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Emotions of austerity: care and commitment in public service delivery in the North East of England

Abstract

In the context of an austerity agenda constructed through the deployment of aversive emotions, we offer a more-than-rational understanding of the implications of geographically uneven austerity politics for organisations providing public services for marginalised groups. The article highlights how emotions are at the heart of the experiences of those delivering services in the North East of England and considers the emotional toll of changes under austerity on the professional lives of participants, but also those impacts which relate to wider interpretations of loyalty and care beyond individual participants. Due to the nature of occupational roles which involve an ethos and practice of commitment, and through relations with decision makers, colleagues, service users and broader definitions of community and marginalisation over time, participants are engaged in a range of emotional work. We explore how recent experiences have highlighted a continued and in some cases accelerated undermining of their work and communities of which they are, in different ways, a part. However, they are also seen as generative of a set of significant emotionally charged responses to such challenges, which variously challenge and conform to the dominant discourse of austerity.

Keywords: austerity, emotional work, emotional toll, public services, care, resourcefulness

Introduction

Since the global crisis of 2007/8, the relationship between austerity and emotion has been considered in a variety of ways. These have ranged from cultural theorists focussing on the 'affective orchestration of the crisis' (Helm et al, 2010), to those drawing on economic theory to illustrate the policies of austerity as 'morality plays' (Blyth, 2013). Elsewhere, scholars have focussed on quantifiable consequences in relation to health, emotional wellbeing and social bonds (Clark, 2014; Basu and Stuckler, 2012). Others have focussed on people/places most adversely affected, including work at the national scale such as psychological work on politics of trauma in Greece (Darvou and Dermertzis, 2013), but also in more specific socio-spatial contexts, through for example, qualitative studies of emotional suffering for youth support workers in the UK (Colley, 2012).

While such studies conceptualise the emotional quite differently, all clearly view it as a crucial dimension of austere times. In a similar vein to Kraftl (2009) and Hardill and Mills (2013), who argue for the need to complicate the separation between policy studies and research on emotions. We look to bridge these lines of enquiry through a focus on the politics of emotions in relation to both the operationalization and experience of austerity in a specific context. For Pain (2009: 18), the point of drawing attention to emotions is that they are always part reflection and part productive of identities and power relations which are 'fundamental to the layout of society'. The work of Tolia-Kelly (2006) amongst others (see Thien, 2005; Askins, 2009) also situates the study of emotions within specific arrangements of power, recognising their inter-subjective, uneven and potentially exclusionary character across distinct social groups and spatial settings. In this paper we

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attempt to apply such an understanding of the politics of emotions to the experiences of those in caring occupations in a context of a discourse of 'necessary' cut backs.

As a way of illustrating the intersections between politics and emotions, as well as providing a sense of context to changes being witnessed by those working on the front line of public service delivery in the North East, we first draw attention to the role of emotions as constitutive of austerity politics in the UK. We then consider the importance of emotions within caring and community orientated occupations under austerity, drawing upon a recent study in a part of the UK which is amongst the most adversely affected by the recent recession and public spending cuts – the North East of England. Through the accounts of practitioners working in fields across sectors which have at their heart an ethos of care and commitment, we highlight both the immediate workplace based experiences but also broader psycho-social connections, before considering expressions of emotionally charged resourcefulness amongst our research participants.

Emotion, politics and austerity

In sharp contrast to the call for a 'compassionate' Conservatism by David Cameron when he became leader of the Conservative Party (Cameron, 2005a), the Conservative led Coalition Government since 2010 has been rather more tough-talking. The specific austerity measures adopted in the UK have explicitly focused on deficit reduction through rolling back the state, cutting public spending and reductions to public sector employment thus 'further entrenching the neoliberal model' (Hall et al, 2013: 4). This model continues to dominate

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policy discussions, through an insistence that public expenditure is the root cause of contemporary economic woes. Evidence of the social and health related damage done by drastic and rapid reductions in state spending adopted internationally is clear (Basu and Stuckler, 2012) as is that which indicates that austerity is not as economically effective as the rhetoric suggests (Krugman, 2013). Yet it has been popularly accepted as the new 'virtuous common sense' of fiscal responsibility (Blyth, 2013). Between 2011 and 2012, the proportion of the UK population saying the cuts are necessary rose from 55% to 60% (Moore, 2013). Arguably, this is the result of a combination of an absence of convincing counter-arguments, but also the manner in which the idea of 'pain now, gain later' has hit a collective emotional nerve.

Public attitudes are subject to manipulation and the language of austerity, resurrected during the latest crisis (Cameron, 2009), seeks to persuade and legitimate policy measures through an activation of emotions. In this sense, austerity is not just a series of policies, but also ideological in both constructing a threat and as a means of regulating behaviour.

