LORENA VALENCIA-GÁLVEZ

Mothering and 'helping out': volunteering practices and state intervention through local and expert knowledge

In this article I examine the work of home visiting volunteers as an expression of state intervention. I draw on my experience as an ethnographer based at an NGO office in South Manchester. I show how the state is made manifest in the mundane and quotidian practices of volunteering, parenting and 'helping out'. I argue that volunteering operates as a governing technology promoting values such as self-regulation, self-help, independence and decision-making as elements key to the right kind of citizen. The state conceals itself and its modes of operation through volunteering, but in the process it is also diluted. In this case, it relies on ideas of self-development and self-improvement, but people go further in exploiting governing technologies for their own purposes. It not only concerns (self-)discipline but also maternal and gendered practices, social policy and different kinds of knowledges. The distinction between 'indigenous' or local knowledge and 'expert' or professional knowledge is key. Volunteering becomes a visible form of indigenous or local knowledge promoting the self-regulation of women's capacities and in doing so acts as a concealed expression of the state.

Key words volunteers, state intervention, indigenous and expert knowledge, mothering, women

Volunteers' encounters on the council estate

I met Sally at a local NGO called Start-Up.[1] She is a senior volunteer who has six children of her own. Sally is cheerful, friendly and easy going. We used to meet at Start-Up for the events and get-togethers that the charity regularly organises. Sally is a clever woman: she displays a great deal of pride in being aware of her own position within her community, and describes herself as a 'mixed-race' person. Sally recalls her life, stressing that she was born in a mixed-race family and how this fact helped her to grow up in more tolerant surroundings. As she recalls:

> I was a child in 1967, I was born and obviously … being of mixed, mum's white, Dad's Jamaican, years ago it was just intolerable, because I remember me mum saying that … when she told me Nana that she was pregnant, she said is it black? So obviously my mum, me, structurally, I think our culture's definitely gone a bit more diverse to the way it was because of having different children, in different cultures and it's got more tolerant with more understanding.

[1] Real names have been anonymised.

Like many of the women with whom Sally has worked, she was a teenage mother; she had her first child when she was sixteen. As I learned during my volunteer training course, many of the volunteers have not finished their secondary education and some have limited numeracy and literacy skills (I noticed some volunteers having difficulties with writing reports and reading materials provided during the training sessions). Other volunteers had had professional careers and had now retired. Thus, in some cases, volunteering here entailed taking one's education a step further. Sally, like many others, did not finish school. In her words, 'I just couldn't learn and I realise now that I've got dyslexia and dyscalculia'. Sally is now attending a college where she studies English and maths. She confesses that she never wanted to be visited or assisted by any kind of 'expert'.

Moreover, she did not believe in such 'home-visiting' approaches for many years. This was a strong conviction she inherited from her mum, who would never let any professional into her home. Sally never allowed professionals in until she had Rachel, her disabled daughter. As she reflects:

> I was a very young mum. I was sixteen when I had my first … to be quite honest … I don't feel I had enough information about being a mum at all. And so, between Damien who's twenty-seven now and my other children, there is definitely a difference since then. Years ago, you were told 'just don't let anybody in', like health visitors or anybody like that, because they are just being nosey … not just because you're a young mum … they're going to take your children away, and that was from my mum's background. It was just like, you didn't let anybody in official. You just got on with it.

Sally was aware of the policing character of professional and expert intervention ('they can take your children away', 'they are just being nosey') and also of the stigma attached to being a single mother. She grew up in a single-parent household and as she told me, she learned to be a mother from that experience. Interestingly, Sally confesses to me that she has grown up as a mother, and that she has been more open to receiving help from experts. She attributes this change to her own ability for self-improving and learning, starting from her own background (what she learned from her own mother), before opening up to services and resources available in the community. Sally's transformation as a mother is illustrative of a shift in policies for supporting parents. As she asserts:

> You made your bed and you got on with it. So I must admit I didn't gain much services or access to anything, even though it was out there and probably available. I thought I was quite guarded to make sure of that. I didn't let anybody official in, I just didn't. Made sure that I kept everybody safe, with being a young mum, not having much knowledge … but, as the years have progressed, and I have actually experienced my own personal development, and had a few more children, I realised that…

A breaking point for Sally was her daughter Rachel. As she acknowledges, Rachel's situation signalled a turn in how Sally deals with services in her community. Since Rachel was born, due to her needing significant professional support, Sally has encountered a myriad of new knowledges coming from different experts, through participating in several professional clinics, in parenting classes on different stages of child development,

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

community leadership, volunteer training, and so forth. Soon Sally realised that her involvement in such 'empowerment' schemes could bring about more benefits for her in terms of breaking with her own impoverishment; she learned how to do things right in order to prevent her kids from being taken away; she learned how to deal with state officials and their effects; she prepared herself to go through an intensive self-education process, attending classes and training to learn new parenting skills. As she describes:

> Having Rachel, I had to start learning how to play with her … stimulating her to help her development and obviously the organisations were coming in then; it actually made me realise that these organisations could not take your children off you, just like that, you had to be doing something wrong for them to want to come in and take your children, so with that I suppose my barriers slightly went down … and I started approaching different organisations and doing my own personal development, like I say, with play, and I went on to have some more children … and my parenting skills from my first two to the next four are definitely different … I went on a parenting course and that taught me a hell of a lot, and that taught me definitely about play, and even though I count myself as being, I wouldn't say a wonderful mum, but a growing mum, with the other children … it helped my own personal development … so I go out to parents now, who have disabled children and actually teach them these parenting skills, with the basics of learning how to play really.

