Unwaged labour intensified: Volunteer management and work targets at a UK charity

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Abstract

Volunteer management is an expert practice which aims to maximise the productivity and efficiency of volunteers' activities, by adapting Human Resource Management (HRM) approaches to voluntary work settings. Sociological and social anthropological studies of volunteering have not explored the significance and effects of volunteer management in sufficient detail. This article critically examines the historical emergence of volunteer management in the UK, and explores its contemporary practice at a charity providing counselling services by phone and online. Using data drawn from an ethnographic study among volunteers and staff at this charity, I examine how management practices were calibrated to encourage volunteers to achieve productivity targets. Volunteers' workloads increased as a result, but management strategies also portrayed a willingness to work intensively as a key measure of altruistic and compassionate motivations. Drawing on feminist analyses of the constitutive nature of service work for workers' subjectivities, I examine how volunteer management strategies engaged volunteers at the level of affect in order to align their attitudes, feelings and behaviours with the achievement of targets. My argument contributes new insights to sociological and social anthropological debates about volunteering and its relationship to employment, by evaluating how the values of productivity, efficiency and value for money, all of which cohere within volunteer management expert practice, come to animate and reorder the experiences of volunteering.

Keywords

call centres, counselling, UK, unpaid work, volunteering, volunteer management

Introduction

> Increasingly, our clients are looking to increase, improve the management and measure the impact of their volunteering . . . there is increasing pressure on organisations to get volunteer management 'right', to attract and retain volunteers for the long term. (Black, 2016)

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> As a manager. . . you can certainly help create the conditions where the individual volunteer's
> values can be achieved alongside the goals and priorities of your organisation. (Volunteer Now,
> 2012, p. 26)

Volunteering is commonly understood as an ethical, altruistic, or compassionate activity, performed out of choice rather than necessity.[1] Yet volunteers mostly do not determine the conditions of their activity. They may give their time freely, but within formal, organisational settings volunteers' efforts are often closely monitored, coordinated and evaluated. There are constraints on the timing and frequency of volunteering, requirements to undergo training, obligations to commit to specific hours, be mindful of policies and procedures, accept direction and feedback, report to supervisors and submit to being appraised and performance monitored, or to manage others. Indeed, the notion of 'volunteer management' has become a distinctive branch of expertise which is now widely recognised and applied within the charitable and voluntary sectors, within and beyond the UK. This expert knowledge can be found in professional roles and associations, consultation and accreditation programmes, and best practice standards on recruiting, training, coordinating and communicating with volunteers. Although frequently discussed in voluntary sector policy and practice literature (e.g. Brewis et al., 2010; Brudney & Meijs, 2009; Volunteer Now, 2012), this dimension of volunteering has not received sufficient critical attention. Most social science research on volunteering has placed volunteers themselves – their moral beliefs and values – centre stage, alongside the forms of social and economic capital that make engagement in volunteering possible, desirable or pleasurable. The logic underpinning how these unwaged contributions of time and effort are coordinated and organised has been overlooked in critical research, or seen as detached from volunteers' experiences (Cunningham, 1999; Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Parsons, 2006).

This article develops a critical vantage point on volunteer management. Focusing on the historical emergence of this expertise in the UK, I show how workplace management knowledge practices, in particular Human Resource Management (HRM) coupled with technology-driven (ICT) performance monitoring, have been taken up in the UK voluntary sector, nested within a non-profit policy agenda emphasising efficiency, competition and best value. Far from being distant from volunteers' experiences, I argue that volunteer management has a profoundly constitutive effect on their subjectivities.

To make this case, and examine the concrete impacts of these wider historical developments, I evaluate research material from an ethnographic study of volunteers at a charitable helpline where, at the time of the study, new productivity targets and technologies to monitor performance had recently been introduced. Volunteer management practices accordingly encouraged volunteers not only to fulfil the targets, but also to accept the work intensification that went with them as a new marker of their compassion and altruism. Drawing on feminist analyses of service work as constitutive of subjectivity (Hochschild, 1983; Weeks, 2007, 2011) I explore how these management targets reshaped the perceptions and behaviours of volunteers and their supervisors. By developing critical insights into the implications of adapting workplace management models for the coordination of volunteers, I contribute to sociological debates that seek to bring waged and unwaged forms of work into a common analytical frame and explore the connections

between them (Baines, 2004; Baines et al., 2017; Halford et al., 2015; Keleman et al., 2017; Taylor, 2004, 2005). That a target-driven productivism can infuse volunteer practice and experience supports Kathi Weeks's (2011) claim that waged work's values and practices increasingly order and animate non-work spaces, relations and sociality in the post-Fordist era.

