad sound editor software and edited audio files were stored in NVivo 8. It was a labour intensive task, which took around two and a half hours for every hour of audio file. Nevertheless, at the outset of the research, it was considered critical because it was anticipated that the analysis would be undertaken directly from the audio files. It was later decided not to undertake analysis from this format (see section on data analysis for an overview of the reasons) and the audio files were transcribed. These transcriptions were saved in Microsoft Word format with a security password and were only viewed by the researcher. Consent

was given, however, for extracts of the interviews (after being anonymised) to be utilised in this thesis and other publications/presentations completed by the researcher.

On completion of the PhD, for which this research was being undertaken, the information obtained will be archived by the principal researcher and/or the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) Qualidata for potential future research. It was acknowledged that if the data were to be stored with the ESDS Qualidata, then all users of the data would be required to maintain confidentiality of the participants as part of the terms and conditions for using data as part of this service (see <http://www.esds.ac.uk/orderingData/termsandConditions.asp> for full details of terms and conditions of use).

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data involved three different stages: to identify what might be considered as *work activity*; to understand the reasons and motivations for engaging in these activities, as well as the factors underlying those motivations; and to look at the interrelations that exist between different activities. This section will provide a brief overview of each of these stages of analysis.

### **Stage 1 - Identifying Activity and Work Activity**

Utilising NVivo, the transcripts were reviewed and coded, with a view to highlighting the activities undertaken by older people. This information was detailed at the start of the interviews where participants were asked to talk about a typical week and the activities with which they engaged. It was only those things that participants thought had value attributed to them that were discussed further within the interviews. This was justified in designing the interviews as the focus was to be upon work undertaken by older people, and the crux of wider definitions has centred on those

things that create value to others. However, in embracing such definitions, value was not to be thought of primarily in economic terms but rather acknowledged as being perceived by others in many different forms (see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion). The nature of value was not predetermined by the researcher; instead, participants determined what they considered was meant by value. Subsequently, as well as exploring the activities that were of value to others (therefore considered as *work activities* for the purposes of this research), it was also interesting to consider participants' views regarding the nature of value. Identifying what value was to others formed the second wave of coding that was undertaken in this stage of the analysis.

Coding, according to Babbie (2009), is the key process in the analysis of the qualitative research projects. The coding undertaken above involved the following steps:

1. Firstly, the researcher was familiarised with the interview data at the coding stage.
2. All activities discussed were assigned a code.
3. The sections of the interview, where participants discussed value to others, were noted and coded according to the nature of the value discussed.
4. Areas which had coding for both value to others and activity were considered to represent *work activities*; that is those activities that participants considered to have value to others.

The process of coding from the transcripts the 'value to others' and 'activities undertaken' was a relatively straightforward process utilising NVivo 8. However, identifying which activities had value to others was more problematic; here, the matrix coding option in NVivo 8 was used. This process

ought to have highlighted all occasions when activities were discussed as having value to others. However, there were a number of false positive results, because utterances that had been coded often had reference to more than one activity. Yet the 'value to others' being discussed and coded was in reference to only some of the activities discussed within that utterance. Subsequently, all of the extracts identified by the matrix coding had to be explored further to ensure that they did not include these false positive returns. Only after this process was it possible to identify the *work activities* that were undertaken by the participants and therefore, the activities that would be of interest in the second and third stage of analysis.

## **Stage 2 – Identifying reasons and objectives for engaging with *work activities***

The second stage of analysis was paradigmatic in nature and aimed to identify participants' understandings of the reasons and objectives for engaging in *work activities*.<sup>4</sup> This type of analysis is used in many qualitative research projects and aims to identify "common themes or conceptual manifestations" from the data (Polkinghorne 1995: 13). Paradigmatic analysis should not be confused with pragmatic analysis. As Breuer and Schreier (2007) acknowledge, pragmatic analysis is undertaken where there is detachment from prior epistemological and theoretical assumptions. An example of such an approach is traditionally grounded theory, which Bryant (2009) suggests has its roots in pragmatism. Traditional grounded theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967) assumes that theory should emerge solely from the data associated with the research being undertaken and borrowing/utilising other theories is not best practice. As Glaser and Strauss (1967: 4-5) state:

An author could, of course, borrow the grounded theory of another sociologist for its general relevance, but – since this kind of theory fits and works – it would readily be seen whether it is clearly applicable and relevant in this new situation. It cannot be

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<sup>4</sup> This stage of the analysis was only conducted upon *work activities* as it was only those that were discussed as having value to others, which were subject to greater exploration within the interviews.

tenuously connected, omitting of many other possible explanations, as a tacked-on explanation so often is.

Such an approach is inconsistent with the overall methodology of the research described in this thesis. This analysis aims to provide a rich source of information about the reasons for engaging in *work activities*, which can contribute to the enhancement and evolution of a pre-existing theoretical perspective. It is paradigmatic in nature and as such, aims to understand the findings or outcomes of the initial observations from the analysis. It is important to emphasise however, that the initial analysis during this stage was consistent with what was detailed by Jankowski et al. (2000) as a “not-knowing” stance. The identification of themes and categories, which in this stage of the research were to represent the reasons and objectives for older people engaging in the different activities, was identified through the following coding process, whilst adopting a ‘not-knowing’ stance:

1. A stage of re-familiarisation of the transcripts.
2. Common reasons and objectives for older people who engage in different activities were identified, and all relevant comments were coded as appropriate.
3. The transcripts were then explored further, with the intention of understanding how the reasons and objectives might have been constructed. These additional factors themselves were coded into nodes.

### **Stage 3 - Understanding the interrelations between different activities**

The penultimate stage of the analysis was intended to provide an understanding of the interrelations

between activities in different socio-economic spheres. Much like the other stages of analysis, this involved a process of coding. Firstly, there was a re-familiarisation with the transcripts. Then all areas where interrelations were discussed were recorded, with those of a similar nature being grouped together. Through the consideration of the interview transcripts it was observed that there were interrelations not only between activities currently undertaken but also with those things engaged with in the past.

#### **Stage 4: Developing Illustrative Vignettes**

A fourth stage of the analysis involved the creation of vignettes, which illustrated the commonality in the pathways to ageing and engagement in the activities. The composite vignettes can be thought of in terms of Weber's "ideal types". This is to say that they demonstrate analytical constructs, which are "formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view" (Weber 1949: 90). The vignettes were created through the following process. Firstly, for each participant a brief narrative was produced with the activities with which they were involved, the reason they engaged with activities and what influenced their decisions of engagement. The narratives for each individual participant were then considered alongside those of other participants, with commonly reported themes being drawn out. A combination of these themes, reflecting those discussed by participants, were amalgamated to form the narratives presented within the vignettes. To add authenticity and a sense of gender pseudonyms (taken from the General Registrars Office of Scotland record of the most popular baby names in 1950) were added. These vignettes were utilised to demonstrate the blended experience of activities, whilst protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

The vignettes, along with the information from the first three stages of the analysis, were drawn together to provide a detailed descriptive account of how the older person is experiencing different activities (see chapter 5). The inclusion of such description drew upon Geertz' (1994) idea of 'thick

description'. The aim of such description was not only about reporting the meaning of certain concepts to participants of research but also about understanding the "conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts" (Geertz 1994: 229). The inclusion of such a description it is hoped will add credibility to the research because, as (Shenton 2004: 69) states, it is through this that we can:

convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them. Without this insight, it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings "ring true".

The detailed description presented within chapter 5 was deemed necessary here in advance of drawing inferences and conclusions in light of what is already known on the topic, and it is through that subsequent stage of analysis that new knowledge about work and then age was identified.

### **Stage 5: Identifying New Knowledge and Recognising the Implications for Understanding Age**

The consideration of findings in light of previous literature is to be seen as a stage of the analysis process and is in line with the position of Jankowski et al. (2000), who detail that there is a need to identify whether findings fit or diverge from the prior-held knowledge of the researcher. In this case, that prior knowledge is obtained from the review of literature, social policy and existing theoretical positions from both the sociology of work and social gerontology. It is through this process of thinking about the findings in light of pre-existing knowledge that the developments in thought on work and ageing have been identified (see chapters 6 and 7 respectively for detailed accounts of the findings from this process).

## Chapter Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has introduced the overarching methodology and the specific methods utilised within this research. It highlights that data was collected through 23 initial interviews and 20 follow-up interviews with participants over 50 years old. Although all the data was achieved through a single research method (interviews), there were multiple stages of analysis utilised to ensure that the following research questions could be answered:

1. What activities are undertaken by older people and why?
2. How can we rethink the work of older people and what is the importance of age?
3. What are the implications of reflecting on work for understanding ageing?

The remainder of this thesis will be dedicated to exploring and discussing the findings from the analysis. Chapter 5, will be of a descriptive nature, and will highlight what older people do, why they do it and what factors underlie reasons for engagement in activities. This chapter will include the information obtained from stages 1-3 of the analysis described above and will incorporate the vignettes composed in stage 4. Overall chapter 5 will provide greater detail of who the participants are and what they do. It is the information contained within this chapter, which will be most pertinent to answering the first of the research questions stated above. The findings represented within chapter 5 were considered in light of pre-existing knowledge as in accordance with the fifth stage of analysis identified above. It is the outcomes of that stage of analysis that are presented within chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6, will reflect upon the findings highlighted in chapter 5 and will look specifically at how we might rethink the work of older people. Although this chapter will make some reference to issues of

age, much of the information discussed within this chapter might be considered as age-unspecific and as applicable to all age groups. Yet it must be emphasised that actually, what is presented is pertinent to the age cohort being discussed, and that importance of age will be illustrated further within chapter 7. Chapter 7 will also reflect upon the implications of the findings on understandings of ageing. It is through chapters 6 and 7 that the information required to address the second and third research questions is presented. Whilst all the research questions will be answerable utilising the information contained in chapters 5-7, chapter 8 will summate the findings in relation to the questions. It will also summarise the added benefit from the blended consideration of work and age and explore the implications and future directions associated with this research.

## **Chapter 5: Introducing the Participants – Who they are and what they do**

This descriptive chapter aims to provide a greater understanding of the 23 participants taking part in this study. Initially the chapter presents some demographic information before exploring the experiences of the various activities that older people engage in and their reasons for engagement. Whilst such detail provides an overview of the multiple activities people might be involved within, it does not provide sufficient insight into the overall unique combined experiences of individuals. Whilst having a vital role in helping to get to know the participants, the inclusion of such content provides ethical challenges to the protection of participants' anonymity. Given this, the chapter will utilise composite vignettes to supplement the rich description and illustrate individual experiences of the early older years. The vignettes discussed within this chapter are amalgamations of the experiences of the multiple participants who engaged with the research. These are to be taken as illustrative and should not be considered as completely comprehensive because the sample is not homogeneous due to the great diversity amongst the experiences of participants.

Overall, the vignettes alongside the other information presented within this chapter should help provide a deeper understanding of the characters of individuals that were involved within this research. The chapter will provide further insight into what the participants do and why they choose to engage with particular activities. The description provided within this chapter will provide the basis upon which the discussions of work and age are founded (see chapters 6 and 7 respectively for these discussions).

### **Demographics of Participants**

Some basic demographic information (in terms of age and gender) was collected on a form at the

outset of the research (see Appendix 8). Furthermore, during the interview process information was gathered on the occupational status of each participant. Appendix 9 provides an overview of the characteristics for each participant and Figure 3 is an overall summary of the number of participants that fall into different occupational subcategories, age bands and gender groups.

**Figure 3: Summary of participant characteristics**

<b>Occupational Status</b>					
Retired	Transition to Retirement	Self Employed	Part-time Employment	Full-time Employment	Full-time Education
5	1	2	6	8	1
<b>Age</b>					
50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75 and over*
8	4	5	5	1	0
<b>Gender</b>					
Male			Female		
5			18		

\* Although no participants were in this age group, it is included here as it was one of the categories in the form completed by participants about their age.

It is evident from Figure that, five participants were retired from paid employment, one moved from paid employment to retirement between interviews and the remainder were self-employed (two participants), in full-time employment (eight participants) or part-time employment (six participants). Of those involved in paid employment or self-employment, five were over the state retirement age. Participants were employed in a range of different paid occupations, such as hairdressing, bookkeeping, distribution, secretarial, care, ministry, and teaching (secondary and tertiary education).

All the participants were under the age of 75 and were considered the younger-old. Only one participant was aged between 70 and 75. Five participants were aged between 65 and 69; five were aged between 60 and 64, four between 55 and 59 and eight between 50 and 54. The majority of the participants were female (18 participants) and only five were male. This was despite modifying the recruitment strategy and making efforts to increase the number of males (see pages 81-84 for an overview of the modified sampling approach and reflections on why fewer males might have opted to participate in the research). Although no formal analysis was done to compare different groups of people, no clear distinctions between males/females, or between different age groups (or their respective beliefs/opinions) were observed in relation to the sorts of activities people were involved in.

## **Activities Undertaken**

The participants in this research spoke about engaging in a range of different activities, including paid employment/self-employment, study, volunteering, housework and gardening, supporting/caring for children and grandchildren, supporting/caring for elderly or ill relatives, attending social clubs, sports and physical activities, arts and crafts, and socialising. This section provides a little more detail about the participants taking part in each of these activities.

### **Paid Employment/Self-Employment**

Fourteen out of the 23 participants were involved in paid employment, either part-time (six participants) or full time (eight participants). Of those in full-time paid employment three were male and five were female. One of the male participants in full-time paid employment was on sick leave at the time of the interviews. A female participant, who had been in full-time employment and was

on sick leave, was in the process of moving into retirement. All of those participants working part-time were female. Figure 4, shows the range of different occupations for those in paid employment and Appendix 9 shows the SOC2000 category for each participant’s occupation.

**Figure 4: List of Occupations**

Delivery driver	Charity worker	Secretary
Research centre manager	Teacher	Doctor
Teaching auxiliary	Nursing home activities manager	Lecturer
Minister	Training co-ordinator	

The majority of those in paid employment were under state pension age (60 for women and 65 for men). Although three participants were in paid employment after state pension age, another remained in employment after the age that they could collect their private pension and two people suggested that they did not intend to leave paid employment at state pension age. In addition, two female participants in self-employment were beyond the state pension age, with one owning a hairdressing business and the other being a bookkeeper.

Decisions to remain in paid employment/self-employment beyond retirement age for some relate to financial necessity. However, for others, this was associated with reasons such as seeing themselves having more to contribute, not wanting to lose what they had worked hard to achieve, finishing the work they had being involved with from the onset, and retaining associated friendships/social networks. The latter is a particularly common reason why people in self-employment do not retire at state retirement age (Sainsbury et al. 2006).

**Independent Study and Learning**

Three participants were involved in formal study of some description. One was involved in study at undergraduate level and two were involved in study at postgraduate level. All of the participants

involved in study were female. One was aged between 60 and 64, and the other two were aged between 50 and 54. Other participants commented that they would undertake learning as part of their paid employment and, as will be illustrated in chapter 6, the undertaking of what might seem independent study is quite often not distinct from other activities such as paid employment. Furthermore, it was observed within this research that learning and study took place in a number of other activities undertaken by participants, albeit in a less formal manner. For example, some participants spoke about how they were involved in book clubs, which helped them to learn about new perspectives and that through attending social clubs or undertaking physical activity it had been possible for them to learn new ideas and things about the local community.

## Volunteering

Thirteen participants were involved in volunteering. Three were male and ten were female. Seven volunteers were over the state retirement age but not all of these participants were retired from paid employment/self-employment. Only four participants who volunteered were retired from paid employment. Two participants involved in volunteering were self-employed, four were employed part-time and three were employed full-time. The voluntary activities discussed were varied in nature. Figure 5 lists some of volunteering activities in which participants were involved.

**Figure 5: List of Volunteering Activities**

Guide dog training	Advocacy work	Hospice work
Community council	Fundraising	Resident associations
Charity committees	Sports committees	Inner wheel *
Community associations	Management groups	WRVS
Citizen Advice Bureau		

\* Inner wheel is a voluntary group: membership of which is restricted to the wives, sisters, mothers and daughters of members of the rotary club.

## **Housework and Gardening**

Fifteen of the participants discussed undertaking housework and gardening on a regular basis. All five men and ten females spoke about engaging in this. For many, involvement in housework was secondary to engagement in other activities, with comments being made about how housework would wait until another day and how the dust would be there long after them. This laissez-faire attitude towards housework was something that participants themselves noted represented a change to their younger years where housework and gardening was far more important to them.

## **Supporting/Caring for Children and Grandchildren**

Seven participants (all female) discussed providing care and support for their children – some of these children were grown-up, some teenagers and some younger. The support discussed ranged from the provision of emotional support and the provision of financial support. Whereas, care involved looking after younger children (two participants spoke about looking after their own younger children). Furthermore five participants provided child care to grandchildren. Of those providing care to grandchildren, two were self-employed, two were in paid employment, and one was retired from employment. In this respect the majority of those involved in the provision of care for grandchildren were juggling the responsibilities for this with their employment responsibilities. For others however, their paid employment certainly restricted the provision of care for children and grandchildren.

## **Supporting/Caring for Elderly or Ill Relatives**

Seven participants spoke about the provision of care for relatives. Two participants (one male and

one female) were involved in the care of family members that experienced chronic ill health and in the main, the care provided related to emotional and physical help on a routine basis. Five other participants (all female) spoke about the provision of care and support to elderly relatives, and in particular elderly parents.

### **Attending Social Clubs**

Eleven of the participants spoke about how they attended social clubs, such as golf clubs, walking groups, book clubs, film clubs, choirs, drama groups, bird watching groups and business clubs. Both males and females spoke about attending social clubs but the nature of those attended appears to differ according to gender. Males spoke predominantly about attending golf and walking groups, whereas book clubs, choirs, drama groups and film clubs tended to be exclusively attended by females. Females typically spoke more often about involvement in a wider range of groups and clubs.

Although gender differences were observed in this research in the frequency of discussions about attending social clubs, it must be noted that the way in which males and females spoke about these activities did not differ significantly. The underlying motivations given for engagement were consistent irrespective of gender, and as will be elaborated upon later in this chapter, were similar to those discussed in relation to other activities.

### **Arts and Crafts**

Seven of the participants spoke about being involved in arts and craft activities. These activities included painting, cross stitch and embroidery, and cake decorating. Participant's that engaged with these activities were all female. These activities were not felt by participants to have value to others and as such were not subject to further elaboration within the interviews.

## Reading, Theatre/Cinema and Listening to the Radio/Watching TV

Five participants spoke about going to the theatre or cinema on a regular basis, and almost all participants spoke about listening to the radio or watching TV. Despite this a number of the participants spoke about how they felt that TV was not a positive element in society and how they would prefer to read or do something else as an alternative. Almost all of the participants spoke about enjoying reading and engaging with this on a regular basis. These were not seen by participants as having value to others, but rather were seen as forms of relaxation and leisure and therefore of benefit purely to the participants. Like arts and crafts, these activities were not subject to elaboration within the interviews.

## Sports and Physical Activities

Eighteen participants undertook sport or physical activity of some description (4 male and 14 females). Figure 6 provides details of the sports and physical activity in which participants engaged.

**Figure 6: Sports and Physical Activities**

Badminton	Bowls	Cycle
Fishing	Golf	Gym
Hockey	Rugby	Walking

Many of the sports activities undertaken involved a degree of social networking and socialising, with only those talking about the gym and cycling considering these to be done in isolation of others. As such it is not surprising that there is some overlap between sports and physical activities, and friendship/socialising which has previously been mentioned.

## Socialising

Sixteen of the participants discussed how they would socialise with others. For example, some people spoke about how they would invite people over for a meal, or go over to friends for a meal. Others suggested how they would go on outings with friends.

## Summary of Activities Undertaken

In conclusion, the people involved in this research discussed undertaking a range of different activities in any typical week. Figure 7 provides a summary of these activities undertaken and the number of people engaging with them.

**Figure 7: Summary of Activities Undertaken**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number of Participants Engaging/Total Number of Participants</b>
Paid Employment/Self-Employment	16/23
Sports and Physical Activities	18/23
Study and Learning	3/23
Volunteering	13/23
Housework and Gardening	15/23
Support Care of Children	7/23
Support Care of Grandchildren	5/23
Care of Elderly or Ill	7/23
Attending Social Clubs	11/23
Arts and Crafts	7/23
Reading	20/23
Theatre/Cinema	5/23
Listening to Radio/Watching TV	21/23

It is evident from the above table that this sample of older people are involved in a wide range of different activities within any given week. The information presented thus far provides a snapshot of what older people might be doing on a regular basis. This research also looked in depth at why people were involved in those activities participants felt created something of value to value to others.<sup>5</sup>

## **Understanding the Reasons for Engagement in Activity**

Rather than consider the reasoning for engagement for each activity in turn, the focus of this section will be to explore the issue more generally. This approach is adopted for two reasons. Firstly, there is a degree of continuity of the reasons given across the different activities; secondly, it also allows for a coherent and unified discussion of how these reasons have been constructed.

