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Religious Faith, Effort and Enthusiasm: Motivations to Volunteer in Response to Holiday Hunger

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Abstract

The voluntary sector is playing an increasing role in responding to UK poverty, but there is a lack of attention in cultural geographies to understanding what motivates people to volunteer in this response. In particular, faith-based organisations – and therefore volunteers with religious faith – have been an active part of the voluntary sector response to poverty. However, little is known about what motivates people who have a religious faith to volunteer. Drawing on participatory and ethnographic research with a UK Christian charity working in the area of children’s holiday hunger, this paper seeks to make three contributions. First, it moves beyond static notions of religious motivation which tend to characterise quantitative and more reductive qualitative approaches to volunteering in the social sciences. Secondly, it develops analysis of religious faith which foregrounds its relational, fluid and contested role in motivating people to volunteer, highlighting the importance of ongoing volunteering journeys alongside the initial motivations which led to a person starting to volunteer. Thirdly, by focusing on effort and enthusiasm the paper seeks to break down the binary between faith-based and secular motivations and highlight instead the ways volunteers at the holiday hunger project experienced challenges in turning an initial motivation into action, and how ‘faith motivation’ itself is inherently relational and is co-constituted in place.

Keywords

faith, volunteering, geographies of religion, geographies of voluntarism, holiday hunger, participatory geographies

Introduction

The voluntary sector is playing a leading role in responding to UK poverty, but there is a lack of attention in cultural geographies to understanding what motivates people to volunteer in this response. In particular, faith-based organisations – and therefore volunteers with religious faith – have been an active part of the voluntary sector response to poverty. This paper responds to the question of how religious faith can motivate people to volunteer in response to UK food poverty and makes use of participatory research with a UK Christian charity, TLG, responding to children's holiday hunger.

In the geographies of voluntarism, two ways in which volunteers' motivations have been approached are in relation to organisations and ethos¹. These have explored volunteers' motivations in relation to organisational and personal values and experiences. However, where attention has focussed on one-off and occasional volunteering experiences this can lead to motivation being framed as a static notion that is only considered at the start of a volunteering experience. This paper argues that motivation is ongoing in volunteers' journeys. In turn, in recent years the geographies of religion have focussed attention on how religious faith can be acted out in people's daily lives² and how faith-based organisations respond to societal need. A typology by Sider and Unruh³ is often used to understand the composition and activity of faith-based organisations. Their typology has three components (the characteristics of the organisation, the project being run, and different types of organisation) which shows how faith can be explicit in activities, influence the ethos of the organisation, and/or remain a background influence upon how an organisation functions. However, what their typology does not recognise is how the role of faith in an organisation can vary both over time and within an organisation, and the typology categorises faith in opposition to the secular. This is problematic for understanding faith-based organisations and volunteers' motivations because whilst a faith-based organisation may present its beliefs in its mission statement, individuals involved in that organisation may differ in their own individual beliefs, and how these are then performed⁴. It is therefore important to also give emphasis to how volunteers with religious faith are acting out their faith as volunteers, as well as attention to the organisation with which they are volunteering. Hence, just as motivation in the geographies of voluntarism can be theorised as a static notion, so dominant theorisations of religious faith and volunteering do not necessarily account for variation over time.

This paper is based on participatory research which allowed me to engage directly with the idea of faith as acted out in daily life because as the researcher and project leader I was able to follow volunteers' motivations over a twenty month period. This showed how motivations must be continually renewed for people to persist in volunteering⁵ and how a motivation does not necessarily result in action: there was both faith-based action and in-action. The thematic analysis of volunteers' narratives at the holiday hunger project also raised the issues of effort and enthusiasm in terms of motivation and starting to volunteer. As subsequently detailed, inspired by the work of Craggs et al.⁶ and Spinoza⁷ in this paper effort is understood as the body striving to act despite barriers to action, whilst enthusiasm is understood as a passion for action that can turn a motivation into volunteering. Effort and enthusiasm break down the binary of religious faith and