Being a volunteer and volunteering's practices in the UK: guidance and discipline for the poor

Being a volunteer is an activity not without its paradoxes, exerting indirect state authority through indirect professional supervision, while at the same time exercising local and situated knowledge acquired through life experience – what I call 'indigenous' or local expertise. This knowledge can be considered as 'indigenous' because their expertise is built on local and deep-rooted knowledge based on lived experiences as opposed to 'expert' knowledge based on science and literature proficiency.[2] Indeed,

> Volunteering has also become an increasingly global phenomenon, which takes shape through global inequality. While [volunteers] may be driven by humanitarian motives or political solidarity, participation in such projects also promotes the future careers of young predominantly middle-class volunteers. These projects often highlight or entrench inequalities as much as they mitigate them. (Prince 2015: 89)

Voluntary labour is situated within an 'economy of affect' (Eliasoph 2011, in Prince 2015), which relies on unpaid labour and non-profit infrastructure to do the work of the state (Adams 2012, in Prince 2015). In England in particular, much of the earliest welfare provision was proclaimed and deployed by philanthropic organisations and depended on women volunteers (Summers 1979). 'Visiting the poor was a practice

[2] I have used indigenous knowledge or indigenous expertise for the local and situated knowledge acquired through lived experience. Local volunteers who help women to parent their children are experts by lived experience. Together they can exert social and cultural values many times in dispute (i.e. discipline, hygiene, recreation, learning techniques, habits of study, etc.).

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

initially intended to transfer values from the visitor's home to the working-class environment' (1979: 57).

In this article, I present a case of guidance and discipline for the poor and/or needy population now delivered *by* citizens *for* citizens. I suggest that, as manifest in the form of home-visiting volunteers, the state becomes unmarked and remains in the shadows, out of the view and not available for analysis (Harvey 2005). I argue that volunteering is a form of governing technology that is performed through different nuanced techniques of self-development. Volunteering practices may invoke the state through a politics of care, specifically deploying moral strategies that shape and govern what it means to be a woman and a mother in contemporary England. The argument is organised from ethnographic vignettes on what it entails to be a home-visiting volunteer in the UK, the training experience and the welfare state and the co-production of motherhood. The final thought is about how indigenous knowledge based on home-visiting volunteers' lived experience becomes a diluted state effect.

The assisted woman is now linked 'into the social order as a democratic citizen with rights and responsibilities' (Miller and Rose 1990. pag. 22). A tacit assumption characteristic of these post-welfare policies is that 'expertise' can be regarded as an automatically transferable commodity that can be granted to all women who will decisively change their own living conditions via personal empowerment (Hyatt 1997). Volunteers thus appear to be 'indigenous' or local experts in the art of self-help within this domestic ideology. The state does not materialise in self-evident forms on the council estate where I conducted fieldwork and lived. Most of the time, volunteers do not embody the state for the women they assist. Volunteers invoke authority through the institutions they represent, but they are not perceived as bringing the state into people's homes, at least not in its self-evident form. Volunteering is not perverse in the sense that it does not coerce itself, it rather uses technologies of subjectivity and citizenship to establish a relationship between a woman's self and a tutelary power (Cruikshank 1993), for instance in the form of a volunteer, a social worker, community scheme, parenting classes, counselling, etc. 'Governance in this case is something we do to ourselves, not something done to us by those in power' (Rose 1989: 213). In fact, I found that the women I met during my fieldwork were often very keen to take part voluntarily in training schemes or to follow paths of self-improvement such as workshops, training courses, counselling, therapy or psychological coaching.

I very soon learned that it is a duty for every volunteer to ensure that everybody has access to the services they need. In this way, women in the community could be assured to progress adequately with regard to their 'self-development', especially through cultivating parenting skills. The volunteer's role is to inculcate a sense of autonomy, encouraging women to take decisions and to thus be more confident. Sally puts this very nicely:

> As a parent I think as well, you don't get told often enough that you, that the job you're doing is alright, so I like to instil in parents, you know there might be something that you're not quite sure about or getting to grips with but … the other things that you are doing is fine, you are doing a really good job but maybe if you tweak this way or tweak it that way, then we will work together and try and get it sorted, you know, coz I think definitely the onus is definitely on play, in my circumstances anyway…

As a volunteer Sally has remade herself, or 'engineered' her life. She has taken from professionals what she needs to achieve her own autonomy and agency. She wants to be

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

as good as everybody else; she does not want to be treated as a second-class citizen, as she said. Sally stresses the importance of growing in confidence and of standing on her own two feet, as being significant parts of what she refers to as her 'own development'. She acknowledges a hierarchical position regarding her relationship with professionals though. Sally told me she sometimes feels that some professionals have a patronising attitude (especially medical specialists). Sally resists it though. The paradox is that her own weapon of resistance, her 'self-development', seems to reflect her own subjection:

> I don't know whether it is back from years ago or I just haven't got a clue, I just know whether it is just instilled coz I believe that things are learned behaviour, and I suppose if you have got a society that always just believes that, if you let the professionals in they are going to do this, they are going to do that, they are going to take your children away, then they are scared and also sometimes when you are working with professionals they give you that kind of feeling … I don't know whether it is just people's insecurities, like that because they are professionals they've got it right, and as parents I think, I feel parents are treated as second class citizens and with professionals, I think they, they tend to think that parents are second class citizens. I feel my own personal judgement is that straight away if a parent goes into a situation that they are feeling uncomfortable with and they don't feel as equal as the professional, then that starts a friction as [soon as] they walk in through the door, and it's just the airs and presence, I don't know.