In order to bring these aspects to light further and to demonstrate in part the interrelated experiences of activities, this section will periodically make reference to vignettes. Whilst it is important to emphasise that there is great diversity in pathways to ageing and engagement in activities, the six vignettes serve to illustrate the shared characteristics of those engaging in the research. The names used for the vignettes (Heather, Morag, Malcolm, Brenda, Evelyn and Norman) are deliberately distinct from the pseudonyms for individual participants. Nevertheless these names are taken from the General Register Office of Scotland records for most popular names in 1950. The vignettes will help illustrate the reasons discussed for engagement and how they are constructed. Those reasons include: maintaining good health; personal development and lifelong learning; enjoyment and pleasure; friendship, social networks and belonging; giving back and helping others;

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<sup>5</sup> Justification on the focus of activities that create something of value to others is provided within the methodology chapter of this thesis.

meeting the needs of others; obligations and expectations; fulfilling economic reasons and work beliefs.

## Maintaining Good Health

A commonly discussed reason for engaging in activities was to maintain good physical and mental health. This was discussed primarily in relation to either sports, physical activities or gardening. Figure 8 provides some example quotes demonstrating how sports/physical activity and gardening<sup>6</sup> were a means of keeping physically fit and in good health.

### Figure 8: Keeping Physically Fit

<b>Sport or Physical Activity</b>	
Cycling was a means of transport but then it became a means of, a pleasurable activity and an effort to keep relatively fit.	[Ronald]
I mainly took it up to get fitter and to lose a little bit of weight, possibly because of the high blood pressure, you know helping that.	[George]
Well that is about fitness as well, I try to keep fit, you have probably noticed that I am not overweight or anything.	[Joseph]
<b>Gardening</b>	
It is good exercise as well.	[Linda]
I think it is quite important to my health, I think, hmm and preventing, I am sixty hmm, I feel you have got to keep your joints moving.	[Kathleen]

In addition, some of the participants also discussed being involved in these activities to maintain good mental health. For example, Sandra noted how they sometimes experience mental health

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<sup>6</sup> Whilst gardening and sports/physical activities are referred to separately here, gardening is often thought of as a form of physical activity in much of the relevant literature. Thus, where previous literature is discussed and the term physical activity is used, it is used to refer to both gardening and sporting physical activity.

problems and that, to help with these, they will do some gardening, stating: “gardening switches my brain off completely, so I am not thinking about anything else”. Other participants [Catherine and Maureen] discussed how they do gardening to distract themselves from thinking about their problems or issues. The undertaking of activities to distract attention away from problems was also discussed by Joseph, who suggested that they had engaged in a range of volunteering roles in the past to avoid facing up to personal troubles, with which, at the time, they did not feel they were able to cope.

Engaging in such activities is not only seen as valuable for the participant’s current mental health, it is also seen as important in maintaining long-term mental health and helps to prevent illnesses, such as dementia. Some participants believed that keeping busy with different activities is important for “keeping your brain going” [Kathleen] and necessary “if you don’t want go down the dementia approach” [Helen].

The desire to engage with these activities to maintain health and wellbeing was often discussed by participants in association with the awareness of campaigns promoting the health benefits of physical activities. For example George and Kathleen, respectively, stated:

I think the publicity that is given to that has increased and as has the number of older people that are participating in the gym. [George]

I think that nowadays there is so much publicity about keeping well and keeping healthy. [Kathleen]

Furthermore, it appears that engagement in activities for these reasons is facilitated by a more recent and wider acceptability for older people to be active. For example, Ronald discussed how it is now socially acceptable for people in their seventies and eighties to be at the gym, whereas in the recent past it would not have been considered appropriate for anybody over the age of 30 years to go to the gym. It is therefore not unrealistic to consider that the opportunity for people to engage in these different activities, with the view to keeping healthy and active, is greater now than it once was.

Previous literature has discussed the representations of older people and their involvement within physical activity by relating these to more general images of the older person. As Vertinsky (1991: 64) stated:

Socially constructing old age as a diseased, dependent and inactive “stage of life” has strongly influenced the way many people think about the physical and sporting possibilities of ageing men and women.

Such representations resulted in widespread beliefs that older people should refrain, where possible, from engaging in rigorous physical activity and when the older person did undertake physical activity, this should be done with caution (Vertinsky 1991). More recently, Berger et al. (2005: 192) noted that cultural expectations and, in particular, assumptions that retirement is a time for people to “take life more easily” mean that physical activity declines as people get older. The argument presented by Berger et al. (2005) and Crombie et al. (2004) is that in order to increase the number of older people engaged in physical activity, there is a need to challenge wider images and beliefs of the older person and promote the benefits of physical activity.

In Scotland over the last ten years, the Government has emphasised the benefits of older people engaging in physical activity. This has been through the *All Our Futures* strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b) and in *Let's Make Scotland More Active: A Strategy for Physical Activity* (Scottish Executive, 2003), which are implemented with the support of the NHS Health Scotland and other partners (HealthScotland.com 2010). The health benefits from physical activity, which are promoted through these strategies and subsequent programmes, do indeed appear to be reflected amongst the participants within this research. As the quotes above indicate, participants were aware of the publicising of the benefits of healthy ageing and the changed images of the older person, and this in turn has resulted in increased numbers of older people engaging in physical activity. Older people are clearly aware of the health benefits of engaging in physical activities, such as sport and gardening. This research also indicates that participants have, to some extent, accepted the current social policy directions of healthy and active ageing and the inherent messages underlie or shape one of the reasons for older people engaging in activities such as physical activity and gardening.

The importance of keeping fit and healthy is noted within the vignette of Norman, which highlights an awareness of campaigns surrounding keeping fit and the challenges of doing so whilst still in paid employment.

### *Norman*

*Norman is the oldest of participants at the age of 71. He is divorced and living alone. On retirement Norman became involved in a range of different voluntary activities including being a member of the WRVS. Norman sought solace in volunteering at the time of retirement from a teaching profession. He found that volunteering was a distraction to some personal problems and also was a great opportunity for him to meet new people.*

*Norman speaks about how retirement for him was associated with the loss of numerous social contacts and with loneliness. In addressing this issue, Norman not only engaged in volunteering but also joined numerous social clubs and the gym. He saw how this afforded him the opportunity to improve his fitness and health. This is something that Norman was aware that he should be doing and mentioned a number of Health campaigns but commented that he found this difficult to integrate with his working life. Retirement was also associated with allowing Norman to spend more time with his grandchildren – something that he simply was unable to find the time to do whilst he was working. Several years after retirement, Norman still remains involved in some social clubs, still sees more of his grandchildren, and still engages in volunteering. However, Norman also suggests that he is considering cutting back on his involvement in these activities because he doesn't have the same energy or enthusiasm for it. He is considering his options for the future and is thinking of enrolling in a computer class as this is something that has always interested him. Norman does not want to completely give up volunteering as he still feels it is important to give something back to society. However, he now wants to have some more time for himself and his preferred activities.*

The above vignette not only demonstrates how this sample of older people are interested in keeping fit and active, but that their decisions are influenced through public campaigns and an awareness of the importance of healthy ageing. Yet this is only one aspect that shapes the desires of Norman; amongst a host of reasons and motivations to engage, Norman also speaks about taking some time out for himself to enrol in a computer class and undertake some formal learning. This is another aspect that was discussed by numerous participants and something that is touched upon henceforth.

## Personal Ambition and Learning

Some participants wanted to learn more about the activities that are going on within their local area. An example of this can be found in the interview transcript of Thomas who stated the following as a reason for engaging in sports and physical activity:

It is nice to find out what is happening in your local community that you might not know about. [Thomas]

A further example was noted by Helen who spoke about their involvement at a local social club:

You hear about things that are going on in the local community that you wouldn't otherwise hear about and so it kind of keeps you in touch on all sorts of levels. [Helen]

In other instances, involvement in activities was not centred on learning about what was happening in a community but rather hearing about different people's perspectives. For example, in relation to volunteering, Kathleen noted:

I work with, I volunteer with, you know, other volunteers for example, I would find that everyone has a different perspective on things and you can pick up things. [Kathleen]

For one participant [Carol], learning new perspectives was critical to them because they were aware of stereotypical images of older people being “stuck in their ways” and they themselves did not want to be portrayed thus. Although this was only a single instance, it shows the potential role of stereotypical images in decisions of older people to engage with, in this case, learning.

Participants also spoke about engaging in activities in order to develop skills and knowledge, which could be utilised in their current paid employment, or which might increase their future employability. For example, speaking about their involvement in a social club, Joan stated:

You can brain storm there and people would say ‘what would you do with this?’ I mean I had a problem with somebody not paying me and they did pay me in the end but it was good to know what to do. [Joan]

Similarly, a reason for Kathleen continuing in paid employment beyond retirement age was to enable them to “add another string to [their] bow” just in case they “wanted to go out and do some more work”. Engagement in activities for learning purposes are, at times, associated with paid employment (illustrating interconnectedness across socio-economic spheres – something that will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 6). However, for one participant, wanting to engage with learning for employment-related purposes is something that reflects a current attitude towards learning in Scotland. As Ronald discussed:

One of the other things that may have changed, that could be argued to have changed, is the nature of education. Where hmm, traditionally a Scottish thinking

education was always thought of as a good thing for its own sake...whereas increasingly for thirty, forty years now, education has seemed to be training for a job and there has been quite a shift there and people that used to be very hmm positive about people with university, and art degrees. and eh that was good for education, the education was good for them, good for society, people are now taking a kind of generic arts degree and look down at that because they are not doing anything for the good of society as it is perceived, in that it is perhaps not moving towards a job. [Ronald]

Learning for employment is certainly something that is inherent in some strategies produced by the Scottish Government and this perhaps demonstrates where social policy discourses are reflected within wider discourses. For example, *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy* (Scottish Government 2007: 21) notes that “people in Scotland need an appropriate combination of essential and vocational skills that will enable them to secure and retain employment” and “older people also need to be able to return to learning to enhance their skills”. Similarly, the *All our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population* strategy (Scottish Executive 2007b) emphasises that many older people will want to develop skills to increase their employability or to assist them in volunteering roles. Yet this strategy also acknowledges that older people will engage in learning opportunities for a number of different reasons such as for learning’s sake or enjoyment.

Certainly, this was the case for the three participants who were engaged in formal learning and study, which was not undertaken as part of their paid employment. None of these participants engaged in formal study to learn for the purposes of employment although benefits to employment were noted as an outcome of that learning. Indeed, learning per se was not a reason or motivation

given by those engaging in paid employment. Rather, Linda undertook formal study because this was something they had always wanted to do and they wanted to “keep the brain going”. Whereas Participants Mary and Sheila undertook formal study partly because they wanted another interest to fill their time and they wanted to do something that involved personal development. For example, Participant Mary stated:

I also think there is an element of wanting to do something in the evening, especially in the winter evenings when it is dark. There is an element of I think I could get on better in life. That’s what I notice so much you know, I lost the opportunity. The opportunities are there to meet people and to develop my reasoning skills and learning how to communicate with people. I didn’t benefit at all from education...general education system and I lost out on that. [Mary]

It is evident from this extract that education experiences influenced their reasons for engaging in formal study and learning later in life. Memories of significant others being involved in learning (informal and/or formal) was also discussed by participants as being influential in undertaking learning activities. For Carol, this was a lodger that had stayed with the family as they grew up, for Dorothy it was their mother and for Linda it was their father who had influenced their desire to learn. Whilst personal past experiences were discussed by participants as important in their desire to undertake learning-related *work activities*, one participant also acknowledged how there had been cultural shifts in attitudes towards learning. As Sheila stated, “it is kind of a mindset that it wasn’t before”. Similarly Helen noted:

[it’s] the kind of idea of lifelong learning, although people might not express it in

those terms, but the idea that we don't stop learning after we leave university and it is currently more accepted that you continue to develop your views. I think that certainly is more positive in society than it was. And I think there is a thing in society about live being challenged. Hmm, you know as far as my parents generation it was clear what was right and what was wrong, it was very black and white and there is, in my lifetime there was a lot of what was right and wrong, and what you should say and what not has changed quite dramatically and so the idea of constantly challenging ourselves and why you respond in a particular way hmm has become much more current. And the expectation that if people aren't engaging with new ideas there is something wrong about that, whereas that wouldn't have been part of my parents' expectations. [Helen]

Although Helen was discussing a change in attitudes towards learning between their parents' generation and now, it is possible to argue that this cultural shift has occurred much more recently. Recent literature (see for example St. Clair 2006, Help the Aged 2008) noted that older people are unlikely to engage with learning opportunities because of cultural expectations that they are too old to learn. It is evident however, that this does not appear to be the case for those participants within this research who generally embrace a lifelong learning perspective and acknowledge that learning does not need to be undertaken in a formal setting. As Carol noted "you don't necessarily have to study to have an open mind and to be learning all the time". Furthermore, there is some indication from participants that learning at an older age is generally accepted by others within society, and as Linda states "it is not seen out of character".

It is clear therefore that there is a culture of learning amongst participants, which reflects the

messages that are promoted in social policies in Scotland (e.g. learning occurs throughout life, learning can take place in formal and informal settings etc.) and these participants acknowledged being aware of associated publicity encouraging involvement in such opportunities. This is perhaps further evidence that social policy reflects wider discourses or social representations, which can shape the reasons and motivations older people give for engaging in different activities. However, this research also highlights that religious doctrine is similar in nature to the representations within social policy and therefore this must also be acknowledged. This was highlighted by Sheila, who suggested that

It is definitely there in the church, in every walk in life we have this emphasis on improving yourself and going on courses and learning more about your subject.

[Sheila]

The promotion of learning through religion is something that has been acknowledged in previous literature. For example, Johansen (2010) writes about how various religions embrace learning practices. Christianity and Judaism stress the importance of self-development and insight, whereas Buddhism and Hinduism acknowledge that insight is developed through learning at all stages of life (Johansen 2010). Furthermore, in Islamic religion, Muhammad is thought to have stated that every Muslim is obligated to search for knowledge (Rue 2005). Within Scotland, the earliest forms of organised adult education were rooted within the religious organisation of the Church of Scotland (Weedon et al. 2010). Whilst acknowledging this, Weedon et al. (2010: 3) continued by stating that:

the rise of interest in lifelong learning must be understood in the context of the rise of global capitalism...Beck (1992) for instance, suggests that, whereas in the past an

individual's life course was strongly influenced by deterministic social factors such as social class and gender, the new global economy provides new opportunities to exercise individual agency. Acquiring academic credentials is clearly one of the ways in which an individual can strive for upward mobility...lifelong learning is seen as enabling states and individuals to maintain their economic competitiveness by constantly updating their skills and competencies.

Without denying the actuality of people engaging in learning to ensure employment competitiveness, it is evident from this research that religion and social factors still play a role in shaping older people's decisions behind engagement or disengagement - this issue of agency and structure will be covered in greater depth within chapter 7. At this point, however, it is sufficient to acknowledge that religious doctrines are for some older people influential in the desire to engage with learning activities.

The influential role of religion is something others have commented upon in relation to older people. For example, Davie and Vincent (1998) noted that although there was a steep decline in church attendance in those born post-war compared to previous generations, the belief in God and positive attitude towards the church remains. Davie and Vincent (1998: 109) stated that "it remains the case that the great majority of older people in the West continue to live conventional lifestyles and to invoke traditional forms of religion – albeit with increasing innovative elements". From this perspective we can see how the structural aspects of religion still remain prevalent within constructions of motivations and reasons for engaging within different activities. This must however, be counterbalanced with the view that older people will also engage in aspects not just in fulfilling roles associated with structural elements but also, as aforementioned, to ensure a competitive edge

in employment. Furthermore, this research has also shown that older people will engage with learning and study to fulfil a desire for enjoyment and pleasure.

## Enjoyment and Pleasure

Enjoyment and pleasure was mentioned by a number of participants as reasons for engaging in many different activities. Figure 9 provides some example extracts for different activities, where participants discussed enjoyment and pleasure.

Figure 9: Enjoyment and pleasure associated with different activities

<b>Study</b> I enjoy it	[Sheila]
<b>Sport or Physical Activity</b> I get a lot of pleasure out of doing it It is enjoyable in its own right and it is fun, I really enjoy playing tennis	[Sandra] [Maureen]
<b>Clubs</b> I have just always enjoyed working with my hands...and I am really enjoying it	[Marion]
<b>Housework and Gardening</b> I enjoy gardening Cooking I do enjoy, I find that recreational and very therapeutic	[Catherine] [Ronald]
<b>Volunteering</b> We enjoy doing that Because I just enjoy it	[Margaret] [Kathleen]
<b>Paid Employment</b> It is a job that I enjoy I also work because I enjoy it quite a lot	[Robert] [Agnes]
<b>Grandparenting</b> I love it, I never thought I would.	[Joan]
<b>Socialising</b> So yeah that is it I enjoy socialising	[Mary]

All of the *work activities* identified in the previous chapter were engaged in for reasons of enjoyment and pleasure. This is consistent with the literature that highlights enjoyment and pleasure as

something associated many activities undertaken by older people such as study (Gray 2001), sports/physical activity (Murray 2006), paid employment (Boaz et al. 1999), and gardening (Bowling and Gabriel 2007). The involvement in paid employment for reasons of enjoyment and pleasure is something that has not always been observed and, as Waters (1990) observes, pleasure was historically seen as the antithesis to paid employment. Nevertheless, for the participants in this research, individual preferences of enjoyment and pleasure are given for reasons to be engaged in paid employment, which highlights one distinction between this and other activities that is not possible (see chapter 6 for further information on blurring boundaries of work). The following vignette of Morag, highlights how older people will get pleasure and enjoyment from a number of different activities, including in this case, self-employment.

### *Morag*

*Morag is 67 and owns her own business. She remains actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the business and employees a number of staff. She is also involved in a range of voluntary activities including cancer research and inner wheel (which she first got involved in when her husband was alive). In addition, Morag also provides regular care for their grandchildren in order that their child can be in full-time employment. She speaks about how her self-employment gives her great pleasure and enjoyment but it also offers flexibility and allows her to be involved in so many activities. Morag comments on how hectic her lifestyle is but suggests that she not only enjoys being busy but she thinks it is also important to keep active as she gets older. She does not intend to be distanced from the daily activities of the business in the imminent future, as this is a source of enjoyment and also socially important for her. Morag has developed many friends through her business and also talks about how being in business means she earns respect from others who welcome her advice. She speaks about how the voluntary work*

*is also important in developing social relations with people but that it also is an opportunity to bring happiness and some help to others. Morag talks about how she always remembers her mother wanting to spend time helping others in the community. Her father on the other hand was very much against this and often there was conflict between Morag's parents about her mother's involvement in such work. Morag was brought up in a very strict household in a small village in the East Coast of Scotland and talks about how she had a strong bond with her grandparents when growing up. They wanted to have the same bond with their grandchildren and were very happy that providing regular care to them meant that they were able to achieve this.*

The vignette of Morag, not only demonstrates how enjoyment and pleasure are associated with many activities, but also how self-employment is associated with friendship and social networks. This was something that was also incorporated into the vignette of Norman presented earlier, and which commented upon how leaving paid employment meant a diminishing of social networks and an increased sense of loneliness.

### **Friendship, Social Networks and Belonging**

Participants said they engaged in *work activities* to have the opportunity to be part of a social network. This was discussed in relation to a number of activities and extracts supporting this point are presented in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Friendship, social networks and belonging**

<b>Paid Employment</b>	
when you work you are up to date with things socially, you are part of the society	[Barbara]
being at work is part of the social network that you have	[Jennifer]
<b>Volunteering</b>	
it is the social side because I think the social side is a big part of it, I think that is a big thing that people do it for	[Jennifer]
I felt I had to get out and mix with people, doing voluntary work did that	[Joseph]
<b>Sports or physical activity</b>	
I think people see the benefits of walking...the socialising side	[Kathleen]
<b>Clubs</b>	
I go as much for the community, for the social grouping as I do for [the dog]	[Sandra]
You become part of an enterprise thing, and again it is belonging. Hmm I have a very large need for belonging because of the way that I was brought up in a, in a church family	[Maureen]

The value to the participants of having social networks and friendships in some way reflects the ‘value to others’, which was discussed by participants in relation to friendship and socialising. More specifically the participants considered that socialising was of value to others because it allows people a medium through which they can discuss and gain support for any problems they might have. In addition, however, some participants [Helen, Maureen, Sandra, Marion and Joan] discussed wanting to engage in activities in order to belong to a group or community. As Helen stated in relation to volunteering,

...it is about being part of the community...it is about engagement and belonging...you get to know people and feel a part of something. [Helen]

Similarly, Maureen made the following comment in relation to a choir that they were in:

It is a huge thing to belong to something like that, huge...I think people who are involved in choirs are overtly there because of the belonging. [Maureen]

All the participants, who described a need to belong, also explained how they grew up in a village or town where the church played a central role and influenced the values and meanings that they held as adults. For some, the sense of belonging was associated with the experience of being raised in a community where the majority of people were involved in the church and attended a variety of church activities on a regular basis. Three out of the five participants who explicitly discussed 'belonging', talked about this in relation to their memories of the role of the church in their community when they were growing up. Furthermore, Helen discussed how the church now plays a diminishing role in society and that activities such as volunteering have "for some people...taken place of the church" and that people undertake these so that they can be "part of the community in a different way". This was echoed by Thomas who suggested that people would become involved in different activities nowadays rather than church associated activities.

There is some indication from the research that this situation is specific to the current generation of older people, their common social activities and communication channels. For example, Helen spoke about undertaking activities (other than attending church) to get a sense of belonging to a community and that this was perhaps specific to their generation. The participants talked about how people in their parents' generation would have been part of the church and the same social network for many years and there would have been no "need to look beyond that because they were part of the community anyway". Some said that their children's generation are unlikely to have a similar sense of belonging because they, like the generation before the participants, have continuity in their social networks, as these social networks are virtual or electronic.