secular motivations because they show how volunteers experienced challenges in turning an initial motivation into action, and how their religious faith interacted with other factors that cannot be entirely isolated into separate categories from their religious faith, including politics. Breaking down the binary between religious faith and secular motivations also emphasises that the focus on religious faith in volunteering is not to call faith motivations superior or exclusionary: rather, they are inherently relational. Overall, in order for the geographies of voluntarism and religion to comprehensively understand how and why people volunteer in response to poverty, this paper contributes an understanding of the relational, fluid and ongoing role that religious faith can play in motivating people to volunteer: motivations are not static, and religious faith cannot simply be categorised as a motivation in opposition to the secular.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, I frame the paper within the geographies of voluntarism and secondly, the geographies of religion. Thirdly, I outline the participatory methodology used in running a holiday hunger project. I then turn to the role that faith played in motivating volunteers at Lunch: faith as a motivation to help people in need, faith in relation to politics, and faith impacting upon a person's entire life. Throughout these themes, effort and enthusiasm interacted with volunteers' faith to encourage and challenge their motivations to volunteer. I conclude with future directions for the geographies of voluntarism and religion in terms of motivation and volunteering, and implications from this paper for the voluntary sector for volunteer recruitment and retainment strategies.

The Geographies of Voluntarism

Milligan⁸ suggests that human geography has been slow to engage with the topic of volunteering, and Cloke et al.⁹ add that the voluntary sector is growing yet under-researched. Despite this, human geography is well placed to contribute to understanding volunteering. Milligan and Fyfe¹⁰ characterise the potential of geography to understand the voluntary sector around three themes: space, with the uneven distribution of voluntary sector welfare provision; place, as voluntary sector provision is affected by where it is taking place; and the political context, as voluntary sector provision is increasingly in the context of the retracting welfare state. Subsequently DeVerteuil et al.¹¹ take up the debate over the relationship between the voluntary sector and the welfare state, advocating a relational approach to voluntary sector geographies in order to engage with relationships as varyingly mutual, parasitic, and/or independent. Such a relational approach to the voluntary sector is important in order to recognise that volunteers, service-users, and organisations are not independent entities but are relational to each other and their wider environments.

Indeed, more widely in the social sciences, research has shown that volunteering motivations are complex¹² and change over time, for example with age¹³. In the voluntary sector, research has categorised motivation into three themes: altruistic – wanting to give back; instrumental – some form of self-development; and obligatory – feeling a moral duty to volunteer¹⁴. Methodologically, attention to volunteer motivation

has often been through quantitative analysis, whereas as argued by theologians Muers and Britt¹⁵, qualitative approaches are advantageous to assess the complexity of volunteers' motivations. Subsequently, this paper uses qualitative data gathered through participatory research to contribute directly to the geographies of voluntarism for understanding why people volunteer.

Similarly to the hesitant engagement with volunteering in human geography overall, there has been limited engagement with volunteers' motivations, and the focus in the geographies of voluntarism has more commonly been on volunteering experiences, particularly in relation to volunteering organisations. Attention here has recognised that volunteers' motivations and experiences are shaped by the organisation with which they are volunteering¹⁶. For example, Conradson¹⁷ explored the volunteering welfare response at a community drop-in centre in New Zealand, framing this in terms of organisational spaces that are "brought into being, take on certain experiential characteristics, and are reproduced through time." Understanding volunteering in terms of organisations frames voluntary sector provision in relation to the retracting welfare state and UK politics¹⁸. This relates volunteering to citizenship and how volunteers contribute to society and in turn to volunteering as form of social capital¹⁹. Overall then, the organisational framing in the geographies of voluntarism puts more emphasis on volunteers' experiences and their relation to the welfare state than on volunteers' motivations.

The geographies of voluntarism have given more attention to motivation in terms of ethos: for example how people can be motivated to volunteer to seek experience for employment²⁰, and from a moral motivation or desire to improve oneself²¹. In particular, Barnett et al.²² explore Allahyari's idea of moral selving: "the mediated work of creating oneself as a more virtuous person through practices that acknowledge responsibilities to others." Volunteering in relation to ethos therefore emphasises how motivation can relate to both oneself and others in terms of wanting to 'improve' oneself and the situations that others live in, including poverty, but can also be more self-centred to display moral virtue for personal gain. However, work has also shown how volunteering can help to break down a binary between there being a 'giver' and 'receiver'. For example, Williams et al.²³ in their theoretical overview of a Trussell Trust foodbank discuss how the ethos of volunteers can affect service-users and the provision given, and in turn impact volunteers' learning from their experiences. They found that volunteers developed "wider ethical understanding and political awareness" of foodbank clients' situations and the greater political context, which in turn can affect a volunteer's political outlook. An ethos approach to volunteering therefore not only emphasises how volunteers can be motivated by their personal values to volunteer, but also how this can affect the service care provided through volunteering.

