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Different Drivers: Exploring Employee Involvement in Corporate Philanthropy

Beth Breeze[1] · Pamala Wiepking[2]

Abstract

Corporate Philanthropy (CP) is multi-dimensional, differs between sectors and involves both individual and organisational decision-making to achieve business and social goals. However, the CP literature characteristically focuses on strategic decisions made by business leaders and ignores the role of employees, especially those in lower status and lower paid positions. To redress this imbalance, we conducted a qualitative study of employees' involvement in CP processes in ten workplaces in the South East of England to identify whether and how they are involved in CP decision-making and to capture their perspective on the nature of CP and the benefits generated by such activities. We specifically chose to study workplaces where employees are involved in the actual execution of the CP strategy, prioritising companies with a visible presence on the high street. The results illustrate the benefits of involving employees in CP decision-making, which we argue derives in part from the 'liminal-like states' that typify CP activities organised by shop floor staff, involving the temporary overturning of hierarchies, humanising of workplaces and opportunities for lower level staff to prioritise their personal philanthropic preferences and signal their charitable identity to colleagues and customers. Whilst the data also suggest that CP decision-making remains predominantly top-down and driven by profit-oriented goals, we conclude that employees should be involved in choosing charitable causes as well as in designing and implementing workplace fundraising, in order to maximise the advantages of CP for the company and for wider society.

Keywords Corporate philanthropy (CP) · Corporate social responsibility (CSR) · Employee involvement

Introduction

In companies with a visible presence on the high street, such as supermarkets, retail banks and restaurants, it is not unusual to see employees involved in raising funds for a variety of charities. People working on the tills in a supermarket might wear bright pink feather boas to encourage shoppers to donate to breast cancer research; customers at a bank might see tellers taking turns on a treadmill in the banking hall to collectively 'run a marathon' to raise funds for a local hospice; and waiting staff in a restaurant might ask diners to consider rounding up their bill to pay for Christmas dinner at a local homeless shelter. In all three cases shop floor staff, who are typically low-status and low-paid employees, are engaged in employee fundraising activities, which has become a commonplace yet largely overlooked strand of Corporate Philanthropy (CP). A common feature of fundraising around the world (Breeze and Scaife 2015), employee fundraising is "one of the major ways" that US-based companies support nonprofits (Burlingame and Dunlavy 2016, p. 88) and was found to be the most common mechanism through which UK-based companies supported charities in 2015 (Institute of Fundraising/Good Values 2015). Shop floor employees do most of the legwork in this form of CP, notably organising and implementing the fundraising activities, and communicating to customers about the charitable cause and opportunities to donate. Yet despite their essential role, little is known about these employees' involvement in making and executing decisions, such as

✉ Beth Breeze
  b.breeze@kent.ac.uk

  Pamala Wiepking
  pwiepki@iu.edu

1 Centre for Philanthropy, School of Social Policy, Sociology & Social Research, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NF, UK

2 Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, University Hall Suite 3000, 301 University Blvd, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5146, USA

which causes to support or what fundraising activities to develop, what motivates them to become involved, and how their decision-making and charitable behaviour might differ from that of business owners and managers.

This article presents a qualitative study of shop floor employees' experience with, and involvement in, CP decision-making related to fundraising in the workplace. It uniquely focuses on an understudied population: lower status and lower paid employees, and focuses on workplaces where employees are involved in the decision-making and the execution of CP strategy. By doing so, it answers the call made by multiple scholars in the CP and the broader corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature to study CP across different environments and from the perspective of different stakeholders (Gautier and Pache 2015; Haski-Leventhal et al. 2015; Liket and Simaens 2015; Muller et al. 2014; Rodell et al. 2016; Roza 2016). By exploring the rationale for shop floor employees to become involved in CP decision-making and workplace fundraising activities, and contrasting their drivers with those commonly articulated by managers and owners of firms, it increases the understanding of new facets of the multi-level and multi-dimensionality of CP, and as such adds to the employee involvement literature. As Mize Smith justly remarks: "While it may be the company that commits corporate support to charitable projects, it is often the employees who make that support a reality by volunteering or raising the funds to be donated." (Mize Smith 2012, p. 373). Therefore, in this study we focus on the involvement of lower level employees in CP practice and decision-making.

Corporate Philanthropy

CP, including corporate fundraising and corporate volunteering, is often studied as one form of the much broader concept of CSR (as, for example, in Hejjas et al. 2018). It is typically defined as the voluntary private contribution of resources in the form of money, time and/or expertise by corporations to benefit the public good (Gautier and Pache 2015; Schuyt et al. 2015). CP is multi-dimensional, differs among sectors and is decided upon both at the individual level (employees, managers and directors) and the organisational level (the firm, CSR department, corporate foundation) (Aguinis and Glavas 2012; Liket and Simaens 2015). A recent review of the literature, examining 162 articles on corporate philanthropy published over the course of 30 years (Gautier and Pache 2015), finds that the corporate philanthropy literature is scattered across disciplines: management (e.g. Muller et al. 2014), economics (e.g. Duncan 2004), sociology (e.g. Galaskiewicz 1985) and public policy (e.g. Hwang and Powell 2009). Within and across this body of work the many different rationales for CP are found to exist on a continuum from 'altruistic' to 'profit oriented' (Gautier

and Pache 2015, p. 346). As such, there is little consensus or overarching theory on what drives CP, but the literature characteristically focuses on CP decisions made by business leaders, such as members of the board, the chief executive or senior managers (Marquis et al. 2013), and often ignores the role of lower level employees (Muller et al. 2014). It also typically considers large multinational corporations, whilst limited attention is paid to larger national corporations and small and medium-sized enterprises (Gautier and Pache 2015).