This was echoed by Maureen, who suggested that their children did not have the same need to belong to a community or group of people as they themselves did. In addition, other participants spoke about their perception that the younger generation were less likely to get involved in activities within their local communities (albeit they did not necessarily discuss this in relation to belonging). For example, Ronald said:

I think there is a huge societal change going on at the moment, hmm, and part of that is fuelled by the internet and what have you because people are making connections in a different way now than in the way that they made connections before...and if I can get my entertainment on my own laptop or I can get my entertainment sitting in front of the television or just with my immediate family then other more social, community forms of engagement and entertainment become less important, hmm, yeah so I think that's, that's a huge issue. And that would certainly mean that if that was to continue that would certainly mean the next generation of society would become even more individualised.

[Ronald]

If the desire to belong and be part of a collective fades (and this was a reason for engagement) then it is possible that fewer older people will engage in these activities. It is observed from many participants that involvement in community activities is diminishing within Scotland. There is an acknowledgement amongst the sample that younger people are becoming involved in other activities, which could lead to the development of social relations and networks. However, for the participants in this research, engagement in these activities as a way of developing social networks is important because it fulfils the need to belong to a collective group. Essentially, participants undertake activities to fulfil their individual desires to belong – something that the discussion above

shows might be associated with wider social issues. The vignette of Brenda is also beneficial in highlighting how social issues might be important in the sense of belonging. More specifically, Brenda discusses being brought up in a small village, which revolved around the church and this has been influential in developing a need for belonging.

### *Brenda*

*Brenda is 58, widowed and working part-time as a co-ordinator for a charity. Financially, Brenda has no need to be in employment but she describe having a strong work ethic. Her parents emphasised to she and her brothers that they should work hard at everything that they do, yet the need to be financially remunerated for those activities was never emphasised. Rather Brenda talks about how her father was a philanthropist and from a young age she was involved in publicly being seen to donate to those that were less fortunate. Belonging to a community is very important to Brenda and she attributes this to being brought up in a small village, where much of daily life surrounded the Catholic Church. Nowadays, Brenda still remains a member of a Church but describes how this is not about being religious but about belonging to a group. She lives in a small village and is actively involved in numerous local sporting and social clubs. Brenda talks about how she doesn't only go along to these for her own enjoyment but is also involved in the clubs to help keep membership levels up and ultimately the facilities open. Helping out others is something that is central to Brenda's experiences and she suggests that if she ever retired she would have to replace her paid employment with further voluntary or community work.*

## Giving Back and Helping Others

Another motivation for engagement discussed by participants for taking part in activities was being able to help others or to give something back to society. For example, in speaking about studying, Linda stated:

It is giving something back in that it may be something that makes people think about things in a different way. [Linda]

Similarly, speaking about volunteering, Helen and Joseph, mentioned the following:

Well I thought I should be giving something back to the community. [Joseph]

I think giving something back is part of it. [Helen]

Some participants suggested the value of giving back and helping others was ingrained in them because of their upbringing and the activities in which they had been involved when they were younger. For example, Thomas stated, in relation to why he felt it was important to give back to society:

You were always encouraged to have a moral code and work ethics, to do the right thing and we were encouraged to share. As I say there was five of us and my mother always encouraged me to join organisations when I was young. I was in

the Scouts for instance...I was in the, went to Sunday school and eh, bible class when I was young and she encouraged me to do all these sorts of things.

[Thomas]

Other participants were not encouraged in their younger years to hold these values or do activities that promoted these values. Joan and Joseph described how their mothers were involved in helping others but this was discouraged and their fathers did not approve. Furthermore, Kathleen suggested that their parents were not involved in activities that involved helping others and they were not aware of this when they were growing up. These participants developed these values later in life when experiences or other people made them aware of the importance of helping others.

For other participants, the desire to give back and help others was associated with the stories and memories passed onto them about historical events. For example, some participants reflected that during the war, there was a need to work together and help each other, and that these values had been passed onto them through their families. Another historical event (or memories/understandings of it), was the introduction of the welfare system in the UK. Some participants said how grateful they were for the opportunities resulting from this system and, subsequently, they wanted to 'give something back'. Glover and Bates (2006) state that it is common for people to want to give something back when they believe that they have received some assistance. An example extract, which demonstrates this point, was taken from the transcript of Carol, who stated:

We were children of the welfare state, and you know people like me could never have got, you know I couldn't have gone to university without a grant...and all my

fees were paid and there was no way that my family could afford that. Eh, and then the NHS came in with free care and you know, because you were aware of how things were before... you were very conscious of those times and how if people didn't have money they didn't get health care because they couldn't afford a doctor and how the welfare state transformed all that...you know I was certainly brought up very, very consciously of those things and you know hence very proud of the NHS and not indebted, I mean obviously you paid for it with your national insurance but..very conscious whereas people are much more demanding nowadays, they think they have got rights and rights more than responsibilities. [Carol]

It is evident that many of the participants felt that the value of giving back/helping others is dwindling within society today. The perception of some of the participants was that, as time passes from these historical events, and in the absence of adversity, it is possible there will be diminished appreciation for those values important enough to these participants to shape the activities in which they are involved. This belief is demonstrated by the following comments from Sandra and Ronald, respectively.

I guess it is quite a long time since there was a need to have that Dunkirk spirit. You know during the war people had to help each other out and help out...and I guess it is probably fifty, sixty, years since we've been in a situation where people naturally are needing to support their community. [Sandra]

If you take the war as a time when people were heavily dependent on community and one another then eh, in the sixty-five years since then there has been a gradually diminution of that...if there was a kind of social demise in civilisation or if there were

a flu pandemic then these things might all affect how the next generation responds.

[Ronald]

It could be interpreted from the above that for some participants, retaining the values of giving back and helping others is associated with an awareness of (or direct experience of) times when people needed to rely on others. There was a perception amongst participants that these societal values have diminished over the years because of a perceived lack of need to work together.

Whilst many of the other participants agreed that there are decreasing numbers of people possessing the desire to give back and to help others, not all associated them with less adversity or with people not needing to work together. On the contrary, the majority of participants related them to political changes promoted by Margaret Thatcher and her policies, which had resulted in more individualisation within society. In this respect, participants acknowledged the role of historic political discourses in the shaping of the reasons for engagement or non-engagement in different activities.

In some cases, participants spoke very strongly about the role Margaret Thatcher had on the values that were held in society. For example, Robert suggested that Margaret Thatcher should be “put against the wall and shot” for the role she had in changing values in society. Other participants spoke less emotively but they were also adamant of Margaret Thatcher’s role in diminishing the number of people that value giving back to society and helping others. The following quote provides an example of this:

I don't think people realise how much of a revolution Margaret Thatcher caused...not politically but, I mean as well as politically, just in the attitudes to their fellow man...you know selfishness. [Carol]

For the participants, the politics of Margaret Thatcher saw an end to an era characterised by values of working together and helping each other. An era that they understand in terms of their memories or the stories told to them about the war/post-war periods and the introduction of the welfare state. The nostalgia about an era thought to be characterised by people working together, appears to influence the desire to help others and give something back. To demonstrate how these can be influential in the want or need to help others, it is worthwhile looking to the vignette of Heather.

### *Heather*

*Heather is a 63 year old female who works full-time as a doctor in a town in the East of Scotland. She is actively involved in a range of voluntary work, although she describes how she is looking forward to being able to become involved in more of this when she retires. Retirement, however, is not something that Heather has any desire to realise in the near future. She speaks of how she could retire at the present with a very generous pension but this was realistically only an option should her husband's health deteriorate. Being in her current employment allowed Heather to give back something to the community and to realise the strong work ethic installed in her by her parents. Heather speaks of their upbringing in understanding the experiences of today. She talks about how her parents would reflect upon the war years, the struggles and the immense nature of people to work together. She talks about living near the docks and remembers clearly tales of relatives having to queue on a daily basis for employment, as well as the struggle*

*experienced by many in times of deprivation. She suggests that these aspects of her past make her appreciate the opportunities she had to gain further education qualifications and makes her feel as though she should provide something back to the community for as long as possible. Yet Heather is finding it difficult to manage paid employment with supporting her ailing mother. She talks about how there is a social expectation that she will provide this care and that the current political approach within Scotland means there is nobody else to provide this. Heather, with her enthusiasm for paid employment, states that she sometimes feels guilt at not being there for her mother but continues to fulfil her employment commitments – except where her mother has a crisis that requires immediate support and care.*

It is worthwhile noting that although Heather strives to help others, and this is influential in her decisions to remain in paid employment, she faces the challenge of meeting the needs of her mother and the social expectations of her being the most appropriate care giver. Many of the participants spoke about undertaking activities in order to meet the needs of others, and meeting obligations and expectations.

### **Meeting Needs of Others, Obligation and Expectation**

This reason for motivation was discussed briefly in relation to volunteering [Marion and Joseph]; there was a need for volunteers but nobody else was willing to undertake that role. For example, Joseph spoke about how they were the chair, treasurer and secretary of their residents' association because there was "nobody else to do it". They further stated how they were "toying with the idea of giving it up because [they] thought somebody else should shoulder the responsibility" but they

felt that this would not be possible, as they struggled to have members come along to the association's meetings let alone be office bearers.

Undertaking an activity because there is a perception that nobody else will do it was also discussed by Kathleen in relation to the provision of care to elderly relatives. Kathleen goes on to discuss how this was not the case in previous generations, where families would remain in the same geographical area and where "there would always be somebody there in case something" happened. This was something on which other participants also commented. For example, Janet noted:

I was born in Aberdeen and the family had come from Aberdeen for generations before that and they were much closer knit because they lived within easy distance of each other and they kept up much close, closely than they did today you know, hmm and they looked out for each other as well...and the elderly weren't left alone because they would always be somebody nearby...I am very conscious that I have an elderly aunt and uncle in Aberdeen for example. They only have got one daughter who lives outside Glasgow...and they have nobody there for them.

[Janet]

A large proportion of the participants commented that they had moved away from their families, but for some, it did not inhibit them from providing input into the care/support of their elderly relatives (who lived far away). For example, Linda, Maureen and Barbara said they made regular visits to their relatives and often helped in the provision of their care or support. Linda also discussed how they contacted their relatives on a daily basis to ensure that they were well and not in need of any additional help.

Whilst most of those providing care to their elderly relatives said they were glad to be able to provide the required help and that it was something they wanted to do, many at the same time (paradoxically) suggested that there was often a sense of obligation or duty associated with this role. For example, Kathleen expressed how they wanted to help their parents but because they lived so nearby, there was almost an “obligation” to help. Linda described how they spoke to their father not because they felt the “need to have a conversation” but because “they ought to, as an obligation” and Maureen spoke about how the visits to their mother were more often “out of a sense of duty”. For other participants there was no current sense of obligation or duty associated with supporting and caring for relatives, but they were aware that these feelings might one day be prevalent. As Agnes explains:

Nor would I see that as a duty either. I think that is something that I want to do.  
Having said that they are quite fit. I might have said something different if they were, had dementia or required a lot of care. I might have a different view on that and I could easily have a different view as I get older as well. [Agnes]

Whilst Agnes currently does not see the provision of care as an obligation, they acknowledge that one day they might feel like some of the other participants. Such feelings of obligation and duty to provide care have been observed to cause an increased amount of stress, feelings of being overburdened and potential impaired levels of care (Glendinning et al. 2009).

It should be noted that social policy (Scottish Executive 2007b) emphasises the increasing

importance of informal and unpaid care and the role of the older person in delivering this. Participants were very much aware of the importance of taking on care responsibilities, which is emphasised in these social policies and the related approaches to social provision of care. In the perceived absence of alternatives and through a sense of duty or obligation, some older people will engage with the care of elderly or ill relatives.

Yet participants also spoke about a sense of duty and obligation in associated with caring for children and grandchildren. One participant [Dorothy] also spoke about providing support to their grown-up children out of a sense of duty:

I always think that I am responsible for them, even though I hear my friends or their father say that now they are thirty-six and forty-one, I mean how long are you going to be responsible for them and I say well probably all my life because...my mother helped me all the way along and they let their children do whatever they want, so I think I have a responsibility for them. [Dorothy]

Dorothy felt that they ought to help and support their children in achieving their dreams through whatever means necessary (and in particular through the provision of financial support) but as is indicated in the quote above, this perceived responsibility was not seen positively by those around them. The participant discussed how their friends would suggest that their children should be self-sufficient. Rather than supporting this action, the participant's friends were "critical of what" was being done and this led to the participant keeping their life a "sort of secret" and withdrawing from social contacts.

Although her friends reportedly frowned upon the financial support afforded to Dorothy's children, the offering of support to older offspring was something that was discussed by a number of the participants in this research. Albeit for other participants, the support was not directly financial – it was principally in the form of providing advice or helping with care for grandchildren – the latter could have some financial benefit to their children in terms of reducing childcare costs or enabling the participants' children to earn wages (now commonplace in society). As Participant Joseph noted, “a lot of women get involved in their grandchildren, childminding is a serious thing”. Similarly, Participant George spoke about how “it is mainly the grans that take the toddlers along” to the mother and toddler groups. This is just one activity that does not appear to receive the same criticisms as the support provided to the adult offspring by Dorothy. Whilst it is something that the participants want to do for their children and grandchildren, Maureen suggested their children seemed to expect the help:

People didn't have as much expectations, for example their daughters or daughters-in-law didn't expect their parents necessarily to hmm look after their grandchildren to a sense that people say of your generation, who are making vast assumptions that their children, you know if you had children you might expect your mother and father to look after the kids at least some of the time. I think it is quite common now and that free childcare means it helps to pay the mortgage, if you have a mortgage dependent on two salaries coming in the grandparents take care of the child so there is free childcare.

[Maureen]

The extent to which grandparents provide routine childcare for their grandchildren is perhaps influenced by (as Joan stated) the need for mothers to re-engage with the workforce; but it is

perhaps also associated synonymously with high childcare costs. Almost all participants who provided routine childcare for grandchildren discussed this point, which is illustrated by the following quotes:

I think it is getting more and more and more. I think because girls are having to go back to work...and they have been pushed back and there is no two ways. I mean people say they should stay at home but it is all very well if your husband is earning enough to pay. My daughters, both of them, need to work and they couldn't get by on their husbands salary...but not only that they are paying forty pounds a day for nursery and it is a lot of money because their costs are really, really high so it is a case of juggling to see if it is worthwhile working. [Joan]

I would say the majority of my friends do a certain degree of childcare while the mothers are working rather than just to help out...most people need to go into paid work and because childcare is so expensive so if the grandparent can do it then great. [Dorothy]

These extracts demonstrate that care of grandchildren is undertaken because it is perceived that this is necessary to enable grown-up children to work and gain sufficient income – something that would not be the case if the grown-up children remain at home to care for their children or if the grown-up children pay for childcare. This appears to relate to the economic positioning of the participants' offspring. It demonstrates how the work undertaken by older people in one sphere relates to *work activities* undertaken in other sphere by family members. It stresses the contribution that older people can make to the economy and within society Furthermore, the importance of this care is

something that has been recognised in social policy (Scottish Executive 2007b; HM Government 2009) and within the existing literature (Aziz 2007; Duncan et al. 2004; RIAS 2009).

Older people are being influenced in their decisions to provide care for grandchildren because of the current political economic conditions, and as such are adopting the roles and living up to the representations promoted within social policy. In a similar vein, ideas of need, expectation and obligation have also played a role in the decision to undertake other activities, such as care of relatives and volunteering. There are clearly accepted stereotypical images of the older person and the role they ought to play in providing this support. Whilst participants note that they are generally happy to engage in these activities, they also comment on how they engage in them because of a sense of duty and obligation. In the current socio-economic climate, there is also a perceived need to engage in activities like grandparenting because of the perceived economic pressures placed on their offspring.

## **Economic Rationale and Work Beliefs**

### ***Economic Reasons***

As well as the economic needs of family members, the economic status of the participants was at times influential in decisions to engage with paid employment or self-employment. More specifically, Irene, Agnes, Maureen, Sandra, Sheila and Joan suggested that they needed to be in employment for financial reasons. Irene spoke, in particular, about how they are the chief income earner in their household and thus, their male partner is forced to adopt the childcare responsibilities. The issue of females being able to receive higher remuneration in paid employment

is something that was also discussed by Robert, who considered that the world of work is more favourable to women and this has meant more men staying at home to provide childcare.

There is at least some support from national statistics, which supports the idea that there are greater proportions of older women than older men in paid employment. According to the Labour Force Survey, between September 2008 and October 2009 in Scotland, 70.7% of men and 71.4% of women between the ages of 50 and state pension age were in employment (Office of National Statistics 2010). Beyond state pension age, 9.1% of men and 11.5% of women are in employment (Office of National Statistics 2010). Whilst the precise reasons for there being greater percentages of older women compared to older men in the labour market are not known, it is at least possible to determine, from this research, the reasons why older women are involved in paid work.

As has already been stated, some women are involved in paid employment out of economic necessity. Others however, remain in paid employment for economic desire. For example, Mary, Helen, Kathleen and Joan spoke about how they want to earn their own money and do not want to be financially dependent upon their husbands. This was discussed by all three who observed their mothers having to ask for money from their fathers and struggling financially. As Joan stated:

My father he was the man of the house and my mother's attitude was she would have loved a part-time job, which she did eventually get...You could see the difference in her when she was doing that, getting her motivated, getting her out and getting her some independent money, which was important. She was dependent on my father for years and years for money for clothes, she had no

money of her own but when she got this it was the best thing that ever happened to her...I wouldn't like to think of me without any money. [Joan]

Economic necessity and economic desire might influence why people engage in paid employment or self-employment, but they should not be considered the only two reasons, especially when we consider retirement from paid employment. Only one participant [Maureen] indicated that they would retire from paid employment if they "could afford it" and only another two [Agnes and Sandra] suggested that they would consider reducing their work hours further if they could. In the main, whilst it was commonly noted that economic necessity was associated with undertaking paid activities, it was not the only reason for engaging in paid employment. As Mary stated, "money is important but I guess if it was that important I would be teaching full-time". Therefore, whilst obtaining necessary remuneration from paid work might have been discussed by participants, it is apparent that this is not the only or main motivation for the majority of participants. This point is illustrated further by the desire of many participants to remain in paid employment beyond state pension age.

It might be intuitive to consider that in light of the reported 'pension crises' and economic conditions, people may continue in paid work beyond state pension age for financial reasons. Certainly, there is some support for this argument from previous research (see for example Smeaton and McKay 2003). However, there is also a vast array of previous research indicating that financial necessity is reported as the reason for staying in employment in only the minority of cases. For example, Maitland (2010) indicates that only one in three people aged between 60 and 64, and one in seven people aged between 65 and 75 would remain in paid employment because of financial necessity. This was also the case with the participants in this research, who continued with (or

wanted to continue with) paid employment after state pension age, with only one participant suggesting that they would continue in paid employment beyond state pension age because they needed the money:

Because I started so late, my pension is not really worth anything, I think I have about three thousand pound a year or something ridiculous like that. [Sheila]

For the remainder of the participants who continued (or wanted to continue) in paid employment, their motivation was associated with some of the aforementioned reasons (e.g., personal development and lifelong learning, socialising, giving back to society) or because of their work beliefs, discussed below. The desire to remain in paid employment for reasons other than economics is illustrated through the vignette of Evelyn, whereas a contrasting experience of needing to remain in paid employment can be seen in the vignette of Malcolm.

### *Evelyn*

*Evelyn is 66, married, living in a rural area in central Scotland and retired some six years ago. Since then she has begun working part-time as a dental receptionist and for the last few years has provided additional care for her parents. She also engages in a range of voluntary activities including hospice work and inner wheel. In addition, Evelyn is undertaking a part-time undergraduate course, which she wanted to do to challenge herself and provide her with greater confidence in their abilities. As a child she was not successful at school, primarily because her parents travelled around and there was no consistency in education. She speaks about how they believed for many years that she was incapable of learning. Yet as she gets older, she wanted to prove that getting*

*educational qualifications were possible. Evelyn also recognises the benefits of learning to her current paid employment and also for future employment opportunities. She speaks about the importance of being in paid employment to her and relates this to having an income of her own rather than relying on that of their husband. Evelyn has experienced this before her children's early life. However, she also relates this to her childhood and memories of how unhappy her mother was being "stuck at home", not being able to engage in employment and having to ask for money from her father should she want to buy anything. Such memories are in complete contrast to those of her grandmothers, who both engaged in full-time employment since the war. Evelyn speaks of how one of her grandmothers was highly involved in the suffragette movement and fighting for women's rights. It is these prominent figures in Evelyn's childhood that she considers have been most influential in her desire to work and not rely on her husband's income.*

### **Malcolm**

*Malcolm is a 55 year old male, who lives alone and suffers from a health condition for which he is currently off work. He ordinarily works long hours as a delivery driver and has done so for a number of years. He likes to go out fishing and walking with his dog. He is not involved in any voluntary activity because he finds that he does not have the energy or the time for this. However, he suggests that he would like to become involved in voluntary work, which would help benefit frail members of the community and the countryside around where he lives. Malcolm was brought up in Glasgow, where both his parents worked in paid employment until they were in their seventies. He himself does not want to continue in paid employment until that age. Malcolm discusses how he would like to retire but that he does not have a good pension and financially this is not an option. He does not want to withdraw from work altogether but rather would like to*

*engage with voluntary work instead. He speaks about how being in Northern Ireland during the conflicts made him passionate about helping others and working together as a community. Malcolm describes a few examples from Northern Ireland where he saw neighbours co-ordinating with each other and working together to achieve their goals in the face of adversity. Furthermore, he talks about the influence of Margaret Thatcher's policies in Scotland on people's willingness to pull together for the greater good. He speaks of how this has had a negative impact and he emphasises how he would like to do his bit to help others. Although restricted by energy and wealth to achieve this with voluntary work, he strives within his paid employment to acquaint himself with, and where possible help, his regular customers.*

What does not come through in these two vignettes, but which does emerge in the earlier vignette of Heather is the importance of the work ethic. This was something that was discussed quite frequently by participants within this research, as was the expectations of this age group to be involved within paid employment.