Volunteering and the Geographies of Religion

Religious faith (hereafter referred to as 'faith') has been considered a "predisposition" towards volunteering²⁴ which fits within an ethos framing of volunteer motivation.

Beyond geography, statistical studies have come to a variety of conclusions on the statistical significance of faith as an influence on volunteering, for example the statistical relationship between religion and helping others²⁵, and a test of models on the impact of social, religious and human capital on voluntarism²⁶. Quantitative studies are useful, but they cannot engage with people's volunteering experiences in the same depth as qualitative approaches, and particularly participatory methodologies as utilised in this paper. In the geographies of religion, qualitative approaches to volunteering are more common, for example with work on international faith-based volunteering experiences, where it was found that experiences can contribute to the formations of young people's religious identities²⁷ and transitions to adulthood²⁸. However, the geographies of religion on the whole have given little attention to faith motivations and volunteering²⁹.

This paper contributes to this gap with an analysis of the role of faith in volunteers' motivations at a holiday hunger project (Lunch), and in doing so problematises static notions of motivation and faith, and the binary of motivations as religious or secular. Faith has been theorised in the geographies of religion in multiple ways. Holloway³⁰ argues that faith is differentiated spatially and temporally which means that faith should be examined across a range of spatialities and more consideration given to the interaction between the religious and secular because there is not a clear boundary between the religious and non-religious³¹. Further afield, Caputo³² philosophises religion without religion, by which he argues that God and love are more important than institutional religion. This links faith, experience and action as Caputo writes: "Human experience, I am contending, comes alive as experience by and through the impossible." Building on the link between faith and action, Miles³³ a Christian writer and founder of a food pantry in San Francisco, USA, understands faith as being intrinsically related to action, calling it: "a lens, a way of experiencing life, and a willingness to act." As will be shown from volunteers' narratives at Lunch, this means that volunteering can be a way to act out one's faith. Returning to Holloway³⁴, he argues that a faithful disposition is characterised by "space-time as immanently diffused with divinity." Building on Holloway and Miles, this paper argues that faith as a motivation for action (including volunteering) is ongoing, and continually affected by God. Whilst the actions in themselves – such as volunteering – are not the preserve of the religious, the analysis of Lunch volunteers' narratives in this paper will show how this link to God can make a faith motivation distinct in its importance – whilst still relational – to other factors.

Holloway³⁵ concludes that "the spiritual life therefore is a realisation and a mode of realising space-time as infused with the divine that the faithful enact and continually re-presence." This re-presencing is important for faith and volunteering because when faith is intrinsically related to action, in terms of faith and motivations to volunteer, this changes how motivation must be understood: motivation is ongoing, rather than a static notion at the start of volunteering. The geographies of religion's attention to the performance of faith in people's daily lives helps to explain this further. This is called a "performance of believing" by Dewsbury and Cloke³⁶; what a person believes impacts upon their actions. For example, work by Vincett et al.³⁷ found that young people in Scotland felt that it was important that they behaved as Christians every day of the week, and not only on Sundays in formal worship spaces. Such actions can be positive and

negative, with religious extremism being the most negative example, and volunteering generally more positive. In this way, daily activities can become a spiritual performance, but not necessarily in a formally religious space³⁸, and faith can affect every aspect of a person's life, alongside other motivations and factors. Sutherland³⁹ takes this further by arguing that religious subjects play a role in the construction of daily practices, and that through this they can produce their own daily theologies. How faith is put into practice will be different for each person, vary temporally, and is in relation to other aspects of their life and in relation to other motivations. This emphasis on faith motivating action throughout a person's daily life results in the possibility of faith being an ongoing motivation for volunteering. Furthermore, the complexity and variety of faith motivations mean that as Muers and Britt⁴⁰ argue, it is false when "Christianity is constructed as a relatively stable and identifiable 'explanation' for particular forms of action". Instead, this paper argues for a less static notion of faith and motivation to show how these are temporally variable, relational to other factors, and affected by experience.

Faith as being acted out in people's daily lives, for example through volunteering and as faith-based social action, responds to calls in the geographies of religion to consider the role of faith beyond traditionally sacred spaces⁴¹. As discussed in relation to Sider and Unruh's typology, faith-based social action can take a variety of forms, and faith motivations can aspire for multiple goals from that action. For example, a volunteer with an aim of evangelism is likely to put more emphasis on converting people to their faith, whilst more broadly a faith motivation for social action puts emphasis on social justice for its own sake⁴². Faith-based volunteering is therefore relational to non-religious motivations and contexts. These inter-connections mean that it is problematic to present faith and secular motivations as a binary. Whilst others have broken down the faith and secular boundary in terms of faith-based organisations and their relationship to the public realm and state⁴³, this paper focusses on volunteers' daily lives and on how faith is a relational motivation to volunteer – in particular to the everyday notions of effort and enthusiasm.