Volunteer management

Since the 1980s, successive UK governments of the right and centre left have supported the involvement of voluntary and charitable organisations in the provision of public services. The practice of contracting non-profit organisations to deliver services previously provided by state bureaucracies began in the 1980s under the Conservative administration led by Thatcher, and has been extended under subsequent governments (Fyfe, 2005; Wolch, 1989). This has gone hand in hand with the growth of centralised governance of the non-profit sector. In order to gain public funding and contracts, charitable and voluntary organisations must comply with regulatory mechanisms aimed at securing government priorities of cost-containment and value for money. Discourses of management, marginal in the non-profit sector before the 1980s, have gained significant traction more recently. This is evident in the 'great deal of attention . . . paid to the adoption of practices such as business plans, strategic choice, quality initiatives and mission statements' in voluntary and charitable organisations (Cunningham, 1999, p. 19). The management of volunteers comprises one dimension of this broader development.

Over recent decades volunteer management has come to denote a widely recognised field of expertise in the UK, with its own professional standards, accreditation programmes, professional courses, literature and roles (e.g. Brewis et al., 2010; Brudney & Meijs, 2009; Gaskin, 2011; Moxham & Boaden, 2007; Rochester et al., 2010; Volunteer Now, 2012). The first professional peer-support forum of volunteer managers formed in the mid-1990s, aimed at enabling its members from charitable and non-profit organisations to 'improve the capacity of organisations to better involve and manage both existing and new volunteers' ('AVM's story', 2019). Volunteer management entails the application of workplace models of employee management, particularly HRM, to the coordination of volunteers. HRM has been defined as concerned with 'how the employment relationships for all employees can be managed in such a way as to contribute optimally to the organization's goal achievement' (Legge, 2005, p. 223; see also Bolton & Houlihan, 2007). According to proponents, volunteer management enables organisations to tackle high rates of volunteer attrition and improve retention – both common problems in the sector. Volunteer managers, or coordinators, take on 'human resources' tasks of recruiting, training and supervising volunteers, exploring their motivation to volunteer and enhancing familiarity with organisation's priorities, policies and procedures (Brewis et al., 2010; Volunteer Now, 2012). In this way, volunteer management seeks to maximise the commitment, energy and resourcefulness of volunteers. A perennial topic for discussion concerns the most effective ways of motivating volunteers and inspiring their dedication (e.g. Alfes et al., 2017; Brudney & Meijs, 2009; Taylor et al., 2006). This adaptation of workplace management models for use within voluntary settings initially generated opposition from some practitioners but had nonetheless become

widespread in the sector by the late 2000s. Rochester et al. (2010) discuss survey evidence from 2008 indicating the prevalence of volunteer management roles, practices and procedures across UK voluntary organisations and charities, noting that practitioner literature increasingly reflected 'the growing influence of more structured management' (Rochester et al., 2010, p. 148; see also Brewis et al., 2010; Volunteer Now, 2012). Volunteer management expertise is also widespread outside the UK. Alfes et al. (2017) review international studies investigating the use of HRM in volunteer settings across Europe, North America, Australia, Israel and India.

Alongside ensuring volunteers' continued enthusiasm, volunteer management also aims to mould and direct it towards the fulfilment of the organisation's goals. Like HRM within employment settings, volunteer management legitimates a view of volunteers as 'individual resource unit[s] to be optimally configured' (Bolton & Houlihan, 2007, p. 4). Volunteer management is thereby tied up with burgeoning obligations on non-profit organisations to demonstrate the positive differences their work is making in society by providing evidence of their impact, performance and cost-effectiveness (e.g. Grieco et al., 2015; Kendall & Knapp, 2000; Moxham & Boaden, 2007; Rochester et al., 2010). A number of expert tools for quantifying the value and impact of volunteers' activities have evolved (Rochester et al., 2010). One example is the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) tool, first developed by the Institute for Volunteering Research, and widely adopted since by many UK-based and international organisations, including the Home Office, the Prince's Trust and the Red Cross (Gaskin, 2011). By following a system of calculating in monetary value the costs of managing volunteers (e.g. training and supervision) against the value volunteers bring (what volunteers would notionally earn as wages), the tool enables organisations to produce figures representing the 'investment return' of their volunteer programmes (i.e. for every £1 spent on training, the organisation recoups £4 in unwaged activities). The creators of the VIVA tool claim it has helped a range of organisations achieve 'more effective management information on volunteers', as well as 'cost-effectiveness and boosting investment in volunteers' and 'attracting external funding and boosting accountability' (Gaskin, 2011, p. 1). In the context of data capitalism (Beer, 2019, p. 7; see also Beer, 2016; Kitchen, 2014), the expansion of metrics alongside the use of big data analytics for measuring and evaluating voluntary work at a global scale is becoming increasingly important in the voluntary sector (e.g. Datakind, n.d.; Volunteers Count, 2019).