Despite reasoned evidence to the contrary (Dolphin, 2011), the government appears to be fighting a battle of 'hearts and minds' through a quasi-religious discourse (Forkert, 2014) in which reductions in welfare expenditure are necessary to redeem the country's guilt about apparent profligacy through the New Labour years (1997-2010). In their latest 'long term economic plan' the Conservative Party (2014) reinforces this cardinal virtue of prudence against the recklessness of the previous government as at the heart of national 'recovery'.

By a stirring of emotions the state has managed to make a convincing case that a failure of the market has been a failure of excessive state spending:

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“In government, Labour racked up the biggest budget deficit in our peacetime history. Now they want to do it all over again with more spending, more borrowing and more taxes, which would wreck the economy and put the recovery at risk. Our plan to reduce Labour's deficit is working - now let's finish the job.”

Ritualised language, such as ‘we’re all in this together’ first tabled by Cameron in 2005 (Cameron, 2005b), but often repeated in the aftermath of the crisis (Cameron 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011) as well as other slogans such as ‘making tough decisions in tough times’ (Montgomerie, 2012) and ‘in the national interest’ (HM Government, 2013) are examples of powerful semiotic tools repeatedly used for convincing the public that there is no alternative. Emphasising common strife, common cause and shared responsibility, these mantra present a strong and responsible government which, despite difficult conditions and limited choices, is making sensible and ‘fair’ decisions which ‘share the pain’ (Clarke and Newman, 2012). This discourse has been deployed to justify the necessity as well as the benefits of policy choices around welfare reform (Duncan-Smith, 2014), the privatisation of public services (see Localism Act (2012) and Health and Social Care Act (2012)), and restrictions on government spending at national and local levels, to ensure that local councils ‘keep doing their bit to tackle the inherited budget deficit’ (Pickles, 2012).

What remains unquestioned is the inevitability of the cuts, their speed, consequences for economic recovery, disproportionate social impact (Reeves et al, 2013) and implications for collective – public - provision of welfare. As Hochschild (1979), who pioneered ideas of ‘emotional labour/emotional work’ argues, political elites (as well as social groups) look to define the rules which govern the emotional tone of a situation (the *framing rules*) and the

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appropriate emotions to be felt in specific situations (the *feeling rules*). These rules are according to Hochschild (1979: 566) 'the bottom side to ideology' - varying ideological stances come with different sets of framing and feeling rules. The induction of a desirable set of responses is therefore contingent and for some may well result in a sense of vindication vis-à-vis their own judgements of marginal social groups, or for others the characterisation of austerity as an unpleasant necessity.

For example, the 'crackdown' on the UK welfare system since 2010 has been enforced through the stirring of resentment but also guilt and shame (Probyn, 2005), for groups such as 'workless families' (Shildrick et al, 2012), described by Cameron (2012) as 'the real shame' and the disabled (Watson et al, 2011) separated out from 'hard working families' and described as 'parked' on benefits (Osborne, 2013). Collective responsibility is pitched against individual responsibility and resentment is fostered through the idea that individuals have been asked to provide for welfare, which is recast as fostering a 'shameless' dependency. Through such governmental techniques emotional responses to austerity are controlled (Gilbert, 2011) and policy approaches narrowed (Helms et al, 2010).

On the other side of this is the experience of shaming for those who are targeted as culpable. In our own research, amongst those working with groups subject to increased scrutiny, there was a sense of disbelief at the level of harassment directed towards those in receipt of social security. As with other recent research in the North East (Garthwaite, 2013), we see here not only the demonization of vulnerable groups as a way of justifying change, but also the emotional damage caused by these changes. For those already dealing with challenging conditions, the impact is acutely felt. As an experienced disability support group representative made clear in relation to benefit eligibility, this is new emotional territory. For

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those encountering austerity through direct engagement with those most clearly affected, persuasion about the logic of cuts might not be so straightforward (Bennett, 2013).

It is extremely worrying and frightening and of course the various tests that there are for people on their ability to work, there's a huge percentage of those have been won on appeal, but in that period that person has gone through all that worry and anxiety and feeling of, in some cases, worthlessness. And so all this uncertainty and all this, I would say, villainisation of people who either have a disability or people, because of their disability, are having to claim benefits. I've not seen it to this extent I don't think since I came into the voluntary sector.

Working between care and cuts

There is then a blurring between Aristotelian *logos* (appeal to reasoned argument) and *pathos* (appeal to emotional connections) in the rhetoric and results of austerity, problematising what Emirbayer and Goldberg, (2005) call the 'pernicious dichotomy' of reason and emotion. If the realm of emotions is so significant, there is a need to further engage with these 'more than rational' dimensions as encountered and understood by those who have a clear perspective of both the changing funding landscape and consequences for marginalised social groups. As Anderson and Smith (2001: 7) point out 'there are moments where lives are so explicitly lived through pain, bereavement, elation, anger, love and so on that the power of emotional relations cannot be ignored'. We see the changes brought about by austerity as triggering those kinds of moments. However, as Pain (2009, 478) reminds us, we should be wary of simplified views of emotions which treat them as 'blank canvasses' waiting to react to external events:

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‘but [rather] as situated, historicized and relational – already formed and always changing - and affecting politics, as much as they are affected by politics, at a range of scales.’