The promise of change in people's minds underlined in this strategy of empowering individuals (citizens) fosters the problem of obscuring power relations and the politics of poverty. This shift from 'social improvement' to a therapeutic model of 'self-improvement' (Rose 1992; Cruikshank 1993), which emphasises self-determination, individualisation, moral community and moral responsibility, implies what Rose named the 'double move of autonomisation and responsibilisation' (2000: 14). A search for reasonable, rational, moral citizens who seek the best for their children will also help to maintain social cohesion and public order (Gillies 2005).

However, what I found during my fieldwork was that the relationship between professional experts (workers) and indigenous experts (local volunteers) is not quite so straightforward. Citizens and experts are not the same, they do not value the same things and inequality cannot be masked beneath the liberal rhetoric. Sally explained this problem with 'authority' through her relationship with medical experts who tended to remind her that she is 'just a parent', someone different from 'us':

> I mean obviously I've got a disabled daughter … I went to see a professional heart specialist, and … it was like I'd ask him questions and it was just like he would just sort of fob me off but give me in his terms, in his professional terms, or as if to … sort of, I got the feeling. It was like 'who are you to ask me, you're just a parent', coz obviously she had a congenital condition, a heart condition and I needed to know the ins and outs of the information he was giving me and because I questioned him and because he was … I felt he was a high up professional I felt like how dare you even ask me, you're just a parent; but I mean eventually we … we sort of reached an understanding where he knew I was going to ask questions, and would challenge him, but yeah, so I suppose through having that experience with him it has left me very guarded as well, and even though I work with professionals, I still feel quite intimidated by them. Selective ones.

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

Similarly, these political technologies tend to obscure class, gender and race relations. Issues like poverty, social deprivation, exclusion, domestic violence, racism and so forth are masked with the veil of moral responsibility, freedom of choice and self-development. Through the mediums of public policy, education, health provision and promotion, social work and law, governments take an explicit interest in the kinds of selves their citizens are made up of, and hence in what kinds of selves mothers are producing (Lawler 2000). As Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey put it, the mother has become 'the guarantor of the liberal [democratic] order' (1989: 15). Her task is to produce the good, well-managed self, who will uphold democracy (Lawler 2000). It has been argued (Gillies 2005) that, in terms of social capital, this model of success seems to be more closely linked with the white middle classes, rather than with working class and/or ethnic minority parents. Middle-class parents are viewed as socially competent and as creating and fostering social networks, whereas working-class parents are seen as lacking connections, confidence and self-esteem. Sally describes how professional experts represent people like her:

> I just feel that there's no communications skills there, well not so much. They don't do it in layman's terms, they do it in the big environment and their terminology, so the parent gets lost in the translation of it. And you do find even with that when you're speaking to medical professions or other professions, you think because that's their field, you've got no right to question it as well, they're always right.

This focus on a lack of self-esteem does not fully provide reasons for why or how people come to understand themselves as lacking in self-esteem. It obscures and neglects the underlying causes of exclusion, poverty and deprivation, promoting moral punishment if minimum standards are not reached. As Sally said,

> It was like they were just treating Rachel as a single child, but there were other siblings attached to it and one might need to go to football here, or something over there, but you had to make sure you went to them appointments, because if you wasn't, you'd be penalised.

Social problems seem to be treated as individual issues, whereas poverty appears to be criminalised. There is a fine line between the subjectivity of the citizen and their subjection (Cruikshank 1993). The evidence demonstrates an increasing demand for more professionalised childrearing practices, alongside a parallel request for support, advice and guidance for parents. Implicit in this movement is the notion that working-class parents or 'socially excluded' families are targeted as the main subjects of this kind of state intervention. Social policies for families – including volunteers and professionals' schemes – emphasise a perceived disconnection from lower classes' values and aspirations, which on many occasions promote tacit classed and moral judgements coming from middle and upper classes. In many occasions these practices can be concealed by a rhetoric of self-development and empowerment that focuses attention on personal and individual skills to be learned by mothers.

The training volunteering course

The Start-Up rules were introduced at that first meeting. I learned that one of the most important rules is 'to report to the organisation', both in writing and verbally, not only

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

on my own performance but more importantly on 'the assisted family's performance'. In practical terms this means that on a weekly basis they cover ten times as many 'interventions', exponentially expanding the number of community connections and 'self-improvement' possibilities for women involved in the scheme. Accordingly, Start-Up stresses that the key feature making them extremely effective in working with families is the fact that the scheme is very flexible. There is a strong emphasis on the fact that they do not offer exclusively professional guidance. On the contrary, volunteers are normally local parents, mostly middle-class women, who actually visit the families as friends – not as professionals – helping to generate a more 'relaxed mood'. As they put it, it is a scheme where 'parents support parents'. There is also an emphasis on the fact that the family or the volunteer can say 'no' whenever they wish. When that happens, the volunteer will be assigned another family and vice versa. Either of the parties can withdraw from the exchange at any time and hence there is a common understanding that it is a scheme emphasising friendly, as well as practical, help.