Within most policy and practitioner-oriented literature on the non-profit sector, the business of managing volunteers and auditing their value is viewed benignly, as a matter of merely selecting and refining the right systems of measurement. As Rochester et al. put it, 'Funders want to know that they are getting a good return on their investment, and organisations want to know "what works"' (Rochester et al., 2010, p. 161). However, in critical social science scholarship it is long recognised that systems for measuring and monitoring performance are not merely neutral instruments for the inspection of existing realities, but power-laden interventions with significant social and political consequences. These include the financialisation of social relations that occurs as the language of accounting extends across and embeds itself within diverse domains of social life, constructing 'concepts of performance in its own image' (Power, 1997, p. 119; see also Shore & Wright, 2015a, 2015b). In employment settings, technologies designed to

monitor and quantify workers' output and performance on an ever more minute and exacting basis enable the tightening of managerial regimes of control (Moore, 2017). Yet surprisingly few studies have explored how these audit processes and managerial technologies impact on experiences of volunteering. In the rare instances where this is explored, 'management' is conceived as a set of practices inherently external to what motivates volunteers, or the ways they find value and purpose in their activities (Cunningham, 1999; Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Parsons, 2006).

Sociological and social anthropological research on volunteering has usually framed its object of enquiry in a manner which overlooks volunteer management. Instead, volunteers themselves – their backgrounds, perspectives and experiences – are placed centre stage, whilst critical focus is given to how their social locations within economic structures intersected by gender, class, age and race constitute their orientation to and engagement in volunteering (e.g. Allahyari, 2000; Cummins & Blum, 2015; Flores, 2014; Read, 2010, 2019; Taylor, 2004, 2005; Wang, 2013). From this vantage point, the practical organisation and coordination of what volunteers actually do within organisational settings is not usually addressed as a field of power and contestation in its own right. In addition, and as Taylor (2004, 2005) and others have argued, volunteering is usually conceptualised as a dimension of citizenship (public participation, civil engagement or activism), but not as work. The volunteering-as-citizenship perspective draws attention to volunteering vis-a-vis the state, social and legal rights, obligations and entitlements (e.g. Hyatt, 2001; Muehlebach, 2012; Read, 2010, 2014, 2019), but elides detailed enquiry into the conditions in which volunteers labour, including how they are incentivised, disciplined, motivated and monitored in their endeavours.

An exception to the volunteering-as-citizenship view is scholarship associated with the new sociology of work (NSOW). This seeks to develop a common analytical framework for the study of all work, including unwaged work such as volunteering (Parry et al., 2005). Scholars in this field have drawn on Glucksmann's (2005) total social organisation of labour model to assess historical shifts in the organisation of waged and unwaged work across economic, social and spatial relations (Glucksmann, 2005; Parry et al., 2005). Taylor (2004) adapted this model to critically evaluate the conditions which enable or constrain how individuals differently positioned in the labour market combine waged and unwaged (volunteering) work in the course of their lives (see also Taylor, 2005). Subsequent studies have developed Taylor's key insights. For example Baines (2004) and Baines et al. (2017) show how, in the financially stretched labour market of Canadian non-profit social services organisations, unpaid work is extracted from waged and unwaged workers through varying degrees of coercion and compulsion, even as volunteers' time and effort is ostensibly given freely (see also Halford et al., 2015; Keleman et al., 2017). Government policies that instrumentalise volunteering as a route into employment have also been critiqued (Keleman et al., 2017; Parsons, 2006). In sum, NSOW perspectives approach volunteering as work rather than citizenship and have advanced understanding of how jobs and labour markets constrain, enable or compel different people's engagement in volunteering.

This article builds on these insights by bringing new theoretical perspectives to the analysis of how work relations shape volunteering. I concentrate on how volunteers' experiences are reconstituted by managerial practices transposed from employment settings, in

particular HRM alongside technologies for closely quantifying and monitoring the performance of workers. I contend that the impact of these managerial practices on the experience of volunteering is more profound than has been recognised to date, because like working, volunteering is a 'process of subjectification' (Weeks, 2007, p. 240). Volunteer management operates through affect, by moulding volunteers' emotions, perceptions and behaviours in particular directions. This process is constitutive of subjectivity, as Hochschild recognised in her pioneering study of emotional labour of service workers (1983/2012). In aligning their behaviours, attitudes and feelings according to managers' expectations and goals, service workers and volunteers alike do not merely act a part, they transform their subjectivities and social relations (1983/2012; see also Weeks, 2007). Volunteers' motivations and sense of values and purpose are directly engaged by managerial practices and strategies, and thus cannot be analysed separately from them.