### ***Work Beliefs and Work Ethics***

Most of the participants discussed how they believe that it is widely accepted in society that people of their age are in some form of employment and they too think this is appropriate. These participants acknowledged there is a current positive stereotype relating to the role of the older person in paid employment, which is promoted in current social policies and forms social policy discourses (see Scottish Government 2007b). However, as identified in Chapter 2, social policies have at times not advocated the role of the older person in paid employment but rather encouraged

early retirement from this. Participants were aware of this, and recognised that the role of the older worker relates to current socio-economic situations.

For example, Participant Helen noted that the current situation is a change from “ten years ago” when early retirement was common practice. The perceived change in expectations of older people in work is related to the economic situation and discourses at the time. As Participant Thomas states:

I think until a few years ago the local authority gave provisions for early retirement but then there was a big concern that people were, things have changed, because ten, fifteen years ago we were told it was a leisure age, people probably wanted to retire in their early fifties. People got the good use of the fact that they would have thirty odd years of retirement after, and so at one time there were early retirement schemes. Then authorities, local authorities and government started this no, no people are going to live longer now, they should be working longer and we will raise the retirement age so that the old age pension will be raised to sixty seven for instance...so there were actually deterrents to retirement, until this year when now because there is cuts, government cut backs to spare the economy they are reintroducing early retirement schemes, encouraging people my age to retire. [Thomas]

This description, which was echoed by other participants, highlights how the stereotypical image of the role of the older person in employment varies over time and is associated with social policy directions. It represents how images on work and retirement, which are situated within socio-economic contexts, are fluid and dynamic and support the arguments presented within political economy perspectives of ageing. As such it is intuitive to believe that the perceptions of their role in

work will vary throughout time and across ages. This was discussed by Ronald who commented on how working beyond retirement is something that is new to this generation of older people:

This had been a change occasioned by a greater social acceptance of older people than was previously true and older people being active. and I think it has also been occasioned by hmm, an increased expectation of what economically one would be able to do in older age...hmm you know my parents to some extent, my parents generation, or certainly my grandparents generation. [Ronald]

Reflected in these descriptions of the older person and their role in work, are the same messages that are highlighted and promoted in current social policies (e.g., active ageing policies). Yet social policies alone cannot be thought as the only aspect that might contribute to the work beliefs discussed by the participants. For example, when discussing their views on paid employment, some female participants referred back to impressions of older women in their family when they were growing up. As Mary said:

You get nothing in this life without working and that comes back from, way back when my grandparents then, everybody worked, my grandparents. Hmm you know in the war time, my grandparents were, both grandmothers had different attitudes to my mother, they left their children and went to work, which was just not done in those days and my mum had been so affected that she didn't want to leave her children, so perhaps. My work ethic has come from my whole family that you always have to work, from my grandparent, my great grandparents not necessarily my great grandmother, my grandmother was certainly working the same as my dad did. [Mary]

In the above quote, the participant refers to a work ethic. This was something that was discussed frequently by participants and often in terms of religious doctrine. In particular, Agnes, Sheila and Joseph explicitly discussed having a Calvinistic, Puritan or Protestant work ethic. As Joseph stated:

I suppose I had this idea that you have to work for people, eh never mind about  
pleasing yourself...I think they call that Puritanism. [Joseph]

According to Weber (1905), the Protestant work ethic is characterised by working hard and working for the glory of God rather than for the Self. Idleness would be frowned upon, yet continuous and systematic work would be seen as a sign of true faith (Weber 1905). This is in contrast to the Catholic work ethic. As Tilgher (1962: 16) suggested:

The Catholic rejects an insensate and absurd precisely the quality in pursuit as profit which moderns find natural and praiseworthy. Catholic doctrine grants that men may enrich themselves, but only within the strict limits of morality and for the purpose of charity.... Work is an obligation in so much as it is necessary to maintain the individual and the group in which he is a part.

This work ethic was observed in the transcripts of only one participant [Sandra], who spoke about how, if she and her husband had the financial means (as they had had in the past), they would give up paid employment and take up unpaid employment. She also spoke about how they could probably earn more money in another company doing the same type of job, but they preferred to

work for the charitable organisation in which they were currently employed. Much of what this participant did was in relation to maintaining the community within which they lived.

It is interesting to note however, that work ethics (or at least the values associated with these) were not only discussed in respect to paid employment but also in terms of other activities.<sup>7</sup> More specifically, the inability to commit fully and 'do the best job' was often given as a reason for not engaging in volunteering. Furthermore, it is clear from the transcripts that work ethics also play an influential role after retirement from paid employment. Undertaking certain activities affords older people an opportunity to fulfil the work ethics that they would have once applied to paid employment.

## Chapter Conclusion

It is evident from the above that older people are routinely involved in undertaking numerous activities. The lives being described seem to be distant from the older person being a 'burden on society'. What is discussed is also far from what might be argued by those accepting disengagement theory, where ageing is associated with an inevitable withdrawal from society (Victor 2005). On the contrary, the participants in this research were openly looking to continue engaging in many activities, and were on occasions, looking for new opportunities in which to become involved. Furthermore, it is possible to see instances from this research where older people are living-up to the more positive representations of ageing that are presented within social policies observed within chapter 2. For example, some older people are continuing to remain in paid employment for longer;

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<sup>7</sup> The term is used here in the plural to reflect that there are different work ethics (Protestant, Catholic) referred to by participants.

others are involved with care of grandchildren or elderly/ill relatives; and many are involved in voluntary work.

Reflecting on the perspectives of Moscovici (1973) and Sijuwade (2009) it could be argued that older people are engaging with these activities in an attempt to live up to current social representations. From this research, it is clear that this may be true to a certain extent. For example, in discussing care of elderly relatives/grandchildren, some participants speak about the pressure to engage with these activities; similarly, others spoke about paid employment and retirement and how this might be influenced by the expectant role of the older person given the economic and social context. However, there were a variety of reasons and motivations discussed for involvement with the different activities. The vignettes utilised within this chapter illustrated further the experiences of older people and the principal reasons and motivations behind decisions of engagement. We can begin to see from the information presented in this chapter how age is important in the reflections about involvement in different activities – particularly in terms of current expectations of this age group and in respect to the role of past memories. Looking at age is pertinent to understanding the activities of older people, but the exploration of what older people do is also imperative in understanding ageing (These issues will be looked at in greater detail in Chapter 7).

In summary, this chapter has demonstrated that the lives discussed by older people appear to reflect positive social representations of ageing and fall short of the negative images that have often been discussed. Despite this, as was highlighted within chapter 2, the negative images of ageing remain pervasive and systemic within society. I argued in the earlier chapters of this thesis that there is a need to rethink the work of the older person to pave the way for the widespread acceptance of positive representations of ageing. Through rethinking the work of older people there is a possibility

to adopt new perspectives on ageing, which are no longer founded upon the transitions from work (or more specifically paid employment) into retirement. With this in mind, the fifth stage of the analysis aimed to reflect upon the findings thus far and the pre-existing knowledge from the sociology of work, to identify the way forward in looking at the *work activities* of older people. It is the outcomes from that analysis, which are presented within the subsequent chapter.

## Chapter 5: Rethinking Work - My work isn't work and I work at leisure

The introductory chapters of this thesis highlighted how considerations of the older person and work are most commonly preoccupied with paid employment rather than other work activities. Whilst a limited number of articles discuss the unpaid work of older people, the recognition of unpaid work is much more widely accepted in literature from the sociology of work. This chapter will examine further the reflections of older people relating to the activities in which they were involved. These were emphasised in chapter 5, but will now highlight how we can further develop our understandings of work. This chapter will also highlight how we can rethink work through the recognition of new *work activities* and the interconnections between them.

Whilst much of the information presented within this chapter might appear age-unspecific it is important to emphasise that age matters crucially in properly understanding the complexities of the work amongst this cohort. Decisions of engagement or disengagement from *work activity* and the underlying reasons for these are (as are discussed in chapter 5 and 7) associated with numerous factors pertinent to this particular age group. As such, it must be borne in mind that a comprehensive understanding of older people's work is not only shaped by the information presented within this chapter, but also informed by the age specific aspects introduced in the subsequent chapter.

### Recognition of New *Work Activities*

The previous chapter highlighted how participants reflected on the value or benefit to others associated with the following activities: paid employment/self-employment; volunteering;

housework study; childcare/care of grandchildren; care of elderly/ill relatives; attending social clubs; socialising; and attending sports clubs. It is possible to argue that these should be considered *work activities* where this is defined (as it is by Chester and Grossman 1990, and Andersen and Taylor 2006) as an act that creates something of value to others. Yet whilst there is no denying that paid employment/self-employment are widely accepted as work, and volunteering, care/childcare and housework have become more recently recognised as forms of work, activities such as attending social clubs, socialising and attending sports clubs have rarely been thought of in this way. Nevertheless, it is clear from the previous chapter that participants speak of these as having similar values to others as are associated with recognised paid and unpaid work. It is this commonality in the reported value, and also the wider definitions, which result in the argument being made to recognise these additional acts as *work activities*. Is it truly possible to recognise some acts as work and others as not, where they have a similar outcome from others, simply because of the arena in which they are being conducted? For example, if a person helps others to learn within an informal setting in the public sphere (e.g. through attending sports clubs, or social clubs such as book groups) it would most likely not be thought of as work. Yet the actions of the older person and the outcomes of those actions will resonate that of the teaching and learning taking place in the paid domain of education – something that undoubtedly would be thought of as work. I would argue that in both examples, the by-product is similar (albeit to varying levels of intensity and possible quality), so why should one be thought of as work and not the other? Certainly, Glucksmann's Total Social Organisation of Labour, and others that have been informed by that stance, would suggest that any work activity will be provided in a range of socio-economic domains and there is a need to consider all instances of that work whether paid or unpaid, in a formal or informal setting, or in a private or public domain.

However, the argument here to incorporate the activities described by the participants in this

research as forms of work is underpinned with an assumption that these activities do hold true value to others, and that participants were not just framing their responses as benefiting others. Mansvelt (1997) discusses how older people will often talk about 'working at leisure' as a way of counteracting the negative images that are systemic within wider society. From this perspective, it is possible to see why older people may have framed their discussions in such a way to highlight the value and contribution they are making. However, there is no evidence from this research to have suggested this was the case here and one has to remember that not all activities discussed by the participants were noted as having value to others. In addition, There is no denying that those activities discussed as contributing to others, are recognised as such within the wider literature.

The benefits associated with volunteering are widely noted (see for example Haski-Leventhal et al. 2010, Age Concern 2004 and Egerton and Mullan 2008). The worth of care and grandparenting has also been noted extensively reported in the literature (see for example Age Concern 2004; Koslowski 2009). Similarly, the value of engaging in sports and physical activity have been discussed by Coalter (2007) and Hoye et al. (2009); socialising by Hall (1999); and attending social clubs by Law and Mooney (2006), Hyppä et al. (2008) and Sichertman (2006). Whilst some activities discussed by participants as benefiting others (i.e. paid employment, care, childcare, and volunteering) have previously been recognised as work, there are others (e.g. socialising, study, attending social clubs, and sports/physical activity) which have rarely been defined as such. This is despite there being an obviously recorded value associated with them. With a widely accepted value it is hard to contest an argument that these should be considered as work as long as we accept wider definitions such as those provided by Chester and Grossman 1990, and Andersen and Taylor 2006. But why have these never been thought of as work previously?

It is suggested here that the explanation for neglecting such *work activities* might be founded in the history of how wider definitions of work have emerged. Wider definitions of work have their roots in feminist inspired research (Edgell 2006; Taylor 2004) and therefore, by their very nature, have focused on activities that were traditionally dominated by women first, within the unpaid private domain (e.g. housework, care/childcare) and more recently in the unpaid public domain (e.g. volunteering). This, it might be argued, has restricted those aspects that are thought of as work. The possible implications from this are illustrated through looking at the aforementioned neglected activities in relation to the socio-economic spheres observed by Taylor (2004). As Figure 11 (overleaf) demonstrates, many of the previously neglected *work activities* are to be found within the unpaid public informal sphere, which has not been the focus of mainstream attempts to reconceptualise work.

Activities within the unpaid public informal sphere would be completely missed through reference to simple dichotomies of paid/unpaid or public/private work. By adopting a holistic approach, and recognising that work can take part in any one of the six socio-economic spheres (as illustrated in figure 11) it becomes possible to incorporate these undertakings as new forms of work. I suggest that by challenging the negative images of ageing, we need to rethink work to incorporate these activities that were suggested by older people to create something that benefits others and which is identified in previous literature to have social value.

By effectively adopting a holistic approach focused on activities (more widely) rather than work, and by exploring the perspectives of older people, this research has identified some additional acts or behaviours that could be incorporated into the category of work. Encapsulating these activities under the rubric of 'work' exposes their hidden value and the contributions of older people. In the

same way that feminists have challenged sexism through emphasising the importance of work conducted in the private sphere, this thesis argues that widening the boundaries of work further is an important phase in tackling ageism.

**Figure 11:** Positioning newly identified '*work activities*' into different socio-economic spheres

<p><b>Paid Public Formal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid employment</li> <li>• Business owner/self-employed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paid Public Informal</b></p>	<p><b>Paid Private Informal</b></p>
<p><b>Unpaid Public Formal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study (formal)</li> <li>• Volunteering (hands on) – (guide dog training, advocacy work, hospice work, money raising activities)</li> <li>• Volunteering (committee)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unpaid Public Informal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs and organisations (book clubs, business clubs, choirs, drama groups, film clubs)</li> <li>• Socialising</li> <li>• Sports and physical activities (badminton, bowls, cycling, fishing, golf, gym, hockey, rugby, walking)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unpaid Private Informal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing support to elderly or ill family members</li> <li>• Domestic activities (housework and gardening)</li> <li>• Caring/supporting children and grandchildren</li> </ul>

However, this should only be considered as an initial stage in the process of rethinking work. It is clear from the transcripts (and the previous chapter) that older people view the value to others associated with conventionally understood work and newly identified *work activity* in a similar vein. The ways in which people engage with these are also similar and as such there is a need to develop new understandings of work that recognise the fuzzy boundaries between work and non-work.

## Blurring Boundaries

Some of the newly identified *work activities* (e.g. socialising, sports and physical activities, and

attending social clubs) are perhaps more intuitively considered as acts of leisure, which is often seen as the “antithesis” to work (Lewis 2003: 345). As Banks (2008:2) stated:

The binary opposition between work and leisure has endured, partly because it has hitherto proved useful to capitalists and governments for stabilizing the economy and polity, but also due to the determined efforts of labour to protect their own autonomous time-space.

Whilst acknowledging that the dichotomy of work/leisure has been constructed within capitalist regimes, Banks (2008) highlighted how this divide is now under threat because it is becoming more difficult to distinguish between the extremities. Aspects of enjoyment and choice are argued to be a feature of contemporary work, where these were seen only in the domain of leisure (Banks 2008). Furthermore, as Lewis (2003: 344) stated

It could be argued that many forms of post-industrial work, which dominate people’s lives, are becoming the new leisure. Work is what people choose to spend their time on and enjoy doing.

To a certain extent, the claims of Lewis (2003) are supported by the findings. For example paid employment and self-employment does seem to be a significant factor in many of the participants’ lives (even for some of those that are beyond retirement age). Yet this paid work is not detached from what may be considered as leisure activities – employment for many of the participants in this research was something to enjoy. Joan noted “in the summer we went white water rafting, you

know and we are all age...it is supposed to be a kind of bonding thing". Similarly, in discussing paid employment, Kathleen stated "it is also quite sociable...we have a coffee and a blether and we all know each other and I had worked with [one of the others] as well forty odd years ago. So it's like going out for a coffee...and doing a little dentistry". Without the enjoyment in employment, some participants such as Mary suggested that they "would move on" to another job.

There is a suggestion in the words of Mary and others that there is an element of choice surrounding the engagement in paid employment, thus further supporting Lewis' (2003:344) argument that "work is what people choose to spend their time on" and also the Scottish Government's position that those in the baby boom cohorts would desire a freedom to engage in paid employment. Certainly, as is illustrated in this from Thomas, engaging in paid employment was certainly a choice.

My work isn't work because I could retire now if I wanted to, I could give notice and retire anytime I wanted to so again I am fortunate...I still have a lot to contribute...the role I play has a contribution to make in people's lives. [Thomas]

Still for others the situation was somewhat different from this, with decisions of engagement in paid employment being associated with either changed financial situations (as illustrated through a quote from Sandra), or pension provisions (illustrated through the following quote from Sheila). For those participants, the decision to engage with paid employment was not so much of a choice but rather an enforced necessity.

I will be honest, I was widowed and I have ended up with probably the hardest life that I have ever had because I didn't expect to be on my own and I didn't expect to have to work full time for the foreseeable future. [Sandra]

I would go on beyond retirement age because of practical reasons because my pension is not really worth anything. I think I have about three thousand pounds a year or something ridiculous like that, so I don't think I can afford to retire at sixty five. [Sheila]

It is evident that for Sheila, as for other participants, it is not choice but the need for employment that shapes decisions of engagement: A need, which for some is associated with pension provisions, and as such might be seen as rooted in wider political and economic situations. The association between the wider economic climate and the older persons role in, or more accurately retirement from, the labour market is something that emerged in the course of this research. Participants (such as Thomas, Irene and Ronald) commented on how when the labour market was affected by slumps, older people in some professions were encouraged through increased pension provision to take early retirement. What is discussed and accepted by these participants is reflective of the position adopted within political economy perspectives on ageing (described in chapter 3), and subsequently, these might provide some support to Smart's (2007: 9) argument that "sociological theories can become popular and enter into everyday understandings". Yet, whilst it is important to recognise the role of this, there is also a requirement to understand how the need to fulfil an internalised work ethic drives engagement and disengagement from paid employment as well as other work activity.

For example, if we look more in-depth at Mary and others whose words support an argument of employment through choice, we see that for some these decisions are shaped by a need to fulfil a

work ethic. The role of the work ethic is something that appears not only to influence paid employment, but is applied to previously recognised unpaid work and newly identified *work activities* (as was demonstrated within the previous chapter). There could be abstinence from activities such as volunteering if older people felt they were unable to apply the same work ethic to this as they did to paid employment. As was highlighted in chapter 5, the work ethic transcends paid employment and is applied to unpaid activities both before and after retirement from paid employment. As such, it can be argued that older people do not differ in their approach to paid employment and other *work activities* identified in this research.

Is it appropriate to differentiate in the classification of these activities, with some being referred to as work and others not being thought of in that manner? I would argue that the distinction between work and non-work is somewhat difficult to establish. This research highlights how the boundaries between work and non-work are not so stark. Older people are working at leisure, and engaging in leisure at work. There are resemblances across activities in the motivations and reasons for engagement or non-engagement. The work ethic informs many of those undertakings of the participants in this research. Furthermore, the need to give something back to society, and to help others is also discussed over multiple forms of work. If older people are engaging with paid employment for the same reasons as they are in conventionally understood leisure activities, then how does one distinguish between them? The literature suggests that leisure differs from work in the pleasure it brings (see for example Ramey and Francis 2009 for further discussion of this). Yet the participants in this research noted they will engage in 'leisure' such as sports, attend social clubs and volunteer for the purposes of helping others and giving something back to society. With such altruistic reasons for engagement, and taking into consideration definitions of leisure and work, should these not also be thought of as work? Where any activity breaches the boundaries of definitions of work, what argument can there be for not considering these as work?

The argument presented within this thesis is that we should embrace these blurred boundaries and accept all these acts as *work activities* undertaken by the older person. However, it must be emphasised that such conceptions have clear implications on how retirement is viewed given that previously this has been reflected on as a time for leisure (Demakokas et al. 2006). Retirement should thus no longer be thought of as withdrawal from work but rather from the cessation of paid employment. It is very clear from this research (see chapter 5) that retired older people do continue to engage in activities that make a contribution to others. They also strive for the very things they did in paid employment (i.e. to satisfy work ethics, helping others and giving something back to society). In rethinking work we must embrace this fact and recognise that the dichotomies of leisure/work and work/retirement are problematic polarisations. This thesis provides further weight to previous critiques of these dichotomies. Yet in conceptualising work, it is important to acknowledge, as it has in previous research inspired by Glucksmann's Total Social Organisation of Labour, that the public/private divide is over-simplistic and that any one work activity can span across multiple socio-economic spheres.