Theoretical Background

Friedman's (1970) famous assertion that business has no responsibility beyond making profits marked the start of the search for the business case to "rationalize and legitimize" activities carried out under the CSR umbrella (Carroll and Shabana 2010, p. 88). Porter and Kramer's (2002) seminal article in the *Harvard Business Review* further motivated scholars studying CP to primarily focus on the direct strategic managerial or corporate goals of CP (see for example Du et al. 2011; Wang and Qian 2011). The rapidly increasing influence of stakeholder theory on the study of CP (Freeman 2010; Godfrey 2005) rejects the narrow neoclassical economic view of CSR as solely an instrumental means of achieving profit maximisation in favour of a broader view of CSR as a means for business to pursue its ethical and philanthropic obligations to society (as discussed, for example, in Schwartz and Saiia 2012). This advance in the literature enables CP to be understood as a means by which firms can simultaneously pursue commercial goals whilst investing in the communities in which their staff and customers live, as well as demonstrating their commitment to wider society (Gautier and Pache 2015, p. 347). Yet despite this understanding of the multifaceted role of CP, there remains an assumption that the 'company' perspective can be adequately represented by the opinion of business elites, such as members of the board, the chief executive or senior managers, with little or no reference to other perspectives, including that of employees. Scholarly explanations of CP activity have thus tended to have a "primarily top down rational interpretation" (Muller et al. 2014, p. 1). This is curious, given that employees make up the majority of the workforce. The private sector is comprised of a small number of owners and managers, and a much larger number of employees, many of whom are employed in low-paid and low-status jobs (Office for National Statistics 2014). Thus, research that only seeks the opinion of 'business leaders' or the 'corporate elites' will inevitably lack insight into the nature and benefits of CP from the point of view of the larger part of those engaged in CP activities.

Until relatively recently this research reflected the process of CP rather well because corporate giving was predicated on 'chairman's choice' and business leaders bringing their personal philanthropic preferences into the boardroom. As Sargeant and Jay (2014) note: "Until the early 1980s corporate giving still owed much to the interests and concerns of chief executives who usually made the final decision on the organisations they wished to support" (Sargeant and Jay 2014, p. 252). But the last decade has seen an increasing involvement of employees, including in the selection of charitable beneficiaries as well as in the organisation and implementation of workplace fundraising activities. For example, the UK has seen an almost doubling of the use of democratic and devolved procedures involving consultations, staff charity committees and workforce ballots to select 'charity of the year' partners (Ribeiro 2011) and a similar shift has also been noted in the US context (Giving USA 2018; Mourdoukoutas 2011).

Different Drivers: Taking into Account the Employee Perspective

In the broader CSR literature, attention has been paid to the role of employees, including "bottom up" CSR initiatives driven by employees (Aguilera et al. 2007; Brewis 2004; Chong 2009; Grant 2012; Roza 2016); CSR organised as "participative processes" (Maclagan 1999, p. 43); and the effects of employees' ethical fit with CSR-derived corporate reputation (Coldwell et al. 2008, p. 611). These studies suggest that focusing beyond the alignment of CSR with core business goals, and paying attention to the benefits of CSR for, and its impact on, employees, enables a more strategic version of CSR to evolve, which—as noted above—entails the planned pursuit of profitable and socially purposeful engagement with employees, the communities in which firms operate and wider society (Gautier and Pache 2015). This is well illustrated by studies showing the benefits of employee engagement in CSR initiatives, most notably in corporate volunteering (CV) programmes. For example, Liu and Ko (2011) find that the internal and external added value of employee volunteering activities for corporations can be shown through, the "enhance[ment of] a company's legitimacy in the eyes of its employees" (Liu and Ko 2011, p. 255) as well as signalling to external stakeholders the companies' "increased commitment and efforts regarding community involvement" (Liu and Ko 2011, p. 259). These programmes furthermore contribute to Human Resources Management (HRM) goals as they provide employee training, development and team building, and help employees to gain self-esteem and a sense of pride in their regular jobs (Liu and Ko 2011).

In another example of the HRM advantages gained by involving employees in CSR activities, a study of employees at a financial services company in the UK shows that employees' perceptions of their employer's CSR activities strongly relates to their organisational commitment (Brammer et al. 2007). Corporate social performance activities can also serve to signal the corporation's social responsibility to potential employees, which is an attractive feature for many in the job market (Bhattacharya et al. 2008), and may decrease employee turnover because employees, and especially female employees, are proud to work for a socially committed employer (Brammer et al. 2007; Peterson 2004). Further studies confirm this point: Kim et al. (2010) show that employees' participation and decision-making opportunities in CSR initiatives positively relate to employees' identification with the company, which in turn positively relates to organisational commitment. In a study of DHL's employee involvement in disaster relief after the Indian Ocean Tsunami in Indonesia, Chong (2009) shows that employees involved in this programme experienced stronger identification with DHL's corporate identity, providing opportunities to signal greater employee commitment and identification. Likewise, De Gilder et al. (2005) show a positive relationship between participation in a Dutch financial institution's employee volunteering programme and higher self-reported attitudes towards job performance and attendance. Finally, Peloza and Hassay (2006) report that companies facilitating at-work volunteerism benefit from increased organisational citizenship behaviour, defined as "positive behaviours made by employees on behalf of either their employer or other employees" (Peloza and Hassay 2006, p. 358). The resulting 'good soldier' and 'good friend' behaviours are exemplified, respectively, by employees reporting "a great deal of 'company pride' when representing the firm in the community" (Peloza and Hassay 2006, p. 367), and being motivated to volunteer for causes that had personally affected colleagues, such as cancer care charities (Peloza and Hassay 2006, p. 368).

