How structural factors promote instrumental motivations within youth volunteering : a qualitative analysis of volunteer brokerage

DEAN, Jonathan <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3338-1957>

Introduction

The question of what motivates someone to give their time for free continues to fascinate researchers across disciplines, and findings in this area are of upmost interest to volunteer-involving organisations, particularly practitioners within the voluntary sector. Understanding what motivates people to volunteer is seen as vital to maintaining and increasing recruitment, and in turn to running a successful volunteer-involving organisation. It is no surprise therefore that the academic literature on volunteering pays considerable attention to individual motivations (Holdsworth and Brewis, 2013).

This article does not seek to replicate the substantial academic work already completed on volunteer motivations (see, for example, Anderson and Moore, 1978; Boz and Palaz, 2007; Clary et al, 1996; Gage III and Thapa, 2012; Musick and Wilson, 2008: 54-80; Nichols, 2012, and many others). Instead, following on from that body of work and, especially, that which points towards the increasing individualisation of volunteers' motivations (Holdsworth and Brewis, 2013; Hustinx and Meijs, 2011), this article draws attention to the *structural* factors that are encouraging young volunteers to express, and those working in youth volunteering to encourage, instrumental motivations. Original qualitative evidence is presented to show how these factors operate, and understand what their implications might be.

To begin, the theoretical literature that examines the changing conceptualisation of volunteering, and how this is providing a challenge to volunteer-involving organisations, is explored, and the article goes on to explain how these issues are of particular relevance in the field of youth volunteering, with a focus on previous studies exploring the motivations of young volunteers. Following this, a methods section details the process by which the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with individuals who are

either delivering youth volunteering projects or implementing youth volunteering policy. In the subsequent analysis, by combining previous literature, policy-analysis, and this study's original qualitative data, the structural factors influencing elements of youth volunteering are examined at three levels: at the *policy* level, at the *programme* level, and at the *operational* level.

At the policy level, the emergence of volunteering as a key area for successive UK governments' attention is considered, and how this has influenced the policy areas of Higher Education and work experience. Both these and the growth of 'compulsory' volunteering are examined as structural influences on the role of volunteering in young people's lives. Next, at the programme level, two specific volunteering programmes (Millennium Volunteers and the citizenship-focused element of the International Baccalaureate) are discussed, showing how both utilise volunteering as a short-term CV-building exercise for young people, as opposed to building a culture of long-term commitment and critical community engagement. Following this, at an operational level, the work of volunteer brokerage workers is explored, with particular attention paid to respondents who saw volunteering as an experience to be commodified and 'sold' to young people, again for the reasons of CV-building or developing university applications. The data shows that volunteering brokerage workers see an increased emphasis on employability as an outcome of volunteering from schools, government, and the labour market, which in turn reinforces the expression of instrumental motivations by young volunteers. Interviewees raise ongoing and potential future dangers with policies and discourses that prioritise volunteering as a source of work experience above its role as an opportunity to participate in altruistic and community-minded activities. Throughout, the article demonstrates how these multiple structural forces combine to affect young people's attitudes towards volunteering, and their participation in it. It is concluded that, in line with current theoretical debates, volunteer-involving organisations need to be aware of these

structural forces, and demonstrate flexibility in their volunteer recruitment, programmes, and management, otherwise they are likely to face problems in sustaining the recruitment of volunteers.

Individualisation and the changing nature of volunteering

It is often posited that volunteers have highly individualistic motivations, from giving their time as an act of hedonism (Lähteenmaa, 1999) to wanting to develop their CV (Brooks, 2007). It is also cautioned that many volunteers lack the degree of commitment that voluntary organisations need (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011: 5; Wollebæk and Selle, 2003; Hustinx, 2005), as concerns are expressed about 'volunteer motivation and commitment shifting towards personal interests, gain, and lack of commitment' (Yeung, 2004: 42). Hustinx (2001) writes of volunteering shifting from the c*lassical,* identified by traditional values of culture and community and the unconditional commitment of volunteers who are motivated by altruistic instincts, to the *new,* identified by its individualisation, irregular and conditional commitment, and the reciprocal benefits felt by both the volunteer and the recipients of assistance. But these two forms are not mutually exclusive: the majority of volunteering contains a blend of classical and new characteristics, dependent on the individual and on context specificities. Motivations to volunteer are rarely clear-cut, and in fact can be complex, multi-dimensional and even contradictory (Brooks, 2007). Yet it has been argued that the traditional discourse of volunteering as a purely altruistic and self-sacrificial activity may have become an unrealistic and old-fashioned ideal (Hustinx, 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Hustinx and Meijs, 2011). It may be that we must conceive purely 'classical' volunteering as unattainable, where even the archetypal altruistic volunteer, such as an older woman working in a charity shop, is giving her time partly or wholly in order to make friends or keep active in her retirement (see Sanchez Flores, 2009).