### **Recognising Work Crosses Socio-Economic Boundaries**

It is evident from the discussion in the previous chapter that engagement in work activities crosses over the socio-economic boundaries identified in the previous literature of Taylor (2004). It is possible to demonstrate this through using the provision of care and support to others as an example. This has been selected as an example here because it is an activity in which older people have played an increasingly important role (see for example, Scottish Executive 2007b). Figure 12 highlights how the provision of care and support (as discussed by the participants) can be thought of in relation to the socio-economic spheres that are recognised in Taylor (2004).

**Figure 12: Care and Support Crosses Socio-Economic Spheres**

<p><b>Paid Public Formal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid employment associated with care and support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paid Public Informal</b></p>	<p><b>Paid Private Informal</b></p>
<p><b>Unpaid Public Formal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary work associated with care and support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unpaid Public Informal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care and support associated with socialising</li> <li>• Care and support associated with social clubs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unpaid Private Informal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care and support for family members</li> </ul>

Most of the participants spoke about providing some emotional or physical care and support to people during a typical week. There was however, great diversity and variety in the level of care that was being provided by different individuals and the contexts within which this occurred. For example, participants such as Catherine and Ronald, discussed how there was an element of care or support provided through their paid employment. For Catherine, this was through her employment as an activity coordinator in a nursing home, and for Ronald this was associated with his employment as a minister. However, for others such as Kathleen the provision of care was in a voluntary role, and within the unpaid public formal sphere.

Care and support, however, can also occur within the unpaid public informal domain. For example, a number of participants spoke about socialising being associated with the provision of emotional support for friends. As Margaret stated in relation to asking friends around for dinner:

If you've got a good friend and you know they have maybe had a wee problem when they do come and you start having a wee conversation they'll usually spill something to

you about it. My mum used to say a problem shared is a problem halved so this is probably what it is.

Although the support discussed by Margaret occurred concurrently with the socialising, many other spoke about how this socialising led to the networks that were essential for both the receiving and giving of support and care when needed. In speaking of this mutually reciprocated support, Jennifer stated:

As I say we had a wii night and we were very into *mamma mia* for a while and we went to London and had a *mamma mia* night on in the village hall and had a show, and we all dressed up. You know we just do crazy things and again it is a social thing, it is social. And that is terribly important because I feel that, I know that at this stage, if something happened you know, husband is at work and I need help actually there are four other people that I could lift up the phone to and would be there if I said I need help...they would do the same, so if one was ill we would all take turns in walking the dog, another she lost her husband and we supported her, another one lost her father and we supported her, you know...in a way it is not that dissimilar to what you have at work, you have this network.

Through socialising, networks are developed and older people utilise the resources within these to negate through difficult situations. It is interesting to note, from Jennifer's perspective, that these networks are akin to those that were once had within her paid employment. This further illustrates the fuzziness in the by-products of paid employment and other *work activity* noted above. Yet what

the above quotes also demonstrate is how socialising either immediately, or at a later point in time, is interlinked with the provision of care or support for friends.

It is worth noting that the information discussed above and within the transcripts, which may be thought of as occurring within this sphere, tends to relate more to the provision of emotional support in times of need rather than physical care. Yet one must not reject that the social networks that develop from socialising or the attendance at social clubs may, in some instances, become a resource utilised for the provision of care. Certainly, as Phimister et al. (2003) noted the informal care and support offered by neighbours and friends is an important part of caring for older people. With the demand for informal care by children or family members likely to exceed provisions within this decade (Pickard 2008), the emphasis on this type of care within an unpaid public informal domain will become crucial.

Nevertheless, it has to be observed that within this research all instances of informal care to elderly or ill relatives were something reserved to the unpaid private informal sector. For example, Carol provided care for her son who experienced mental health problems and suggested that she provided this care for him because, in her opinion, the formal strands of care afforded to him had not been the most appropriate for his mental well-being. By contrast, participants such as Kathleen provided informal care to her parents because care was not currently available through formal sources like social services or the health boards.

It is evident, that the care work undertaken by older people takes place in no single socio-economic sphere but rather that it is dispersed through a range of means and in various settings. If we are to understand care and support as a work activity, it is necessary to look to at the total organisation of

care work. It is important not to think only of care provisions by older people as occurring solely within the unpaid private informal sector (as it is represented within current social policy directions i.e. with a focus upon informal care of grandchildren or of elderly relatives). I would argue instead, that given the findings from this research, it is important to consider that care and support work by older people transcends multiple socio-economic spheres and adequate acknowledgment of this must be evidenced in future research on this area. The importance of considering configurations of care (with particular reference to elder care in different countries) has of course previously been recognised within the works of Glucksmann and Lyon (2006) and others inspired by the Total Social Organisation of Labour (see chapter 3).

It is also, however, possible to apply these same principles to some of those activities, which I would define as *work activity*, but which have previously not been commonly thought of as such. To illustrate this I will utilise the example of study and learning. As illustrated within chapter 2, a common stereotypical view of older people is that they are resistant to learning and study (Loretto and White 2006). Yet “at a European and national level, lifelong learning is regarded as fulfilling a number of central functions” including being seen as “the generator of human capital, social capital, personal growth and development or as a means of social control” (Weedon et al. 2010: 3). For many of the participants within this research, learning was deemed important and was engaged with for a variety of reasons (see chapter 5). It is an activity that is closely interlinked with paid employment, as well as with activities that might be associated with other socio-economic spheres. Figure 13 overleaf illustrates how learning and study crosses socio-economic boundaries. It is clear to see how those involved with paid employment might engage with study and learning to enhance their skills or to improve their opportunities for employment. For example, Kathleen – a 60-64 year old working part-time – discussed how attending courses through her work improved the opportunity for further employment in the future. For others, it was not paid but unpaid work in the

public formal sector (i.e. through volunteering) that was associated with learning opportunities. Helen, for example, discussed how volunteering would afford her the opportunity to engage in learning or study, and to keep her skills updated in such a way that would not be possible if she did not volunteer.

**Figure 13: Learning Across Socio-Economic Spheres**

<p><b>Paid Public Formal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid employment associated with study and learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paid Public Informal</b></p>	<p><b>Paid Private Informal</b></p>
<p><b>Unpaid Public Formal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary work associated with study and learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unpaid Public Informal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study and learning associated with social clubs</li> <li>• Study and learning associated with sports and physical activity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unpaid Private Informal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study and learning for family members (intergenerational)</li> </ul>

Yet participants spoke about learning and studying taking place within more informal socio-economic spheres. For example, those attending book clubs commonly discussed how this would allow the opportunity to learn new perspectives and knowledge. As Helen and Maureen stated:

it also gives you a different perspective about reading and writing, because there are other people in the book club who have very different views or you know who have done English literature so are much more able to deconstruct a book or characterisation

[Helen]

reading the same books as other people and then I can talk about it, and it really

enriches your learning about the book So hmm, I like being in a group for that reason. The philosophy one stretches me hmm, it is taken by someone that teaches philosophy and hmm, and he, you know you play with these ideas but you don't know exactly what you are dealing with so he can tell us some of the background and explain things and work more like a seminar facilitation. So hmm, it is like a form of adult education and the other one is more for pleasure if you like but it did, the last book that we read at that book group got a riotous discussion going, which I was very pleased about.

[Maureen]

This illustrates how learning can take place whilst attending social clubs, but participants also noted how learning frequently took place in sports and physical activities. For example, in chapter 5 it was shown that people spoke about taking part in these activities to learn new skills and familiarise themselves with what was happening within their community.

In addition to the above, a few of the participants that were involved within this research also discussed how they had experienced intergenerational learning whilst looking after their grandchildren. This form of learning might be thought of as occurring within the unpaid private informal domain. Overall it is clear that lifelong learning occurs in a multitude of situations, and across several domains. Learning and study not only serves as an example of a work activity that transcends socio-economic boundaries, but they also represent the interconnectedness of different work activities (the issue of interconnectedness will be returned to later in this chapter). Effectively, in the lives of older people, learning and study are integrated with the undertaking of many other activities. This is perhaps not surprising given the importance placed upon learning within the knowledge society, and also the role of learning emphasised by religion and religious doctrine, which

were shown in chapter 5 to be influential in shaping ageing experiences. With such a complex platform for the presence of learning and study, it is necessary not only to acknowledge formal modes of learning and study but all forms of this activity, regardless of the sphere it occurs within the other activities of which it might be a by-product.

The recognition of the fact that any one activity might take place in the various socio-economic spheres is at the heart of the 'total social organisation of labour' perspective introduced by Glucksmann (2005) that inspired additional research in the sociology of work. Nevertheless, those exploring exclusively the older person and work have given insufficient attention to this critical dispersed distribution of *work activity*. Of course there is some literature that begins to accept certain activities (such as care) within informal and private spheres as unpaid work. However, this is limited only to certain forms of work and does not relate to all *work activities* highlighted by this research. Furthermore, the focus has been, as it has in the sociology of work literature, upon those things in the formal public paid/unpaid, and informal private spheres. In recognising the contribution older people can and do make to the labour of society, we as social researchers, must step away from the blinkered perspective that we are so often constrained by and embrace a more holistic approach that recognises that work crosses socio-economic boundaries.

## Recognising Interconnections

The value that emerges in one activity can be intertwined with the undertaking of other activities – especially when thinking of paid employment. Participants spoke about the benefits of other *work activities* (e.g., volunteering and study) upon their paid employment. For example, Helen, who was a member of a committee of a voluntary organisation, discussed how this benefited her paid

employment because it gave her access to conferences and courses, where she obtained information or knowledge that could be utilised in her paid employment. A similar point was made by Sandra. In both cases, the volunteering and paid employment involved similar types of roles.

A second example of where other *work activities* were discussed by participants as having benefits to paid employment related to formal study. Mary and Sheila, who were undertaking study that was not related to their employment, described how there had been unintentional and unexpected benefits for their paid employment. As Sheila expressed:

I have been doing that in practical theology and the courses that I have been doing have, eh, related quite accidentally almost hmm, to the work that I do...and I have found myself using stuff that was actually enhancing my ability to provide training for my supervisors.

[Sheila]

Sheila went on to describe how she combined full-time paid employment with study when she was required to do a work placement for her course. She noted that “they couldn’t have a placement on top of their work” and as a result, she used her paid employment as the placement for her study. This suggests that where study can be undertaken alongside paid employment, it can have benefits even where, at the outset, there is no direct or obvious link between the study and the paid employment, and where paid employment objectives are not the reason for engaging in the study.

A final example of where other *work activities* were reported to benefit paid employment related to sports and physical activities. This was discussed by one participant [Ronald] who suggested that engaging in physical activities such as fishing and cycling had a beneficial impact on his paid employment because it made him more relaxed, focused and generally a “better person at work”.

Interestingly, in all cases, the activities that participants believed to enhance their paid employment were not within the paid socio-economic spheres; they all took place within the public spheres (unpaid public formal and unpaid public informal). The research found that engagement in one activity can have benefits for 'value to others' and outcomes from other *work activities* and, on the flip side, the total benefit from any *work activity* might not be fully attributed to that activity alone. This observation emphasises again the importance of not limiting considerations of work to one activity like paid employment, but rather to think of this in wider terms and to acknowledge the various forms of work that might be undertaken by the older person. Furthermore, it is necessary not only to look at the links between paid employment and other *work activities*, but to consider further combinations of positive interrelations.

Whilst the above suggests how there are significant interrelations between unpaid activity and paid employment, information was also provided by participants about the impact of paid employment on other activities. Participants said paid employment or self-employment led to opportunities for socialising and the development of social networks. For example, when talking about one of her clients, Joan said:

They are a husband and wife and two sons and they have become very good friends so I just enjoy it and I can see myself working there, if anything happened that I had to give up work I would just stay there. I would actually just keep going there. [Joan]

This suggests that Joan thinks that the friendships developed through (in this case) self-employment would continue even when they are no longer employed there. This is in contrast however, to what was reported by the participants who were retired. For example, Dorothy described how, when they retired from paid employment, it was "like you lose part of your life, your friends". Furthermore,

other participants (e.g., Marion, Jennifer and Carol) reported that when they retired, they got involved in other activities like sports, arts and crafts, and volunteering to make new friends. As Marion indicated, this “social contact” was important because she was not coming into “contact with people the same” as when she was engaged in paid employment.

It therefore could be assumed that some *work activities* enhance socialising. For example, around a third of participants spoke about how their involvement in clubs had resulted in socialising and friendships. Five participants (George, Kathleen, Marion, Joan and Jennifer) discussed how voluntary work had provided an opportunity for socialising. For example as Jennifer described:

There is a very social network in the guide dog world, well with the puppy walkers and that was one of the bits that I thought was great when I started being retired, you go to the training classes and you meet other people with pups and you meet them for a coffee and you know you go places with them and go walks with them and so you get to know folk that way, so you get friends that way as well you know. [Jennifer]

A similar outcome of voluntary work was described by George, who said:

It gives you some purpose compared to, and also the opportunity to meet people...which you don't get when you are either swimming or down the gym and everyone is grinding away. You don't get much opportunity as everybody has their ipods on. [George]

This was in contrast to just under a third of participants, who suggested that they did develop friendships and socialised through their involvement with physical activities or sports. Although

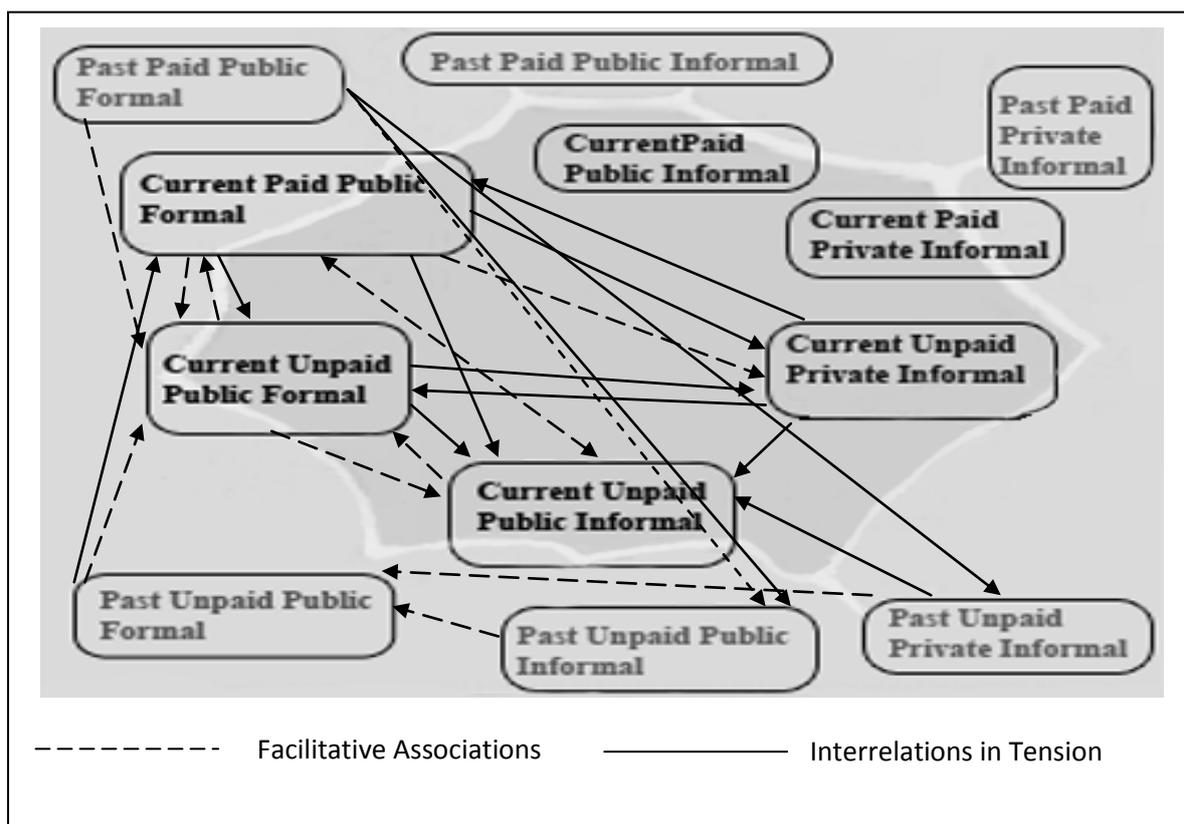
there are numerous quotes that demonstrate how these activities lead to friendships and socialising, the following extensive quote from Ronald is provided as an example:

I get a lot of enjoyment out of watching a rugby match but there is no doubt that the social life and the friendships that revolve around it probably have a greater value than the rugby itself so the rugby becomes a focus, hmm, of social engagement and social activity around. and I suppose all of our friends, by no means are involved in rugby, but in terms of ongoing social connection, it is around rugby that on going social connection with a group of fluid and open group of people...sometimes eh, we have got friends whose son and sometimes his friends come along as well. We have another friend who is professionally involved in eh, but sometimes his kids, well adult kids are involved as well so there is a whole mix, a fluid dynamic mix...a very open, fluid, dynamic and enjoyable mix of ages, people that we wouldn't normally socialise with in another context...it has and it continues to at every turn open up new doors and creates new links and seeing people that we may know from another context and eh get to know each other and as I say get to meet friends we have never met before and that has ended up with a social network of people. [Ronald]

This quote demonstrates how activities, such as sports, can lead to the development of friendships and social networks. The social networks highlighted above were deemed important by participants because they provided reciprocal informal care and support when needed. Yet what the above quote also demonstrates is how these activities can increase intergenerational links – something which is described as important in the *All Our Futures: Planning for an Ageing Population* (Scottish Executive 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) and in the wider literature (see for example Flora and Faulkner 2006; Morgan et al. 2007; Souza and Grundy 2007).

Overall, however, the information presented within this section illustrates how *work activities* do not operate in isolation. The possibility of engagement in one activity might be subdued by the engagement in another. On the other hand, however, the outcomes and by-products within one activity might well be intertwined with the engagement in other activities. The interrelations identified within this research can be illustrated pictorially in relation to the different socio-economic spheres (see figure 14).

**Figure 14: Diagrammatic Representation of Interrelations**



I would argue that considerations of work must reach beyond the activity in question and adopt, as has been the case within this research, a more holistic approach. Only through accepting the possibility of complex interconnections with other activities, is it truly possible to understand what

emerges from that specific act or element of work that is of particular interest to the researcher. Acknowledgement of the interconnections between *work activities* is of crucial relevance to understanding the activities of older people, and must therefore be encapsulated in new approaches to understanding older people's work.

## Chapter Conclusion

In the introduction and early chapters of this thesis, I argued that there is a need for social gerontologists to adopt a new way of thinking about work. Through this research and within this chapter, I have suggested that in consideration of older people's work it is necessary to recognise three important factors. Firstly, we must look beyond paid employment and recognise a multitude of *work activities*. It is clear that there is a need (as has frequently been recognised in the sociology of work literature but not significantly so in gerontology) to think about the unpaid work undertaken. Even where wider definitions of work have been adopted, this research has emphasised that some activities that fall under the rubric of leisure might now be considered as a form of work. For example, this chapter has introduced socialising, attending social clubs, and undertaking sports and leisure as possible *work activities*. In arguing this point, I am arguing for an expansion not only of definitions of work in social gerontology, but also for greater breadth to the types of activities generally considered under already accepted wider definitions of work.

Secondly, and related to the above point, I argue in this chapter that it is important to recognise a blurring of boundaries and the absorption of leisure into work. Older people will work at leisure and leisure at work. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the need to think not only of the activity that is immediately of interest but rather to look widely and holistically and a multitude of *work activity*. Only through looking beyond a single activity can we see the possible interrelations between

different activities and how the outcome or by-product of any single activity might be enhanced or hindered through the engagement of another. All these factors, I would argue, need to be addressed if we are to have a truly comprehensive understanding of the work of older people.

Of course, there are many things discussed within this chapter, which might not be thought of as the sole privilege of older people. Much of what has been written might be thought of as age unspecific. Whilst at a superficial level this might appear to be an accurate representation of the situation, the following chapter will illustrate just how age matters in our understandings of work. Rethinking the work of older people must rely on both the information presented within this chapter and that provided in the next.

## Chapter 7: Age Matters – Realising the Importance of Age

In the preceding chapters, I introduced the key tenets of a new vision for older people's work, how we understand it, what is involved, why people are involved, and what influences their involvement. This chapter will emphasise how age is crucial to understanding *work activities* of older people. It observes how involvement with work is shaped through a complex interplay of the influences of current social and cultural expectations of age, a desire for freedom, autonomy and choice, and a respect for the legacies of the past. Each of these aspects will be reflected upon in detail within this chapter, which will make clear the point that considerations of work need to be specific to age period cohorts. The reasons and motivations for work, along with the activities undertaken, are likely to be age specific because the combination of social, cultural and historical factors that influence older people in contemporary society is likely to be different from those shaping the lives of people born into past, and future, generations.

The elaboration of the above will enhance the understandings of ageing and the factors influencing activities undertaken. However, the contribution of this thesis to social gerontology goes beyond that. In reflecting upon the new vision for work this chapter will comment upon current understandings of the third age and how these can be progressed. Overall, this chapter highlights how age matters in understanding work, and subsequently the importance of considerations of work for understanding ageing. It begins by discussing how older people's involvement with work is shaped by social and cultural expectations.