I further contend that this transposition of practices developed for the workplace to volunteering settings must be understood as one dimension of a broader process whereby work relations come to pervade almost all of post-Fordist social life. As Kathi Weeks (2007, 2011) has contended, the boundaries between productive/wage-earning and reproductive/human-sustaining work, so central to Fordist regimes of accumulation, are now opaque. The necessity of working long hours for a living is individualised and depoliticised, as workers expend ever more time outside the workplace arranging for their working life, and thus their survival, to continue (e.g. training, socialising, consuming). In this context, spaces and relations nominally outside waged work are increasingly inscribed by its relations of productivity, success, efficiency, talent or management. Most volunteers and voluntary organisations claim that the values of volunteering are distinct from employment because volunteering is unwaged and therefore selfless. Yet this leaves unexamined how definitions of altruistic behaviour are shaped by managerial practices adapted from waged employment (see further Taylor, 2005). The ensuing discussion draws on data from a qualitative research project among volunteers and staff at a UK charity providing counselling services by phone and online. I examine the implementation of productivity targets and how volunteers were managed to achieve them. This resulted not only in volunteers working in a more intensive, disciplined manner for the Charity, but also in altruism and compassion increasingly being recognised in volunteers' willingness to work intensively to meet targets, as a target-driven productivism came to saturate volunteer practices.

Research setting and methodology

I discuss research carried out in 2011–2012 at an organisation I will call the Charity. The Charity operates nationally across the UK, providing 24/7 telephone and online counselling services. At the time of the research, there were 1500 counsellors at the Charity nationally, the vast majority of whom were volunteers. The Charity's services are delivered through a number of regional bases around the UK. My research project was located in one of the larger English bases, located in the Midlands, with just under 200 volunteers.

The original aim of the study was to explore and compare how recently recruited and long-serving volunteers characterised their identification with the Charity, using an

ethnographic methodology which incorporated participant observation and semi-structured interviews (O'Reilly, 2012). This research began with participant observation of the training of a cohort of 15 recently recruited volunteers by staff supervisors, as well as formal meetings with volunteers and staff, training and development events for experienced volunteers, and recruitment events for new volunteers. My position as a researcher was overt at all times and I kept detailed fieldnotes during these gatherings as well as outside them. I later conducted semi-structured interviews (De Walt & DeWalt, 2011) among seven newly trained volunteers and three volunteers with several years of experience at the Charity, exploring their socio-economic backgrounds (employment, financial circumstances, family obligations), experiences at the Charity and identification with its aims. I also interviewed six members of staff responsible for overseeing and coordinating volunteers about their approaches to training, supervising and volunteer support. These primary data were gathered over six visits of three to six days carried out over the course of 12 months. Thematic analysis of fieldnotes and interview transcripts, alongside secondary literature about volunteering policies at the Charity, provided the basis of a detailed report on the study's findings, completed in 2012.

In the months prior to my field research, the Charity had made some major changes to how volunteers were managed which had been controversial. Although not the main focus of my original study, research participants frequently referred to this issue during my research. Some years after the completion of the first report on the study, I returned to reflect on this dimension of the data in the light of theories and literatures on sociology of work which had not informed my first report. I carried out an iterative-inductive analysis (O'Reilly, 2012) of my original fieldnotes, interview transcripts and secondary literature, focusing in particular on narratives about changes to volunteer management. This process initially entailed open coding, which through an iterative process of reflection later cohered into the argument developed in the forthcoming sections.

Volunteers' engagement with the Charity

Volunteers' commitment to the Charity was linked to their employment aspirations and professional identities. Most of the 10 volunteers I interviewed were either actively pursuing or had retired from careers in caring professions such as teaching, counselling and social work. Of the five volunteers that held Bachelor degrees, three also had postgraduate or professional qualifications, and a further two were studying for a degree. Over half said volunteering at the Charity provided them with experience of value to their career aspirations, for example enhancing their studies or training, or providing insights to a field of work which interested them. Three retired volunteers emphasised that they used the skills developed in their working careers. Volunteers balanced their commitment to the Charity with the demands of paid work and/or caring commitments to partners and other family members, while often surviving on low incomes. Aside from two studying and three retired volunteers, four were working full- or part-time and one was unemployed. Six volunteers regularly cared for dependent family members. Notwithstanding their educational and professional aspirations, volunteers were not particularly wealthy. Four had personal incomes of less than £10K per year and the majority of volunteers in the study lived in households with overall annual

incomes of less than £30K per year. Overall, volunteers' engagement with the Charity was strongly shaped by their work-related identities, aspirations and practical arrangements with their families and household members, as other NSOW studies have also shown (Baines, 2004, Baines et al., 2017; Halford et al., 2015; Keleman et al., 2017; Taylor, 2005).