Instructions such as 'only give advice when it is asked for', 'always try to empower parents to find out for themselves', 'never push any advice on others', 'respect other people's beliefs' are examples of the golden rules that volunteers are encouraged to learn and follow. Volunteers here are meant to perform the correct response.

There are tensions experienced in the volunteer's everyday routines, as expressed through the strict requirement to keep writing reports and records for supervision meetings. These reports can be considered as a practice of 'inscribing' the family's behaviour – and especially the mothers' performance – thus determining strategies for promoting 'self-improvement'. This tension between ruling, inscribing and letting them be, evidences the desired 'ambivalence' of the volunteer's role. A volunteer, though not a hired worker, comes to occupy a position as an 'indigenous' or local expert, and as such – whether (s)he is aware of it or not – occupies a hierarchical position in relation to the families with whom (s)he is working. It is a concealed, elusive and indirect (Mitchell 1991) way of playing out political power. Being a volunteer can thus be a 'political technology' through which the state conceals its own operations of governance. As Dreyfus and Rabinow have pointed out, 'political technologies advance by taking what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse and recasting it in the neutral language of science' (1982: 196). In other words, political technologies such as volunteering act to create expertise and expert knowledge. This is a combination of external 'subjection' and internal 'subjectification' (Rabinow 1984). Lemke (2000) points out that 'government' refers to self-control, guidance concerning the family and children, management of the household and directing the soul. Foucault (1993) and Donzelot (1997) agreed that these professional and philanthropic interventions have two components: the welfare apparatus (for example some kind of counselling, which served to privatise social problems by transforming them into the responsibility of those affected) and the medical-hygienist apparatus (which in turn helps to regulate working-class birth rates and introduce norms of civilised life, sustained by children and women).

Women's groups' and community-based organisations' existence as a means of governmental intervention since the colonial period has been widely recognised (Brown 2013). The realms of home, the domestic and the community have been understood as appropriate targets of government intervention ever since. Ideas such as family, love and community have been mobilised as part of a moral agenda that has moved around the world. In this vein, for example, primary health care was part of a radical shift in

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

developments during the 1960s and 1970s, away from large-scale projects to a focus on small projects and basic needs (Packard 1997). Linked to these initiatives and in the context of the ongoing popularity of development interventions requiring community participation (Green 2000, Mosse 2005), particularly through schemes that involve the training of lay people to provide services to the community (Brown 2013). As Brown and Prince (2015) assert, volunteering nowadays is more akin to neoliberal governance, with its emphasis on individual responsibilities (Rose 2000) as a means of demonstrating one's moral worth (2000: 36).

Volunteering then is an indirect mechanism that acts on 'expert knowledge' in the form of 'parental knowledge' to establish a normative grid that helps mothers to act on and to change themselves. An emphasis on change was paramount throughout the training course. I learned that as volunteers 'we can help people to change', using learned techniques such as 'empathy', 'unconditional positive regard' (listening to others in a supportive manner and being positive despite what they say to you), 'using reflection' (rather than giving opinion, just repeating what they said), 'creating dissonance' (anxiety over uncomfortable differences between two statements that do not agree), and so forth. Change is one of the main aims of a volunteer's work. There is strong and lasting encouragement to promote practices of self-reflection on the part of the women with whom we are supposed to work: 'giving them insights to say and think things for themselves' is a very important axiom in the volunteer's agenda.

Following Miller and Rose (1990), it can be argued that such 'techniques of the self' operate through powers of expertise that help to normalise the capacities of the subjects by means of 'self-regulation'. These 'indirect' resources have become key elements of both modern forms of government and welfare provision in contemporary liberal democratic societies. 'Liberalism renders its political subjects 'governable' by requiring that they become self-activating and free agents' (Burchell 1991: 119, in Shore and Wright 1997: 9). This is how family becomes an instrument of government (Foucault 1991) and volunteer schemes a scene in which 'state effects' are acted out. The state thus, through liberal policies embedded in the voluntary sector and quasi-governmental organisations (like charities) characteristic of the so-called post-welfare state, promotes values such as 'freedom', 'individual choice', 'self-development' and 'independence'. In this sense, the notion of 'self-governance' assumes an importance in very specific ways. 'Capitalist state formation fragmented identities based on class and replaced them with the fiction of equal individuals who were all equal rights-bearing members of the nation' (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005: 7). What is interesting here is – as Hyatt (1997: 219) has already argued – that there is a trend in contemporary social policy of producing environments intended to foster self-government not only 'of' the poor by the authority of experts, but also a self-government 'by' the poor. In other words, this promotes a new understanding of poverty by privileging knowledge held by local people (i.e. neighbours who volunteer), where poverty and disadvantage can be experienced as an opportunity to engage in 'self-improvement' and empowerment.

This idea of engineering a particular environment in such a way as to 'produce' a certain kind of person seems to come from notions of modernity and the rise in importance of the category of 'the social' in England (Hyatt 1997). The history of voluntary work and the welfare state in England offers a good illustration of how the idea of what it means to be a woman and a mother has been co-produced, regulated initially through models of the welfare state and then through the emergence of a new post-welfare strategy.

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

The voluntary sector and the welfare state in England: the co-production of motherhood

Anna Davin has examined the emergence of state interest in motherhood historically. The emphasis on motherhood as a valued skill to be achieved can be traced back to the 19th century, starting with Darwinian notions of species and their struggle for survival as a fundamental element of life. Since then, infant mortality and mothering practices have come to be viewed as a matter of national power. Children were considered a national asset and therefore had to be well-nurtured and observed under the close eye of the state.