Rather than treating emotions as purely the outcome of austerity measures in a mechanistic fashion, we consider here the manner in which certain emotions form a central part of the experience of public service employment, but which have been heightened and in some cases politicised as a result of recent changes. The workplace, embodiment and emotion, as McDowell (2009) illustrates in her research on service sector employment and gender, are fundamentally intertwined. Modern work practices concern new forms of sociality, particularly when it comes to the dominant service sector. Despite the digital age, service based jobs still require face-to-face ‘body work’ and intense emotional engagement. This requires individuals to adopt specific forms of self-presentation, demeanour and emotional states and to actively engage in the management of such states (Hochschild, 1979).

However, the nature of the emotion work we discuss here differs from the experiences of figures such as Hochschild’s airhostess (1979), who is valued for her ability to toe the line in her emotional performances. In this example the management of appearance and emotion concerns the manner in which emotions become traded as commodities – to appear happy and to mute anger depending upon what is required by customers. Despite the proliferation of managerial organisational models (Exworthy and Halford, 1998), a recognition of power inequalities between service providers and users and the multiple roles enacted by participants, this is not so clearly the case for those for whom caring is at the heart of what they do. One of the key characteristics of our participants, as set out by Lipsky (2010), is that despite efforts to manage and control their behaviour, they operate with a degree of

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discretion, with both positive and negative consequences. Whilst there is an awareness of the need to survive in the context of a funding crisis, the importance of emotions here is not linked to commerciality but a range of other commitments. These include interpretations of social justice (Baines, 2011), an 'ethic of care' (Askew, 2009) and affiliations to place-based and often marginalised communities (Jupp, 2013). These are roles which are characterised by the sensitivity of issues tackled, by the often urgent needs of service users and political orientations which are rarely limited to individual job satisfaction and financial reward. What emerges from our study is illustrative of these distinctions, which result in, as well as provide the context for, a range of emotional responses.

Following an outline of the methodology, the rest of the paper draws directly on our empirical material and comes in three parts. The first considers the immediate work-based implications of changing funding regimes in emotional terms, the second considers the broader social and spatial connections of care and commitment and the last examines emotional dimensions of practices of resourcefulness.

Methodology: accessing words and emotions

The data discussed here is drawn from a broader study of the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in 2010 and changes to funding for placement partner organisations of a Social Sciences department in a university in the North East of England (x, 2012). Our study did not originally set out to address or explore the emotional experiences of participants. However, in discussing experiences of austerity, research encounters were emotionally charged events involving not just the articulation of past emotions, but also the out-pouring of feelings and non-verbal expressions including bangs on tables, laughter of disbelief and, on some occasions, tears.

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Methodologically, it is recognized that there is a tension between non-representational understandings of emotion which stress the need to go beyond articulations of feelings to question the nature of 'feelingness' and interpretations which emphasise 'giving voice' to marginal experiences (Bondi, 2005a). We are interested, as Laurier and Parr (2000) outline, in the manner in which emotions are felt and performed, but also how they are articulated through research encounters. While experiences are best understood in the moment in which they emerge, emotions are not viewed here as an un-representational singularity outside the grasp of the research encounter. Significant glimpses of embodied and emotional experiences leak into and from such encounters and their articulation points towards events that are both within and beyond the moment in which they are expressed. Our interviews and focus groups created opportunities for the expression of emotions that cannot be easily detached from the everyday realities of our participants.

The geographical focus of this study is important for several reasons. The social and political fallout from the decline and re-structuring of the North East economy from the 1970s (see Hudson, 1998), can still be felt. Whilst change has been uneven, with Newcastle witnessing culture-led regeneration, the region remains peripheral. It continues to witness higher than average levels of deprivation and unemployment, has been relatively reliant on public sector employment (Worthy and Gouldson, 2010) and remains staunchly loyal to the Labour Party. Under austerity these trends have continued through a North-South divide in terms of which areas have been hardest hit by cuts in spending (Pearson, 2011) and the economic conditions which leave it more vulnerable to - welfare cut backs (Jarvis et al, 2013). Regional research (VONNE, 2011) has emphasized that currently, public service provision through the third sector in the North East is in survival mode, with many organizations forced to consolidate or collapse.

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Over the two-year study, thirty in-depth interviews with practitioners working for organizations in the public and third sector and six focus groups involving both service users and practitioners from third sector organizations were conducted. By 'public' we refer to state led/funded agencies and by 'third sector' we refer to independent, non-governmental and non-profit organizations who rely on public funding. In this paper we concentrate on the perspectives of practitioners which include those working in a range of roles including, managers, supervisors, professionals, chairs and members of steering groups and those offering voluntary support. Participants allowed us access to experiences, memories and narratives in relation to funding changes over time and the impact of such changes on their work and their service users. The organizations involved all served the interests of marginalised social groups and variously provided youth work, early years work, disability support, care for older people, health promotion, community development including non-traditional education and training for women, support to self-help groups including refugee and asylum seekers and social work. The sample was drawn from across the region.

