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Selling volunteering or developing volunteers? Approaches to promoting sports volunteering

Abstract

This paper considers the balance between promoting volunteering in sport by emphasising the personal rewards to prospective volunteers themselves – the dominant management approach – and promoting it by the long term development of the values of volunteering. We review the motivations and rewards of sports volunteers and how these can be used to promote volunteering as being a transaction between volunteer and organisation. This is contrasted with a life-course approach to understanding volunteering, and evidence that an understanding of the value of volunteering can be inculcated that underpins continued volunteering. The two approaches regard potential volunteers respectively as ‘consumers’ and as ‘citizens’. We suggest that a shift to treating volunteers as consumers can lead to volunteering being regarded as transactional. The discussion has implications for volunteering in general; in particular, how it can be promoted in a society where narratives of ‘the consumer’ increasingly dominate over those of ‘the citizen’.

Introduction: The scale, context and importance of sport related volunteering

Across Europe, the Eurobarometer 75.2 survey, (European Commission, 2011), shows that of those who “have a voluntary activity on a regular or occasional basis,” the most common of 15 categories of activity is “sports club or club for outdoor pursuits,” with 24% of volunteers engaging in this. In the United Kingdom, sport is the third most popular area for volunteers to engage in after education and religious volunteering (Low et al, 2007). The 2012–13 Active People Survey (Sport England, 2013) reports that 12% of British adults volunteered for sport. The most important context for formal sports volunteering is sports clubs run by their members; normally called ‘community sports organisations’ (CSO). Given the difficulties of measurement (including defining a ‘volunteer’ and a ‘club’ in a way which provides consistent survey responses), volunteering in these clubs account for 75% of sport volunteers and 83% of the time contributed (Nichols, 2017; Taylor et al, 2003); and there are about 62,398 sports clubs in England. In 2013/14, 22% of the English population had taken part in sport as a member of a sports club (Harris et al, 2017). Sport clubs are a particular type of voluntary association, as while volunteering can be conceptualised as leisure; volunteers produce sporting and social opportunities, both for themselves and for other members (Nichols, 2017, Nichols et al. 2013). Further, sport and clubs may have positive externalities in the sense of public goods for society, such as health promotion.

Thus volunteering in sports clubs is an important area of formal volunteering in England. It is also important because it provides the opportunity for a large proportion of sports participation. Sports clubs, and the promotion of volunteering within them, are an important component of Sport England’s strategies to increase sports participation. In England the median club size is 112 members, about 20% of members take some volunteer role and there are few paid staff; mainly involved as coaches or facility maintenance. These organisations represent small social groups, bound together by shared enthusiasms or values, in which volunteers perform functions of both management and delivery. This has a bearing on understanding promoting volunteering and may contrast with large organisations in which paid staff ‘manage’ volunteers.

This paper describes the motivations of sports volunteers which form the basis for promoting volunteering as an essentially self-interested activity. This is contrasted with evidence that other values promoting volunteering can be developed. This is placed in the theoretical

framework of a life-course approach and interpreted in the context of sports volunteering where there is a strong overlap between volunteering and participation. Promoting volunteering through appealing to self-interest is criticised as promoting values which may undermine it in the long-run. The paper concludes with policy recommendations. Some of the work on the motivation of sports volunteers, and use of a life-course approach to understanding this, is developed from a review conducted for Sport England (Nichols, et al. 2016).

Previous research in England has consistently identified recruitment of volunteers as a problem, especially in the most demanding roles of chair, treasurer, secretary and coaches (Gratton, et al. 1997; Taylor et al. 2003; Groom et al 2014). The importance of these key roles across all clubs is confirmed by a survey of clubs conducted for Sport England in 2018 (Barrett, et al, unpublished). This survey, combined with 4 focus group interviews of 16 clubs to deepen understanding of volunteer recruitment, found that volunteers in these positions also tended to take a wide range of other roles in the club.

A recent survey of 35,790 sports clubs across ten countries in Europe (Breuer et al, 2017) asked respondents how significant problems of recruitment and retention of volunteers for various roles were. The mean score for the recruitment and retention of board level volunteers was 2.7 and for coaches and instructors was 2.6 (on a five point Likert scale (1 represented 'no problem' and 5, 'very big problem')). Clubs were also asked if any problems would threaten their existence in the next five years. Responses varied across Europe. In England 5% of clubs reported that recruitment and retention of coaches would threaten their existence and 4% that recruitment and retention of board members would do so. This particular survey's English sample over-represented larger clubs with more formal management practices, in particular the adoption of Sport England's quality badge, 'clubmark'. This may have reduced the number of clubs perceiving volunteer recruitment as a problem. However, previous research in England has consistently identified this (Gratton, et al. 1997; Taylor et al. 2003; Groom et al 2014).