Volunteers framed their choices to volunteer within narratives of compassion. Using altruistic idioms to depict their unremunerated time and skills, they found it rewarding and personally fulfilling to 'help others' or 'give something back' to people who were suffering and in need. Mark,[2] a new volunteer in his early twenties, told me,

> I've only done a few shifts, but I can think of three calls, three contacts, where I think, I genuinely feel I made a difference to that . . . person's, sort of, state of mind. And yes, that is a big deal. That's a really big deal to me.

Annabel, a recent recruit in her early thirties, said, 'I have to say I have found it really satisfying, I mean . . . very tiring . . . But extremely satisfying . . . it is very rewarding.' Retired teacher Denise remarked that volunteering enabled her to appreciate her own good fortune and to 'give something back to people', whilst Eva, another longstanding volunteer, in her forties, described the pleasure of feeling that, as a counsellor, she could be a catalyst for positive change in the life of a client. 'It makes you feel good . . . it really does make you smile!' That this counselling was unpaid was seen by many as advantageous in developing a rapport with clients, who were more inclined to trust 'selfless' counsellors. This was affirmed by supervisor Cathy, who acknowledged that some volunteers 'are quite idealistic and really aligned to the ethos of [the Charity, and] their perception [that] it's a volunteer service.' Overall volunteers' emotions and affect were deeply engaged in their work for the Charity. This also required submitting to being managed, as the next section explores.

Managing volunteers, counselling quality

The work of volunteer counselling was of necessity closely guided and coordinated. Training and management of volunteers was an explicit duty of various staff. A coordinator was responsible for recruiting new volunteers, maintaining a volunteer database and coordinating annual social events for volunteers, while supervisors offered training, appraisal, supervision in group or one to one sessions, as well as monitoring counsellors' work on shifts. After an initial interview and vetting process, new volunteers had to undertake extensive counselling training over several months, totalling 51 hours of workshops and mentoring. Counsellors were trained to practise empathetic engagement with 'contacts' (people contacting the Charity via phone or online) entailing listening and asking non-judgemental, open questions to explore the contact's point of view. Training aimed to build skills and resilience necessary to counsel people in distress resulting from experiences of abuse, bereavement, difficult relationships, poor mental health and risky or dangerous personal circumstances. Once they completed their training volunteers were asked to commit to working one shift per week alongside monthly supervision sessions.

Until 2010, the aim of volunteer management practices of training and supervision had been to ensure the quality of volunteers' counselling abilities. Whilst the commitment to volunteering once a week was notionally expected, it was not practically enforced. Supervisors regarded volunteer unreliability and poor timekeeping as regrettable but unavoidable, reasoning that, after all, volunteers had jobs, families and caring responsibilities to juggle, and their contribution to the Charity was unpaid. Regardless of their reliability, supervisors, coordinators and managers expressed unconditional gratitude to volunteers for all their contributions of time and effort. The speed and intensity with which volunteers worked on shift had also not conventionally been managed. Supervisors advised counsellors on the content of their communication with contacts, but each counsellor could judge how much time to spend communicating with a single client (potentially the entire four-hour shift). Volunteers nonetheless sought affirmation from supervisors that they were handling contacts appropriately, displaying empathy and understanding in the right measure, and 'making a difference' to clients.

Prior to 2009 the Charity's telephony infrastructure made the quantification of overall national demand for its service a complicated calculation that could only be achieved retrospectively on a monthly basis. This information did not inform how volunteers were managed. Although senior managers were kept abreast of these figures there was little awareness amongst volunteers or supervisors of how many clients were attempting to access the counselling services at any moment in time. Yet by the time of my fieldwork in 2011, volunteer management practices had been altered to incorporate new targets around the speed, intensity and pace at which volunteers worked on shift. I now turn to a discussion of the developments that drove this new approach.