Occupational emotions: health and morale

Some of the most keenly felt consequences of changes to funding were in relation to the personal work-related circumstances of participants and their colleagues. The negative impacts on health and well-being were particularly discussed in emotional terms. As Colley (2012: 331) argues in her Bourdieusian analysis of youth support advisors, 'Austerity...not only changes the conditions of the field, but in doing so also seeks to re-orient practice within in.' Practitioners spoke about feeling personally and professionally overwhelmed by increased workloads as they were being asked to cover for posts deleted, services cut and hours curtailed. For some, recent changes to funding had a dramatic, negative impact upon

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established work patterns, while for others, particularly youth workers (which is non-statutory and therefore especially vulnerable), the impression was that this was a continuation of a history of under-resourcing. As one youth worker put it: *'...youth work is always understaffed anyway, the decent youth work.'* However, for all participants there was a sense that because of reduced budgets and the new challenges facing service users they were having to do 'more with less' at the same time as more experienced staff were disappearing.

In their response to cuts made in government funding to them in 2010, North East local authorities identified that one of the immediate implications would be 6,200 public sector redundancies and between 2500-4000 redundancies in private and third sectors (ANEC, 2010). As the following participant, in the Social Work department of one local council explained, the re-organisation of local government resulting from such job losses, has had clear consequences for the amount, type and quality of work required of remaining staff, but also emotional ramifications in the form of precarity (Waite, 2008), uncertainty about the future, fear of the worst and low morale. This illustrates not only the effects of changing funding priorities, but the very personal consequences of sacrifices made in the 'national interest' across this council:

My line manager is retiring in two weeks' time and I'm getting jobs from there. So to me the situation, it's like that piece of elastic, we can all do more, but then there comes to a point where you literally can't do more and you're not doing anything as effectively as what you would hope to and wish to. I mean it's got to the crisis point with me in the sense that they're having to take some of the direct work...off me and pulling me much more into more strategic stuff, which is what

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the changes are going to be for me. I mean I never envisaged that when I came into this post, you know, so it's unsettling It's pulled me a lot further away from the service area, from operations ... So I mean mine is just a personal example, but I think the general morale is absolutely dire. (Social Work, Local Council)

These experiences were also shared by those working in the third sector, who were struggling to cover the work of other recently closed groups/projects, an experience described by a representative from a refugee community organization as 'draining'. This refers to a form of emotional labour – not necessarily the work that goes into the management of emotions for other audiences (Hochschild, 1979), but rather the work which goes into coping in increasingly pressurized environments. Some organisations, such as a women's education centre, were finding it harder to recruit employees on the wages they could afford to pay therefore compromising continued service delivery. The mood of the participant representing this centre during our interview was stoic yet clearly downbeat. In addition the atmosphere of the centre during the middle of the day was noticeably quiet with a discernable sense of resignation in the air. Again in this case, the issue of low morale, something shared by a significant proportion of UK society (TNS BMRB, 2013), is raised as a significant concern as remaining staff faced the prospects of the project closing but were applying additional effort to ensure its continuation. In both of these examples, the impact of austerity is tangible in terms of mood, morale, ability to perform roles and additional efforts required to do so. However, the position of third sector organizations is notably more precarious. Shortly after this interview, the organization was forced to close::

[W]e've lost staff over the years. Being a charity, we can't pay big high wages.

We can't really compete with the private sector. ... Whereas years ago we would

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re-advertise and re-employ we just haven't been able to re-employ anybody, and as a result all the staff are working three-four times harder. They're picking up everybody else's job and morale is really, really low. (Manager, Women's Education Centre)

Connected to the low morale of staff, there were also discernible implications for mental health and well-being, particularly in terms of stress and depression. As one youth worker explained in relation to the culture and atmosphere created within their local authority, it was not just the scale of redundancies which was 'horrible', but the process and manner in which individuals had been treated during the implementation of changes to staffing and roles. The pain of austerity here is literal and embodied in the talk of 'going on the sick'.

Well people in [the local council], if they didn't know what stress was, they know what it is now because they're feeling it in bucket-loads. I've seen it on a scale I've never even seen it before. Anybody when it comes to redundancy, even voluntary redundancy, the stress that people are going through. By the time they get into it I'm thinking, 'god, you're going to have to go off on the sick'. You either take redundancy or go off on the sick because some people are not able to cope with it. I personally couldn't cope with it. I went through about two months of just feeling like I was in a fog and just so depressed. I thought, 'I just...' I wanted to walk. I nearly did at one time. Lucky I made it through, but I'm expecting another round of cuts. So it's not over yet. I think they're going to do it all again next year. So there's no way anybody can relax at all... Someone's just had a baby and they were made redundant. It's horrible. Absolutely horrible. (Youth Worker, seconded from Local Council)

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There is already an established literature on how increasing workloads in 'human service' employment is leaving individuals more vulnerable to increased stress and burn out (Lait and Wallace, 2002). However, what we see here is an apparent acceleration of these impacts and recognition that such emotional intensities are becoming an accepted feature of these occupations – part of what seems to be an accepted 'new normal' within and beyond the UK (Martin et al, 2012). As the following example, which comes from the account of a former manager of a children's centre, makes clear, health related implications are not restricted to specific locations, but are becoming geographically dispersed because of common pressures.