Selling it – the motivations and barriers to sports volunteering

In sport, the most recent government strategy to promote sports volunteering in England emphasises the benefits to the potential volunteer, as opposed to the benefits to others. It states that: 'Volunteering has traditionally been regarded as an enabler for others to play sport. We will turn this on its head, focusing on what the volunteer gets out of volunteering, making it easier to fit volunteering in sport into a modern lifestyle' (Sport England, 2016a: 15). Sport England stress that: 'Volunteers who give their time for sport and physical activity to happen in their community enjoy many of the benefits associated with actually participating in sport and physical activity... physical and mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development. So when someone provides their time, energy and expertise as a volunteer there's a double benefit - for those playing and for themselves.' The premise of this approach is that the best way of attracting volunteers is to make opportunities 'marketable' to them by emphasising the personal benefits. In this way Sport England has tried to 'sell' volunteering by emphasising how it will provide rewards for the potential volunteers themselves. This is important because it contrasts with the traditional definition of a volunteer as altruistic (Cnaan et al., 1996) or at least, at that end of a scale between altruism and self-interest.

A review of the motivations of sports volunteers not only helps understand the benefits of sports volunteering which can be emphasised to potential volunteers but also the complexity of motivations. Empirical evidence from sport volunteers demonstrates that volunteers are motivated by a mixture of different kinds of incentives. A review of the motivations of sports volunteers,

conducted in 2016 for Sport England (Nichols et al, 2016) identified 131 relevant items, 59 of which were reviewed in depth. These confirmed an overlap between sports participation and sports volunteering, shown by fifteen studies. From these, motivations of sports volunteers include a combination of self-interest (SI) and altruism (A) although one has to be wary of socially acceptable responses to questionnaire prompts. In summary, the motivations were:

- Being a parent of a child participating in a sports club and wanting to help friends and family achieve social benefits (Gratton et al, 1997; Doherty, 2005; Nichols, 2005; Sport Wales, 2012; Taylor et al, 2012) (SI)
- Social benefits (Gratton et al, 1997; Taylor et al, 2003; Doherty, 2005; Weed et al, 2005; Egli et al, 2014) (SI)
- Giving something back to the community, be it a local community or a sports community, or both (Taylor et al, 2003; Doherty, 2005; Sport Wales, 2012; Dunn et al, 2016) (A)
- Wanting to remain involved with the sport after retiring from playing (Taylor et al, 2003; Doherty, 2005; Nichols, 2005; Sport Wales, 2012) (SI/A)
- Enthusiasm, or passion, for a sport (Taylor et al, 2003; Doherty, 2005; Sport Wales, 2012) (SI/A)
- Attachment to a club and a desire to see it do well (Taylor et al, 2003; Sport Wales, 2012; Egli et al, 2014) (A/SI)
- Using existing skills and learning new ones (Taylor et al, 2003; Doherty et al, 2005; Egli et al, 2014) (A/SI)
- Satisfaction with achievements as a volunteer (Taylor et al, 2003; Sport Wales, 2012) (A/SI)
- Pride in helping a club do well (Taylor et al, 2003; Sport Wales, 2012) (A)
- To enhance a CV (Sport Wales, 2012) (SI)

Five of these ten motives specifically link sports volunteering with sports participation, of the volunteer or their children; or with affiliation to the sports club. This confirms the importance of understanding the promotion of volunteering within the context of sports clubs and the relationship between participation and volunteering.

Summarising results across studies must take into account the use of different questions, samples, and time points the surveys were conducted (between 1997 and 2014). Responses very much reflect those prompted for, and social desirability. Most of these studies were not designed to build on theoretical frameworks and so have to be retrospectively related to theory. Nevertheless, they give a background to approaches to promote volunteering by emphasising the personal rewards, as well as altruism.