A decentralised management strategy with freedom for local branches and employees to customise CSR programmes to suit local contexts is shown to help preserve the HRM benefits of CSR initiatives (Liu and Ko 2011). Enabling employees to express opinions and exert some degree of influence brings benefits by ultimately increasing the quality of interactions between managers and staff (Liu and Ko 2011, p. 259). This subversion—however temporary—of normal workplaces hierarchies creates what is known in the anthropological literature as a 'liminal state' (Tempest 2007; Turner 1969), in which normal standards of deferential behaviour are lifted and conventional ranks are disregarded in the short-term, in pursuit of longer-term objectives that ultimately reinforce the status quo. The extent to which liminality might be a useful concept in better understanding CP is a key concern of this paper.

The concept of liminality, which was introduced in the discipline of anthropology (Thomassen 2009) and subsequently operationalised in the organisational literature (Tempest 2007), is useful to explain what occurs during workplace fundraising activities. The etymology of the word 'liminal' comes from *Limen*, the Latin for 'threshold' and refers to contexts that are characterised by "high levels of ambiguity" (e Cunha et al. 2010, p. 189). A liminal state is one in which the normal ways of behaving and organising social life in hierarchical societies are temporarily overturned, creating conditions of "being between normal social statuses" (Kaufman and Morgan 2005, p. 317) and involving "a fundamental suspension of social structures" (Johnsen and Sørensen 2015). A classic example described in the anthropological text that popularised the concept describes how a chief-elect, wearing "nothing but a ragged waist cloth", must crouch uncomfortably and submissively whilst being harangued by his soon-to-be subjects (Turner 1969, pp. 100–101). An example from the modern Western world is Halloween, when children are given 'liminal dominance' to trick and scare their elders (Turner 1969, p. 172). Such periods of deliberate inversion are temporary and ultimately designed to reinforce the status quo, as: *"Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low"* (Turner 1969, p. 97).

Employee Involvement in CP

Unlike the studies of corporate volunteering discussed in the previous section, studies of corporate philanthropy have not paid much attention to the role of employee involvement. Although there are several empirical studies focused on the philanthropic behaviour of employees, such as studies focused on motivations for workplace or payroll giving by employees (Agypt et al. 2012; Carman 2003; Haski-Leventhal 2013; Nesbit et al. 2012; Osili et al. 2011; Romney-Alexander 2002; Shaker et al. 2017; Shaker and Christensen 2018), very few have assessed the influence of employee involvement in CP decision-making.

As an exception, in a case study of the Chicago and San Francisco Bay chapters of the United Way—an umbrella organisation offering workplace giving programmes—Barman (2007) illustrates the institutional factors that lead some corporations to increasingly include employees' perspective and choice in CP decision-making, whilst others continue with old fashion 'top-down' CP decision-making: when the corporate elite holds a centralised view on philanthropy and believe that CP should be organised rationally and effectively by professionals, employees have very limited say in CP. Whereas when the corporate elite holds a decentralised view on philanthropy, the needs of donors—in this case employees—take precedence and

less emphasis is put on meeting direct corporate strategic goals, and thus employees are more strongly involved in CP decisions.

Muller et al. (2014) constructed a theoretical model for CP considering the influence of employees on CP decision-making. They state that employees are "important drivers of and participants in corporate philanthropy initiatives from the 'bottom up'" (Muller et al. 2014, p. 1), and that collective empathy at the employee level influences executive CP decisions, infusing their rational CP decision-making with emotions. As a result, CP becomes less strategic in terms of direct managerial and corporate goals whilst maximising benefits for a broader range of stakeholders (such as those benefiting from charitable causes preferred by employees) thus positioning CP as an ethical activity as well as an instrumental tool to deliver management goals. Supporting Muller et al.'s (2014) theory of collective empathy are studies by Mize Smith and Sypher (2010) and Mize Smith (2012, 2013). They conducted qualitative studies examining the attitudes and behaviours of different level employees involved in CP at a financial institution in the US. Among other concerns, they look at how organisational and employers' philanthropic values and practices influence employees' attitudes and behaviours towards workplace giving. They find that for both senior and lower level employees it is important that the corporation's motive for CP is aligned with their "own moral standards of giving" such that CP should primarily be focused on promoting the public good, whilst strategic and profit-maximising motives should be of secondary interest (Mize Smith 2012, p. 383).

A major concern of business leaders is that employee involvement in CP decision-making results in 'unstrategic' philanthropy, without focus and with diminishing corporate benefits such as profit maximisation, competitive success and reputational value (Barman 2007; Caligiuri et al. 2013; Gautier and Pache 2015). Employee involvement in CP does appear to decrease the direct strategic alignment of philanthropy with corporate goals, as Muller et al. (2014) argue theoretically, and as shown empirically by Barman (2007), Mize Smith and Sypher (2010), and Mize Smith (2012, 2013). Yet, despite the alleged diminishing effect of the achievement of strategic CP goals as a consequence of increased employee involvement, the advantages of increased employee involvement from other strategic perspectives should also be taken into consideration, as it is done in the wider CSR and CV literature (Zappalà 2004). This was already argued by Smith in 1994, who stated that CP and employees' perspective on philanthropy need to be integrated into the overall corporate strategy, using the example of IBM, which by the late 1980s had explicitly linked its voluntarism and philanthropy to its human resource strategies by, for example, engaging employees in choosing charitable beneficiaries (Smith 1994).

We have been able to find only one study that pays specific attention to the benefits of employee involvement in CP programmes. In a study on the influence of a code of ethics on CP and organisational and job engagement in the hospitality industry in Korea, Lee et al. (2014) show that firms that pay more attention to ethical issues also undertake more CP activities, such as helping the poor and bettering the local community. In turn these CP activities influenced employee engagement and turnover intention. Whilst focusing on the immediate commercial benefits of CP, Muller and Kräussl (2011) secondarily illustrate the HRM benefits of CP. In a study of corporate disaster relief after Hurricane Katrina, which caused immense damage along the US's Gulf Coast in 2005, communication of employee involvement in the CP response to this disaster was found to positively relate to the market value of the corporations engaged in CP. Muller and Kräussl (2011) argue this is because employee involvement in CP signals a "sincere" involvement to stakeholders in supporting the cause, and because it precipitates greater future employee commitment and identification.