Schemes for supplying milk in working-class boroughs and prizes for healthy babies were common. Voluntary societies promoting health and domestic hygiene emerged. Such voluntary societies were composed of women without jobs as well as professionals such as doctors, social workers, teachers, nurses, health visitors, and so forth, and on many occasions their activities frequently overlapped with those of local authorities. While volunteering is a global phenomenon, it is also situated within historically specific political and economic contexts (Brown and Prince (2015)). The political value of volunteer labour is being repositioned within neoliberal governance as states seek to shift responsibility for social welfare onto citizens (Brown and Prince (2015): 30). Now volunteers 'are tasked with taking the common good into their own hands' (Muehlebach 2012: 38), as voluntary labour is used to provide solutions to social and economic problems considered to lie outside of the formal reach of the state (Lacey and Ilan 2006). Recent work has explored volunteer participation as a 'global moral economy of compassion' and 'encounters between privilege and poverty' (Brown and Prince (2015)). Volunteering has always been a tool for governance and control, although it has also been an important force for mobilising people in the direction of development and citizenship. Volunteering has been animated by the desire to help others and create better futures, to 'serve the community' and 'develop the nation' (Brown and Prince (2015): 32).

Motherhood can thus be considered more as a constructed notion rather than as something given, where women occupy a principal role as responsible not just for their children but also as 'nurturers of citizens of the nation'. Women, whether as the focus of intervention or as volunteers, embodied the spirit of the state and a focus on an ideology of racial health and purity expressed through a myriad of policies. The relationship between women in their domestic role and the state became not only a matter of policy but also a moral duty, giving legitimised authority to the state apparatus to intervene if considered necessary (Poor Law 1899). This emphasis on women, domesticity and individualism set the basis for an ideology of motherhood broadly popular in the UK since the 20th century, where being a 'good mother' was understood as a skill to be learned, something that could be instructed. It constitutes a kind of 'mother-craft' (Davin 1978), organised and delivered through voluntary societies (professionals included) and local government. Definitions of what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' motherhood practices have thus been shaped by certain class, gender and racial components. As Davin argued, 'the authority of state over individual, of professional over amateur, of science over tradition, of male over female, of ruling class over working class, were all involved in the redefining of motherhood during this period' (1978: 13). The family, and mothers particularly, are seen as the guarantors of social order,

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

not only the 'good citizen' but also the 'good society' (Lawler 2000). As Walkerdine and Lucey point out 'mothers become the guarantors not only of the 'good self' of the child, but also of the 'good society'. They are to regulate their children by teaching them to regulate themselves' (1989). The phrase, 'the good enough mother', which originated with the British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, reveals that being 'good enough' is a considerable achievement; it evidences a woman whose whole life is bound up with the needs of her child (Lawler 2000). The underlying proposition here is that mothers produce gendered selves and, therefore, that it is mothering that can transform the social world (Lawler 2000).

In this way, social deprivation and poverty have served the conservative elite as a rationale for promoting a change in the attitudes and the moral mind-set of poor mothers (Gillies 2005). During the late 20th century in England (specifically during the 1980s), a shift away from state assistance to moral regulation was promoted by the 'New Right', who sought theoretical support in concepts such as the 'undeserving poor', 'underclass' and 'culture of dependency'. Working-class people are constituted as 'getting it wrong' – they do not *know* the right things, they do not *want* the right things, they do not *value* the right things. They may be pathologised as ignorant, wasteful and dominating (Lawler 2000). As Walkerdine argues, the working classes have come to be a repository for the fears and horrors, as well as the desires and hopes, of the middle-class observers who study them (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 30).

This view, as Gillies (2005) points out, focused particularly on single mothers who were considered a danger and a source of crime and social pollution. Conservatives consequently created policies seeking to support family life and reinforce traditional values. During the post-war period, the provision of welfare was based on a strongly gender-differentiated model of the family, in which men were viewed as full-time workers and women as full-time carers. In this context, care was seen largely as a private matter and was not considered to be one of the basic needs of citizens (Finch 2003).

From the 1960s onwards, demographic and social changes – including the mass mobilisation of women into the workforce – led to changes in the family model. In particular, the notion of a single male breadwinner and female housewife began to be disrupted (Butler et al. 2014). This shift was reflected in the policies of the New Labour government from 1997 onwards, with a move away from a 'familist' regime towards a more 'individualistic' one. The shift constituted an important transition in British welfare, assigning the family a central role in socio-economic development, with the state responsible for its support (Daly 2010). New Labour also promoted female employment through childcare and parental leave. Yet despite these changes, women were still expected to bear most of the burden of childcare and childrearing (Finch 2003).