## An Age of Social Expectations

It is evident from this research, and the findings presented within chapter 5, that there are a number of situations where older people take on board social expectations and these are discussed when making sense of their involvement in different activities. Some participants suggested that social policy and governments shape these wider representations. For example, as Sandra put it, the “government is very influential in setting values”. Participants were also aware of the role of messages and representations within social policies and the influence these have upon decisions to engage with particular activities. For example, in discussing going to the gym and the increasing numbers of people of his age group engaging in such activities George stated:

I think we are all pushing this health agenda, has just made them [pensioners] a wee bit more conscious...I mean even in the paper today some MSPs are suggesting that we ban trans fats, the hydrogenated vegetable fats and because that is responsible for high blood pressure or putting on the weight and things like that...and I think the publicity that it is given to that has increased the number of older people that are participating in the gym. And certainly, now a days now I am at the stage that you get a health check up every year anyway because we are in a deprived post code and in an elderly area, you are one of the target areas for the government measures. [George]

Similarly, as was illustrated within chapter 5, participants understood the role of the government and social policy in promoting particular images and creating opportunities for retirement. Older people were aware of the expectation of them to adopt multiple roles (such paid employment, and care of grandchildren and elderly relatives), which are represented within the *All Our Futures*

strategy (Scottish Government 2007b) (see chapter 2). They acknowledged people of their age group have a role in paid employment, that they should provide care for elderly residents and that there is also a social expectation to provide care to grandchildren. Whilst being aware of the multiple activities expectant of their age group, it is clear to see how navigating these multiple tasks proves challenging at times. For example, some participants spoke about how it was difficult to juggle requirements of care and support of grandchildren, children and elderly relatives (see chapter 6). In these circumstances, and associated with holding a strong work ethic, older people will continue to engage with paid employment as long as possible at the expense of the undertaking over other *work activities*. As was elaborated upon in chapter 6 this can lead to feelings of guilt and angst at not being able to provide sufficient support to those close to them.

In contrast, however, those within self-employment were able to negate the expectation of being involved within multiple roles more easily. For example, participants such as Margaret and Joan were appreciated and felt lucky for the flexibility that self-employment brought to them in terms of delivering care to their grandchildren. Flexibility within paid employment is certainly something that allowed older people taking part within this research to engage with many different activities. The issue of flexibility in paid employment is, of course, something that has been raised several times in the existing literature base (see for example, Lee 1996; Lenz 1996; Loretto et al. 2007; Platman 2004). Yet it is proposed here that there is also a need to introduce more flexibility in all unpaid *work activities*. This research has demonstrated that some participants will not engage in or withdraw from activities, such as volunteering, because these are thought to require a certain level of commitment that they feel they cannot offer whilst undertaking other *work activity*. This has clear policy implications in a socio-economic context, which implies a need for older people to engage in paid employment for longer, while it simultaneously creates a need for them to take on more responsibility in unpaid *work activities*. Flexibility in terms of work is, of course, something that could

be considered as important to all age groups, but specific flexibility policies might need to be implemented for different age groups given that social representations of expectant roles vary according to different age groups. If we assume, as Moscovici (1973) proposed that those social representations act as a road map through life and influence behaviour, then we could also expect that the *work activities* of one age group will differ from another, thus resulting in the potential need for subtle differences of flexibility policies.

It is interesting to note however, that whilst participants spoke about social expectations when discussing their engagement in care of elderly, care of grandchildren, and paid employment, there were no instances discussed where people felt that there was an expectation of them to undertake volunteering. For the participants, the desire to volunteer was not related to current social or cultural expectations but rather seemed to be influenced more by shared experiences of the past. With this in mind, it is possible to begin to think about how the lives of older people are shaped not only within the present but also in the legacies of the past.

## **The Legacy of the Past**

The older people in this study often reflected upon their understanding of past historical events such as the introduction of the welfare state, economic depression, the Second World War and the post war period. As is evidenced in chapter 5, it is clear that older people's perceptions of the past were central in making sense of their morals for giving back and help others. It was common for the participants to speak nostalgically about the era of the War as being characterised by people working together. Such memories of the War reflect those in the propaganda discourses at the time and subsequent representations by historians. As Donnelly (1999:1) described "the communal

nature of the 'people's war' and the moral superiority of the national cause" is something that was central to propaganda at the time and which are inherent in the images of war presented by historians.

Yet such representations are, it has been argued, mythical because this era was also characterised by great social divisions, resentment between social classes, racial discrimination and increasing crime rates (Donnelly: 1999). Nevertheless, it is the former rather than latter imagery that is held by these participants and which has informed, in some of them, the desire to undertake activities for the purpose of helping others. This supports what Boym (2001) stated; that it is not the past per se that is important but the memories and understandings of that past which are most influential.

The understandings of an individual's past are therefore important in constructing their current reality. The statements of participants observed within this research might be seen, as Bornat (1994) suggests as reminiscence - that is to say the information has been obtained in a way that promotes self-reflection and self-awareness. The history of considering reminiscence with gerontology is a long one (Coleman 1994,) but for some (see for example Cohen and Taylor 1998: 601) the emphasis of reminiscence being increased with age is a 'folklore of ageing'. According to Cohen and Taylor focusing upon reflections of the past contributes to the sustained stereotyping of older people being fixated on the past and not involved in current issues. What is evident from this research however, is that whilst older people are certainly experiencing ageing with a view to taking on board current issues (e.g. active and healthy ageing principles, desires to sustain paid employment etc.), they are still influenced in part by the past. As such it would be neglectful to omit nostalgia and reminiscence of the past in any consideration of current understandings of ageing experiences.

What is more, the importance of this is further emphasised by the fact that the role of history is something that has been noted in the literature regarding narratives and the construction of the self, and is one way in which individuals make sense of their situation (de Fina 2003; Boym 2001; Wilson 2005). Whilst this is true for all age groups, it is important to emphasise that those elements of the past discussed within this thesis are specific to this generation of older people. That is not to dispute that younger people or other generations will not experience, for example, war or deprivation, but rather that the exact nature and blend of social events will differ according to those ageing in different eras. If it is assumed, as Newman (2008:53) noted, that “what we know to be true or real is always a product of the cultural and historical period in which we exist” then there is no doubting that the reflections on involvement in *work activities* provided within this thesis are indeed relevant specifically to this age period cohort.

Indeed the participants in this research did observe how their generation was shaped by a different set of social experiences than those of younger age groups. For example, in discussing their engagement in activities to fulfil their desire to belong to a physical community, participants commented upon how previous generations had consistent physical social networks (often centring around churches and villages) and how younger generations had more electronic social networks. As is illustrated by Helen in the following quote:

They [people in my parents' generation] lived in the same community where they had lived for twenty five years so the neighbours were the same people, they didn't need to do anything very much because people didn't move around much but now people move when they retire or go off on holiday. There is not going to get the papers in the morning or chatting with the neighbours at the door, it [community] doesn't have the

same connotation as it did...I can see from my kids generation the way in which they engage with other people is electronic and they can engage with vast amounts of people and their community is an electronic community and they speak to people that they might not have seen for months and I don't know how they manage. [Helen]

For this generation of older people, social networks were seen to be somewhat transient across the lifespan, with cessation from paid employment often being seen to result in a loss of friendship and the need to seek this from new opportunities. Essentially it is evident that older people are positioning themselves as having different values and attitudes from previous generations, and age matters in understanding the complexities of the world of work. That is not to say that the aspects above do not shape the lives of all ages but it must be acknowledged that the specifics of these will fluctuate, with the potential to result in different experiences across generations. Nor is the claim that we should dismiss the possibility of shared memory, which Anderlini et al. (2010) describe as being the passing of information, attitudes and behaviours from one generation to another. Certainly in this research, much of what was being referred to were shared representations and understandings of the past from parents and significant others. With this clearly exhibited transient knowledge, one could argue (against what has already been noted) that actually there would be continuity across the years in the influence of significant historical events and changes upon the involvement in *work activity*.

However, this research provides some evidence that, in actuality, that argument is not supported. Rather, in the view of the participants' testimonials, those things from their past which influence their psyche would not be as important to younger generations. It was noted in chapter 5, for example, that the participants felt that as time passes the possibility of these nostalgic influences

would be slowly depleted. Memories of the war and the image of people working together for the common good in the face of adversity were seen less likely to be important in shaping the lives of younger people than of this group of older people. For this group of older people, the Thatcher years had a significant impact upon younger people, their outlook on life and indeed the motivations for engagement in activities. The resentment and anger individuals had for Thatcherism and its consequences emerged strongly throughout this research. Participants speak about how the ideologies and politics of Margaret Thatcher had made society more individualistic, had an impact on some of the younger generations.

I wouldn't like to say that all young people are selfish but there are some definitely you know, eh the trend that I have seen over my life time to be self-centred and doing things for yourself...I think it came in with Margaret Thatcher and her policies...you know society doesn't exist, it is just the individual. [Marion]

Essentially, this research demonstrates how older people believe that the era through which one lives, and the key associated social events and changes during that time, are central to the way in which they are living their later years. This demonstrates how important it is, when trying to understand the world of work, that we look at each age cohort as different from others. The information presented thus far illustrates the role of wider social forces, including the socio-economic context associated with each era, and demonstrates how considerations of age are significant to understanding how *work activities* are experienced. The motivations of those in the third age within contemporary society will potentially be different from those in other age groups, and indeed from those within the third age in previous generations. One particular aspect that was

discussed by participants as being different from previous generations of older people relates to a sense of greater choice and autonomy in many aspects of their lives.

### **A Third Age of Greater Autonomy?**

Despite the observations earlier in this chapter that older people's lives remained, in part, shaped by social and cultural expectations, the participants within this research felt that ultimately they had more freedom or choice in comparison to that of their parents' and grandparents' generations. For example, in speaking generally about this manner, Helen noted "as far as my parents generation it was clear what was right, it was very black and white." Ronald, and others provided a more specific example of this in terms of older people now having the freedom to join the gym and undertake other physical activities. Such activities, according to Ronald, would not have been seen as appropriate for older people in previous years.

There were further discussions about traditional gender roles meaning that some participants' grandmothers and mothers, on getting married, would have remained at home to keep the house and look after the children. Whilst this was generally observed, other participants did note that their grandmothers had engaged with paid employment. There was also an observation that as social attitudes changed and in middle age, some mothers reintegrated with paid employment – the positive impact of this for their mothers was influential in the construction of their own views on employment and working (see chapter 5 for further detail on this). Such findings illustrate how older people might be experiencing greater individualisation, as it has been discussed previously by Beck and Beck-Gernstein (2002). That is to say that there is greater need within contemporary society to create one's own biographies in the absence of pre-defined social roles.

Freedom to create one's own biographies means that older people potentially have greater diversity and choice in the activities they undertake, but they also have an intertwined opportunity to reject traditional roles associated with specific groups. Gilleard and Higgs (2007) saw this as a consequence of the way in which the third age was constructed; representing 'youthful' virtues and positioning oneself away from the other of the older old or those that are dependent upon others. The creation of this representation of age is something that reportedly occurred at a time of great societal change and the transformation of modernity (Gilleard and Higgs 2007). These changes, and the creation of a more individualised society have allowed (according to Ray 2005) directly for individuals in all age groups to have greater freedom and choice.

Within this research, it is clear to see some situations where older people have the freedom to undertake activities for self-pleasure. Retirement in particular, for some participants, afforded the opportunity to engage in activities that they had previously not been able to fulfil because of their other assumed roles. For example, George suggested that whilst working he did not have the time for exercise and noticed a deterioration in his health. Yet on retirement, he had, as planned taken up golf and swimming again to improve his health and reduce his blood pressure. Similarly, Linda, who had always wanted to engage in formal learning at postgraduate level but had never been able to combine this with paid employment and family, was able to engage with this on retirement.

Greater autonomy for a few of the participants meant that they were actively seeking to engage in activities so as not to live up to stereotypical roles of the older person. For example, Carol stated that she would engage in activities that involved learning so as not to live up to the image of "older people being stuck in their ways". Effectively, although (as was demonstrated earlier in this chapter) older people will live up to many images of ageing and their actions can be constrained to a degree

by social expectations, there are some situations where older people will actively seek to counter existing social representations. Just as individualisation has been noted as way of disbanding fixed feminine and masculine identities (Banks and Milestone 2011), it might be argued that this can be a source through which older people can reject set lifestyles stereotypically assigned to them. The examples provided here are supportive of the fact that older people will on occasion be self-selective in their biographies within the early older years. Yet it is important to emphasise that the reality of ageing involves the complex interplay between individual choice and autonomy, as well as decisions fixed and constrained by wider social and cultural issues.

One such area where this can be seen is in respect to paid employment and retirement. Chapter 5 highlighted how, for a few participants, the individual economic situation prevented the option of retirement from paid employment. Participants related this situation to current pension provisions and sometimes the wider socio-political and economic context across the life course. For example, participants such as Sheila spoke about how they only entered paid employment later on in life, having spent many years at home raising her children. Subsequently, she had only limited pension provisions. In the words of Kathleen:

Because I started so late my pension is not really worth anything, I think I have about three thousand pound a year or something ridiculous like that. So I don't think I can afford to retire at sixty five.

It is clear that for some participants, the engagement of older people in paid employment is not a matter of choice but rather forced by economic necessity linked to pension policy and gender roles across the life course. Here we can see how the current economic situation is influential in the

reality of work experienced by the older person. Yet some participants also spoke about how the opportunities for retirement and pension provisions are linked to the overall economic situation of a country. Some spoke explicitly of previous times where it was beneficial to have older people removed from the labour market and this was associated with early retirement packages being offered (see chapter 5). Such findings emphasise the importance of the political and economic contexts to understanding experiences of ageing and involvements within work. The association between these wider economic contexts and ageing has already been widely accepted within the political economy perspective said to be influential in gerontology (Powell 2005).

As older people's lives are only partly freed from social, cultural, political and economic factors, it is not possible to fully accept (as has been done by others such as Ray 2005) that older people are experiencing fully individualisation. We can explain this through thinking the work of Lash (1994: 46) who suggests that we have only achieved part individualisation because the traditional structures of "the extended family, the church, village community" have been replaced alternative structures such as trade unions, welfare state, and government bureaucracy. There is no doubt that the latter are features within old age, but ageing remains influenced through some of those traditional structures mentioned.

The importance of the church and a sense of community remain central to many of the decisions with which this sample of older people engaged. It is important to note however, that whilst important to the participants, it appears that this is an autonomous choice to be involved rather than a social expectation as may have been the case in past years. As Helen stated:

It [the church] was a kind of mark of your standing in the community or your reputation and certainly for my parents who were, you know they were married just after the war, it was a strong part of the community then and there was an expectation and if you didn't it was either because you had very strong views or there was something a bit dodgy. So yes it is very different. In some ways it has swung the other way and it is a bit odd you going to church on a Sunday on a regular basis, it isn't seen as normal. [Helen]

At one level it might be argued that the involvement with these traditional structures is not imposed socially for this generation but rather arises out of a process of self-reflexively creating biographies. Certainly, the findings of this research demonstrate how some participants are choosing to engage in these activities as they are looking for opportunities to recreate the social aspects associated with traditional structures. For example, Sandra, who attended church to fulfil a sense of belonging and desire for community rather than for religious reasons, was involved in a number of activities for the purposes of giving back and developing community. She stated:

I just think we can make much more effective use of our time, we live too insularly and maybe that is part, that is part of why over the years people have moved into much smaller units so you don't even have families living, you know nuclear families living together anymore. You have a lot of single parents and then the father is somewhere else, you have sort of segregated families and you know the extended families there perhaps used to be in the thirties, forties, fifties – people lived closer and the all supported each other more...well I find it incredible lonely. I would like to live in a big communion me. [Sandra]

For Sandra, and others like her, the involvement in activities was about striving to belong to a community and to recreate a sense of belonging that had previously been experienced. There is an attempt to recreate the benefits of the past - thus illustrating perhaps the need to adopt a life-course perspective and the need to collect diachronic information in this type of research. Yet it is evidenced through this research that many older people look for new opportunities that afford internal continuity (see Tanner and Harris 2008) rather than necessarily looking for continuity in terms of the activity. For example, in retirement, some will look for places where they might continue to contribute something and apply their work ethics. However, as the following quote from Carol demonstrates, this need not be in the same field as their paid employment.

I don't want to do anything medical. I don't want anything to do with sick people or old people or disabled people or any of that or anything health related...I want a change, like the cancer hospice I am sure you could do a lot for that but it would just be too much of the same sort of thing. I know that sounds horrible but I would rather volunteer for something in a different way. [Carol]

Overall, it can be seen that the fifty-plus years are shaped through a combination of contemporary issues, socially determined age-related roles, the legacy of the past and individual choice. Given the multiple age-specific aspects that are influential within the construction of reality, it is of utmost importance to consider those within the third age as a relatively distinct group when exploring *work activity*. Nevertheless, common understandings of the third age are somewhat problematic, given the findings from this research and as such it is important to rethink the third age in light of these findings.

## Understanding the Third Age

Overall, it is evident that early old age involves the complex interplay and management of the influences of cultural and social expectations, the legacies of the past, constraints of political economic contexts, and paradoxically, a greater degree of autonomy in comparison to previous generations. The influence on ageing of social, cultural and historical factors means it is not possible to fully accept (as has been done by others such as Ray 2005) that older people are as equally affected by individualisation as other age groups. Whilst older people have some choice and autonomy in creation of self-biographies, this age group is not free from social expectation and subsequently part of the biographies of older people remain bound in structure of society. There is no doubt that associated with the political economic context, government directions and welfare provisions regarding pensions and care are having direct implications for older people in terms of activity involvement. Furthermore, the fifty-plus years are shaped through a combination of contemporary issues, socially determined age-related roles, the legacy of the past and individual choice. Given the multiple age-specific aspects that have been discussed within this chapter, it is of the utmost importance to consider those within the third age as a relatively distinct group when exploring *work activities*. Nevertheless, current understandings of the third age are somewhat problematic given the findings from this research.

The third age is a term often attributed to having been developed in Peter Laslett's (1989) book, *A Fresh Map of Life*. It has been utilised previously to describe a "period of *active* [original emphasis] retirement, free from work, financial and social obligations, and the enjoyment of good health" (Fineman 2011: 116). It is possible to see how older people are living *active* lives because as was illustrated in chapter 5, they are generally involved in numerous activities, which they themselves see as creating something of value to others. Yet being *active* is only one component of third age

principles and it is clear from the findings from this research that the other elements of the third age are not characteristic of those engaging with this research. Firstly, not all the respondents were retired from paid employment, and many suggested that they had no intentions of retiring on being able to collect a pension or on reaching the national default retirement age. Nor are all participants free from financial and social obligations – on the contrary, this chapter has illustrated how older people are potentially influenced by both of these.

Yet the biggest challenge to accepting such definitions is the idea of being free from work. Authors (such as Moen 2011: 17) have previously observed the limitations of assuming the third age commencing with the movement from paid employment to retirement – as is illustrated in the following quote:

life in the Third Age remains constrained by outdated social and institutional clocks that promote retirement as a one-way, one-time, irreversible shift from full-time employment to the full-time leisure occurring around age 62 to 65.

Such comments are reinforced by the findings of this research. It is evident that people do not necessarily retire from paid employment between the ages of 62 and 65. Participants such as Margaret, Catherine and Joan were in paid employment beyond this age and those such as Mary and Sheila had no intention of to retire at 60/65 years of age. Furthermore, on retirement people do not necessarily cease to swap work for leisure, and indeed as was discussed in chapter 6 the boundaries between these two concepts are fuzzy and unclear. Understanding the Third Age in contemporary society as being synonymous with retirement from paid employment is flawed. It is necessary to

recognise that people in this cohort may be engaged in some form of paid employment and may also be involved in forms of unpaid work.

As an alternative to linking definitions of the third age with retirement from work, some such as Fineman (2011: 117) suggest that this should be seen as “akin to zeitgeist, a spirit of the generational times, marked by older people’s patterns of consumption and use of leisure”. The Third Age for the baby boom generation has previously been noted as a time where “work and leisure have become disconnected” (Gilleard and Higgs 2007: 25-26).

Whilst this thesis emphasises previous claims of the importance of considering that experiences of the third age may be generation specific, such definitions are equally limited by the major challenge of linking the third age with patterns of consumption and the use of leisure. If we are to fully acknowledge the potential of unpaid work, the lives of older people must not be thought of solely in terms of consumption and leisure. This research has emphasised the complex relationship between work and leisure. Thinking of work and leisure as polarised concepts will only act as fuel to the sustained devaluing of the non-conventional forms of work identified within this research. Those studying older people should not reinforce the divide; nor should they sustain the devaluing of unpaid work through classing this as leisure or through seeing the contribution of older people in terms of consumption and leisure.

With widened understandings of work and leisure, it is argued within this thesis that the Third Age should be thought of as being characterised by transitions between and varying interaction levels with *work activities* in different socio-economic spheres. There is much more diversity than the replacement of paid employment with leisure as has been illustrated throughout this thesis, and

summarised in the vignettes provided in chapter 5. This group of older people are involved in a multitude of different activities, which they themselves see as having some benefit to others and which therefore should be arguably reconceptualised as forms of work (see chapter 6). Whilst acknowledging the multiple contributions of those in the third age, we must remember that this approach is the product of a blend of contemporary and historical factors, as well as of personal options and direction. It is this observation and the awareness that these elements will vary over time that draws this thesis to argue, like Fineman (2011), that the experiences of the Third Age should be seen as pertinent to each generation. Those born within the post-war baby boom period are, as Phillipson (2007: 7) often observed as “having distinctive experiences that set them apart from previous generations”.