The research presented in this paper builds on this past work and makes a novel contribution to the CP literature by presenting a qualitative study of shop floor employees' experience with, and involvement in, CP decision-making related to fundraising in the workplace. It uniquely focuses on an understudied population, lower status and lower paid employees, and focuses primarily on workplaces where employees are involved in shaping and executing the CP strategy. The specific research questions this study addresses are: How are lower level employees involved in decisions related to CP (RQ1)? What are the criteria involved when lower level employees make CP decisions, in particular in relation to the selection of charitable beneficiaries (RQ2)? And which CP decisions and activities are most likely to improve employee morale and foster other corporate and social goals (RQ3)?

Methodology

As our research questions are concerned with understanding the phenomena of employee involvement in corporate philanthropy, rather than counting its incidence or measuring the magnitude of its effect, we chose a qualitative approach, which enables us to reveal the 'social reality behind the figures' (Halfpenny 1999, p. 208). This research is therefore primarily based on observational methods used to study the charitable behaviours and attitudes of shop floor staff in ten different work places. Observational methods were the most feasible and appropriate way to gather data to answer the research questions by observing naturalistic discussions about how employees were involved in CP decision-making and the execution of activities, including

in particular employee fundraising. This approach follows that advocated by Silverman (2007) who draws a distinction between 'manufactured' data, such as that produced by surveys and interviews, and data gathered in the 'everyday world'. The methodology of this paper reflects a belief that the latter is appropriate for investigation into topics such as charitable activity that risk generating socially desirable and pre-scripted—albeit unintentionally so—responses (Frank 1996). Distortions in manufactured data are a result of answers reflecting norms about what people believe they are expected to think about that topic in any given society. This method seeks to avoid stimulating formulaic comments and erroneously analysing them as if they were an accurate reflection of the subject, rather than the 'appropriate script' expected of people who are occupying the role of an employee involved in workplace charity campaigns.

The observations lasted a total of 25 h and took place across ten workplaces. The lead author observed regular staff meetings and specialist charity committee meetings, as well as informal settings, such as over coffee in the staff canteen, within which CP decision-making including selection of charity beneficiaries and plans for employee fundraising was discussed. The fieldwork focused on observing discussions about future plans, and employees' recollections and reflections of past fundraising, rather than observing contemporary solicitation of customers and colleagues, although fundraising was ongoing in some field sites, such as the supermarkets, which all had permanent static donating opportunities. In total the lead author interacted with 50 different staff members, who were employed in positions such as cash till operatives and shelf stackers in supermarkets, cashiers in banks, and receptionists in office settings. These lower level employees work on the 'front line' of their organisations and are responsible for implementing the charitable activities that involve fundraising from colleagues and customers. Their closeness and visibility to target donors, and their simultaneous distance from strategic decision-makers within their company hierarchy, makes them an especially interesting and novel focus for a study of CP in practice.

In order to gain access to the sample it was often necessary to first interact with more senior staff either on the telephone or in a face-to-face meeting, and therefore data from six 'gateway' interactions were also collected and analysed. In addition to data gathered in the workplaces, the lead author attended a one-day conference on Third Sector Corporate Partnerships (TSCP conference) held in London in November 2011, at which notes were taken of both formal speeches and informal conversations with delegates. Some contacts made at this event resulted in access being gained to workplaces. The final dataset comprises over 12,000 words of notes that record observations of, and verbatim comments by, shop floor workers, their managers and attendees at the TSCP conference.

Anonymity was promised to all companies participating in this research so they will not be named, but their basic characteristics and the extent of their involvement in the study are described in Table 1. Whilst we categorise the 'dominant methods of decision-making' in the final column of Table 1, this variable should be understood as a descriptive construct rather than as a basis for sampling, as employees were involved to some degree in executing the CP strategy in all ten workplaces that we studied. In the findings below, pseudonyms are used in place of shop floor staff's real names. All the workplaces observed are in the South East of England, and the fieldwork took place between August 2011 and May 2012.

The selection of workplaces was partly a convenience sample, as getting permission for access was difficult and relied to a large extent on pre-existing contacts. Whilst extant research suggests that type of firm is less relevant than its style of community engagement (Bowen et al. 2010) or the personal attitudes of the charitable decision-makers (Campbell et al. 1999), we prioritised supermarkets and retail banks, which compromise 50% of the field sites, as important types of workplaces for this research for three reasons. Firstly, according to the UK Corporate Partnerships survey 2010, supermarkets and banks are the most sought-after corporate partners for fundraising (Ribeiro 2010). Secondly, supermarkets are targeted as corporate partners because they offer "wide reach, high profit margins, opportunities for cause-related marketing and customer fundraising" (Ribeiro 2010, p. 5). And thirdly, banks are similarly highly prized as partners in fundraising because, despite the recent run of problems relating to the banking sector, notably their role in the global economic crisis that began in 2007, they remain attractive to charities due to their "profile-raising presence on the high street" (Ribeiro 2011). These aforementioned points relate to the known importance of having access to a substantial pool of potential donors who can be reached through fundraising activities (see, for example, Sargeant and Jay 2014; Tempel et al. 2016; Worth 2016). As noted above, the other field sites were selected on the basis of organisational fit with the sampling criteria and our ability to gain access to lower level employees who were involved in CP through workplace fundraising. As is typical in qualitative research, the external validity of our findings is low. Rather, our findings are intended to generalise to theory rather than to populations, such that they support the quality of our theoretical inferences (Bryman 2016, p. 399).