The New Labour government saw both marriage and paid work as moral duties for citizens, using law to 'inculcate appropriate values and "rebuild social order and stability"' (Blair 1996, quoted in Barlow et al. 2002: 110). This discourse became crystallised in two Green Papers, *Supporting Families* and *A New Contract for Welfare*, which set the framework for the New Labour government up until 2001. This set of policies has been described as 'a pragmatic mix (a "muesli") of moralism, care and control, universalism and selectivism' (Featherstone and Trinder 2001: 534). Tackling poverty with an emphasis on paid work and inclusion was promoted using schemes such as the *New Deal for Lone Parents*, *Working Families Tax Credit* and *Childcare Tax Credit*. Of course, mothers' work in bringing up children at home was

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

not considered to be an economic contribution. A new focus on personal responsibility, the important role of community and the family itself was central to Tony Blair's 'Third Way' philosophy (Beck 1997; Giddens 1998). As Gillies (2005) pointed out, a closer look at New Labour family policy highlights the contradictions of a new interventionism characterised by overt attempts to control and regulate parents' behaviour alongside purported values such as the importance of an individualistic ethos in an advanced liberal democratic society, a society that emphasises ethical self-governance and encourages conformity. Although New Labour distanced itself from conservative policies, developing a critique of individualism through a communitarian discourse, an 'economic rationality' of personal benefits prevailed. Tony Blair's Third Way viewpoint attempted to combine liberty with personal obligation, and 'this translated into a seemingly paradoxical desire to reinforce the traditional family while simultaneously encouraging negotiation and choice' (Deacon and Mann, quoted in Gillies 2005: 74). According to Rose (2000), this 'Third Way' philosophy evokes the language of community in order to bring together the state, the market and individual liberty. Families exemplify the community through the practice of parenthood and therefore good parents are seen as mirrors for their children's values to protect and reproduce the common good (Driver and Martell 2002, quoted in Gillies 2005). This political emphasis, according to Rose (2000), situates the state as facilitator and enabler, rather than as guardian of the population.

After the 2010 general election, which resulted in a coalition[3] government, and the implementation of economic austerity measures in response to the budget crisis, a new context for family policies was created. The coalition's *Programme for Government* combined elements of the Conservatives' 'smaller state, bigger society' with the Liberal Democrats' call for civil liberties, public service reform and social mobility (HM Government 2010). Moreover, the programme set out a radical plan to cut public expenditure by £95 billion by 2015. Three primary areas of these recent policy changes include a reduction in family support, a move away from principles of 'progressive universalism' towards targeted support for disadvantaged families and young people, and a new era of welfare state restructuring (Churchill 2013).

According to some research on social policy,[4] since the late 1990s the UK government concluded that disadvantage among young children was increasing and early intervention could alleviate poor outcomes. Until recently, it has been recommended that all relevant agencies be area-based, with all children under five and their families as clients. Comprehensive programmes such as Start-Up have evolved over time, with increasing emphasis on service integration. They did not have a prescribed 'protocol' but all were expected to provide: (1) outreach and home visiting; (2) support for families and parents; (3) support for good quality play, learning and childcare experiences

[3] The 2010 UK general election failed to result in a majority for any of the main political parties. After a series of meetings, David Cameron of the Conservative Party and Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government. It was the first coalition government in the UK since the Second World War.

[4] Melhuish E, Belsky J, Barnes J. (2010) Sure Start and its Evaluation in England. Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development. Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. Available at http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/sites/default/files/textes-experts/en/862/sure-start-and-its-evaluation-in-england.pdf

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

for children; (4) primary and community health care and advice about child health and development and family health; and (5) support for people with special needs.[5]

This tendency of transforming subjects from being dependent on experts' knowledge to being autonomous beings has been aligned with a broader movement known as 'self-esteem empowerment' (Hyatt 1997: 224–8). Paid welfare professionals have progressively been replaced by 'unpaid' local experts: parents themselves (1997: 229). The institutionalisation of this philosophy of 'self-help' through schemes such as 'home visiting volunteers' made possible a new strategy of government, linking people's subjectivity to their subjection, and community participation (activism) to their discipline (Cruikshank 1993). The public sector has thus been reorganised with the promise of transforming 'welfare dependents' into citizens with 'rights and responsibilities'. It marked an ideological shift concerning how poverty and deprivation were understood and conceptualised. When viewed as active citizens, people are situated in a world of productive and entrepreneurial activity (Hyatt 1997): therefore, poverty and disadvantage do not require a great deal of public investment. The state becomes diluted and mixed into the immense amount of voluntary work that this effort requires. In other words, voluntary practices become marked with and by state effects. Voluntary work, in such a form marked with and by state effects, can thus be seen as an effect of post-welfare rule in advanced liberal democratic societies.

Indigenous knowledge, home-visiting volunteers or how the state effects become diluted

For a long time, families and women have been topics of great concern for politicians, policies and the modern state in the UK. Since the late 18th century in England, as a result of early domestic ideologies promoted by the emerging industrial bourgeoisie, a new bundle of ideas concerning women and codes concerning their behaviour became emphasised. Women came to be defined mostly in domestic terms, primarily as wives and mothers (Hall 1979). Women and the household were thus increasingly seen as moral domains (Lawler 2000). The bourgeois ideal of domestic life was promoted through propaganda and government schemes aimed mostly at the poor, who were regarded as lacking in morality (see Cieraad 1999; Lawler 2000; Segalen 1986; Stoler 1995, 2002; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). This emphasis on women, domesticity and individualism set the basis for an ideology of motherhood broadly popular in the UK since the 20th century, where being a 'good mother' was understood as a skill to be learned, organised and delivered through voluntary societies (professionals included) and local government. Definitions of what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' motherhood practices have thus been shaped by class, gender and racial components. These changes led to the notion of mothering, a key element in domestic life, becoming one of the

[5] It seems fair to note there is sufficient evidence in the UK of the positive impact over the last 20 years of programmes like Start-Up that help families and children below the poverty line. In fact, the latest impact reports have shown that 93% of families see improvements in parents' mental health; 94% of families are more involved in their children's development; and 94% of families feel less isolated (as an example, see Home-Start: https://www.home-start.org.uk/2019-impact-report-because-childhood-cant-wait).