Participatory Research: Responding to Holiday Hunger

The context for this paper's empirical analysis is a project 'Lunch' that I established and led over twenty months through the national Christian charity TLG to respond to children's holiday hunger. Holiday hunger is a term used with increasing prevalence in recent years by academics, the voluntary sector and government to refer to when children do not have enough to eat in the school holidays. There are an estimated three million children at risk of holiday hunger in the UK⁴⁴. The research used participatory methodologies as I established and ran the holiday hunger project from January 2015 in an inner-city church that is in an area where deprivation was in the top 5% nationally. Lunch ran in a church hall and opened in the school holidays and gave local children a time of play and a free, hot lunch. Although it ran in a church, there was no religious content for the children at Lunch. My positionality as a Christian and researcher affected my experience at Lunch and the research analysis. This is the remit of a separate paper⁴⁵ so I simply signpost here to these elements. In September 2016 I handed over Lunch to

others at the church; sustainability of the project beyond the research period was important to the participatory ethics.

Lunch relied upon volunteers to run. Over the time that I ran Lunch there were seventy-eight volunteers, the majority of whom were Christian and came to volunteer from Lunch's host church, or from other churches across the city. Volunteers ranged in age from teenagers to people in their eighties, were students, employed, unemployed and retired, and came from a variety of backgrounds, in particular with many volunteers coming from the wealthiest parts of the city. Forty-two of the volunteers took part in the research side of Lunch which examined people's volunteering experiences through solicited diaries (twenty-eight volunteers giving 110 diary entries) and semi-structured interviews (eighteen volunteers) alongside my own experience of running Lunch which I recorded in a diary to analyse my own narrative alongside that of volunteers. The longest volunteer diaries were written over fifteen months, and the shortest one day. As discussed by Muers and Britt⁴⁶, there is a challenge in researching volunteers' motivations over how to disentangle one motivation from another, and a challenge over what volunteers self-report as motivation. I asked volunteers to write in their diaries about their motivations and experiences at Lunch; a general remit so as not to predetermine content, particularly with regards to faith and volunteering. This paper's analysis of volunteering at Lunch in relation to faith is therefore *emergent* from Lunch volunteers' narratives. Hence, when faith is distinguished as a significant motivation, this is because volunteers referred to faith in this way. Furthermore, the thematic mode of analysis recognised where people referred to faith alongside other motivations, for example politics. This is how the analysis avoided presuming that faith is a key motivation, and recognises how faith as a motivation is relational. Finally, the participatory methodology was advantageous for understanding volunteers' motivations because volunteering alongside the research participants meant that I gained more awareness of their personalities, motivations, and shared experiences than if the research has relied solely upon less participatory methods such as interviews or a quantitative approach, both of which are dominant in volunteer motivation studies. Experiencing alongside volunteers, sharing their experiences, and recording my own observations therefore went some way to address the methodological challenge of researching motivation that what people say is not always what they think.

Faith as a Motivation to Volunteer

Emerging from volunteers' narratives, faith was a key motivation to volunteer in three dominant ways: faith as action and a motivation to help people, faith and politics, and faith impacting upon a person's entire life. Volunteers' narratives show that the majority of volunteers understood their faith as the personal relationship between themselves and God⁴⁷. Volunteers' narratives also show that effort and enthusiasm were significant in combination with faith for starting to volunteer.

What then is meant then by the notions of effort and enthusiasm? Craggs et al⁴⁸ reflect that recent geographical engagement with enthusiasm has been in terms of enthusiasm as

a passion for action. Enthusiasm is therefore often engaged with by geographers in relation to people's emotions which then affect the actions which are subsequently undertaken⁴⁹. However, Craggs et al. also note that historically enthusiasm has been associated with religious fanaticism and therefore with negative connotations whilst the former implies positivity. This paper's understanding of effort is inspired by the work of Spinoza⁵⁰ in *Ethics*: Spinoza writes that human bodies continually strive to continue in their existence (which Spinoza calls *conatus*⁵¹). This striving can be thought of as effort by a body to start and to continue with an action, which in the case of this paper is volunteering. Therefore, bringing these together, in this paper, effort is understood as the body striving to act despite barriers to action, whilst enthusiasm is understood as a passion for action that can turn a motivation into volunteering; recognising that a motivation does not necessarily result in action. Effort and enthusiasm are crucial for understanding faith and volunteering in the geographies of voluntarism and religion if we are to avoid romanticising these, and casting them in an idealised manner – as Holloway⁵² argues, we need to take faith seriously, but also give attention to how it is challenged. This paper draws on extracts from seven volunteers' narratives (using pseudonyms) which illustrate the motivation themes found across the forty-two participants' narratives. However, this is not to present a single narrative of Lunch: each person was motivated to volunteer distinctly, within and beyond these themes.