From quality to quantity and quality: ICTs and performance targets

In 2009 the Charity initiated a major project of investment in its telephony and ICT infrastructure. Deemed archaic, the latter was replaced with state of the art call centre ICT systems. These technologies dramatically improved the potential for monitoring demand for the Charity's counselling service, and how well it was meeting this demand. Instead of aggregate monthly reports that were only ever retrospective, it was now possible to monitor on a more or less live basis how many contacts had been received within each 15-minute period over the previous month, whether and how quickly they had got through to a counsellor and what kinds of issues had been discussed. This information could be used to forecast future demand for the Charity's counselling services at a highly granular level, right down to how many counsellors were required to be on a shift at a given base at any given time.

These developments at the Charity were characteristic of wider trends during the 2000s, in which ICTs which had hastened the proliferation of call centres in the commercial and financial sectors were increasingly being adopted within non-profit and public sector organisations providing telephone and online services, such as the police and the National Health Service (see further Glucksmann, 2005; Taylor & Bain, 2007; van den Broek, 2008). These ICTs had been developed in competitive commercial environments in which profits depended upon a management ethos and a set of working

practices which delivered both quantity and quality. Call centre workers were tasked with achieving targets for average call handling speeds whilst also maintaining good standards of customer interaction. Taylor and Bain (2007) argue that in adopting these technologies, public and non-profit sector organisations also ushered in the management ethos that went with them. In a context in which government policies supported the use of business models of efficiency, competition and value for money in the public and non-profit sectors, the 'private sector comparator' helped ensure striking commonalities in working practices across profit and non-profit contact centres (Taylor & Bain, 2007, p. 358). This argument is borne out in the case of the Charity.

The Charity's leaders wanted to use the improved ICT capabilities to measure the Charity's performance in new ways, and communicate with funders and the general public about how well the Charity was achieving its own objectives. They saw great advantages in leveraging good performance statistics in a context in which non-profit sector funding was ever more linked to the quantitative demonstration of impact and effectiveness. Accordingly, experts with a background in financial call centres were hired to advise the Charity's leaders on developing standardised, statistical measures of performance. One such expert recalled to me that in his early days of working at the Charity, some managers and supervisors expressed their discomfort at this prospect of quantification, reasoning that instead of managing volunteers 'as though it's a work environment', the Charity should 'be grateful' to volunteers for their time. Nonetheless, shortly after the implementation of the new technologies, the Charity's senior leaders set organisation-wide targets which matched those of private sector call centres. The 2009 average answer rate of 71% was deemed to be too low and a new average answer rate target of 90% was set. 'Call demand' (the number of clients contacting the Charity at any given time) and 'answer rate' (the number being answered as well as the speed at which they were answered) assumed a new existence as apparently neutral knowledge categories through which the quality of the Charity's activities could be interpreted and understood (Shore & Wright, 2015b).

Intensifying work, reconfiguring altruism

For base managers, meeting the new national targets for the Charity required dramatically changing how volunteers were managed. The nature and impact of these changes, which had been implemented at the base in the year prior to my fieldwork, were fresh in the minds of research participants and frequently commented upon. Sandie, a senior supervisor of long standing at the Charity, remarked that amongst themselves supervisors marvelled at how much their relationships with volunteers had altered. This could result in,

> . . . a bit of a laugh or a reminisce about that in team meetings. You know, kind of 'do you remember when we were eternally grateful that somebody walked through the door?' And they didn't have to do it very often, it was just 'oh wow, you're fantastic, thank you for being here!'

As in private sector contact centres, quantity became as important a measure of volunteers' contributions as quality (Taylor & Bain, 2007). Meeting targets meant increasing

the number of contacts counsellors answered, without jeopardising the quality of their interactions with clients. That entailed reducing volunteer absences on shifts and changing advice on the handling and duration of contacts. Managers and supervisors sought a firm commitment to turn up to pledged shifts. Tighter records were kept of volunteers' punctuality, and when they missed shifts, they were contacted by supervisors asking how they would make up the time. Volunteer requests to rearrange shifts were not granted easily, as such alterations were disruptive and could damage answer rates. Some volunteers were taken aback at how strictly these new rules were applied. Donna, a new volunteer, sought to swap shift times when her husband had been invited to a job interview and couldn't look after their children during the time she had pledged to volunteer. Her request was granted only grudgingly by her supervisor, and she related to me that she had been 'made to feel bad' for making it, which she disliked since she was 'doing this [work] for free!'