It has been suggested that, in order to adapt to the 'new' volunteerism, volunteer-involving organisations might need to change their functional practices to 'better accommodate not only volunteers' individualised conditions and constraints...but also their changing preferences and needs' (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011: 10). The authors continue:

> The goal is no longer to keep volunteers tied to the organisation, but rather to realise an optimal adjustment between, on the one hand, volunteers' individual possibilities and desires and, on the other hand, clearly delineated projects and tasks. Organisations and volunteers increasingly use an exchange model: exact inputs and returns are discussed and negotiated in great detail. Volunteers know what they are expected to do, what they can expect from the organisation and what they will get back in return for their efforts. (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011: 10-1)

Such transactional volunteering however may prove problematic, as the general public's view on whether an activity is classed as volunteering remains relatively strict. While the academic literature defines volunteering as an activity which is undertaken of one's own free-will, receives no financial reward, is of benefit to others, and requires some organisation and structure (Rochester et al, 2010), Cnaan et al (1996) found that the public are more likely to consider an activity as volunteering the more cost there is to the participant (for example, the more someone has to go out of their way to contribute, or the more difficult the project is).

Hustinx and Meijs (2011) state that this public attitude may shift as more 'new' volunteers give their time to projects which are, for example, either implicitly or explicitly obligatory. As society adapts to this more attenuated form of altruism, we may reason that in future volunteering ‘will be *rewarded* more (although not necessarily financially) and to

some extent will become *obligatory'* (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011: 17, emphasis added). As shown in this article, while not formally compulsory, volunteering can increasingly be understood as a non-negotiable necessity in young people's lives, as they increasingly have to make allowances for the uncertainty of their choices and futures (Bauman, 2001; Holdsworth and Brewis, 2013).

The reported motivations for volunteering among young people

Since the 1990s, volunteering in Britain has entered the political mainstream. Under Prime Ministers Major, Blair, Brown, and now Cameron, volunteering has emerged as a significant area of government policy (Alcock, 2010; Etherington, 1996; Kendall, 2005). Policies encouraging young people to volunteer often highlight its potential role in transitions to work and adulthood (Kamerade and Ellis Paine, 2014), and it is often asserted that volunteering is a way of developing skills and, as an effect of this, increasing employability (Hardill et al, 2007). Employers prefer volunteers to non-volunteers (Hannah, 2010; NYA, 2007; v, 2008), not only because of the practical and soft skills they have developed but since 'volunteering involves a cost to the volunteer it constitutes a credible sign that says, "You can believe I'm a good person because I volunteer"' (Bekkers and Bowman, 2009: 894), reasserting the message of Cnaan et al (1996).

Many authors have acknowledged that instrumentality plays a greater role in young peoples' volunteering than for people of other ages (Hustinx, 2001; Eley, 2001), with young people more likely to assert that volunteering will assist them in gaining employment. In one Canadian study, 55 percent of young people said improving their job opportunities is a reason why they volunteer, compared to only 16 percent of older people (Schugurensky et al, 2005: 3).

The *Helping Out* survey of volunteering in England (Low et al, 2007) also provided comprehensive data focusing on young people's motivations to give their time. Responses to questions enquiring about an individual's motivation to volunteer fell into 19 categories, including personal importance, time to spare, and religious belief. For most of the responses there were no significant differences based on the age of the respondent. However, there were two responses for which the youngest age category produced a statistically significant different response: those who were motivated to volunteer in order 'to learn new skills', or 'to help me get on in my career'.