## Chapter Conclusion

Through this chapter, it has been demonstrated that the working lives of older people are influenced and shaped through a combination of individual choice, age-specific social expectations, and the legacies of a past that is pertinent to this generation. Age is critical to our understanding of work, but at the same time the lessons learnt about work in chapter 6 are crucial to our understandings of age. The re-conceptualisation of work allows an important route through which ageist attitudes might be challenged, but it is equally important in contributing to how we might think about or define the third age. In this chapter, I have elaborated upon the consequences of these findings for definitions of the third age, and it is here that I believe there is added benefit of blending the fields of social gerontology with the sociology of work. The third age (as was introduced earlier in this thesis) is often thought of as a time that commences when somebody moves from paid employment to a time of leisure and personal choice yet the findings of this research challenge that. The third age does not necessarily mean distinction from paid employment and indeed this is something that Laslett (1989) commented upon, and to whom the term is often attributed. Laslett (1989: 4) stated that:

the possibility has to be contemplated that the Third Age could be lived simultaneously with the Second Age, or even with the First. Since the Third Age is identified here as that during which the apogee of personal life is achieved, anyone who reaches the goal at the same time as money is being earned and accumulated, a family founded and sustained, a successful career brought to a pitch of attainment, could be said to live the Third Age alongside the Second.

Whilst acknowledging that the third age must not be thought of as a period where there is absence from paid employment, there are conceptual implications from acknowledging this as a stage that might occur alongside the second stage of life. Such blurring of different stages of life would be inappropriate for the very reason that work experiences, as they have been observed within this research, are impacted upon by age and social events commonly experienced over the life course of particular age cohorts. I would argue that to embrace the true picture of reality there remains a need to distinguish between the work of older people and that of other age groups. As such, the term 'the third age' remains a valuable one, although there is a requirement to rethink what is meant by that concept. Consequently, I have argued that the third age is more appropriately thought of as a time characterised by transitions and varying interaction levels with *work activities* in different socio-economic spheres. The re-conceptualisation of the third age in these terms has hinged upon the integrated consideration of work and age. Not looking at work would return the concept to one involving a distinction between employment and non-employment. This has so often been done within social gerontology. In comparison, through considerations of work, it is clear that the boundaries are not as stark as those previously taken-for-granted. By blending two fields, this thesis has made a significant contribution to how we think about age, and subsequently offers future directions for exploring the experiences of the third age.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion – The Benefit of Considering Work and Age**

Through insights from the sociologies of work and gerontology, and by discussing my research into the work of older people, this thesis has enhanced understandings of age and work. This chapter will summarise the lessons learnt in relation to the following key research questions set out earlier on in this thesis:

- What activities are undertaken by older people and why?
- How can we rethink the work of older people and what is the importance of age?
- What are the implications of reflecting on work for understanding ageing?

It will explore the implications of these findings, the limitations of the study and the need for further research. It will therefore include discussion of the theoretical developments that have emerged through the approach adopted within this thesis and a new framework will be proposed, which might be utilised in future research exploring both ageing and work. Throughout the discussions, reference will be made to the importance and significance of integrating these two sociologies, rather than considering them independently.

### **What activities are undertaken by older people and why?**

The older people within this study were, as was evidenced in chapter 5, engaged with a variety of activities within any given week. The activities discussed in this research included paid employment/self-employment, sports and physical activities, study and learning, volunteering, housework and gardening, support or care of children, support or care of grandchildren, care of

elderly or ill relatives, attending social clubs, arts and crafts, reading, theatre/cinema, and listening to radio/watching television. Through the vignettes, and other information presented within chapter 5, it was clear to see how older people generally undertook several of these different activities. Furthermore, it is evident that most of these activities were seen by participants to have value to others and were thus subject to further exploration within the interviews (see chapter 4 for discussion on why only those things of value were discussed further in interviews).

As part of that elaboration, it was possible to see that the principal reasons for people doing these different activities were:

- To maintain good physical and mental health
- Personal ambition and learning
- Enjoyment and pleasure
- Friendship, social networks and belonging
- Giving back and helping others
- Meeting needs of others, obligation and expectation
- Economic rationale and work beliefs

Looking at these elements in more depth, it was observed that motivations for these activities are rooted within a blend of social, cultural, historical and individual factors (see chapter 5). The consideration of the activities in which older people participated and why they did so, was fundamental to answering the second research question: How can we rethink the work of older people and what is the importance of age?

## How can we rethink the work of older people and what is the importance of age?

In the early chapters of this thesis, I argued that there was a need for social gerontologists to adopt a new way of thinking about work. Such a need was founded upon three factors. Firstly, there is the assumption that our current understandings of work are fundamental in constructions of the negative images of ageing. Secondly, key policy documents in Scotland have called for a new understanding of work; and thirdly, much of the developing conceptualisations of work emerging through the sociology of work have had minimal impact within gerontology.

This thesis provides a step towards rethinking the work of older people. In acknowledging the wider definitions of work provided by Chester and Grossman (1990) and Andersen and Taylor (2006), this research argues that *work activities* were those that the participants themselves considered to be of value to others. Those acts of work identified included employment/self-employment, study, volunteering, housework and gardening, support/care for children and grandchildren, support/care for elderly or ill relatives, attending social clubs, undertaking sports and physical activity, and socialising. Whilst the value of undertaking all these activities has been identified in previous literature (see chapter 5), many are not commonly thought of as *work activities*, even where wider definitions of work have been adopted. Those that have not been classified previously appear to be those that are aligned to the third sector and more specifically that part of the third sector that Pearce (2003) described as non-trading and non-market driven.

The neglecting of some activities (such as socialising, attending social clubs, and undertaking sports and physical activities) as forms of work is partly a consequence of conventional understandings of

work, which have been discussed in the existing literature (e.g. Edgell 2006; Granter 2009). It is further intertwined with the traditional preoccupation of activities relating to the market, which has previously been noted by, for example Fevre (2003). The omission of some *work activities* is further associated with the evolution of challenges to definitions of work such as those of Crompton (1997) and Glucksmann (1990), which have focused on the divides between paid activities in the market and unpaid activities within the private sphere. By challenging the conventional definitions of work and recognising, as did Taylor (2004), that work can occur in six socio-economic spheres, this research adopted a more holistic approach and highlighted a whole range of *work activities* undertaken by older people.

The *work activities* identified go far beyond paid employment and the unpaid forms of work are more comprehensive than those most commonly identified within previous literature (i.e. volunteering, care and housework). They include activities (e.g. attending social clubs, socialising, and sports and physical activity), which are more intuitively thought of as leisure activities. Subsequently, this research has demonstrated, and argued for, the dissolving of boundaries between leisure and work. This is something that Mansvelt (1997) noted as a possible way of challenging ageist attitudes within society. In drawing attention to the diverse nature of work and the multiple ways through which something of value to others is created, this research then advocates the productive and positive contribution of older people within society. There is no doubting the potential and need for a re-conceptualisation of the work of older people.

Within this thesis, the need for rethinking older people's work was discussed at three different levels (see chapter 6). Firstly, the undertaking of one activity in any sphere can have a distinct and direct impact upon the outcomes and success of a different type of work undertaken within another

sphere – thus consideration of one without the other provides only a limited understanding of work. Secondly, any one activity might take place as paid or unpaid, and in the public/private, informal/formal settings – thus making it difficult to categorise work merely on the socio-economic sphere in which it takes place. Finally, the research identifies synergy across the board in terms of the reasons for engagement in *work activities* with the seven reasons previously discussed. The question that must be asked is whether distinctions might be made between activities undertaken by the older person for the same reasons. Essentially, there is synergy of those things conventionally understood as work, and those things I have argued should fall under the rubric of work, which might otherwise be thought of as leisure. The argument I present here is that all these aspects should be thought of as *work activity* given the complex web of interrelations that exists between all those activities discussed by older people, which they felt had value to others.

Overall there is no doubt that this research can make significant contributions to our understandings of work but the question might be asked, how unique is this to older people? It is possible to think of much of the information presented within chapter 6 as being age unspecific and which might have been identified through consideration of any age group. However, the true importance of considering age alongside aspects of work was emphasised in chapter 7. Through the analysis, it emerged that older people felt that the era within which they had been raised, and the key social events or changes occurring within that time frame were influential in their decisions of engagement in or disengagement from *work activities*. It was often reported by participants that the generation before them and indeed that after them might have been influenced by different motivational factors.

The importance of age when considering work was, however, further illustrated in the fact that older

people feel a sense of obligation and expectation to undertake different activities. The expected social roles of older people, which include those reflected within and promoted by social policy, at times socially constrain working lives in a way that do not necessarily affect other age groups (see chapter 7). Consideration of work independent of age would not allow for the emergence of this knowledge, nor would it allow for such a nuanced understanding of ageing in a particular era. There is no doubt therefore that the blending of two fields, which have been, to date, rather distant from one another, significantly enhances our understanding of work and allows for a greater understanding of ageing.

### **What are the implications of reflecting on work for understanding ageing?**

Previous literature often suggests that the third age is a time characterised by choice and autonomy (see for example, Gilleard and Higgs 2007; Ray 2005; Vickerstaf and Cox 2005); whilst others see this as being shaped and structured within political economic contexts (see for example Powell 2006; Phillipson 2005). In giving consideration to the older person's role in work, this thesis has demonstrated how ageing involves the complex interaction of sometimes contradictory influences. The biographies of older people are on one level self-created but at the same time are manipulated through the role of social, cultural and historical influences. The decisions made by older people within this research, and indeed the reasons for engagement in *work activity*, were influenced by expectations of age "appropriate" roles (similar to those represented within social policies located in current political economic contexts), the nostalgia and shared memories of war and other significant social events or changes, and greater freedom and choice than previous generations. The findings from this research reflect the following comment made by Wilson (2005: 56):

Individuals are caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them.

This makes it essential that when thinking of ageing we consider each age group cohort as a relatively distinct group. The motivations for, and influences on, work likely vary between age groups and across different eras. Reflecting and rethinking specifically on the work of older people in today's society enables a positive view of ageing polarised to the image of the older person as a 'burden'. Through the encapsulation of more activities as work it is possible to raise the awareness of the value to society associated with these, which the participants themselves observed. Furthermore, in accepting the fuzzy boundaries between work and leisure it is possible, as Mansvelt (1997) proposed to challenge ageist attitudes within society. Through time and dissemination, I call for a widespread acceptance that work of older people takes multiple forms, transcends different socio-economic boundaries, and involves a complex web of interrelations. The integration of such thought within social gerontology is potentially suppressed at a theoretical level due to the way definitions of the third age are often linked with the dichotomy between paid employment and retirement (see chapter 2). However, as was identified earlier in this thesis, a recent review of research directions (FuturAge 2011) has sought a new way of looking at ageing, which moves beyond the binary associations of age to work and retirement.

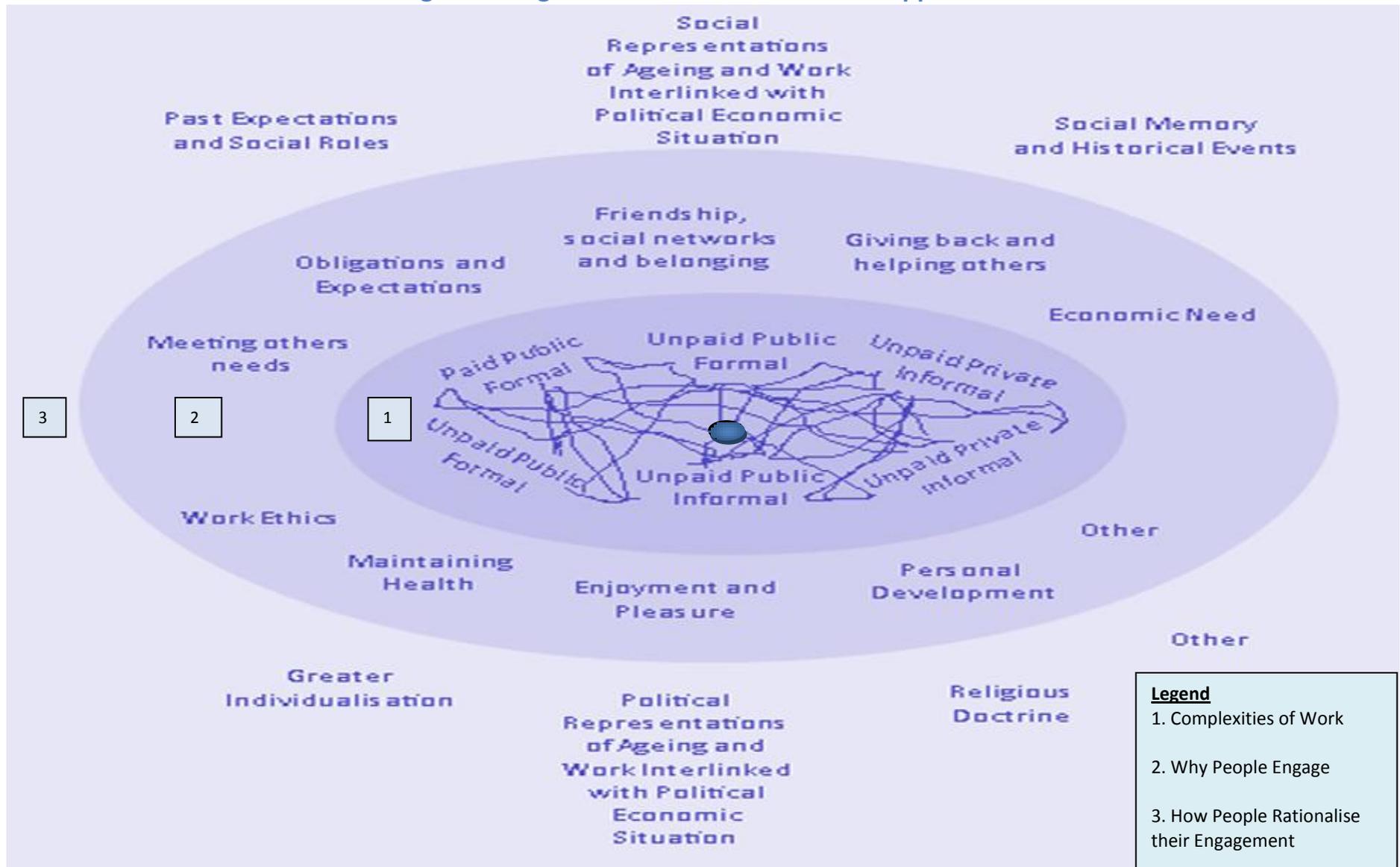
In rethinking what is meant by older people's work, this thesis demonstrates how we might now think about ageing. The added benefit of considering age and work is that it highlights the necessity of refocusing our understanding of the third age. In chapter 7, I argue that the third age should no longer be thought of as liberation from work but more appropriately, it should be thought of as a time characterised by transitions between, and varying interaction levels with, *work activities* in

different socio-economic spheres. Rethinking the third age in these terms hinges upon the integrated consideration of work and age. Not looking at work inevitably ensures that the third age continues to be viewed as the distinction between employment and non-employment. This has too often been the case within social gerontology. In comparison, through considerations of work, and the identification of the blurring boundaries and frequent interconnections, it is possible to see the error of considering the third age in terms of the move from work (or more accurately paid employment) into retirement and subsequently for the refocusing of this term as identified above. Future research and approaches to ageing need to take on board the lessons from this research about ageing and work. Later in this chapter, comment will be made about the potential future directions for research emerging from this study. In advance of this, however, it is important to mention the theoretical framework that emerged from considering age and work.

### **Age Works: A New Theoretical Approach**

Embedded within this thesis is great detail about how older people interact with the world of work, as well as more generally how they might be experiencing ageing. This section aims to encapsulate that complexity in a new theoretical approach and serve as a tool for further study of aspects of both work and age. The Age Works framework is presented in pictorial form on the following page. At the heart of the representation there is a reconsideration of work, which acknowledges that work does not equate solely to paid employment but rather encompasses a host of other activities within the socio-economic spheres that have been previously acknowledged within the work of Taylor (2004).

Figure 15: Age Works - A New Theoretical Approach



The dot in the centre of figure 15 represents a vortex and symbolises that these activities are not undertaken in temporal isolation but are linked to undertakings of the past and indeed those in the future. This temporal dimension emerged as important within this research and is something that Glucksmann (2000) emphasises through the course of developing previous TSOL frameworks. Therefore, it is necessary in a holistic understanding of older people's experiences of work. It must also be observed that no activity is experienced in isolation – rather there is a complex web of interrelations between those things that people engage within the different socio-economic spheres.

Participants noted a variety of reasons why they engaged with work and those identified in this research are depicted within the middle layer of the diagram. Contained within this section is also an “other” position. This is to reflect the reasons for engagement or disengagement for another sample of people that may include something not already represented. The third layer however, illustrates that whilst there might be parity in the reasons for engagement across the age groups the way in which those reasons have been constructed and how they are understood by participants might vary across samples. For example, for some older people in this research, personal development was influenced by the intention to live up to accepted religious doctrine; yet for others this was influenced by representations in Scottish policy; and for others it is about having the choice and autonomy to engage with activities in attempts to negate stereotypical representations. The motivation to engage or disengage in *work activities* is a conflation of historical, social, cultural and individual influences. Any comprehensive exploration of *work activities* must consider all these different aspects.

The importance of fully understanding the reasons why people participate in different activities is twofold. Firstly, it is recognised (see for example Brodie et al. 2009) that participation is influenced

by societal and contextual factors. Secondly, within an ageing population it is clear that there is a need (as is illustrated within social policies) to engage more older people in multiple activities. Understanding motivations is of utmost importance to the design and success of social policies (Le Grand 2003). Through understanding what it is that make people participate or disengage from different elements of work, the recruitment of individuals to participate in activities is potentially facilitated. Further studies considering *work activities* (including but not limited to older people), as well as studies exploring activities not limited to work, could utilise this theoretical stance to guide their investigation. Researchers can look to this approach and simply see the multiple layers and interconnecting factors that influence engagement across different socio-economic spheres, and which must be addressed in any comprehensive study. The theoretical stance allows for the exploration of age and work away from simplistic approaches that centre around paid employment. Whilst providing a solid base for research, this framework must be seen as fluid and adaptable because, as time changes, or when different cohorts are investigated, it is entirely possible that other aspects that have not been identified within this thesis will come to light.

## **Limitations and Future Directions**

Although the contribution of knowledge arising from this research has been significant and illustrates the significant benefits of considering the concepts of age and work side-by-side, it must be noted that there is need for further exploration on these topics. This need is in part associated with the limitations of the current study. These limitations are primarily concerned with the sample obtained such as the lack of males, the lack of the older-old, and a sample predominantly involved with multiple activities thought to hold value to others. The extent to which these findings are transferrable to the wider population is not known, so further research would be needed to identify this. The aim of this qualitative research was never to provide fully generalisable findings – rather

the focus was upon widening knowledge and rethinking conceptualisations. In the success of this, and through the development of a theoretical framework, wider studies into the work of older people (and of other age groups) are facilitated.

Such work may take the form of a large-scale quantitative survey, with the intention of furthering knowledge of participation. Such a study would provide a more comprehensive overview of the reasons and motivations behind engagement in specific activities, as well as a more measurable overview of the extent to which engagement in some activities hinder or promote engagement in another. These elements are likely to be supportive in the fine-tuning and development of policies and strategies that might promote the involvement of older people (or any other age group) in specific *work activities*. Furthermore, such a study would also be beneficial by looking at those aspects that have been defined here as *work activity*, with a view to exploring the extent to which other populations agree that these meet the criteria of wider definitions of work. Longitudinal studies of this nature, which also measure attitudes to ageing and older people, could trace the influence of the re-conceptualisation of work by targeting the negative images of ageing.

## **Concluding Comments**

Despite the aforementioned limitations, it must be emphasised that this research, overall, has enhanced our understanding of older people and work. It challenges conventional definitions of work, identifies how experiences of work might be constructed, and notes the range of *work activities* undertaken by older people that take place in a number of different socio-economic spheres. This further emphasises the importance of not limiting such research to the simple dichotomies of paid/unpaid work and work/retirement. In adopting a more holistic approach than

has been taken before, and in challenging conventional definitions, this research highlights numerous activities undertaken by older people that have some value to others. It discusses how those values to others have been recognised in previous literature relating to older people in general, but emphasises that the activities remain hidden in terms of previous research exploring older people and work.

This research is an effort to raise awareness about the numerous and diverse range of *work activities* that are undertaken by older people in Scotland and in doing so, to highlight how older people have an active role to play in an ageing society, even where they are out of the labour market. It is argued that future research on the older person and work should move away from considering work as a primarily paid activity because it devalues unpaid activities and does not fully recognise the diverse range of social contributions made by unpaid *work activities*. In doing so (and thus continuing to raise awareness about the productive roles provided by older people), it is possible to challenge negative images of older people and ageing. Older people can and do contribute to society in productive and important ways and social gerontology researchers have a vital role to play in highlighting this to the wider population.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Ethical Considerations in Research Design

Below is a summary of the ethical issues that were given consideration in the design of this research and the associated measures taken.