The length of time spent counselling each client was subject to a maximum duration of 40 minutes in all but exceptional circumstances. The previously unlimited counselling time per client was ill matched to targets of answering more calls. Supervisors now robustly advised and instructed counsellors on shift when it was time to bring their communication with a client to an end. Supervisors also encouraged strategies aimed at intensifying the speed at which volunteers worked, and thus the quantity of calls answered, without compromising their quality. Steve explained how he would train counsellors he supervised to end their online counselling sessions with clients more promptly by bringing the 'chat transcript into the supervision, and we go through it . . . and we'd look at [and discuss] . . . where were the indications that it could have ended? It's about the optimum time.' He'd also advise counsellors to shorten overall online chat handling times by beginning the post-session work of writing up their notes of the interactions with clients whilst still conversing with them. 'I've done this with a few counsellors and . . . they are far more productive than they were', he remarked.

> It's like Team Steve. [My volunteers] actually performed better than any other [supervisor's] cohort . . . [giving] a minimum of five shifts per month. That was an average for mine and I've got twenty. And they gave some serious hours.

Volunteers also often reflected upon changes at the base. As Denise, a retired teacher remarked,

> Oh, we are more managed. We are far more managed, definitely . . . It's all this accountability again, isn't it? All ticking boxes. I can be tongue in cheek about it I think, because I've been around a while [as a volunteer]. To me that's what ruined education – too many rules, too many tick boxes, too many targets. Taking your eye off the [client] as a whole.

Denise's outspoken criticism of the new approach to volunteer management, and her pointed refusal to stick to the recommended time limits for contacts ('I treat every call as an individual and I'm on as long as I need!'), was unusual. For the most part, managers and supervisors were largely successful in persuading volunteers that increases in the speed and intensity with which they worked were in keeping with the altruistic

missions of the Charity. For instance, some volunteers felt that counselling time limits curtailed their ability to establish a relationship of trust with clients. But managers and supervisors countered this perception by arguing that most clients got tired after 40 minutes, and thus longer counselling interactions did not help clients, but exhausted them. They further suggested that long conversations were in fact only really desirable for counsellors, and undermined the Charity's mission to help as many people as possible. As supervisor Joe put it,

> . . . some of the rumblings I've heard [from counsellors] is, you know, 'we're not a call centre'. No, we're not a call centre, but it is about optimum time for [the client], not the counsellor. Because some counsellors think, you know, they haven't had a good shift because they haven't had a long call. They might have had ten really good interactions, five good interactions, but it wasn't a good shift for them. But was that about them, and what they wanted . . . or was it from the service user? . . . We have to bring it back to . . . the amount of [clients] we are trying to talk to.

Targets were presented as a necessary part of the Charity's mission to enable every needy client to get through to a counsellor. Previously, when they had expressed gratitude for all contributions of volunteers' time, supervisors and managers had ceded a significant degree of control over the pace and regularity with which they worked. By associating altruism and generosity with more target-focused attitudes and behaviours, the new volunteer management priorities restrained such freedom. This was evident at recruitment events, where volunteer coordinator Shovita met prospective volunteers and provided information on the Charity's training programme. Prior to the introduction of answer rate targets, training was framed as simply as a donation of volunteers' time to gain the skills necessary to help its clients. But this depiction changed as managers focused attention on lowering the high rates of volunteer attrition during and soon after training. Instead, Shovita emphasised the significant cost to the Charity of providing a 51-hour training programme and cast it as an investment in new recruits, in return for which the Charity demanded 140 hours of shift work per trained volunteer over the first year. Volunteering for the first 12 months was thereby depicted as the repayment of a 'debt' to the Charity rather than a selfless donation. Similarly, advanced training events were promoted as opportunities for more experienced volunteers to enhance skills, but made available only to those who had participated in all their pledged shifts over the past six months. As involvement with the Charity was at least partially connected to career plans and professional identities, this representation of training as an investment to be reimbursed was credible for most volunteers.

The most controversial of the recent changes had been the hiring in 2010 of 20 waged counsellors from the existing pool of volunteers to work shifts of peak demand that were enduringly unpopular and therefore prone to low answer rates (such as Saturday and Sunday evenings). By the time of my fieldwork in 2011, it was widely acknowledged that this move had generated considerable bad feeling amongst many volunteers, many of whom believed that non-remunerated counselling was more truly selfless and compassionate. Mark summed up this kind of sentiment thus,

> I like to volunteer because I'm not getting paid for it. So I come out of passion for the job, not because I'm getting a wage at the end of the week. It would change how I felt, I think, I don't want to do it for the money.

Similarly, Eva remarked that,

> I don't think money is a good motivator for something like this . . . I think if people's motivations towards [counselling] are more that they want to do something to help, or they want to be . . . [a] more involved member of society, I think that is a bit more valuable . . .