[Figure 1 here]

[Figure 2 here]

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that young people aged 16-24 were significantly more likely to report being motivated to volunteer for instrumental reasons than individuals in other age ranges. This is not to say that younger people are not motivated by altruistic reasons as well, but the likelihood of reporting altruistic motivations are consistent across the age ranges, unlike the two reported motivations indicated above.

These findings have some correlation with those of Handy et al (2010), who used survey data from 12 countries to examine the relationship between motivations to volunteer and the ensuing impact on young people's participation in volunteering. The authors focused on three broad but separate and constructive motivations – altruism (wanting to give), résumé (wanting to get), and social (wanting to meet). The authors found that generally 'students express the strongest support for altruistic and value-driven reasons for volunteering' (Handy et al, 2010: 509), with the instrumental motivation to build one's résumé the second most reported, and with social motivations the third most reported. However, notably, students in the USA, Canada and England reported résumé-building as the most important motivating

factor in their volunteering. Most interestingly, and perhaps most worryingly, the authors found that young people with the desire to volunteer principally in order to build a résumé did not have a higher rate of participation in volunteering; in fact these students volunteer less, with a lower intensity and regularity.

Overall, while young people report various motivations to volunteer, they are more likely than other age groups to report a desire to develop their employability as a result of their volunteering. Recent research by Ellis Paine et al (2013) however cautions that volunteering has a weak effect on employability outcomes, with too much volunteering proving a particular barrier for young people's move into employment. This often negative correlation presents the authors with a puzzle: while volunteering discourses clearly state a positive correlation between volunteering and employability, the relationship is not always so simple. Further to such considerations, Jochum and Brodie's (2013) research indicates volunteer-involving organisations need to be much more reflexively aware of the individual contexts of volunteers. However, as the qualitative data presented below shows, at the operational level of youth volunteering, discourses often remain focused on the simple narratives of volunteering, prioritising instrumental motivations to volunteer and the link to increased employability.

Methodology

In order to explore if young people’s increasingly instrumental motivations for volunteering were being shaped by volunteering policy, programmes, and operational practices, 31 in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in England between April 2010 and March 2011, as part of a wider doctoral study (see also Dean, 2013). Interviewees worked in volunteer brokerage organisations such as Volunteer Centres, and in youth charities aimed at engaging young people with pro-social work. Brokerage organisations are

established agencies, working as the intermediary in the volunteering relationship, recruiting both organisations and individuals, and working to match individuals with suitable opportunities. The sample also included policy-practitioners and statutory sector officials employed by Local Authorities and voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, who worked with brokerage agencies to develop local volunteering projects. The breakdown of the sample can be seen in Table 1 below:

[Table 1 here]

The sample was selected through a snowballing technique, which identified key figures working in local volunteer brokerage institutions, and then enquiring who, given the nature of the questions asked during interview, the researcher should speak to next. The sample was considered adequate when interviewees suggested the names of previous interviewees, and the data became saturated. Data saturation was understood as the point in the research process at which themes and examples were repeated by different interviewees, interviewees were unable to expand research themes any further, and there were few new divergences of opinion between interviewees. In interviews conducted later in the data collection process, participants were asked to comment on the themes emerging from previous interviews as the research findings were established. Interviews lasted between 40 and 180 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed by the author. The names of all interviewees, organisations, and locations have all been changed in order to maintain their anonymity.

The interview data was analysed thematically, with each transcript coded according to an emergent schema of topics. These centred on how interviewees felt youth volunteering was changing, what factors (structural and agential) accounted for these changes, and specific examples of how these changes were manifested in practice. As noted above, in presenting

the findings, a three-level model is adopted, in which the structural factors raised by interviewees as influencing youth volunteering are broken down into policy, programme, and operational level factors.