After I left, the assistant manager nearly had a breakdown. It was that bad... So staff morale is like really low at present and I'm working in other places now just as a supply and it's lovely but I can see it and I can see the pressure on the managers and on the staff because of the cuts. I can see it happening and I'm thinking the same thing's going to happen here as happened at [former place of employment]. (Ex-Children's Centre Manager)

Uncertain futures, increased hours and the additional workloads meant participants were not seeing positive results from the intensification of their physical and emotional labour. However, these experiences need to also be related to the inter-subjective emotional ties that exist for our participants in social and geographical terms (Cronin, 2014). For example, the experience of *low morale* is by definition relational, collective and located. In order to make sense of the *need* and *will* to continue in such adverse circumstances, as hinted at above in the co-existing 'loveliness' and 'pressure' of work, the paper now explores in more detail the emotional relationships established through caring occupations.

Connections of care and commitment

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At the heart of our participants' work is a sense of intense emotional, inter-corporeal (Cohen, 2011) and inter-subjective commitment, which in different ways has been challenged, but also reinforced under austerity. As a refugee support worker expressed with a sense of regret, sadness and frustration after outlining the list of their projects due to close: *'I clearly feel that there is a lot of things that we cannot do anymore'*. The impression given was one of letting down those people they existed to support and of difficult decisions around prioritisation. In this specific case, the sense of frustration was heightened as many of the support workers and volunteers in this organization had already been, or were currently going, through the asylum process themselves. A sense of empathy, beyond attempts to appreciate the emotional trials of service users (Askew, 2009), is therefore related to recent and first-hand knowledge of daily challenges. This blurring of the boundaries between practitioners and service users was not always as clear as this, but the demonstration of care and commitment through an awareness of emotional and material circumstances appeared across the narratives of participants.

For example, two black youth workers we spoke with had spent decades working within black and minority ethnic communities on a detached basis. This involved moving around neighbourhoods to get to know young people and their families outside of formal youth spaces, often above and beyond the direct requirements of their job. In this example there were again indications of the permeable boundaries between professional and personal identities (Walker and Larson, 2006), making detachment very difficult to achieve. There is also a connection to and empathy with service users here which is nurtured through growing up 'non-white' in a predominantly 'white' region and experiencing forms of exclusion both outside of and within their experiences of youth work practice. The impacts of funding cuts and changing priorities of decision makers certainly made their professional lives more

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demanding, but as some of the few people in the area engaged in detached youth work with ethnic minority communities the weight of this responsibility and nature of the emotional entanglements both before and after the advent of austerity were discernible in their accounts as longer term *draining* experiences.

Mentally it is absolutely draining. Youth work is generally, but this kind of work and how clever you've got to be within the communities and work within the communities. And you constantly, it's very subtle and it's constant battles within your own community. (Youth worker 1)

However, there is also an evident sense of fulfilment, passion and satisfaction from working with service users (see de St Croix 2013 in relation to passion and youth workers) which highlights a certain ambiguity as interviewees elicited both the emotional pain and pleasures of their work. As Bondi (2007:2) notes in relation to women's care work, what we see here is the co-existence of the oppressiveness of care and the hurt which emerges when this is undermined, but also the 'expression of love, pleasure and vocation'. Even for those working with service users in extremely challenging situations, the depth of connection is tangible. The excerpt below speaks of the warmth and what Valentine (2008) calls the 'affective structures' that exists and has developed over time between themselves and the young men they feel responsible for.

YW2: So this lad who is always in trouble. Always in trouble. We had him here. He even cooked for his teachers, different curries and oh it was fantastic. It was really, really good. And when he's cooking, doesn't ever have any problems. And you just get this like, 'You do this. You do that.' So he's in control.

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YW1: *All I ever seen is like a lot of warmth.*

YW2: *Warmth. Absolutely.*

YW1: *And it's a pleasure to be with them.*

YW2: *You look past. You look past. You get past what other people see.*

YW1: *That's dead hard to explain.*

Beyond the significant relationships between practitioners and their service users, our focus on emotional dimensions also revealed other relations at play. Despite a discourse designed to bring together the nation in a crisis and flatten out perceptions of uneven impact, some participants identified broader feelings of neglect which made sense of more recent changes in the context of historical disinvestment and in relation to emotional understandings of community. For example, in attempts to comprehend the uneven impact of cuts, some participants, particularly those in areas which had been more severely impacted by the decline of the regions' industrial heritage, sensed a continued and purposeful level of undermining by national politicians. As one participant working as a volunteer in a former coal mining area suggested, an impression of retaliatory and revanchist politics (MacLeod, 2002) enacted upon their community has renewed relevance. This had material consequences, but is also understood here in emotional terms; both verbal and non-verbal as indicated by the use of laughter in this focus group to both express a form of disbelief and as a mechanism for dealing with the gravity of the situation.