The distinction between altruism and self-interest in sports club volunteers is not as clear as in some other organisations because the volunteers are producing a ‘good’ (i.e. product) for themselves, which is the opportunity for themselves or their children to take part in sport and to enjoy the social rewards of club membership. They may also have a motivation to promote the sport in general to others. This may be contrasted with volunteers in collective associations which exist primarily to provide a service to others, for example, a lifeboat crew (O’Toole, 2013) or mountain rescue team (Nichols et al. 2014). However, the sports club also offers a public good in that all members benefit whether they volunteer or not. Some economic theories which are predicated on the assumption that individuals seek only to maximise their own utility would define non-volunteers as ‘free riders’ (Olson, 1965). According to these theories, those who volunteer must be motivated by the incentive to produce some other private good. Our contention is that these economic theories do not adequately recognise the full range of human

motivations, and emphasise only self-interest by ‘crowding out’ others. For the purposes of this paper we are just contrasting altruism and self-interest, building on Cnaan et al.’s (1996) defining characteristic of volunteering at the altruistic end of this dimension.

Selling it – volunteering and the personal reward of wellbeing

In accordance with the previous discussion, we consider motivations of sport volunteers to include both self-interest and altruism. The Sport England policy of promoting volunteering by emphasising its benefits to the volunteer (Sport England, 2016a) was influenced by analysing volunteer motivations of different groups using secondary analysis of the Taking Part Survey (Sport England, 2016b). Details of methods are provided in two reports for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Fujiwara, et al. 2014a., 2014b) and more recently in a report entitled ‘GIVERS’ (Fujiwara, et al 2018). The GIVERS report utilised three national surveys (the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), Taking Part and Community Life) to identify a relationship between volunteering and wellbeing. Multiple regression analysis isolated the impact of volunteering as the independent variable from others which may affect wellbeing (for example, gender and age). Wellbeing was measured using seven different dependant variables as indicators. It is claimed that this shows the direction of causality, that volunteering influences wellbeing, rather than that more healthy people are more likely to volunteer. However, the data was cross-sectional and reverse causality cannot be ruled out.

Prior to this analysis, eight previous studies are reviewed to support this direction of causality. However, one study (Son and Wilson, 2012) also found people with more social wellbeing were more likely to volunteer, thus challenging the direction of causality. The claim that volunteering causes wellbeing, in a unidirectional relationship, is further undermined in the GIVERS report, when it claims that a ‘virtuous cycle of volunteering’ exists; in which voluntary activity and charitable giving causes higher wellbeing, which causes greater altruism, which in turn causes more voluntary activity and charitable giving. If this virtuous circle existed, it would need to explain why the level of volunteering in the UK is static. Further, such approaches ignore the structural reasons why certain people or groups volunteer more or less than others.

The studies above (Fujiwara, et al. 2014a., 2014b, 2018), influenced policies of the Department of Culture Media and Sport and Sport England. Both promoted volunteering by informing people it would increase their wellbeing, although there was no evidence that this would be effective. It was assumed that individuals are motivated by self-interest and so would be motivated by being told that volunteering would provide personal benefits. Further, in relation to sport, the studies above were all concerned with general volunteering, rather than volunteering in sports clubs. From the previous summary of the motives of sports volunteers the more pertinent personal benefits to emphasise might be for one’s children or oneself to take part in sport, the social rewards, along with altruistic motives of benefitting the club or the community. These are relevant to a life-course approach to developing volunteering, which we elaborate below.

Developing volunteers – a life-course approach

A theoretical framework for understanding an alternative approach is provided by a life-course approach which understands the changing experience of sports participation and sports volunteering through people’s lives, and how a wide range of interrelated events and factors have influenced these. A small number of previous pieces of research on volunteering have also argued for this approach (see Hardill et al, 2007; Baines and Hardill, 2008; Brodie et al, 2011; Hogg, 2016; Lindsey and Mohan, 2018). Hardill et al (2007: 400) explain that the use of a life-

course approach to volunteering research allows the researcher to, “understand the qualitative experience of volunteering, specifically why people create (emotional, temporal and physical) space for voluntary work, and how they juggle unpaid voluntary work with other ‘work’ (paid and unpaid) they undertake”. Brodie et al (2011) achieved this by conducting 101 in-depth interviews to find out how volunteering changed over people’s lives. This approach concluded that at different stages in people’s lives their volunteering was determined by:

- *Individual* factors such as personality, values, identity and resources;
- *Relationships* and social networks with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues;
- *Membership* of groups and organisations and how these are organised;
- Their *local environment* and place where they live, including public spaces, events, institutions and politics;
- *Wider societal and global factors* such as national and international events, social movements and trends.