Policy level: Volunteering and the route to employment

As data collection took place against the backdrop of a recession and a youth unemployment rate of over 20 percent (House of Commons, 2014: 1), interviewees commented that the economic climate provided a 'hook' that they could use to encourage young people to volunteer. This was encouraged by central government in the *Real Help for Communities* programme (Cabinet Office, 2009), a £12m investment during the early stage of the recession to encourage the unemployed to use volunteering as a tool to develop skills and move back into work. The package of measures made little comment on the potential altruistic benefits of volunteering, instead concentrating solely on the potential for volunteering to increase employability:

> If we are to respond to the challenges of the current economic climate, it is vital that Government creates opportunities for people to get new skills. Volunteering plays an important role in enabling people to develop new skills and improve their employment prospects. (Cabinet Office, 2009: 16-7)

Holdsworth and Brewis (2013) focus on these themes in their exploration of students' volunteering within UK universities. They demonstrate how UK education policy is playing a large and growing role in youth volunteering, as a form of what Reay (2006) has termed 'mass credentialism'. The authors identify policy drivers, external to Higher Education, that are encouraging an increasingly instrumental focus in youth volunteering delivery. They highlight the increased marketisation of Higher Education, where delivering and experiencing

a ‘good education’ is no longer enough, with students and universities jointly responsible in enhancing employability. Accordingly, universities see volunteering as another field in which they need to gain a market advantage. The authors show that while universities believe there to be a ‘hard’ link between volunteering and employability (the instrumental benefit), the relationship between volunteering and community engagement and social responsibility (the altruistic benefit) remains ‘soft’, thought of as a serendipitous relationship, a nice outcome rather than a central goal that should be worked towards formally from the outset. Further, Holdsworth and Brewis (2013) argue that while volunteering may once have been a choice, now it is a requirement; an activity once considered extra-curricular has become co-curricular.

Also at a policy level and related to this finding, the impact of strategies which 'enforce' volunteering should be considered. In an earlier study of a volunteering programme which required welfare recipients to volunteer if they were to continue receiving state benefits and educational credits, Warburton and Smith (2003) found participants were less likely to engage and participate after being forced to volunteer. The young people they interviewed felt dismissive of volunteering after being forced into it, which shows how enforced participation can hinder the development of important facets of citizenship such as trust and cooperation (Brown et al, 2000). Whereas Warburton and Smith were focusing on explicitly enforced volunteering, the present study is instead concerned with the implicit normalisation of volunteering as an expected part of a wider credentialism. Hypothetically, if volunteering begets volunteering, then the motivations for initial involvement may be insignificant in the long-term. Yet as the above literature shows, if that initial involvement is compulsory then young people are more likely to experience some resentment towards volunteering, perhaps affecting their future commitment.

Interviewees reported that short-termism in volunteering participation would continue to increase as a result of policy developments. For example, Anjay, a youth volunteering

brokerage worker for an environmental charity who recruited young people to help in community gardening and landscape redesign projects, saw the developments as entirely negative, a move away from the more traditional altruistic notions of volunteering, and emblematic of the way in which volunteering was seen by government as a 'panacea' for society's problems (Sheard, 1995: 115). It was also noted that even a potential benefit of instrumental reasons to volunteer, such as volunteering to gain a skill to create a new route into employment, may not be enough to encourage young people who have had many setbacks in work or in life to have the confidence to embrace volunteering. 'People who are unemployed are unlikely to do something for nothing,' said Lynette (Volunteer Centre brokerage worker), who spent a growing amount of her time locating volunteering placements for people referred to her organisation for work experience by Job Centre Plus (JCP) staff.[1] She said the attitude of potential volunteers was very negative and inward looking; they asked 'what's the point in that, I'm not going to do something for someone else', even though the offer of volunteering was a means to an end, a specific training opportunity which happened to be voluntary. This did not occur in all instances, but had become a more dominant theme in Lynette's work as the impact of the recession became felt. In summation, Kay (youth volunteering brokerage worker) told me of how she felt that volunteering and work experience had become blurred in the eyes of policy-practitioners, as if they were interchangeable ways of thinking about and dealing with the school to work transition. This development is also apparent at the programme and operational levels.