These tensions were aired in regular forum meetings attended by volunteer representatives from each shift covered by the base, the volunteer coordinator and a senior manager. During one such meeting when the issue of waged counsellors was being discussed, retired volunteer Denise asserted with characteristic forthrightness that the Charity 'was founded as a volunteer organisation. We told [clients] that everybody that works here is a volunteer . . . People give up their time . . . for you to have someone to talk to.' Sally, a volunteer in her thirties, supported Denise by adding that the presence of large numbers of waged counsellors had disrupted the camaraderie and friendship groups on her regular shift, whilst Andy added that their effect on his shift had been 'devastating'. The staff present countered these grievances by reasserting the importance of meeting answer rate targets. Volunteer coordinator Shovita explained that many volunteers sign up for shifts but don't show up, adding that some are only doing one shift per month. This was met with shocked silence amongst volunteers present, followed by mutterings amongst them of, 'that's not enough! That's not what the commitment is!' Most then nodded in reluctant agreement with Annette, the senior manager, as she affirmed that it was how counsellors performed that mattered most, not whether they were paid for it. She added that the Charity existed to serve clients, not volunteers, and that 'too much time is lost supporting volunteers who don't perform well'.

As this interaction and others like it revealed, volunteers did not always like the new targets and management techniques. But these initiatives were also not met with widescale or sustained opposition. From a total of around 200 volunteers at the base around a dozen left the Charity as a direct response to the changes, but the vast majority did not see targets as fundamentally at odds with their own ethical values and motivations to volunteer. They largely accepted the reformulated notions of what constituted altruistic behaviour, adjusting their counselling practices to accord with the new drive to meet call demand even while they mocked or disdained some of its implications. In their always highly mediated relationships with clients, volunteers continued to look to supervisors for affirmation that the time and effort they gave was valued by the Charity and truly helping clients. Volunteer management did not exist as a set of practices imposed upon but intrinsically external to volunteers' own motivations, as it has sometimes been depicted (Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011; Parsons, 2006). Its impact on volunteers was profound precisely because it worked through affect, transforming their perceptive and emotional identification with the Charity through the practical coordination of their activities.

Conclusion

Volunteer management is a growing field of expert practice in the UK, and internationally, which applies HRM models for managing employees to the coordination of volunteers in non-profit organisational settings. It aims to align volunteer motivations, values and interests with organisational goals, and to optimise the efficiency and productivity of volunteered labour. Like HRM, volunteer management makes selective use of possibilities newly emerging technologies provide for ever more exacting means of monitoring, quantifying and evaluating volunteers' activities. Yet these developments and their implications have not been critically evaluated within sociological and social anthropological studies of volunteering, which remain focused on the identities and social backgrounds of volunteers, rather than the organisational contexts in which their labour is mobilised, coordinated and disciplined. Studies which analyse volunteering as a dimension of citizenship have mostly ignored volunteer management, or viewed it as largely irrelevant to volunteers' subjectivities. Conceptualising volunteering as part of an expanded concept of work, NSOW studies have examined how employment and labour markets influence engagement in volunteering, but not investigated the implications of adapting workplace models of management to the coordination of volunteer labour.

This article has sought to open up a critical vantage point on volunteer management and attendant ICTs. At the Charity, volunteer management worked at the level of affect, shaping volunteers' emotions, perceptions and subjectivities. Volunteers were motivated by a desire to help the Charity's clients, but also closely managed by staff and necessarily dependent on guidance from supervisors as to how to translate altruistic motivation into practical action as counsellors. As new productivity targets were introduced, managers and supervisors achieved them by making a willingness to work intensively a key measure of the model volunteer. No longer was possession of good counselling skills sufficient as a marker of selfless virtue and commitment. Instead, volunteers' strong performance in meeting targets became a proxy for their altruism, compassion and whole-hearted identification with the goals of the Charity. In working to targets, volunteers aligned their altruistic feelings and behaviours with these managerial priorities.

The broader implication of these arguments is that volunteer management contains significant potential to remake volunteering in the image of waged work, and in that way can be seen as emblematic of how waged work harnesses non-work spaces and relations in the post-Fordist era. Volunteer management can mobilise to its own ends the possibilities opened by emerging ICTs to monitor, quantify and evaluate volunteers' activities in order to maximise productivity, efficiency and value for money. In seeking to evaluate the significance and place of volunteering in contemporary social life, sociological and social anthropological research must give closer and more critical attention to the impact of volunteer management strategies and practices, and analyse them as integral to, and not detached from, volunteers' subjectivities and experiences.

Funding

Notes

1. Wilson (2000, p. 215) defines volunteering as 'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause'. See further Keleman et al. (2017).
2. All names are pseudonyms.

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