I think we've been forgotten for quite a while up here. I don't think they've gotten over the miners' strike. No. I think they're still...I think it's still embodied in them, you know, like we haven't finished with youse yet [laughter]. (Healthy living centre, Volunteer)

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A sense of injustice and in some cases, anger and disgust, was also expressed by participants not just in relation to a sense of punitive abandonment by national politicians, but to more recent decisions made at the local level. Participants' referred to their inside knowledge and perceptions of unjust and unclear funding decision-making, made more so because of the effort and time expended on establishing trust and reciprocity with local communities. The potential emotional consequences of such processes are starkly outlined here.

They've actually destroyed about the last ten years in that decision they've made. They've just swept away Compact Agreements. Whatever partnerships they kept talking about, there isn't any. They've just done it in...I just pray we don't have a really hot summer actually. Riots on. Usually happens in August when there's a hot summer. But it's just diabolical how bad that's been. I can't express how absolutely disgusted and lost I am about that. I really worry about where it's going. And the idea now ... is [that] there's no sense of justice in it.

(Community Development Worker)

The group represented above, along with other youth based organisations in the same urban neighbourhood, had recently been on the receiving end of a decision which meant they would no longer be able to work with 'at risk' young people through Early Intervention Grant funding. Despite a number of smaller and locally embedded organisations, forming a consortium to attract funding, money was given to a larger national children's charity to deliver the services thus severely compromising the future of these locally embedded organisations (see x, forthcoming). The sense of not being valued both as caring professionals, but also as locally embedded organisations was tangible through our encounters with the organizations involved in this consortium, as the excerpt below clearly

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illustrates. As Graeber (2014) argues, the portrayal of solidarity as a scourge under austerity seems to have pushed values of concern for others to the periphery:

[The successful charity] are a national organisation that has that infrastructure to survive, whereas the smaller projects, it is down to one person who has to spend all of their time constantly fund-raising which is soul-destroying when your local authority turns round and hands it to someone else. (Manager, Women's and Girls' Project)

However, it was not just the fact that important funds had been diverted elsewhere, but also the manner of the process which did not appear to be fair or transparent and gave such organizations very little time and opportunity to prepare their tenders. For the worker below a key problem has been the perception that the local authority has never championed the more deprived communities in this city at the level of participatory democracy (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998) or through more everyday interpretations of social justice (Baines, 2011). In his eyes the needs and feelings of the people living in some of the most deprived areas of the region are rarely understood or met and the recent changes to funding have reinforced this. Interpretations of 'we' referred to in the excerpt are worth considering in relation to the sense of (in)justice mentioned above. Arguably this includes the organization, the consortium of organizations who failed to attract funding, and also the broader community in which this work is historically embedded. His account exposes the power relations between the public and third sector, a clash of values with the local authority in definitions of local democracy and the degree to which local people in marginalized communities are at the centre of decisions around the future of their neighbourhoods (for further discussion of these power relations see x, forthcoming)

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Oh we've just been hammered...There isn't a system there to run it with...The Council have always operated at best with, what was it, representative democracy. They have board meetings. They have these meetings and they get your token local person on and it's always somebody they can handle [laughs]. So they tick the box and they go on all the trips...We take eighty-four people away to Beamish [open air living museum] for the day to run a conference about what do we need in our community. And you could ask any of them eighty-four people who's your rep for [the neighbourhood] on the Board? No idea. But the Council just don't... They can't handle participative democracy and that's where all the problem is I think. (Community development worker)

The sense of anger, injustice and emotional oppressiveness expressed here is palpable, and can be seen as both a reaction to a perception of injustice brought about by the pressures of austerity politics, but also the basis of resourceful practices and continued care and commitment in the face of adversity.

Working through/against threats: emotional resourcefulness

Participants were not passively experiencing change. They articulated their commitment to their service through a determination to fight for survival, the championing of their work, a belief that the work is of social use and dedication to sustain their service in some format. There is, as Pain (2009) argues, a need to recognise that emotions are not just responsive, but also generative, challenging and potentially progressive. In highlighting how emotions are at the heart of the coping strategies adopted by the respondents we employ the term *resourcefulness* rather than resilience, recognising that responses to the funding context are often creative rather than pliant: despite the scale of challenges faced there is an element

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of resistance exhibited (Mackinnon and Driscoll Derickson, 2013). However, it is also seen that some strategies can succumb to temporary and individualistic resolutions which fall in line with hegemonic ideologies outlined at the outset.