Programme level: Millennium Volunteers, and the International Baccalaureate

The Millennium Volunteers (MV) programme aimed to engage young people in volunteering by providing recognition in the form of certificates and awards for completing certain targets of hours of voluntary work. The slogan of the programme was 'Put an MV on your CV', clearly emphasising the instrumental benefits an MV award could contribute to a young

person's search for a job or application to university.[2] In her studies of the MV programme, Diann Eley (2001; 2003; Eley and Kirk, 2004) reports the views of young volunteers on why they think people do volunteer work. The young volunteers' answers provide multiple motivations, with 95 percent responding that people 'want to get experience and help their career prospects', with 65 percent of respondents identifying this as the most important motivation (Eley, 2003: 32-4). Being motivated by a desire to 'care for people and the community' was identified by 62 percent of the young volunteers, but was identified as the primary motivation to volunteer by only 20 percent of the sample. What this shows is that young people connect both altruistic and instrumental motivations to volunteering in substantial numbers, but that it is 'egoistic' (to use Eley's term) development that they see as the greater drive to volunteer. However, Eley's (2003: 36) results also show that once young people have volunteered, they can experience a heightened commitment to notions of community and helping others. When asked to comment on what would motivate them to volunteer *again in the future*, the young volunteers were most likely to identify 'the thought that I would be helping others' as a motivation, with 81 percent motivated in this way, narrowly ahead of (the more instrumental) 'the opportunity to increase leadership skills' (77 per cent) and 'the thought that I would be helping my career' (74 percent).

While altruistic and instrumental reasons are again both highlighted here, this does show how motivations can change as young volunteers progress along participation pathways, with Eley reflecting that volunteer projects which ingrain reflection and analysis of achievement are more likely to help foster long-term notions of citizenship in young people. As shown in the data emanating from the present study however, this reflection and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972; Ledwith, 2001) is not built into some current volunteering practices, particularly the role of volunteering within the International Baccalaureate (IB), where a

‘volunteering as work experience’ approach characterises programme delivery from the outset.

The IB is a programme of education for 16 to 19-year-old students, recognised around the world, and currently studied at over 200 British schools. Its central pedagogic aim is to provide young people with a more rounded educational experience, as opposed to students specialising in three or four A-level subjects. There is a ‘community’ element to the system, a requirement to complete 50 hours of volunteering over the two year IB period, and many brokerage workers helped schools in finding placements for young people so they can fulfil this part of the course. However, many saw detrimental impacts in participation in this programme:

> Erin (youth volunteering brokerage worker): IB students are encouraged to do 50 hours of volunteering during the year which is great, but there's a debate about is it volunteering if they have to do it? But then there's IB students who are fantastic, throw themselves into it, but who get to their 50 hours and you never hear from them again!

Further, it was cautioned that the IB works against the development of a volunteer ethic in young people:

> Beatrice (youth volunteering brokerage worker): Not a fan of the IB students who just get the 50 hours then they go because volunteering is something they have to do, they're not choosing to do it. Even the ones who would usually choose to do it, they've got it into their heads 'just get the 50 hours and go'.

> Rita (youth volunteering brokerage worker): It turns young people into mercenaries!

The IB was also presented as self-defeating and limiting, preventing young people from developing individual volunteering experiences:

> Jill (youth volunteering brokerage worker): If you're made to do it, then how does volunteering make you stand out? You have to put even more hours in to show that you actually want to volunteer.

The IB presented contradictions for volunteering brokerage workers. In a substantial significant majority of cases, young people would leave the organisation with which they had been placed after completing 50 hours of volunteering, meaning brokerage workers would have to recruit another volunteer, and the organisation would be required to provide them with fresh training. Often Rita, Beatrice and their colleagues would be blamed for the students' lack of commitment, damaging relationships with participating organisations, and making it less likely that the organisations would want to involve young volunteers in the future. Brokerage workers found themselves seriously questioning whether they should continue to find IB students placements. They saw that they caused problems in the long run for the organisations that required volunteers, in the form of a lack of sustainability and extra costs. However students taking the IB provided a constant stream of work for the brokerage workers, virtually guaranteeing a commitment of 50 hours of volunteering. Brokerage workers were concerned to meet their own targets, and therefore felt they could not turn away IB students even if they saw them as unengaged and not wanting to be involved and volunteer, but who were required to participate as a part of their education.