All these factors interrelate with one another in different ways at different times of life, combining to shape volunteer engagement (Brodie et al, 2011). This approach helps understand volunteering as a process in which people react to different circumstances and opportunities as they move through their lives, directed by fairly constant values and influenced by their experiences. Thus a motivation such as the social rewards of sports club membership may grow in strength with length of membership (Nichols and Shepherd, 2006; Schlesinger and Nagel, 2013) and reflect an underlying commitment to the sport, the club and possibly to volunteering.

An important insight is that values and identity remain fairly constant, while individuals’ circumstances and opportunities change. Thus, if the habit of volunteering is nurtured in early life, it is likely to persist. The continuity of values as a determining factor in volunteering was identified by Marta and Pozzi (2008) and Oesterle et al (2004). One study has also identified that young people’s involvement in sports volunteering is strongly related to their parents’ volunteering (Eley and Kirk, 2002) and others, that family socialization is strong (Bekkers, 2007; Storr and Spaaji, 2017). Developing underlying values has recently been found to be important in encouraging young people to make a habit of engaging in volunteering. Dallimore et al. (2018) applied Bourdieu’s concept of habitus; as a set of predispositions; a factor explaining continuity in an individual’s volunteering. Thus a set of studies support the view that once developed, underlying values and identity can underpin volunteering.

As an illustration of this pathway through sports volunteering: a young person may develop an interest in sport at school and through this and other, often parental, influences, be socialized into an expectation of volunteering to support the organisation in which participation takes place (Bekkers, 2007). At university, volunteers often support the sports teams they participate in, but are also aware that this can be a marketable experience (Dean, 2014). The unanticipated rewards of sports committee membership and a basic coaching qualification may then influence the decision to volunteer later in life when they may have a young family (Rochester et al, 2011; Wilson, 2000). People may experience a range of rewards by volunteering in a sports club to support their child’s participation, from providing sports opportunities for others, to feeling part of a club community. Identification with a club grows as people continue to volunteer as a member of the club committee after their children have stopped participating in the club and left home (Doherty, 2005). The sense of purpose and social rewards continue and in retirement they have more time to give to the club, and at this stage they may take on administrative and leadership roles (Hogg, 2016). Thus motivations to volunteer change in response to circumstances and experience, but depend on an understanding of the value of volunteering to self and others, an understanding which is often established at an early age. A

specific example of applying this approach was understanding motivations of volunteers at the 2014 Commonwealth Games (Tomazos and Luke, 2015).

As emphasised above, a key conclusion of Brodie et al's (2011) analysis was that values are often instilled in childhood and remain relatively constant into and throughout adulthood. A conclusion is that involvement in organisations which encourage volunteering and pro-social values at adolescence, instil values which persist through life. As sports organisations are important places for youth volunteering (Low et al., 2007), this suggests that they can be a vehicle for developing the values and habits of active citizenship to support mutual aid organisations, and an identity as someone who does this. Thus promoting volunteering should promote values and habits which make individuals more likely to accept opportunities to volunteer.

An economic insight which reinforces the life-course approach is that the rewards of volunteering may predominantly be an 'experience good' where the value to an individual will only be ascertained fully after they have been experienced (Ford et al. 1988). This contrasts with a 'search good' whose value can be accurately estimated before consumption, and a 'credence good' whose value still cannot be accurately measured after consumption. Thus, the more an individual experiences the rewards of volunteering, the more concrete they will become. Therefore it is difficult to 'sell' the value of volunteering to a potential volunteer by telling them it will enhance their wellbeing. It will be easier to persuade him or her to continue volunteering, or volunteer in a new setting, on the basis that the rewards will be similar to those previously experienced.

The specific case of sport

So far we have shown that the approach of promoting volunteering through persuading people it serves their own self-interest can be based on an understanding of the motives for volunteering, but evidence that it works is predicated on the assumption that people will act primarily to further their own interests. In contrast, an approach which advocates nurturing a set of values that predisposes the individual to volunteer throughout their lifetime is based on theory and evidence of this continuity of values and habits, as well as developing the confidence to believe he or she can make a difference.

However, to understand how to promote volunteering in sport we need to understand the relationships between sports participation and volunteering. Dawson and Downward's (2013) econometric analysis of over 39,000 usable observations from the first three waves (2005-6, 2006-7 and 2007-8) of the Taking Part Survey concluded that the two activities were complimentary; the same factors predicted the decision to participate in sport and to volunteer in sport. Common factors also predicted non-sports participation and not volunteering. A conclusion was that policy to promote either participation in sport or sport volunteering should recognise the interdependence of the two: sports participants and volunteers have similar demographic characteristics. This contrasts with other volunteer led organisations.