Faith as Action and a Motivation to Help People

Volunteers' motivations are intertwined with the end goal of a volunteering activity. In this context, Lunch ran in a Church of England church which leaned towards evangelicalism in its worship style but theologically the church prioritised serving need in the local community. Many of the volunteers from outside the Lunch host church came from less evangelical Church of England churches and few spoke of their motivation in terms of evangelism; they did not understand acting out their faith – in this context at least – as converting people to Christianity. A member of the church leadership team, Paul, reflected on this effort from more liberal Christians which he found unexpected:

...my experience was the churches that were better at helping other churches were always the evangelical churches and the kind of liberal Catholic were seemingly rubbish at that... so it was pleasing to see that there was this response from [two liberal Church of England churches].

(Paul, interview, March 2015)

Indeed, several volunteers emphasised both in diaries and passing conversation that it was important to them that the focus at Lunch was on responding to holiday hunger, and not overtly or covertly giving the children Christian teaching as well as food. Following this, the host church had a particular approach to mission⁵³: being 'with' people, rather than 'doing' to them. This approach aimed to avoid practices that can stigmatise or place negative demands upon people⁵⁴. The faith motivation here was therefore not only in terms of starting volunteering, but affected the nature of volunteering as Sarah on the church leadership reflected:

I think for us it's working with the community as a Christian, it's about actually what are the needs of the people we are working with and how can we best support them because I guess that's how Jesus worked.

(Sarah, interview, September 2016)

Whilst various types of ethos could lead to responding to need in a community, Sarah identifies “working... as a Christian” as motivating this response, using Jesus as a role model. For Sarah it was not so much wanting to respond to food poverty that motivated her and gave her enthusiasm, but rather responding to whatever need was found within her community. This follows Caputo⁵⁵ that it was practical action and love for one’s neighbour that was prioritised here more than institutional religion. To some extent this mirrors an organisational framing on volunteering because it emphasises how Sarah’s motivation was related to a desired outcome of enhancing the local community. Furthermore, following Barnett et al.’s⁵⁶ discussion of “moral selving” which draws on the work of Allahyari, in an ethos framing of volunteering it would appear that Sarah did not aim to serve her own virtuosity. However, this cannot be known for certain and I do not have data on how volunteering was perceived by the wider local community. Consequently, for Sarah acting out her faith was about a degree of relationality between herself, the church, and the local community – faith and motivation overlapped with the physical (secular) needs of the community which changed over time: faith motivations were inherently relational and fluid.

Most commonly volunteers’ narratives explained that they were motivated to volunteer at Lunch from their Christian belief that people should help others in need:

[I] see it [volunteering at Lunch] as a way of serving and offering something to my neighbour... So it is a way to be living out what I believe.

(Amelia, interview, September 2016)

Amelia understood that by “serving and offering something to my neighbour” she was putting her faith into practice, and through these actions she was performing her faith at Lunch. Echoing Miles⁵⁷, Amelia therefore associated her faith with practical action. Helping others could be presented as binary of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Amelia was concerned by this, and wrote in her diary that she had started worshipping at the host church because: “a recurring concern was that I didn’t want anyone to feel I had parachuted in to ‘do good works’.” (Amelia, diary, October 2015). Amelia’s faith motivation therefore overlapped with a concern of how she would come across to others. She recognised that faith and action are not necessarily positive when a person enters a community to “do good works” because paradoxically this can be ill-intentioned or have negative consequences. Indeed, charitable activities – whether with faith elements or not – have on occasion been criticised for continuing poverty rather than reducing poverty⁵⁸ although Lunch endeavoured to work for long-term change as well as a short-term response to holiday hunger⁵⁹. Returning to Amelia’s diary extract, it is crucial to recognise that starting to volunteer, even when motivated by faith, is not necessarily an easy action: faith does not insure a person from being challenged by the effort of acting. However, Amelia embraced this challenge with enthusiasm, and became a member of the host church congregation which reaffirmed her sense of purpose and renewed her faith motivation to volunteer at Lunch the more that she spent time at Lunch and the host church.