Volunteering brokerage workers had moral and practical arguments against involving IB students, seeing them as symptomatic of a volunteering culture which favoured the short

term, rather than long term commitment (Hustinx, 2001). Yet, as their jobs as brokerage workers required them to meet rigid recruitment goals, they felt they had no choice but to participate in and reinforce practices which they saw as damaging in the medium to long-term. This finding challenges that of Eley (2003) discussed above. There was little notion that volunteering as part of the IB was seen as anything more than a requirement for a qualification, included to provide young people with work experience and develop their employability. Instead of the reflection which both Eley and Hall et al (1998) see as vital if youth volunteering is to lead to deeper understandings of citizenship and social responsibility, both IB students and brokerage workers participated in a policy which valorised short-term instrumentality. In terms of its appropriation by UK schools, the IB is still in stages of infancy, but it is an area in which developments should be investigated closely by researchers interested in youth volunteering.

Operational: The role of volunteer brokers

This final section drawing on findings from the qualitative data focuses on the operational level, the specific practices of those working in youth volunteering brokerage and policy. Broken into three short examples, this section highlights: the role of brokerage workers as individuals who sell volunteering in schools; the relationship between the reported motivations to volunteer of young people and the sustainability of volunteer-involving organisations; and the changing ways in which one interviewee talks about volunteering as a result of the developments identified throughout this article.

Selling volunteering in schools

Schools have a large part to play in the work of volunteer brokerage agencies: ‘Schools are the gateway’ (Paul, youth volunteering brokerage manager). While schools often do not provide adequate transition experiences for work (Mannion, 2005), volunteering has come to

fill the role of a tool of adaptation, providing a safe and structured activity for young people to learn the rules of the workplace. Although some might feel uncomfortable citing work-related motivations for volunteering, it has been argued that it is quite common for schools, colleges, and volunteer agencies to promote this as a specific reason for doing volunteer work (Musick and Wilson, 2008). This was in evidence during research, as the quotes below from interviewees indicate:

> Chrissie (youth volunteering brokerage manager): Schools want their young people to have volunteering or community action on their CVs. We have a lot of kids from one of the grammar schools volunteer on one of our disability play schemes because they have kids who want to be doctors, and they know on their CV working with disabled children will look good...For us it doesn't matter why they do it in the first place, as long as they enjoy it and it becomes part of what they do.

> Beatrice (youth volunteering brokerage worker): In schools you could always go in and get a good bunch for numbers but you often found the students did it more for themselves, to get into Uni or whatever...And so we sold it to them along different lines to get our targets met.

> Jill (youth volunteering brokerage worker): Because you have to pitch it, I say, 'So, you want to go to university and this will look great on your personal statement'.

Schools were demanding that young people prepare for their futures through participation in volunteering, and partnerships with youth volunteering brokerage organisations could help achieve this.

Interviewees spoke of how there are many demands on young people's time – both things that they have to do and things that they can choose to do, with volunteering moving from the latter (classical) to the former (new) (Hustinx, 2001). While going to the cinema with friends might at first glance be seen as an activity of choice, given the social pressures and stigmatisation that can occur if one does not participate, it becomes something young people have to participate in, otherwise they risk becoming ostracised or isolated (Cotterell, 1996). Volunteering finds itself in a similarly awkward category. While the word 'volunteering' has choice at its core, within schools and wider social policy it is no longer seen as a choice; instead it is enforced or obligatory (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011: 17), though economically and socially rather than legally. Interviewees felt that this position, seeing volunteering as an economic and social necessity, implied that choosing not to participate is akin to choosing not to develop or progress or invest in oneself. Instead, it became increasingly clear that volunteering was understood by interviewees as a product to be sold to individuals, which they pay for with their time. No interviewee complained at the use of the word 'sell' – all understood its relevance to their work. Alan (Volunteer Centre brokerage worker) expands upon this as he explains how he sells volunteering (his retail technique):

> Alan: If people come looking for volunteering, we offer them the carrot of improving their CV or UCAS application.[3]
>
> JD: And is there a stick involved?
>
> Alan: Whilst the whole nature of volunteering is about free will, I suppose the stick is if you don't do it and someone else is going for the same job as you in the future, the chances are the person with more volunteering experience will get it. So there's implied, not threat, but loss in the future.