Analysis of The Active People Survey 1, conducted between October 2005 and October 2006 with a total sample size of 363,724 adults (16+ years) in England, supports the view that the relationship between participation and volunteering in sport changes across the life-course (Taylor et al, 2012). While the decision to volunteer generally declined with age; paralleling participation in sport; the higher the age band, the greater was the percentage rise in the time given to sports volunteering. This is consistent with the finding from a survey of sports volunteers; conducted by Sport Wales; that approximately 20% of the volunteers contributed

80% of the time: these ‘stalwarts’ holding key positions in the clubs (Nichols and Shepherd, 2006) and being older, consistent with work on the civic core (Mohan and Bulloch, 2012). This suggests that as sports participants get older, for those that remain as volunteers, their volunteering deepens. The importance of life circumstances is apparent because the existence of dependent children, age, and familiarity with the neighbourhood are all important in motivating people to volunteer (Doherty, 2005; Taylor et al, 2012). Having a very young child reduces the likelihood of someone volunteering in sport, while having older children increases it; probably because volunteering is associated with one’s child’s sports participation (Taylor et al, 2012). This analysis helps us understand how the overlap between sports volunteering and participation changes over the life course.

For the purposes of this paper, a further insight into the relationship between sports participation and volunteering is given by the concept of sporting capital (Rowe, 2012, 2015). Rowe was able to commission a series of research projects into sports participation in his role as research manager for Sport England. He wanted to explain why sports participation levels had remained roughly constant despite initiatives to grow engagement, similar to conversations regarding stubbornly constant levels of volunteering. For Rowe (2015: 45), sporting capital is, “the stock of physical, social and psychological attributes and competencies that support and motivate an individual to participate in sport and to sustain that participation over time”. Within this the underlying factors that determine the likelihood of people participating in sport are classified into three domains:

- *Social*: social connectedness, including family, friends and colleagues who play sport
- *Psychological*: self-confidence, self-efficacy and sport as part of one’s identity
- *Physiological*: physical health and competency, as well as an understanding of the sport

Brought together, these three domains interact and combine to create an individual’s level of ‘sporting capital’. In each of these domains, individuals can possess high, medium or low sporting capital. Rowe (2015) proposes that higher levels of sporting capital will predict both current and future participation – the higher someone’s sporting capital, the more likely they are to get involved and to stay involved. Therefore, those with high levels of sporting capital have a high probability of getting and staying involved in sport, those with medium sporting capital have the potential to engage and to disengage over the life-course while those with low sporting capital are unlikely to participate and if engaged are at high risk of ceasing and not reengaging.

An implication is that those with higher sporting capital are more likely to be resilient to changes in circumstances which would deter others from continued sports participation. One can think of pathways to sports participation in a similar way to pathways to volunteering participation; such that strong levels of sporting capital are likely to help an individual adapt to changes in paid work, family commitments and location; by continuing to take part in sport, but in different forms. This is illustrated by the hypothetical figure of ‘Sam’ in Sport England’s present strategy to increase participation (2016b: 28). His participation in sport changes as he moves from school, to university, to a first job, and then to being a parent; and adapts to his circumstances. For example, he moves from team sport to individual activity once his available leisure time is reduced and fragmented. Rowe tested his concept by devising a ‘sporting capital score’ and incorporating this into the national Active People Survey (APS) wave 6, 2011 – 2012, with a sample of 4527. The sporting capital score was shown to be strongly related to levels of sports participation. Social class emerged as particularly important, with Rowe’s (2015) work showing it to be closely related to sporting capital – those from higher social classes are likely to have more sporting capital than those from lower social classes. This is consistent with Vandermeerschen et al’s (2017) finding that socially disadvantaged groups having less access

to sport. Rowe's concept appears to be a development of that of consumption capital which is understood as a resource that lowers costs and enhances benefits (Stigler & Becker, 1977, 79) 'as skill and experience in appreciation [of a specific activity] are acquired with exposure'.