The data generated by the study were analysed using a process of open coding. This involved reading and re-reading the transcripts to inductively identify the key themes in the data insofar as they related to the research questions. The process of qualitative coding clearly creates potential for bias, as coding decisions are affected to some degree by subjective interpretations. Efforts were undertaken to ensure objectivity by discussing coding decisions with colleagues with expertise in qualitative methods, and minor modifications in coding were subsequently made as a result of feedback from this process.

Findings

The findings are discussed in relation to the three research questions:

Table 1 Basic characteristics of the field work sites

Organisation	Type of company	Total number of shop floor employees interacted with	Total hours of fieldwork	Dominant method for charitable decision-making
1	Retail bank	15	4	C (staff vote to choose charity partners from a short-list compiled by managers)
2	Gambling company	2	1	C (staff vote for a short-list of charities from a long-list compiled by managers)
3	Energy company	3	2	B (self-selecting staff charity committee)
4	High street restaurant chain	2	1	A (staff have some discretion in how they fundraise for charity partner chosen by management)
5	Manufacturing company	2	2	B (self-selecting staff charity committee)
6	Retail bank	2	3	B (staff consulted ad hoc on potential charities)
7	Higher education institution	12	4	A (staff can organise fundraising activities but no management support)
8	Supermarket	5	3	B (staff can nominate charities)
9	Supermarket	3	3	B (staff charity committee with one staff member leading on fundraising as part of paid duties)
10	Supermarket	4	2	B (staff can nominate charities)

A primarily top-down decision-making, *B* consultation with shop floor staff, *C* some form of democratic decision-making

RQ1. How are Lower Level Employees Involved in Decisions Related to CP?

The view of shop floor staff on appropriate charity partners is sought in most of the workplaces studied (in eight out of ten workplaces), and various forms of consultation and devolved decision-making were observed and described, as summarised in the final column of Table 1. These include staff being invited to volunteer to attend charity committees where their views could be expressed, as well as three types of more formal processes in which they could nominate charities for consideration, vote for potential charity partners to be long-listed from which managers made a final decision, or vote from a short-list drawn up by managers. In no case were shop floor staff consulted on whether or not the company should pursue CP per se, nor did they have a decisive influence on the choice of major charity partnerships, but their views were sought for 'lower stakes' CP decisions involving the destination of lesser sums of money and corporate commitment. When consultations took place, their extent was restricted by managerial interpretations of 'the business case' and initiatives were often viewed as tokenistic by the staff.

In the companies where the fieldwork took place, CP continues to be primarily driven by a business case as conceived from a managerial perspective, which seeks benefits such as improved company reputation, brand-building in targeted markets and strategic alignment partnerships as chosen by senior managers and the board. Typically, employees felt they were more likely to be involved in the CP decision-making process when the project involved employee fundraising and when it involved allocating smaller sums from company profits, usually through a 'matching' scheme, such that the employer matches amounts raised or donated by employees. However, when the CP project required significant funds from company profits, employees felt they had very limited to no say in the destination of these funds. No data were collected on the processes and monetary amounts involved in either company-funded matching schemes or 'higher stakes CP', as this would largely happen at headquarter-level rather than in the branches and departments where the fieldwork took place. But the apparent willingness to loosen control on the CP budget only when the numbers are smaller is revealed in this comment made by a manager during the 'gateway process' to gain access to the shop floor in the case of one of the retail banks:

> If we're investing a large sum, say half a million pounds or more, then we have to think it through and have rigour and be sure we're leveraging all the value. But if it's smaller sums we're more relaxed about it. Our matched funding scheme, where we give a maximum of £250 to any charity, is *more a gesture of goodwill* to an employee to say: 'we recognise and support what you're doing in the community'. It's not a Big Brother approach, we don't say 'here's £150 for your kid's football team, now put our logo on their shirts and show us the press cuttings!' (organisation 6, gateway interview with manager, italics added for emphasis)

When democratic procedures were introduced, the goal of improving staff morale through 'gestures of goodwill to employees' is frequently cited, for example, one manager said: *"The main aim is to give staff a 'feel good' factor"* (organisation 8), and another noted: *"The value of this stuff is from a [staff] engagement perspective"* (organisation 4).

The imperative to engage staff can lead to democratised CP being denuded of cause from the employer's perspective, such that the act of charitable engagement eclipses other factors, as this quote illustrates:

> There was no link to the brand, we just wanted to get everyone engaged… we [the managers] step back from the choice because at the end of the day we want an engaged workforce who feel good about the company (organisation 5, gateway interview with manager).

This instrumental approach expressed by managers differs from that expressed by shop floor staff in our study, whose drivers and motivations incorporate altruistic and ethical concerns for chosen charitable beneficiaries (see findings below). This is in line with the suggestion that collective empathy at the employee level infuses the rational CP decision-making of managers with emotions (Muller et al 2014). Yet staff also respond to this 'engagement' aim, as an employee in the same workplace just quoted says: *"Some of this stuff makes me feel proud to be part of the company"* (organisation 5).

But managerial explanations of CP are primarily instrumental and focused on achieving company objectives, such as recruiting, developing and retaining good staff, as these comments from senior managers attending the TSCP conference demonstrate:

> When I get a good approach from a charity I think: that sounds like an exciting and inventive way to develop our people.

> We look to the Third Sector for non-traditional skills development that offer employees meaningful and memorable opportunities.

Whilst a trend away from 'chairman's choice' and towards more open procedures for selecting beneficiaries was apparent, the expectation that CP would serve business objectives remained intact. Even when donations were generated by employee fundraising rather than allocated from profits, managers spoke of being, *"directed by a business need to*

be visually active in certain areas" (TSCP conference). Avoiding dis-benefits was also a managerial concern: *"We're always looking for win–win scenarios. There are certain charities we would steer [the staff] away from, if they were going to cause us [the company] issues"* (organisation 3, gateway interview with manager).