So the beneficial carrot of volunteering is replaced by the bullying stick of non-compliance. As Anjay (youth volunteering brokerage worker) asked, 'if they're not in school, it's volunteering, but do they have much of a say?' School students who did not 'have much of a say' were those taking the International Baccalaureate (IB), and, as already discussed, nowhere did the youth volunteering recruiters display more antagonism towards the increasingly instrumentalised nature of youth volunteering than when discussing the IB system. Yet it was clear during data collection for this study that brokerage workers were ultimately benefitting professionally (in terms of meeting placement targets) from the increased pressure on young people to volunteer.

Values and sustainability in volunteer recruitment

It would be unfair to interviewees not to highlight that the majority stressed that they did not consider it their right to judge individuals' values regarding participation in volunteering. As long as volunteer roles were being filled, and that their partner organisations that required volunteers were able to continue their work, interviewees stated that the motivations of individual volunteers were not really their business:

> Johnson (Local Authority policy-practitioner): If people are going into volunteering activity to get something out of it, I don't think that's any less valuable than going into voluntary work because they want to give something back to society. I wouldn't make a value judgement about it.

> Erin (youth volunteering brokerage worker): They've had it drilled into them that they need a good CV, that they need a university place, and that's absolutely fine because motivations to volunteer come in all different forms.

Helen (Local Authority volunteering worker) expressed the view that in volunteering there is always a balance between helping others and developing personal skills (echoing Brooks, 2007), especially among young people:

> I don't want to decry them. There will be lots of young people who have a strong faith or ethos or family values [but] because there's so much pressure on young people to earn, if my son said 'I'm gonna' do some voluntary work' I would be so impressed I'd probably subsidize him.

Helen sees the issue that young people have to cope with in terms of social forces pulling them from several directions. As du Bois Reymond (1998: 63) has written, as young people 'are forced to adapt to the constantly changing demands of their environment (especially the labour market)…[they] attempt to direct the content and complexity of their lives.' Helen's pained response to her own son's position reflects the difficulty of this constant adaptation, a central tenet of interviewees' explanations for not wanting to judge young people. As Helen simply put it later in our discussion, 'I think it must be terrible being young'.

However despite their belief that they should not make value judgements concerning the motivations of volunteers, interviewees often saw an economic or human resource imperative for volunteering to be motivated by both altruistic and instrumental considerations. Lynette (Volunteer Centre brokerage worker) told how she had volunteered for a bereavement counselling charity, both because of personal experience, and because she wanted to gain a counselling qualification. Alongside her, many other people volunteered as trainee counsellors, but of her fellow volunteers she noticed that 'as soon as they got their qualification they disappeared'. She stated categorically to me that she chose to make no moral judgement about this, reasoning that they may well have used their new skills to help

people in other ways. However, the bereavement charity concerned found itself short of volunteers, causing major problems in regard to workload, and was forced to invest in training a new set of volunteer counsellors at great expense.

Lynette's experience echoes the work of Abrahams (1996: 773-4) who found that many female volunteers in a rape crisis centre were volunteering because they were considering a career in counselling, and they needed to keep a 'foot in the door' of an organisation which might eventually provide employment. Yet, regarding volunteer retention and management of volunteer-involving organisations, Lynette identified significant problems of sustainability. In her view volunteers were not better citizens or expressing higher values if their primary motivation for giving their time was instrumental or altruistic in nature, but she did feel that by staying with the charity, and continuing to give her time after gaining her qualification, she and others like her had shown a deeper responsibility to the charity: 'I felt I owed them for their contribution to my training'. Similarly, Anjay (youth volunteering brokerage worker) started his career in environmental volunteering by giving time to the charity for which he now works: 'It was selfish thing. Yes, I wanted to help people, but I wasn't coming in to give my free time to help'. Whereas the evidence from Eley's (2003) work with Millennium Volunteers shows that volunteer motivations can change, and may become more altruistic over time once the positive effects of volunteering have been experienced, Lynette's experiences demonstrate that this is heavily context specific.