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

central targets for state intervention in social policy and the modernisation of the nation during the 20th century.

In this article I have been more interested in how people experience the state (i.e. state effects) than in the discussion of what the state is. Following Miller and Rose (1990), I suggest that volunteering practices can be considered 'indirect' mechanisms of governing that work on the supervision of 'expert' knowledge promoting self-regulation and independence among women and their households, creating paradoxically an 'indigenous' knowledge based on parenting skills. The question therefore is how the state, through voluntary practices, has become implicated in the texture of social everyday life (Gupta 1995). I go further than Miller and Rose's argument by saying that the state cannot only be seen as government (exclusively) and so I borrow Trouillot's (2001) idea that the state is 'a set of practices and processes and their effects' that recreate relations of political power. I will argue that voluntary practices are processes of power that operate at an everyday level, as indirect state mechanisms.

Therefore, the work of volunteers has become an essential component of development interventions that are increasingly managed by forms of partnership between states and nongovernmental or foreign governmental agencies (Brown and Prince (2015). Volunteering has become increasingly professionalised. And in doing so it has become more intertwined with the more intimate mechanisms of parenting and of helping the families out.

In summary, all these nuances and subtleties seem to be available on the fringes of the state and mostly seen through the lenses of locals' inhabitants. I argue that home-visiting volunteering practices that deal with women and mothers on council estates can invoke the elusive state in both its presence and absence. Paradoxically, although voluntary work is organised within institutional frameworks, it is normally subordinated to major policy directives linked to national legislation. At the same time, however, volunteers are individuals with different backgrounds and life circumstances who establish face-to-face relationships with people in their own homes and communities. In this sense the state is made manifest in the more quotidian practices of volunteering, parenting and 'helping out'. Volunteering articulates different ways of governing mothers' self-promoting values such as autonomy, independence, sovereignty, self-regulation, self-help and decision-making, as elements key to the right kind of citizen. The state conceals itself and its modes of operation through volunteering, but also becomes diluted in the process. Indigenous knowledge is deployed along with expert knowledge. Both are deployed as key elements of the volunteering practice, which on many occasions might highlight or entrench inequalities as much as they may mitigate them. In many instances, this relationship between indigenous and expert knowledge might rely on ideas of self-development and self-improvement, but people go further in exploiting and subverting governing technologies for their own purposes (as does Sally in the vignettes discussed above). This is not only a question of (self-)discipline, but also concerns awareness of support, community and a better quality of life: it is a question of citizenship and women's identity as mothers.

Acknowledgements

This article has been possible thanks to the research and subsequent PhD funded by the Technological Metropolitan University of Santiago-Chile through the sponsorship of the project MECESUP 2356 DE 2007.

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

Lorena Valencia-Gálvez
Social Work Department, Humanities and Technologies of Social Communication Faculty/Institutional Program for the Promotion of Research, Development and Innovation (PIDi)
Metropolitan Technological University (UTEM)
Dieciocho 161
Santiago
Chile
lvalencia@utem.clCorrespondence
lvalencia@utem.cl

References

Barlow, A., S. Duncan and G. James. 2002. New Labour, the rationality mistake and family policy in Britain, in A. Carling, S. Duncan and R. Edwards (eds.), *Analysing families. Morality and rationality in policy and practice*, 110–28. London: Routledge.

Beck, U. 1997. 'Democratisation of the family', *Childhood* 4: 151–68.

Brown, H. 2013. Home based care is not a new thing: legacies of domestic governmentality in Western Kenya, in R. Prince and H. Brown (eds.), *Making and unmaking public health in Africa*, 140–61. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

Brown, H. and R. Prince 2015. 'Introduction: Volunteer labor – pasts and futures of work, development, and citizenship in East Africa', *African Studies Review* 58: 29–42.

Butler, A., D. Lugton and J. Rutter. 2014. *Where next for childcare? Learning from the last ten years of childcare policy*. Family and Childcare Trust Report (https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/where-next-childcare-learning-last-ten-years-childcare-policy) Accessed October 2020.

Churchill, H. 2013. 'Retrenchment and restructuring: family support and children's services reform under the coalition', *Journal of Children's Services* 8: 209–22.

Cieraad, I. 1999. *At home. An anthropology of domestic space*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Cruikshank, B. 1993. 'Revolutions within: self-government and self-esteem', *Economy and Society* 22: 327–44.

Daly, M. 2010. 'Shifts in family policy in the UK under New Labour', *European Journal of Social Policy* 20: 433–43.

Davin, A. 1978. 'Imperialism and motherhood', *History Workshop Journal* 5: 9–66.

Donzelot, J. 1997. *The Policing of Families*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press

Dreyfus, H. and P. Rabinow 1982. *Michel Foucault: beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Brighton: Harvester Press.

Featherstone, B. and L. Trinder 2001. 'New Labour, families and fathers', *Critical Social Policy* 21: 534–36.

Finch, N. 2003. 'Family policy in the UK', York Social Policy Research Unit Working paper.

Foucault, M. 1991. Governmentality, in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds.), *The Foucault effect: studies in governmentality*, 87–104. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. 1993. 'About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self: transcription of two lectures in Dartmouth', *Political Theory* 21: 198–227.

Giddens, A. 1998. *The third way*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gillies, V. 2005. 'Meeting parents' needs? Discourses of "support" and "inclusion" in family policy', *Critical Social Policy* 25: 70–90.