Sporting capital is just being used as an operational concept in this paper, to develop the understanding of the relationship between sports participation and volunteering; which can be illustrated by the example of a 'pathway through participation' above. It is beyond the scope of this paper to debate in detail the nuances of social capital which is a contested concept. For example, Rowe distinguished sporting capital from Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital which explains tastes and preferences, constituting an individual's habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). These 'tastes' are both an expression of, and a reinforcing of, a distinction between groups. Thus cultural capital will explain why an individual chooses to join a particular tennis or golf club, but not why they have a strong disposition to play sport in general.

Both sporting capital and other forms of capital are strongly influenced by parents and early socialisation. Thus while Rowe uses sporting capital to explain continuity of sports participation, evidence above has shown continuity in volunteering to be explained by similar consistent predispositions.

Consumers or citizens - the shortcomings of the dominant management advice

We have contrasted two different approaches to promoting volunteering in sport. 'Selling' volunteering is predicated on potential volunteers conceptualised as 'consumers'; rational economic men. 'Developing it' it corresponds to potential volunteers as 'citizens' who are directed by a mix of personal values and habits; the relative strength of which changes as the individual moves between social roles and contexts. Rowarth (2017) provides a detailed critique of the dominant conceptualisation of people as 'rational economic men'; even when acting within 'bounded rationality' (they cannot base decisions on perfect knowledge), and understood through 'behavioural economics'. Rowarth describes how this considerable simplification of human behaviour as 'homo-economicus' was developed to facilitate economic modelling. For two centuries, from Adam Smith's work in 1759, 'economic theory came to be founded upon the fundamental assumption that competitive self-interest is not only man's natural state but also his optimal strategy for economic success' (Rowarth, 2017, 104). In contrast she cites research which has identified ten basic values present in individuals across all societies. These can be grouped around two axes; the first juxtaposes openness to change with conservation. The second juxtaposes self-enhancement (focused on status and personal success) with self-transcendence (having concern for the welfare of all). In general, a contrast between economists and sociologists (e.g. Smith and Rowarth) is that the former believe preferences are private and constant while the latter believe values can be internalized through socialization.

The critical points for policy to promote volunteering are, firstly, that the dominant model is that of the consumer, and secondly, that this is self-fulfilling. Analysis has shown the use of the word consumer greatly increasing in relation to the use of the word citizen in British media from the 1950's to 2004 (the analysis only goes this far) (Shrubsole, 2012). The concept of a consumer both assumes economic rationality and that expression of the consumer's interests will be in a market. This is a hegemonic view, in that embodies assumptions which favour a particular economic system, but are presented as 'common sense'. Thus the reports for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Fujiwara, et al. 2014a., 2014b) on the motivation of volunteers, and the association of volunteering with wellbeing, are translated to the assumption that if volunteering is promoted as serving these self-interests people will respond. The concern over redefinition of volunteering as a market exchange is reflected in the present debates over how

volunteering should be valued as an input to ‘social return on investment’, for example in an application of this approach to valuing sport, commissioned by the Higher Education Investment Fund (HEIF), DCMS and Sport England (Davies et al. 2016). The influence of discourses and ideologies has been identified as one of the general causes of non-profit organisations becoming more ‘business-like’ (Maier et al. 2016).

The dominant view can affect rather than just reflect behaviour. In economic terms, money and extrinsic incentives can ‘crowd out intrinsic motivation (Frey & Osterloh, 2002). Frey and Osterloh cite the example of a day care centre at which parents often picked up their children late, forcing staff to work beyond their official end of the day. A hefty fine was imposed on parents who failed to collect their children on time. The number of parents failing to collect their children on time rose dramatically. A moral obligation had been replaced by a commercial transaction. ‘A large number of laboratory experiments have confirmed this effect ... the latest and most comprehensive meta-study comes to a clear conclusion: the available experimental evidence overwhelmingly supports the crowding-out effect’ (p 12). This is similar to Dean’s argument that the social construction of volunteering promoted to young people as giving them an advantage in the labour market will alter their perceptions of it, such as it is regarded as a source of extrinsic reward (Dean, 2014). It may well mean that when the extrinsic – likely economic – reward is realised, they will stop volunteering and will not return until a similar reward is offered.