Operational discourses

As a final example at the operational level regarding the changing nature of youth participation in volunteering, many interviewees found that the term 'volunteer' had become less appropriate in their work. Anjay (youth volunteering brokerage worker) stated that he found the language which he used to recruit young people changing: he reserved the title

'volunteer' solely for those community members who gave their time at one of the occasional weekend gardening events he organised, those who were volunteering as serious leisure (Stebbins, 2004). Anjay felt that a distinction had developed between such individuals and those young people who volunteered in his organisation's graduate programme, who entered the schemes saying '"I want to go into this" or "I want to be a climate change officer"', and were looking for work experience in related areas. That this work experience was sold by his organisation as volunteering, the basis on which it had secured funding from central and local government, was immaterial. Young people came forward to plant trees and clear canals, not because they wanted to plant trees and clear canals, but because they wanted to *say* they had planted trees and cleared canals. The *work* had been supplanted by the *experience*.

Conclusion

Using original qualitative research, this study has shown that structural factors are influencing young people's attitudes towards volunteering and the delivery of youth volunteering programmes. These structural factors work at three levels: macro-level government policies which promote volunteering as a pathway to employment and which side-line citizenship and critical community engagement; specific volunteering programmes which reward short-term, instrumentalised commitments; and operational volunteer brokerage strategies which see volunteering as an experience to be sold to young people in exchange for private benefits to them. All three, to an extent, contribute to increased disengagement from the altruistic side of volunteering, supporting the theoretical model provided by Hustinx and colleagues (Hustinx, 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Hustinx and Meijs, 2011). Further, it is cautioned that these developments pose future problems for volunteer-involving organisations in terms of sustainability, again echoing Hustinx and Meijs (2011: 5): 'These alleged changes not only pose a threat to the resilience of the voluntary

sector, but also create a direct problem for volunteer organisations, which experience increasing disruptions in the supply as well as the retention of volunteers.'

While it must be reiterated that reported motivations to volunteer are often both instrumental *and* altruistic, and volunteers of all ages are often motivated by a multitude of factors, evidence has shown that young individuals are less likely to volunteer if they feel they are forced to, as they sense their engagement and contribution are devalued. Holdsworth and Brewis (2013: 12) articulate the need for the delivery of youth volunteering schemes to retain flexibility, so that volunteering can meet varied needs and expectations, rather than bowing to external factors that encourage delivery agents to 'play up' the instrumental benefits of volunteering. Jochum and Brodie (2013) suggest a 'more proactive and nuanced approach to volunteer recruitment and management', demonstrating an awareness of the personal circumstances of volunteers in order that volunteering opportunities correspond accordingly to life stages and professional and personal needs. The data presented here supports this call for flexibility, but argues for practitioners to be increasingly aware of the multi-level structural processes that are inhibiting volunteer policy and recruitment practice from developing such holistic and long-term approaches. As Ellis Paine et al (2013) conclude, not only can volunteering not tackle the structural inequalities that underlie the labour market, volunteering remains subject to those same inequalities. The aim of this article has been to raise awareness of some of these structural forces.

Finally, this article also contributes to our sociological understanding of the construction of youth identities. In the views of interviewees, young people are increasingly encouraged to undertake their volunteering as a part of work experience or training for a future, though usually as yet unidentified, role. Bauman (2007: 4-5; 2001), writing on the ubiquity of fractured pathways faced by (young) people, states that the increased necessity for flexibility in the labour market will mean individuals are more likely to 'abandon commitments and

loyalties without regret – to pursue opportunities according to their current availability, rather than following one's own established preferences', supporting the conclusions of both interviewees and the previous literature on volunteering. If UK government policies and those tasked with delivering such policies continue to sell volunteering to young people in its current form, the goal of building a 'big society' on increased levels of volunteering will, on the evidence of this study, become ever more difficult.

Notes

[1] JCP are the physical agencies by which the UK government's Department for Work and Pensions distribute social security payments, such as pensions, job seekers and disability allowances. These offices operate in most towns in the UK and serve as a centre for job searches and employment advice.

[2] The MV programme formed much of the basis of v, the national young volunteers' service, an organisation which also adopted the use of nationally recognised certificates and awards for completing set hours of volunteering.

[3] The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the central organisation responsible for managing students' applications to Higher Education institutions in the UK.

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