Gupta, A. 1995. 'Blurred boundaries: the discourse of corruption, the culture of politics, and the imagined state', *American Ethnologist* 22: 375–402.

Green, M. 2000. Participatory development and the appropriation of agency in Southern Tanzania. *Critique of Anthropology*, 20(1), 67–89.

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

Hall, C. 1979. The early formation of Victorian domestic ideology, in S. Burman (ed.), *Fit work for women*, 15–32. Canberra: Australian University Press.
Harvey, P. 2005. The materiality of state-effects: an ethnography of a road in the Peruvian Andes, in C. Krohn-Hansen and K. G. Nustad (eds.), *State formation*, 216–47. London: Pluto Press.
HM Government 2010. *The coalition: our programme for government*. London: Crown publication (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78977/coalition_programme_for_government.pdf) Accessed October 2020.
Hyatt, S. B. 1997. Poverty in a ‘post-welfare’ landscape. Tenant management policies, self-governance and the democratization of knowledge in Great Britain, in C. Shore and S. Wright (eds.), *The anthropology of policy. Critical perspectives on governance and power*, 166–82. London: Routledge.
Krohn-Hansen, C. and K. Nustad 2005. *State formation*. London: Pluto Press.
Lacey, A. and Suzan, L 2006. Voluntary Labor, Responsible Citizenship, and International NGOs. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 47, 34–53.
Lawler, S. 2000. *Mothering the self. Mothers, daughters, subjects*. London: Routledge.
Lemke, T.2000. ‘Foucault, governmentality, and critique’, Paper presented at the Rethinking Marxism Conference, University of Amherst (MA), 21–24 September 2000.
Miller, P. and N. Rose 1990. ‘Governing economic life’, *Economy and Society* 19: 1–31.
Mitchell, T. 1991. ‘The limits of the state: beyond statist approaches and their critics’, *The American Political Science Review* 1: 77–96.
Mosse, D. 2005. *Cultivating development: An ethnography of aid policy and practice*. London: Pluto Press,
Muehlebach, A. 2012. *The Moral Neoliberal: Welfare and Citizenship in Italy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
Packard, R. 1997. Visions of postwar health and development and their impact on public health interventions in the developing world. in Cooper, F., Packard, R. & Berkeley, M. (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences*. Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
Prince, R. 2015. ‘Seeking incorporation? Voluntary labor and the ambiguities of work, identity, and social value in contemporary Kenya’, *African Studies* 58: 85–109.
Rabinow, P. 1984. *The Foucault reader*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Rose, N. 1989. *Governing the soul: the shaping of the private self*. New York: Free Association Books.
Rose, N. 1992. Governing the enterprising self, in P. Heelas and P. Morris (eds.), *The values of the enterprise culture: the moral debate*, 141–64. London: Routledge.
Rose, N. 2000. ‘Community, citizenship and the third way’, *American Behaviour Scientist* 43: 1395–411.
Segalen, M. 1986. *Historical anthropology of the family*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Shore, C. & Wright, S. (eds.) 1997. Policy: A New Field of Anthropology. *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. London: Routledge, 3–39.
Stoler, A. L. 1995. *Race and the education of desire. Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Stoler, A. L. 2002. *Carnal knowledge and imperial power. Race and the intimate in colonial rule*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Summers, A. 1979. A home from home – women’s philanthropic work in the nineteenth century, in S. Burman (ed.), *Fit work for women*, 33–63. Canberra: Australian University Press.
Trouillot, M.-R. 2001. ‘The anthropology of the state in the age of globalization. Close encounters of the deceptive kind’, *Current Anthropology* 42: 125–38.
Walkerdine, V. and H. Lucey 1989. *Democracy in the kitchen: regulating mothers and socialising daughters*. London: Virago.

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.

Maternité et « aide »: pratiques du bénévolat et l'intervention de état par le biais de connaissances locales et d'experts

Cet article examine le travail des bénévoles qui effectuent des visites à domicile comme expression de l'intervention de l'État. Je m'appuie sur mon expérience d'ethnographe basé dans le bureau d'une ONG dans le sud de Manchester. Je montre comment l'État se manifeste dans les pratiques quotidiennes et banales du bénévolat, de l'éducation des enfants et de l'aide. Je soutiens que le volontariat fonctionne comme une technologie de gouvernance qui promeut des valeurs telles que l'autorégulation, l'auto-assistance, l'indépendance et la prise de décision, en tant qu'éléments clés pour le bon type de citoyen. L'État se dissimule et ses modes de fonctionnement par le biais du volontariat, mais ce faisant, il se dilue également. Dans ce cas, il s'appuie sur les idées d'auto-développement et d'auto-amélioration. Mais les gens vont plus loin en exploitant les technologies de gouvernance à leurs propres fins. Elle ne concerne pas seulement l'(auto)discipline, mais aussi les pratiques maternelles et de genre, la politique sociale et différents types de connaissances. La distinction entre les connaissances « indigènes » ou locales et les connaissances « expertes » ou les connaissances professionnelles sont essentielles. Le volontariat devient une forme visible de savoir indigène ou local favorisant l'autorégulation des capacités des femmes. Ce faisant, il agit comme une expression cachée de l'État.

Mots clés volontaires, intervention de l'État, connaissances indigènes et expertes, maternage, femmes

© 2020 European Association of Social Anthropologists.