In dealing with stressful situations on behalf of others, there was some suggestion of emotional management, restraint and self-regulation, concealing aspects of this emotional toll in certain spaces as a means of coping (Parr et al, 2007). As these youth workers indicate, their demanding work means that the psychological toll has to 'come out' at some point. This is illustrated by the use of the transitional spaces of the car/television room/pub to move between their occupational and personal lives. These gendered performances demonstrate the dilemmas of multiple loyalties (Plantin and Bäck-Wiklund, 2009) and participants' attempts to protect service users, but also, in the case of the first excerpt, their families from their work related stresses.

Driving back home. So it's about an hour. Is my reflection time. And then when I get home I need to sit in front of the telly and just get lost for an hour and then I can go and speak to my family. So again, it's just like I think you feel a lot of the pressure is because you're responsible for the main work. (Youth worker 1)

I was sitting in a pub for an hour by myself because my head was just smashed listening to people's problems. None of the management structure ever worked that out, you know. I don't know how you deal with it. I go home. I just walk up and down for ages till I'd tire myself out. That's all I do [laughs]. But it takes me a long-long time to bring myself right down again. (Youth worker 2)

The manner in which anger and a sense of injustice is harnessed is a vital one if we are to understand the potential of resourcefulness. As Tyler (2013) notes in her analysis of the

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'revolting subjects' of neo-liberalism, forms of subjugation, exploitation and exclusion are turned back on the powerful as means of resistance against perceived injustices. Our participants' situations demanded a response, even if that response is de-legitimised or eventually futile in maintaining the existence of services. In this way our research illustrated a complex relationship between emotions conventionally viewed as 'negative' and 'positive' (Lindebaum and Jordon, 2013).

Despite the fact that all organisations involved in our research knew of at least one other local organisation to recently close and all were running on tight budgets and short term plans, emotions evoked by participants can be typified as outward looking, focusing on 'the fight' that was to be had to win over funders, and more broadly the political arguments in favour of public/third sector funding. As with the findings of de St Croix's study of youth workers (2013) the positivity, passion and commitment expressed and embodied allows us to illustrate that despite dominant ideologies and emotional pressures there is still room for caring. This period has witnessed several high profile anti-austerity protests in the region, and in alignment with the sentiment of these protests, participants articulated the importance of opposition to funding changes and of coming together in protest against such changes. But this did not mean that workers downed their tools. They continued in many cases to work harder to deliver their services. As one youth worker participant noted, *'You campaign and you protest but you don't just stop'*. Despite the challenges faced and the broad acceptance of austerity politics, many also saw a sense of hope in the resistance offered by their own organisations, service users and wider local communities.

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I think really the community, they've got a voice, you know ... because I mean it's been proven in the past. It's just more or less getting the people to come forward and say we're not going to stand for this anymore.

Interviewer: And do you feel hope about that? Do you feel that could happen or do you feel...

I think it could. I think you can only cut so far and I think people will rebel.

(Volunteer, Healthy Living Centre)

Others emphasized the historic ability of their organization and their sector to survive and adapt to political and financial challenges. Practices of resourcefulness included diversifying funding streams, making more effective use of volunteers, engaging in forms of co-operation and collaboration and stretching the limits of roles. They also included the development of both personal and professional contingency plans in positions and organizations experiencing an intensification of uncertainty. Again, whilst damaging, current cuts in budgets are not the first of their kind. The fact that the voluntary sector in particular has had to historically defend itself to keep afloat illustrates how such emotional damage is also used as a tool to resist change and to survive despite being undermined.

Past experiences come through in many of these accounts as enabling the sedimentation of this form of resourcefulness. Even for those who seem emotionally spent in their challenging jobs or expressed a sense of resignation, there is still evidence of survival strategies, as the manager of one community centre in a deprived neighbourhood emphasises here, the short term nature of funding for community based work means that you 'learn to survive', and that to some extent the challenges faced become normalised:

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Well even when funding was available, you know, it was there, it was still difficult for us and now it's just got a little bit more difficult and we've just got to steer things a little bit differently. So it's just another challenge. A little bit of a bigger challenge. ... It's massive. It is but the only thing going for it is, is that we've always faced challenge and we know that we've got to fight and find a way. So from that point of view I think we are a little bit more equipped than other people (Manager, Community Centre)

This sense of being equipped to deal with the funding crisis in the third sector is also mentioned by the participant in the following excerpt. Such responses can be seen as both an asset of the third sector, but also a persistent weakness – in that the ability to adapt may mean the sector undermines its case for financial support. As we have seen above, not all individuals and organizations have been able to take the shock of the current crisis and ‘bounce back’ so well. There is then a danger in assumptions of resilience (Vickers and Parris, 2007) in that individuals and organisations can only be stretched so far..