A minority of volunteers spoke of the effort of being challenged by the lack of religious content in terms of what it meant to act out their faith, with Anna of the church leadership team reconciling herself to an understanding that “just because you’re not reading the Bible out to them it doesn’t mean you’re not doing God’s work”. Anna’s motivation to volunteer therefore changed as her understanding of faith changed to recognise that acting out faith is not necessarily reading the Bible. Her faith motivation was therefore not only at the start of volunteering at Lunch, but changed over time through her experiences at Lunch: following Holloway⁶⁰ Anna’s faith changed through experience and how she understood God. As in the study by Muers and Britt⁶¹, the social action at Lunch was therefore neither straight forward in being faith-based or secular: the relationship between faith and volunteering at Lunch was “untidy”⁶² as the practical action of the project was play and food, the majority of volunteers were Christian, and yet this was not a requirement as volunteers were only asked to be sympathetic to Lunch’s Christian ethos. This further problematises the categories of Sider and Unruh’s⁶³ typology; building upon the work of Holloway⁶⁴ who understands space as emergent, in being a space that was constructed each day, Lunch was experienced and performed differently by different people. Had there been a greater mix of volunteers from different ‘types’ of churches then how faith motivated, and therefore how faith was performed at Lunch, could have been more diverse, and if there had been more non-Christian volunteers the dynamic could have changed again. In this way, building upon an organisational understanding of volunteering, understanding how people were motivated to volunteer is shaped by the church and organisation with which they volunteered. Overall, this shows that volunteering motivations and social action cannot simply be categorised as faith-based or not, because motivation and the associated actions are multifaceted and inter-relational, particularly as the activity of Lunch was not explicitly religious.

Faith and Politics

Whilst volunteers’ narratives emphasised the significance of faith in motivating volunteering at Lunch, it was not the only motivation as faith was entangled with other factors, and in particular with politics. This is typified by Violet, a middle-aged Christian from a relatively wealthy church who volunteered as a cook and wrote a diary every holiday that Lunch ran:

The theological aspect is to do with the hospitality of Jesus – food is such a big part of the gospels, Jesus is always feeding people and including everyone around the table, so the chance to live this out...was really compelling. ...The political motivation comes from my absolute horror at the outcome of the recent [2015] General Election and the implications of the benefits cuts. ...My reaction to the result was to want to get involved in direct action, partly because it’s needed on a practical level, and partly to equip me to argue against the prevailing right wing mythologies...

(Violet, diary, July 2015)

Violet's diary entry builds upon understanding faith as a motivation in two ways, both of which build upon an ethos framing of volunteering in terms of personal motivation. First, Violet's faith is expressed in her relationship with Jesus, and understanding Jesus as a role model. Secondly, Violet wrote about "the hospitality of Jesus" and how "the chance to live this out... was really compelling". Here her faith was expressed in the action itself of volunteering at Lunch; wrapped in the faith motivation of aspiring to be like Jesus, volunteering was an acting out of her faith which for Sutherland⁶⁵ is a way in which she was daily producing her own theology. Her enthusiasm for Lunch was contagious as she encouraged others to volunteer. However, despite this enthusiasm and Violet having signed up to volunteer every week that Lunch would run in summer 2015, like Amelia, Violet also expressed anxiety and needed to overcome this to start volunteering: "do I just seem like some middle class do-gooder?" (Violet, diary, July 2015). Therefore, whilst faith was a significant motivation for volunteering, it did not mitigate against the effort required to start volunteering, the anxiety that can come with a new experience, and a concern over whether her faith motivation would unintentionally have a negative consequence.

The interaction between faith and politics for Violet also extended beyond volunteering as an action in itself: volunteering held more meaning to Violet than what is represented in her cooking meals at Lunch because she felt it would affect her daily life and interactions with others. It is here that Violet's faith ethos overlapped with a more organisational framing of volunteering by interacting with the wider political context. To give greater context to Violet's writing, I first recruited volunteers at the time of the 2015 General Election when the Conservative Party came to power as a single governing party, whilst Violet later wrote that she was "politically on the left". Violet understood volunteering as a way to increase her knowledge to challenge others' (mis)conceptions about food poverty, and consequently to take part in activism⁶⁶ as she hoped to be able to challenge "prevailing right wing mythologies". How Violet and others framed their motivations in terms of politics was more often in this micro-context than in reference to wider relationships between faith-based organisations, the state, and postsecular society which has more often been the focus of volunteering research⁶⁷. In her fourteen months of diaries and conversations we had together, Violet wrote/spoke of faith, politics, and volunteering at Lunch as relational as they affected each other, and each often reaffirmed the other motivation to persist in volunteering. There was therefore not a binary between faith and other motivations, but Violet did put particular emphasis on the importance of her faith motivating her ongoing volunteering at Lunch.