For these reasons, the involvement of shop floor staff in selecting charitable beneficiaries was often found to be rather tokenistic and marginal. For example, in organisation 2, a long-list of ten charities is drawn up by a senior manager and presented to staff who can vote to select the short-list of five charities who then pitch to the senior managers who make the final choice. In this scenario, the lower-rung employees have no real say over who is under consideration nor who is ultimately successful. The lack of meaningful involvement in charitable decision-making probably explains why many staff in workplaces that ostensibly seek their opinion remain unaware of how causes are selected, as this quote—from a workplace where staff vote to choose from a short-list drawn up by managers—shows:

I'm not fully aware of the process for selecting the charity of the year, it's just announced and then we fundraise for it. (organisation 1).

Widening staff participation in CP can sometimes be viewed as an end in itself by managers, such that the process of selecting beneficiaries is intended to generate excitement and achieve goals related to staff morale and engagement. One manager's view that: *"It's the easiest way to give people a bit of a choice and a bit of a voice"* (TSCP conference) is echoed in one of the workplaces:

[Our] measure of success is not on the selection of beneficiaries but on the number of employees who take up the opportunity [to express a charitable choice] (organisation 1, gateway interview with manager).

In these situations, managers could be slightly dismissive of the resulting charitable choices (for example by labelling them 'the usual suspects') and believed that as managers they still retained control, when necessary, over the final decision:

The shop floor staff make the decisions, but when we started out we did give them a steer… Intuitively they do the right thing. (organisation 10, gateway interview with manager).

However in some workplaces the shift towards wider control over CP does appear to be more embedded and rationalised:

Previously this has been a bit ad hoc, where it's been the branch manager's interest, whereas now we've got a framework… The people who actually make the decision are the people on the shop floor. The people

who work on the shop floor tend to live in the local community, so they've got a better insight into who the best charities are [whereas] lots of managers generally live farther afield. (organisation 8).

Credible data on levels of participation in staff votes were not readily available, but where numbers were provided or guessed at, it appears turn-out rates in voting procedures are around 20% or lower. This was not perceived as necessarily problematic by senior management, given the 'means over ends' approach described above and also exemplified in this quote:

Even when people don't take up the offer to help choose charities, they feel good about the fact that it's on offer (organisation 1, gateway interview with manager)

But the data from the shop floor offer an alternative perspective on low participation in consultations. Staff describe being reluctant to participate in decision-making, such as voting for a corporate charity partner, due to issues related to timing, having other workplace priorities and lacking confidence in their ability to make the 'right choice', as this exchange during a staff meeting in organisation 1 illustrates:

Hari: "[the email about choosing charities] comes round on a Friday when we've just got too much to do, there's no time to sit down and think about it properly"
Iris: "Yeah, it's better not to fill the survey in, if you don't know enough to make good choices"
Hari: "It's an important decision and you can't rush it"
Iris: "I'd rather someone picked who knew more about it"

Therefore, when employees do not take up the opportunity to participate in CP decision-making processes, the reason is not necessarily due to lack of interest on their part, but could be due to other factors such as lack of confidence, bad timing or unwillingness to participate in a process that feels tokenistic.

RQ2. What Criteria are Involved in CP Decision-Making by Lower Level Employees, in Particular in Relation to the Selection of Charitable Beneficiaries?

Consistent with the findings of Nesbit et al. (2012), we find that workplace charitable decision-making reflects the personal experiences and preferences of shop floor staff. A voluntary member of a staff charity committee charged with selecting beneficiaries explains:

It's a really difficult question to answer, how we pick which charities get help. It all depends on the individual's circumstances. If someone has got, say,

cancer in their family they have an affinity with that. Children's charities are always popular – people always want to do things for children (organisation 9)

This extract from an informal discussion in organisation 10 reflects similar sentiments:

> Researcher: "Do you support the same charities in your private life that you want your company to support?
> Anna: "I think it's the same".
> Ben: "Yeah, I'd always pick the one that I felt good about".
> Charles: "I think you make it personal to yourself, don't you? If someone in your family had cancer then you can relate to that…"
> Dawn: "I don't think we think 'this is the one that'd be best for [the company] to support', I think we think: "This is the one I would support", so I'd choose that."

Shop floor staff expressed disquiet about the types of causes prioritised by corporate leaders, which were often perceived as less worthy than causes they would choose. A typical comment, reflecting on a major company investment in an arts organisation, was: *"Theatre is like a luxury, you can live without a theatre"* (organisation 1). Widening CP decision-making therefore enables shop floor employees to exert influence in line with their personal views on the 'right' types of charitable causes that deserve support. In all the workplaces studied it was found that cancer, children and hospices were the causes most frequently mentioned as inspiring the most enthusiastic workplace fundraising efforts among the staff, as these quotes further illustrate:

> Lots of people [colleagues] do tend to think of cancer charities – and yes, that's number one in my book. And children's charities for the obvious reasons. (organisation 7)

> One of our colleagues unfortunately died in one of the hospices, so the [local] hospice is very close to us. And I've banged the drum for [another local] hospice because my father died there. So there is a personal feel for the hospices that we're trying to raise funds for. (organisation 6)

Both managers and shop floor staff recognised that widening employee participation in the selection of charitable beneficiaries creates an in-built advantage for certain charities, especially well-known 'big brands' and those working in cause areas that enjoy widespread support. A manager commented that *"The [staff vote] is not very fair, the same few charities win them all."* (TSCP conference) and in another workplace a staff member explained that:

> We as individual employees have the chance to nominate who we want as our Charity of the Year [and] it's always a big charity. (organisation 6).

Despite this potentially undesirable consequence of exacerbating the widespread mismatch between the most urgent causes and the distribution of philanthropic funding (Friedman 2013), the prioritisation of employees' philanthropic preferences does have the advantage of respecting the moral claims made on the shop floor, which, according to study participants, increases their likelihood of being enthusiastic participants in the ensuing CP activities.