Thus ‘selling’ volunteering by treating individuals as motivated by self-interest and extrinsic rewards will alter behaviour to accord to this model. Conversely, research cited above; (Marta and Pozzi; 2008; Oesterle et al, 2004; Bekkers, 2007; Storr and Spaaji, 2017; Arthur et al, 2017)); interpreted within the pathways model (Brodie, et al 2011) shows how values and attitudes promoting volunteering can be developed. This can be explained within economic ‘framing theory’ in which an individual’s calculation of utility argument) does not depend just on the expected utility of the outcome, but also the goals of the ‘frame’ within which the decision is being made (Lindenberg, 1992, p. 14). In this case, as the sports clubs are associations of people with similar interests who pool resources (not only money, but also time) in order to achieve this; volunteering may be a self-evident duty and part of their identity for a lot of members, and does not need a calculation of further benefits and costs.

Policy implications

Developing volunteering can be thought of as growing a natural resource (Brudney and Meijs, 2009). Promoting volunteering by selling its benefits to the prospective volunteer, as Sport England’s present strategy (2016a), undermines values consistent with a moral obligation to volunteer in a mutual aid organisation and a sustained habit of volunteering. The main policy implications are at the level of the community sports club, where 75% of sports volunteering takes place. The expectation and richness of volunteering needs to be promoted from the initial contact with the sports club which has to make it clear it is a mutual aid organization, reliant on the work of volunteers. For example, parkruns (5k runs taking place in parks throughout Britain, and free to enter) promote their volunteers and thank them at each event to ensure that all runners are aware of the support provided by the volunteers. A study of successful volunteer development (Taylor et al, 2011) included a football team with junior teams for each school year. Each year, when new parents applied for their child to join, the group were given details of a set of volunteer roles required by each age group team. Parent volunteers would be supported, but the expectation was that these roles needed to be filled for the new age group team to function.

A club's developmental approach needs to present new volunteers with simple tasks, and support to undertake them. Rowe's model shows volunteering opportunities, as sports participation opportunities, need to be presented at the level appropriate to the individual's experience, skills and confidence (Rowe, 2015). So a prospective new volunteer in a sports club is welcomed into the social networks of the sports club and offered simple clear task. The ethos of a moral obligation to support a mutual aid organization needs to run through all levels of the club, such as junior participants are also aware of this expectation.

However, one cannot ignore the attitudes promoted by the dominant hegemony. To an extent, Sport England's (2016) conceptualizing potential volunteers as 'customers' may be necessary to induce completely new volunteers, or those with very low levels of volunteering experience to volunteer. A major motivation of young people is to gain skills and qualifications, and offering this may induce them to experience other rewards of volunteering and adopt different values. Thus, especially as the circumstances of potential volunteers are different, appealing to both altruism and personal gain may be relevant. For example, a young person leaving education and entering the job market will have different needs to one who is retired (Nichols and Ralston, 2016). A defining characteristic of volunteering in the literature is that the beneficiary is primarily someone other than oneself (Cnaan et al, 1996), but this is on a spectrum between others and self, so one can't disregard appealing to both motives. However, to emphasize 'selling' at the expense of developing volunteers is to reinforce a hegemonic construction of volunteering which incorporates and promotes a one-dimensional view of human behavior.

While government policy might move away from trying to sell volunteering on the basis of personal rewards, analysis of the relationship between volunteering and inequality suggests that volunteering, general levels of trust, leisure time, and a set of positive social indicators, would all be increased if society was more equal (Veal and Nichols, 2017). Thus, policies to create a more equal society would probably be more effective in promoting volunteering than those to promote a Big Society by extolling the virtues of active citizenship.

Further research could explore the relation between participation and volunteering in sport by replicating the 'pathways through participation' life-course approach. Analysis of large data sets, such as the Active Lives Survey, could continue to examine the overlap between sports participation and volunteering. This paper started from Cnaan et al's (1996) characteristic of volunteering as primarily altruistic, and contrasted this with the view that volunteering is driven by self-interest. This allowed us to contrast and characterize two approaches to volunteering: 'selling it', and 'developing values'. An alternative approach would be to contrast extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. This approach was adopted in Millettee and Gagne's (2008) study of volunteers, developed from Deci and Ryan's (1995) work on motivation. Intrinsic motivation means engaging in an activity because it is enjoyable and interesting, in the sense of Csikszentmihalyi's sense of 'flow' (1991). Extrinsic motivation is on a continuum of internalization between: 'external regulation', based on external pressures; 'introjected regulation', based on a need to prove one's own worth; and 'identified regulation', where an activity is personally valued but its purpose is to achieve an outcome separate from the act of volunteering itself. They found that intrinsic motivation was positively correlated to particular job characteristics. Further research could combine this with the life-course approach to measure volunteers' motivations at different stages.

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