Faith Impacting upon a Person's Entire Life

Care must always be taken in research that questions are not asked to participants which automatically give a response which the researcher is seeking. Not all of the volunteers interviewed initially mentioned faith as a motivation for volunteering at Lunch, but when (knowing they were Christian) I asked if their faith had played a role they often expressed surprise that this was even questioned because to themselves it was obviously a motivation. Perhaps their knowledge of the shared Christian positionality between

themselves and myself meant that they assumed I would realise the importance of their Christian faith in motivating social action. Or perhaps the dominant Christian tradition amongst volunteers – and lack of explicit evangelism – influenced the likelihood of this being mentioned. This reflects the untidiness of social action and faith⁶⁸ because categories are not always put in place in people’s minds or in practice.

Reflecting that faith does not motivate in only one way and can be hard to disentangle from other factors, these volunteers understood their faith as at a level of significance that meant that it impacted upon everything that they did – to paraphrase Dewsbury and Cloke⁶⁹ their whole lives were a spiritual landscape – even if faith was not explicit or initially verbalised as a motivation in their diaries and interviews.

Myself: Would you say your Christian faith influenced your wanting to help [at Lunch], or...?

Mark: Yeah ((pause)) in as much as it influences every decision, not in a: “I have to stop and check everything against my faith”, my faith informs my life at a more fundamental level anyway.

(Mark, interview, July 2016)

This extract is crucial for understanding how faith motivated action in daily life, and specifically volunteering at Lunch. In our interview, Mark did not initially mention his faith as a motivation to volunteer at Lunch. When subsequently questioned on this, Mark responded that his faith informs his life “at a more fundamental level anyway”. Mark then expanded that his enthusiasm to volunteer at Lunch was through a motivation that because he was often involved in youth work at the church, he wanted to be involved in a project aimed at helping the wider community. In this way, Mark typifies volunteers at Lunch who understood multiple actions, and often their whole lives, as acting out their faith with such an ongoing significance that he does not consciously check each action against his faith, and hence he did not initially mention his faith as a motivation to volunteer at Lunch. The experiences of Lunch volunteers therefore mirror the findings of Vincett et al.⁷⁰ that it is important to Christians to act out their faith every day of the week in spaces traditionally called secular as well as sacred⁷¹. Hence, faith does not motivate Mark in one single way, and in affecting every aspect of his life it also interacts with other motivations, including his desire to help his local community. In this way faith is not something that is performed as one distinct part of a person’s life. Rather, these volunteers understood their whole lives as being an acting out of their faith. Therefore, whilst this paper explores the varying roles of faith as a motivation to volunteer to respond to holiday hunger, it also emphasises the key theme in the geographies of religion of how faith can be acted out throughout a person’s daily life. This is important to emphasise in order to comprehend the power of faith as a motivation for any action, whilst emphasising that faith motivations are fluid over time and relational to other aspects of a person’s daily life. However, to avoid romanticising religious faith, it should also be re-emphasised that a religious motivation is not superior to other motivations, and indeed does not guarantee a positive action.

The significance of faith as a motivation did not mitigate against effort to start volunteering. Prior to Lunch starting in July 2015, for the first volunteers (including myself) how the experience of volunteering would be was an unknown entity. Starting to

volunteer at Lunch was therefore not necessarily easy as it could come with a fear of the unknown and associated anxiety. Jack is a volunteer whose narrative showed a strong faith motivation, but also effort in starting to volunteer. In May 2015, Jack quoted the Bible⁷² in a sermon in the context of me recruiting Lunch volunteers: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” Upon starting to volunteer, Jack then reflected:

I can talk and think. Commitment to *doing* I find harder and not easy or natural. But the moment came when I thought it's just not enough to talk. Time to go. And *do*.