RQ3. Which CP Decisions and Activities are Most Likely to Improve Employee Morale and Foster Other Corporate and Social Goals?

The data show that shop floor staff seek two important—if apparently contradictory—qualities in the charities they choose to support in the workplace: they must be deadly serious and yet seriously fun. Firstly, the cause must be widely viewed as 'worthy' and of relevance to the lives of the majority of colleagues. Then, having selected a cause such as cancer research or a children's hospice, talk among staff turns to their anticipation of the enjoyment involved in the forthcoming fundraising: *Ultimately it's about having fun* (organisation 1), and the same sentiment in another workplace: *It's totally fun-orientated* (organisation 10).

Recollections of prior successful workplace fundraising are focused on the fun-factor:

> X charity was fantastic – they had people abseiling down walls and all sorts of things [big smile]. It was great fun (organisation 6).

Explanations for why staff choose to get involved in workplace fundraising rely on the same sentiment: *"Yeah, we all love it. It's just something to get involved in, isn't it?"* (organisation 9).

This exchange at a staff meeting in organisation 1 recalls the enjoyment of a recent fundraising activity in the workplace:

> Jane: "We did a sponsored bike ride where we just had to keep two exercise bikes going in the banking hall all day"
> Keith: "It was really good, cos we got a load of the soldiers up from the barracks, didn't we?" [lots of laughter]
> Laura: "But they wanted a go, everyone wanted a go. It was good fun."

The expectation that workplace fundraising will generate fun and a diversion from the daily monotony of working life was dominant in all the observed workplaces discussions,

articulated most vividly in these comments from a woman working in a supermarket:

> You've got to make it fun, cos you don't get many fun days down there, believe me. Down there on the shop floor. You know, it's hard work. People are working constantly. You know, they come in and do their shift, lugging boxes, putting things on the shelves, bringing things out of the chillers you know, and they do work hard. So it's nice to have a bit of fun, you know? I think morale would be really bad if we didn't, you know, let our hair down. (organisation 9).

The same woman noted that fun-centred workplace fundraising can achieve an additional desired goal of breaking down barriers between shop floor staff and customers:

> You go down the chilled meat [aisle], and there's some guy standing there in a blue wig and some Elton John blue sunglasses. It's just a bit of fun and the customers love it as well, they comment and they chat to [us] then, you know.

The link between fun and charitable activity is reinforced by the inclusion of fundraising in the wider brief of organising workplace social activities. As this woman working in a retail environment explains:

> I'm on the [workplace] social club committee so it's also my job to keep people interested in things like that – we do theatre trips and days out – it's just a matter of keeping morale up… We try and get the store involved as much as we can, you know. Everybody. We dress up here. When we do [breast cancer charity fundraising] events you'll see 'em all with like the pink cowboy hats and the boa feathers and grass skirts and they'll be sitting on the check-out. (organisation 10).

Further, the data show that in addition to creating opportunities for light-hearted fun, workplace fundraising can also subvert—albeit fleetingly—the normal corporate hierarchies. In the name of charity, shop floor staff are empowered to take the lead and request their male managers to undertake activities that can be embarrassing and occasionally painful. For example:

> Last year [to raise money for the charity of the year] we had all of our section leaders and half our managers having their legs waxed and chests waxed. [Animated voice] Yeah! It was cool. We were meant to have a waxer come in, but she let me down at the last minute so we let the colleagues come and do it [lots of laughter]. Yeahh! [more laughter]. Some of them had their chests done, some of them had their backs done, some of them had their legs done. (organisation 9–female employee)

The words, tone and laughter in the following exchanges demonstrate the importance of managers being willing to humiliate themselves in the service of fundraising. Shop floor colleagues in organisation 1 reminisced:

> Natalie: "We were at [a local shopping mall], do you remember? We were running round with a trolley?"
> Olive: "Oh my god yeah, going through [the shopping mall] with a trolley, and we had our branch manager at the time, we was dressed up as pirates, wasn't we?"
> Multiple voices: "Yeah"
> Pam: "Dressed up as a pirate, in the trolley, and we basically had a bucket [to collect donations]… Bless him. He'll do anything for charity that bloke, he really will. Once he waxed his legs in the banking hall"
> Multiple voices: [lots of noises of agreement and approval, e.g. 'yeah'].

Similarly, the shop floor employee in charge of organising staff fundraising in organisation 9 explained:

> Mary: "We're having some stocks made. I've actually just been offered a gunge tank as well, and the managers will go in those. People will pay money to throw stuff at 'em."
> Researcher: "Will the managers be willing to do that?"
> Mary: "Yeaaaah!! [loud, lively voice]… They enjoy it, it's a bit of fun. Nobody would do it if they didn't want to. At Easter we all had our faces painted, all the managers were walking round with their faces painted."

The reason for employee fundraising being driven 'from the bottom' may be pragmatic, as this worker suggests:

> [Fundraising] tends to be set up and run by people [like us] right at the bottom of the organisation. The more senior you are, the less time you spend at your desk, or there's less time to get involved and they can't promise to be there on a certain day, for example for a cake sale. (organisation 7)

But there is also a sense in which senior managers are thought to consciously loosen their grip in order to achieve the desired objectives of raising morale and building teams:

> We did a charity bike ride, instead of being a boss and their team, all of a sudden we were just ten guys on bikes, riding along, enjoying each other's company (organisation 6)

When hierarchies are temporarily suspended in pursuit of a fundraising goal, wider business benefits can be achieved in terms of building relationships and trust between different tiers of a company, as this final quote from an employee shows:

I found myself climbing a mountain with a member of our Executive Committee – the most senior woman in our company! And there was also a new graduate there too. On the trip it didn't matter if they earn ten times more than you, if they climbed slower then you had to all slow down and go at their speed (organisation 3 – female employee).