### ▪ **Vulnerability of participants**

- No adults who are considered as vulnerable will be allowed to participate in the research.

### ▪ **Confidentiality**

- Where a snowballing technique is adopted, those recommending others will be given letters to hand out to those potential participants. It will be at the discretion of the individual as to whether they will participate in the research. The research has been designed this way to protect the confidentiality of the potential participants.
- Where files are transcribed, identifiable information will be removed.
- Electronic files will be password protected to add to confidentiality.
- Only anonymised comments will be included within written or verbal presentation of the findings of this research.
- If stored with ESDS Qualidata, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be maintained subsequent to adhering to the terms and conditions of use.

### ▪ **Consent**

- All participants will be asked to provide written consent before taking part in the research.

### ▪ **Awareness and openness of research requirements prior to participants taking part**

- All participants will be given written information about the research and how data will be stored and used before giving consent to take part.

### ▪ **Data storage**

- All data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In doing so participants will be told how data will be stored/used/kept and will give consent for this.

### ▪ **Distress to participants**

- It is not anticipated that the topics to be discussed will be of a sensitive nature or will be distressing. Nevertheless, participants will be reminded at the start of the interview about the

voluntary nature of taking part and the option to refrain from discussing any topic/answer that would be uncomfortable/uneasy to them.

- If any participant becomes distressed during the interview, they will be offered a break and given the opportunity to withdraw from the research.
- The research will also have a list of helpline numbers to which they can direct participants should they have any potential queries/concerns that are not related to the research but which have emerged during the discussions in the research.

- **Researchers Safety**

- Safety of the researcher will be taken into consideration when arranging a time/place for the interviews.

## Appendix 2: Overview of Key Interview Approaches Considered

### **Structured Interviewing**

Standardised or structured interviews are those where the exact same interview questions (with standard wording) are asked in the same sequential order to all those being interviewed (Fontanna and Frey 2000). In this form of interview, open-ended questions are rare and there is little room for variation in the responses, and the responses are normally coded according to pre-established coding scheme (Fontanna and Frey 2000). According to Fielding (1993) this form of interviewing is appropriate only where the researchers have some understanding of what they might find regarding the sample and the research topic, and is appropriate only where there is no risk of losing meaning by asking the questions in a set way. In relation to the research discussed in this thesis, the use of structured interviewing was considered inappropriate because it is difficult to assume that one has an accurate understanding of all relevant forms of *work activity* undertaken, the interrelations between them and the reasons/objectives for engaging with *work activity*. Essentially, at the stage of research design there is insufficient understanding to allow for the development of structured interviewing techniques.

### **Semi-structured Interviewing**

Fielding (1993) reports that semi-structured approaches to interviews asks certain questions in a standard way but the sequence of these can be altered and probes can be used to elicit more information. Although this is more flexible than the structured interview, it still requires the research to pre-judge the questions that are important rather than to determine the appropriate questions according to the information elicited by the participant during the interview. It was considered that this approach would be inappropriate in determining the types of *work activity*, and the interrelations between *work activities*, and the objectives and reasons for undertaking *work activities*. However, it was considered that this might be appropriate

to explore which social and historical factors are associated with people's engagement or non-engagement with work.

### **Unstructured Open-ended Interviewing**

The traditional type of unstructured interview is the 'open-ended, ethnographic (in-depth) interview' (Fontanna and Frey 2000). This form of interviewing is characterised by the interviewer having a list of topics that are discussed with the participants but no set questions or order is set (Fielding 1993). Furthermore, the interviewer can join in conversation with the interviewee if it is considered appropriate during the interview (Fielding 1993). This type of interview is considered to provide a greater breadth of data (Fontanna and Frey 2000) and is more valuable when the research topic is sensitive or complicated, or where research instruments cannot be determined by sampling assumptions (Fielding 1993). It is considered that the unstructured interview is likely to be a more appropriate form of interviewing to be used within this research. However, at this stage it should also be noted that the open-ended interview is not the only form of unstructured interviewing and some forms of unstructured interviewing remain incompatible with this research as they adopt epistemological/ontological assumptions that differ from those to be adopted.

### **Creative Interviewing**

One alternative form of unstructured interviewing that was highlighted by Fontanna and Frey (2000) is creative interviewing. Creative interviewing, according to Douglas (1985), considers that the situation in which the interview takes place can affect what is being said and this can lead to individuals providing misinformation and disinformation or lies. Subsequently, as Douglas (1985: 22) states:

Creative interviewing embraces the immediate, concrete situation; tries to understand how it is affecting what is being communicated; and, by understanding these effects,

changes the interviewer's communication process to increase the discovery of the truth about human beings.

It appears that underlying the creative interviewing process is first an assumption that truth is important, and secondly that the interviewer has some capability to discovering truth, which subsequently implies that what the interviewer has taken-for-granted as truth is truer than any thing which the interviewee presents as the truth. These assumptions do not reflect the assumptions the author makes. The author considers that what is represented by the participant is what should be considered, irrespective of the truth of that issue because it is these elements, true or not, which shape the understanding, meanings and actions of the individuals. In effect, it is not what the author considers to be true that is important but rather it is the underlying meanings and beliefs that are held or portrayed by the participants, which are important and ought to be considered. It is because of the incompatibility in underlying assumptions that the author would reject creative interviewing as an appropriate method to be adopted within this research.

### **Postmodern Interviewing**

One alternative type of unstructured interviewing suggested by Fontanna and Frey (2000) is postmodern interviewing. Although it is interesting to note that although Fontanna and Frey (2000) suggest that postmodern interviewing is a particular approach, others, such as Gubrium and Holstein (2003) see it not as a particular type of interviewing but rather as interviews that are influenced by the postmodern perspective. Gubrium and Holstein (2003: 3) further describe the assumptions generally associated with postmodern interviewing as the following:

- ☐ The conversation in the interview has diverse purposes
- ☐ The format of the conversation is constructed as much within the interview as it does from any pre-established research interest
- ☐ The roles between interviewer and interviewee are less clear than in a traditional interview

☒ Unlike traditional interviewing, there is less emphasis on standardised representation

☒ The dividing line between fact and fiction may be blurred to encourage deeper understanding

By considering postmodern interviewing in these terms, the postmodern interview could take on any one of a number of different forms. Furthermore, because these assumptions are relatively general, they are likely to fit with a number of other ontological and epistemological stances other than the postmodern tradition. For example, the ontological and epistemological position adopted here is not postmodern in nature, however the adoption of postmodern interviewing, with the aforementioned assumptions, could still be considered an appropriate method of interviewing in this research. Therefore, thus far it has been determined that two forms of unstructured interviewing might be considered appropriate here (traditional open-ended or postmodern) but there are yet further unstructured types of interviewing which ought to be considered.

### **Oral History Interviewing**

One other method of interviewing, which was also identified by Fontanna and Frey (2000), is the oral history approach. Oral history is 'the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form' (Yow 2005: 3) and this can be collected for study of a variety of purposes e.g., experiences of particular events or processes, shared life-course, or experiences of particular groups (generational, occupational, etc). According to Yow (2005), oral history can be collected through methods, such as taped memoirs, written transcripts and in-depth interviewing. In terms of the method of interviewing, Fontanna and Frew (2000) suggest that although the approach differs from other forms of unstructured interview in purpose, it does not differ in the method used. Whilst it may be possible to obtain oral history accounts using general unstructured interviewing methods, it is perhaps worthwhile considering the intended use of those accounts and the different types of data that would be generated with different methods. For example, where analysis is interested in the sequential elements of history and how these elements contribute to the development of situations, then it is necessary for diachronic data to be obtained (Polkinghorne 1995). This is obtained

generally through autobiographical accounts rather than through categorical answers that might be obtained in response to questions asked by the interviewer – such an approach leads to the production of synchronic data (Polkinghorne 1995). Therefore, the method used must be such that it allows for the participants to narrate their autobiographical accounts in detail.

Jones (2003) reports a potential method called the biographic narrative interpretive method. This method begins by using a single narrative-inducing question that asks about the life of the participant (or the event in question). The participant is given as much time as they like to provide this account without interruption from the interviewer. This is followed by potentially subsequent interviews that probe for more information on the issues discussed in the first research method (Jones 2003). It is worthwhile noting that this method is not the sole method for obtaining data of this type and therefore it should be considered as an example of a possible method rather than a definite approach that would be adopted. Although there are a variety of different methods available for collecting this type of autobiographical data (e.g., life history, oral history, autobiography and narrative) these methods share similar assumptions, which on the whole, are compatible with the assumptions made in this research.

### **Social Constructionist**

Koro-Ljunberg (2008) suggests that the aim of social constructionist interview approaches should move beyond asking what participants know about their experiences and should centre on a dialogue that leads to a constructed image of reality based upon the participant's and the researcher's previously held knowledge. It is not about understanding the participant's experiences but rather making sense of the shared knowledge of both participant and researcher (Koro-Ljunberg 2008). This approach is not compatible with the research described within this thesis, which is

associated with an underlying assumption that the individual participant is an expert of their own experience and where the focus is upon understanding the nuances of experiences of work that are held by older people in Scotland.

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## Appendix 3: Initial Interview Guide

### Stage 1 - Narrative in context

To start with I would like to get a better understanding of the different activities and things that you do on a regular basis. I am interested in finding out about any paid employment as well as the key activities that you undertake outside of paid employment.

So I was wondering, could you tell me about a typical week in your life, the key activities and things that you would engage in within that typical week. I would like you to tell me about this in as much detail as you are comfortable with. At this point I am simply going to listen to your account of the typical week and I will not ask any questions.

[Researcher Note: ONCE THE PARTICIPANT HAS DISCUSSED THEIR TYPICAL WEEK I WILL CHECK I HAVE A NOTE OF ALL THE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES.]

Okay, from what you just mentioned, you take part in the following activities... during a typical week. Are there any other activities that you take part in?

[Researcher note: THIS COMPLETES STAGE 1 AND THE PARTICIPANT MAY BE GIVEN A BREAK AT THIS STAGE IF THEY WISH BEFORE MOVING ONTO STAGE 2.]

### Stage 2 – Asking questions about the activities

[Researcher note: IN THIS SECTION I WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES, THE MEANING OF THOSE ACTIVITIES TO THE PARTICIPANT AND THE VALUE OF THOSE ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO OTHER ACTIVITIES.]

For each of the activities the following issues will be covered...

Reasons for engaging in activities

How activities are valued

Compared to other activities they take part in, interrelations

More/less important, why?

Meaning of taking part in activities

Are they considered activities, which provide goods/services that are of value to others, why?

## Appendix 4: Follow-up Interview Guide (Original)

Today, I would like to speak a little more about the different activities that you discussed the last time. In particular, I want to talk about your experiences of these activities throughout your lifetime. For each activity, I intend to ask the following questions...

1. Thinking about different stages in your lifetime (e.g., as a child, young adult etc.) can you tell me about the memories you have of people, who would have been the same age that you are now, taking part in ...?

a. Did people of your age engage in the activities? Why did they/didn't they?

2. Thinking about today, do you think that it is considered normal or expected for people of a similar age to engage in ... or something similar?

a. Who in society do you think expects this or considers it normal?

3. In the first interview, you suggested that you value ... / the meaning of ... is .... What, if anything, that you have discussed today do you think may influence the way that you think about ...?

## Appendix 5: Invitation Letter



**UNIVERSITY OF  
STIRLING**

Corinne S. G. Greasley-Adams

Department of Applied Social Science

Colin Bell Building

University of Stirling

Stirling

FK9 4LA

Dear,

I am currently conducting research at the University of Stirling as part of a PhD. The research will explore the activities undertaken by people over 50 years old in Scotland, which create goods and/or services that are of value to others.

As part of that research, I am seeking a number of people (over the age of 50 years) to talk to about the activities they would typically undertake in any given week and this letter is being sent to you to invite you to part in the research.

I have enclosed an information sheet providing more details about what the research involves and why it is being conducted. If you are interested in taking part, or have any questions relating to the research, please could you contact me using the contact details above. On hearing from you, I will be in contact shortly to make further arrangements for your participation in this research.

Regards

Corinne S. G. Greasley-Adams

## Appendix 6: Information Sheet



**UNIVERSITY OF  
STIRLING**  
Department of  
Applied Social Science

### **Information Sheet (Talking to individuals)**

#### **Activities undertaken by people over 50 years old in Scotland**

##### ***What is the research about?***

This research is exploring what activities are undertaken by people over 50 years old in Scotland, which create goods and/or services that are of value to others. It is further interested in understanding the meaning of those activities to people over 50 years old and how past and/or current experiences have influenced those meanings.

##### ***Why is the research being done and who will be conducting the research?***

This research is being undertaken by me, Corinne Greasley-Adams, as part of my studies towards a PhD which is being conducted at the University of Stirling and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The research project is being supervised by Dr Ian McIntosh and Professor Alison Bowes and has been approved by the Department of Applied Social Science Ethics Committee.

##### ***Who is being invited to take part in the research?***

I am looking for around 30 people to take part in the research. All those being invited to take part in the research will be aged over 50 years old and will normally be resident in Scotland. There is no upper age limit for taking part in the research. Those under 50 years old, and those not normally resident in Scotland will not be eligible to take part in the research.

All those taking part must also be able to make informed decisions and therefore must be able to make the decision to participate or not based upon the information that has been given to them (either in this information sheet or in response to questions asked to the researcher).

You are being invited to take part in the research for one of three reasons: 1) you have heard about the research and are interested in taking part; 2) somebody you know has suggested that you might

be interested in taking part in the research; or 3) I know you and thought that you might be interested in taking part in this research.

***Do I need to take part in the research?***

No. If you have received this information sheet there is no obligation to take part in the research. However, I would be extremely grateful if you could find the time to help me with my research.

***If I agree to take part in the research what will be expected of me?***

If you do agree to take part in the research then I will ask to meet with you on two occasions to talk about the activities that you would undertake (e.g., taking part in paid or unpaid employment, looking after grandchildren, providing care for a relative or friend etc.)

I anticipate that each of these conversations will last around 1 hour. Although this may vary slightly depending upon the amount you would like to contribute. So in total, if you agree to take part I would be asking for around 2 hours of your time.

On the first occasion we would talk about the different activities that you typically undertake in a week, the reasons why you take part in those activities and the meaning to you of taking part in those activities. I would also like to know whether or not you think that these are activities, which would create goods and/or services that are of value to others.

On the second occasion, I would like to discuss with you a bit more about the activities and would like to talk with you about your interaction with these activities throughout your life.

During both of the interviews, I may ask you a number of questions relating to the activities, and your experiences and views related to those activities. These questions are to help my understanding of your involvement in, experiences of and attitudes towards the activities we discuss.

***What if I feel uncomfortable or uneasy about the things being discussed?***

Hopefully, you will not feel uncomfortable with anything being discussed as the activities that you talk about are entirely up to you. Also during both our conversations, I do **not** expect to ask about sensitive or personal issues. However, in the unlikely event that you are asked something that you think is intrusive or which you are not comfortable speaking about then just let me know. We can simply move on to talk about something else.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable with continuing in the research then please let me know. It is your right to withdraw from the research at any stage.

***The conversations are to be recorded, why is this?***

With your consent, our conversations will be digitally recorded. This will enable me to listen back to our conversation and will ensure that I do not miss anything important. I will use these recordings to identify the key points and findings from our discussions.

***What will happen to the digital recording of the interview during completion of the PhD?***

As soon as possible after our discussions I will edit the recording so that information that identifies you (e.g., names and places) will be removed. These edited recordings (which will be anonymous) will be stored electronically.

The anonymous edited recordings may also be transcribed, and these too will be stored electronically.

The audio files and/or the transcripts will then be analysed. After this process of analysis, some small extracts might be used when writing up the findings of the research (either in the PhD thesis and/or academic publications/presentations). Any extracts that are used will be anonymous and therefore could not be traced back to or associated with you.

***What will happen to the anonymous audio files and transcripts on completion of the PhD?***

On completion of the PhD, the anonymous audio files and transcripts will continue to be stored electronically and may be accessed through the UK Data Archive's ESDS Qualidata Service. Further information about this can be found at:

<http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/about/introduction.asp>

If data is accessible through this service this means that other researchers, students and teachers from any field, organisation or country could potentially access the anonymous audio files and transcripts. They could use these for any non-for-profit, teaching or personal development reasons. However, all users of the service must sign a user agreement and subsequently must ensure that they preserve the confidentiality of individuals, households or organisations represented in the data they are accessing. A summary of ESDS Qualidata users' responsibilities are available at: <http://www.esds.ac.uk/aandp/access/summary.asp>

Should you like a printed copy of information about ESDS Qualidata and the service users requirements please let me know and I can provide this.

***Will I be able to find out the findings of the research?***

On completion of the research, I will (if you provide me with details of your address) send you a summary of the key findings from the research.

***What do I do if I have any questions about this research?***

If you would still like to ask something about the research then please get in contact with myself using the following contact details:

Email:

Telephone:

If required, you can also contact my supervisor, Ian McIntosh using the following details:

Email:

Telephone:

## Appendix 7: Consent Form



### Consent form (Talking to individuals)

#### Activities undertaken by people over 50 years old in Scotland

**Please tick the boxes and provide a signature to indicate that, having read all the statements, you agree to participate in this research conducted by Corinne Greasley-Adams.**

I have read and understood the information sheet provided by the researcher.

I have had the opportunity to ask and clarify any questions I had about the research and my participation in the research.

I am aware of and content with what will be involved if I participate in the research.

I am aware and content that the interview will be recorded and that the recording will be stored electronically. I am also aware and content that the recordings may be transcribed and these transcriptions may be stored electronically.

I am aware and content that extracts from the transcription may be used anonymously in the thesis for which this research is being conducted, and in academic publications/presentations given by Corinne.

I have been provided with information about the UK data archive's ESDS Qualidata service and I am content that any anonymous audio files and transcripts may be stored by and accessed through this service.

I understand and am content that if the transcripts stored on the UK data archive then it may be used for non-for-profit research, teaching or personal development by people other than Corinne. 

I am aware and content that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am able to withdraw from the research at any point. I am also aware that I can refrain from answering any questions that I am not comfortable answering. 

I confirm that I am happy to participate in this research and for the information obtained through the research to be used in the manner described above and in the information sheet. 

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 8: Gender and Age Questions

<b>Gender</b>	
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Age</b>							
50-54	<input type="checkbox"/>	55-59	<input type="checkbox"/>	60-64	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-69	<input type="checkbox"/>
70-74	<input type="checkbox"/>	75-80	<input type="checkbox"/>	80+	<input type="checkbox"/>		

## Appendix 9: Characteristics of Participants

The table below provides an overview of the participants who took part in this research. It contains information about gender, age, occupational status and the occupational grouping of those that are currently employed. The occupational grouping (using SOC2000 categories) was utilised rather than specific occupations because it was felt that the latter might compromise anonymity of participants.

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation status</b>	<b>SOC2000 Major Group</b>
<b>1</b>	Female	65-69	Business owner	1 Managers and senior officials
<b>2</b>	Male	50-54	Full time employed (was on sick leave at time)	9 Elementary occupations
<b>3</b>	Female	50-54	Part-time employed	6 Personal service occupations
<b>4</b>	Female	65-69	Part-time employed	6 Personal services occupations
<b>5</b>	Female	60-64	Retired/student	
<b>6</b>	Female	55-59	Part-time employed	2 Professional occupations
<b>7</b>	Female	50-54	Full-time employed	2 Professional occupations
<b>8</b>	Female	55-59	Full-time employed	2 Professional occupations
<b>9</b>	Female	50-54	Full-time employed	2 Professional occupations
<b>10</b>	Female	55-59	Part-time employed	6 Personal service occupations
<b>11</b>	Male	60-64	Retired	
<b>12</b>	Male	55-59	Full-time employed	2 Professional occupations
<b>13</b>	Female	50-54	Full time employed	3 Associate professional and technical occupations
<b>14</b>	Female	50-54	Full time employed	3 Associate professional and technical occupations
<b>15</b>	Male	50-54	Full time employed	2 Professional occupations
<b>16</b>	Female	60-64	Part-time employed	3 Associate professional and technical occupations
<b>17</b>	Female	60-64	Retired	
<b>18</b>	Female	65-69	Self-employed	4 Administrative and secretarial occupations
<b>19</b>	Female	50-54	Part-time employed	4 Administrative and secretarial occupations
<b>20</b>	Female	65-69	Retired	
<b>21</b>	Female	65-69	Retired	
<b>22</b>	Female	60-64	Moved from full-time employed to retired during the study	2 Professional occupations
<b>23</b>	Male	70-75	Retired	

## Appendix 10: Follow-up Interview Guide (Amended)

Today, I would like to speak a little more about the different activities that you discussed that last time. The activities I have noted are:

Do you think this represents the main things that you are involved in? Or is there anything that I have missed?

Okay we will work through the different activities one at a time.

For each activity I will consider the following:

1. Would you say it was popular or common for people of your age to be involved in... or something similar? Why do you think that is?
  - a. Are older people encouraged to take part in activities like this?
  - b. Is it seen as normal/expected for older people to take part in activities like this?
2. Thinking about your parents or grandparents generation, do you think that it was common for them (when over 50) to be involved in this or something similar? Why do you think that the situation is different?
3. Do you think that anything we have discussed today is influential in the meanings/values we discussed the last time? Or in your involvement in these activities?