That's what happens in the voluntary sector. It gets built up. There's a glut of money. The funders realise the value. Everything's going well. The country's doing okay. They can start giving to the voluntary sector again. We'll build it up. Strengthen it up. Then it'll all start to go downhill but because we're quite resilient, we'll keep it going until we're down on our dregs and that's a problem. There's more resilience in the voluntary sector of making resources last and very little wastage. (Volunteer Centre Manager)

Despite the closures, the redundancies, the threat to the quality of services, the movement away from core aims and the impact on well-being of both service providers and service

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users – there was a willingness amongst participants to continue as best they could.

Therefore part of the survival strategies adopted by our participants involved the operationalisation of forms of 'goodwill', which are routed through forms of kindness and going beyond the call of duty. As we have seen above this goodwill comes from an intersecting set of commitments to a range of individuals, groups and places (Jupp, 2013). In the following excerpt an Ex-Manager of a Children's Centre who lived on the housing estate where she worked illustrates how far this can be stretched.

I mean I had a woman who came in and did the kitchen and the house-keeping and I used to give her extra hours to do the house-keeping. To do the washing. Because the children's bedding had to be washed and things like that. So I used to have her in extra to do the washing and things like that, jobs that the girls would have to do, which they do have to do now. ... But of course they cut that back. Said I couldn't have her. She had to do her ten hours and ten hours only. So I lived on the estate. I would stay back an hour on a night time and just do it. But it's goodwill isn't it? They rely on your goodwill.

This reliance on goodwill as a form of benevolence reveals some of the problems with the dominant mode of dealing with the current funding crisis, which is based upon what the individual can do to make a difference or even to sustain the delivery of vital public services. This can be seen in the current government's emphasis on the Big Society which foregrounds the role of voluntary social action and appeals to the 'make do and mend' mentality of earlier periods of UK austerity (Bramall, 2013) in sustaining local services in the face of the withdrawal of state support (see x, forthcoming). As is noted earlier in the paper, these discourses are powerful devices and therefore we might view such tactics as limited,

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but also a form of Foucauldian self-regulation which compromises the ability to work towards collective solutions or to challenge the dominant ideologies which prioritizes the role of individual endeavor and enterprise (Bondi, 2005b). Whilst recognizing the role and value of coping mechanisms, we must be wary of how the emotionally charged resourcefulness of the austerity agenda may in attempts to challenge the worst of its effects, actually work to re-produce its potency.

Conclusion: valuing care/caring values

This paper has considered the emotional dimensions of changing funding and resulting changes in work practices for those in public service provision in the North East of England. Several key areas have been explored. Firstly, the crucial role that emotions play in the presentation of austerity in the UK context has been identified; secondly the distinctiveness of the values and emotions embodied in occupations of care (beyond health professions) both prior to and during the current crisis has been highlighted; thirdly the emotional ramifications of this political agenda for research participants' working conditions and occupational identities has been outlined; fourthly the manner in which commitment to service users and colleagues is underpinned by practices of care which extend beyond the workplace and stretch back through time has been presented. Finally the paper has argued that despite the severe restrictions placed on them, emotional experiences within these contexts are productive not just responsive. This has been seen to involve a level of sacrifice, but also potentially risks the internalisation of a political agenda which stresses individualistic solutions in the context of the accelerated rolling back of the state (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011).

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Naming and locating emotions, is not simply a matter of pointing towards where pain or joy is being felt. It is rather a way of recognising the multifaceted manner in which power relations operate. This paper suggests that the emotional terrain is crucial to understanding both the operationalisation and experience of austerity politics. In so doing it has attempted to highlight, and not trivialise the challenges faced by those on the front line who have experience of both the realities of marginalised service users, but also the changing funding landscape. As Horton and Kraftl (2009) contend in their examination of what matters to users of Sure Start Children Centres in the UK, we agree that what is often valued and what should be valued about such services is often missed. We also contend that the politics of austerity and its emotional ramifications should not be conceptualised simply in terms of cause and effect, as if emotions were only activated in times of acute crisis in public services. Rather we have shown how those working in the related fields of 'care' in the public and third sector operate on the basis of emotional commitments and that it is the character of these emotions in both more damaging and progressive ways which needs to be considered at moments such as this and in places such as this.

Lawson (2007) argues, that as market relations increasingly encroach on those areas of life which involve some form of caring, the need to care increases. The 'care' to which Lawson refers here is a broad definition which emphasises the responsibility we share for 'spatially extensive connections of interdependence and mutuality' (Lawson, 2007: 8). The responses identified by our participants are evolving in relation to emotionally charged political landscape which offers little recognition, reward or value to those providing vital public services to those on the margin. The danger is that because much of this does not fit into established definitions of productive work, as with those who have argued the same for women's work (see Hanson and Pratt, 1995), it is under-valued by those with little

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experience of the difference it may make in peoples' lives. It is time to recognise this value and those who are deeply connected through a range of emotional ties that are threatened by, but also actively navigating, challenging circumstances.

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