(Jack, emphasis in original, diary, August 2015)

Jack preached the Biblical justification and the importance of action to faith, but found action in the context of Lunch was outside of his comfort zone. However, having been cumulatively affected by my needing volunteers, Biblical teaching, and his faith, he was motivated to take on a new action: volunteering at Lunch. Therefore, there were interacting prior causes through which Jack was motivated to volunteer, including but not limited to the challenge presented by his faith which as in Miles’⁷³ understanding, prioritised action. However, ultimately Jack found such action difficult, and although he volunteered in the first summer holidays he did not again after this: his faith motivation and associated enthusiasm could only go so far in overcoming the effort of action. Volunteers therefore responded differently to the effort and enthusiasm associated with volunteering and their faith, which fed into the question of whether they would persist in volunteering as their motivations needed to be continually renewed⁷⁴.

Conclusions

This paper has responded to the question of how religious faith can motivate people to volunteer in response to UK food poverty, specifically holiday hunger. Through this, the paper has responded to a lack of attention in cultural geographies – and specifically the geographies of voluntarism – to the ‘how’ of volunteering because previous foci have predominantly been on organisations and ethos, for example the spaces and places of volunteering, and how volunteering relates to the UK political context. In particular, the participatory methodology utilised has been important in understanding faith and motivation because it facilitated an engagement with volunteers’ experiences that was more in-depth than quantitative or more reductive qualitative approaches. This engagement with participatory geographies has embraced the geographies of religion’s concern for the performance of faith in people’s daily lives. Indeed, this ongoing participatory engagement with Lunch volunteers led to the development of the argument that the geographies of voluntarism and religion need to engage with a less static notion of motivation in volunteering and give more consideration to people’s ongoing volunteering journeys than one-off volunteering experiences. Therefore, what Lunch volunteers’ narratives have shown is the relational, fluid and ongoing role that faith can play in motivating people to volunteer.

In conclusion, faith was a significant motivation for the majority of Lunch volunteers but each person’s narrative is unique. That said, emergent from volunteers’ narratives were

three dominant ways in which faith motivated their volunteering: to help others in need, in relation to politics, and faith impacting upon their daily lives. However, a motivation does not necessarily result in action being taken: people needed to move from a general faith motivation of helping people in need to putting themselves forward to volunteer at Lunch. Effort and enthusiasm were key interactions with faith in a person starting to volunteer at Lunch. These were ascertained through volunteers' written/spoken narratives, but also through the participatory experience of being alongside volunteers at Lunch. Effort and enthusiasm problematise for the geographies of religion the binary of faith and secular motivations because they show how faith, politics, effort and enthusiasm – amongst other factors too numerous to name – were inherently relational and affected each other over time. Yet simultaneously, emergent from volunteers' narratives was a particular significance upon the importance of their faith in motivating volunteering compared to other factors, including politics.

The effort of volunteering could result in a motivation not being strong enough to maintain action, and so there was faith-based inaction as well as action. How faith motivations interact with effort and are affected by volunteering experiences is important to emphasise in order that faith and volunteering are not romanticised. For this reason in both research and practice we cannot only consider motivation in terms of a person starting to volunteer. Rather, we need to recognise how motivations are fluid and must be continually renewed if a person is going to continue volunteering – I have taken forward the question of volunteering persistence elsewhere⁷⁵ – but in this paper I encourage the geographies of voluntarism to embrace a less static notion of motivation where motivation is recognised as ongoing and considered throughout volunteering journeys. It is this point which has particular implications for practice in the voluntary sector. It is recognised in the voluntary sector that faith motivates people to volunteer, but this is often taken no further than advertising for volunteers or a project being run in a faith setting. If voluntary sector projects can understand how their project can respond to different faith motivations then this can inform volunteer recruitment strategies. In turn, understanding volunteers' faith motivations and how these are affected by their volunteering experiences can help to retain volunteers by working with volunteers on their volunteering journey.

Moving forwards, it would be fruitful for the geographies of voluntarism and religion to question how faith can motivate volunteering in other contexts and faiths besides Christianity. This paper has broadened the focus on food poverty beyond food banks to holiday hunger, but there remains a wide variety of unexplored volunteering contexts, and particularly faith contexts that are not Christian. If the geographies of voluntarism and religion are to fully understand the role of faith as a motivation to volunteer and how faith is acted out in people's daily lives beyond sacred spaces then it is essential that the research remit is widened in this way. In doing so I encourage more uptake of participatory methodologies in order that researchers of religion and the voluntary sector understand phenomena by experiencing action alongside their research participants rather than solely relying on second-hand accounts.

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