Having presented our findings in relation to each of our three research questions, the next session discusses how this study advances our theoretical understanding of employee involvement in CP.

Discussion

In the ten workplaces observed in this study, shop floor employees experienced limited involvement in CP decision-making, and demonstrated different drivers for involvement than those articulated by managers and business leaders. We also found that employee involvement did result in less strategic CP decisions, as predicted by Muller et al. (2014) and previously found by Mize Smith (2012). However, this appeared to be not only the consequence of CP decision-making being influenced by employee emotions and preferences, as argued by Muller et al. (2014), but was also facilitated by management choices made in the organisation of particularly smaller CP initiatives. The strategic goal of these smaller CP initiatives was deliberately designed to engage staff and increase staff morale, sometimes with goals of facilitating recruitment and retention. In these smaller CP initiatives, the managers did not seek other outcomes such as reputation enhancement, brand-building and strategic partnerships. Building on the work done by Liu and Ko (2011) in relation to employee volunteering activities, we would argue that this shows how CP can incorporate both internal and external strategic goals if business leaders and employee representatives from a range of levels are involved in the CP decision-making.

Additionally, we propose that our understanding of CP to date has overlooked a key feature: the creation of 'liminal spaces' in workplaces that satisfy shop floor staff's desire for some—albeit temporary—power and enjoyment at the expense of their corporate superiors. The data collected in this study indicate that fundraising in the workplace can create liminal-like states which, as discussed above, involve periods of deliberate inversion that ultimately reinforce the status quo (Turner 1969, p. 97). At a minimum, this could involve shop floor staff experiencing temporary equality with their workplace superiors as illustrated in the example of the charity bike ride in which hierarchies were dissolved to become "*just ten guys on bikes, riding along, enjoying each other's company*". More extreme undermining of

hierarchies is evident in the examples where shop floor staff take control of activities whilst those higher up the corporate ladder undergo embarrassing and even painful acts, such as male managers having their legs waxed or being put into stocks and pelted with gunge.

It is not only in the course of fundraising activities that liminality occurs in the workplace. It also happens at other culturally sanctioned times in the calendar, such as the annual office Christmas party, when normal standards of deferential behaviour are lifted, and at away days or outward bound-type trips when conventional ranks are disregarded in pursuit of team building objectives. Liminal culture exists in the workplace apart from charitable activity, but we argue here that it is appropriated and reconstituted in a particular form for some practices of CP.

Other studies have noted the benefit of temporarily suspending normal office hierarchies, but only from a managerial perspective. For example in their study of managers, Liu and Ko (2011) state that employee voluntary activity "also provides opportunities for quality interactions with each other in a much less competitive and stressful environment. The volunteer experience of employees working together to contribute towards an event can help them to develop respect for others at different levels and in different parts of the company." (Liu and Ko 2011, p. 259). Our study demonstrates this point from the employees' perspective.

In addition to enabling the temporary undermining of hierarchies, employee fundraising also serves a function in corporate settings by bringing the personal into the workplace. Allowing staff to pursue their personal philanthropic preferences in their professional setting, and to do so in a way of their choosing, serves to colonise the workplace with personal experience. A greater social purpose and creativity is allowed to dominate, for example by selling home-made cakes for charity rather than striving to meet targets. Humanising the workplace by allowing forms of association that are otherwise not present can lead to a recalibration of the values and morals within the workplace (however temporarily).

Enlightened company directors and managers recognise that their staff are social beings, that the right fit between companies and employees' ethical expectations is important for staff recruitment and retention (Coldwell et al. 2008), and that perceived corporate hypocrisy leads to emotional exhaustion and high turnover (Scheidler et al. 2018). But there is a denial of the humanity of people in many workplaces because of the dominance of the cash-nexus, whereby relationships are constituted by monetary transactions. As a result of their structural location at the bottom of workplace hierarchies, shop floor staff experience a solidarity in their marginality—for example the shared experience of working on the tills and confronting distracted or rude customers—which can be harnessed in pursuit of philanthropic objectives.

In sum, when considering which charitable choices are most likely to improve employee morale and help achieve corporate goals, our results suggest that charitable causes must firstly be widely viewed as 'worthy' and of relevance to the lives of the majority of colleagues and thus trigger collective empathy (as described by Muller et al. 2014) into executive decision-making. Secondly, and crucially, we argue that employees' charitable choices must also generate enjoyable fundraising activities that flatten corporate structures and give temporary power to those on the shop floor. The combination of collective empathy and liminal opportunities best describes the most compelling drivers of CP for lower level employees.

Lessons for Companies When Conducting CP

It may be challenging to involve both business leaders and employee representatives in CP decision-making, as our study shows that preferences and goals for CP often differ distinctly. When selecting charities, shop floor staff prioritise causes based on their personal preferences and experiences, whilst business leaders prioritise causes based on commercial considerations. A potential solution is for business leaders to direct "employees' attention to some needs and not others" and with this, "executives may try to steer their employees' empathic desire to help others to be better aligned with the organisation's business objectives" (Muller et al. 2014, p. 14). Whilst this may be an attractive option from the business leaders' perspective, the perceived lack of meaningful involvement might still leave employees feeling relatively uninvolved, as illustrated by their responses to exactly these attempts made by the managers in our study. We would thus favour an approach where employees (or

their representatives) are enabled to be involved in making CP decisions, particularly in relation to choosing charitable causes, as well as designing and implementing workplace fundraising activities. We believe this will help to maximise both the business and social benefits achieved through CP, which is important if a company is striving to pursue a broader conception of CSR.

The answer to our second research question can be helpful in understanding how to organise CP decision-making within companies. We asked which criteria were involved when lower levels of employees make CP decisions. In Table 2, we contrast those determinants with the drivers for involvement and rationale for charity choices from the perspective of business leaders as discussed in the literature review section and identified in our data. In sum, we find that the charity choices of business leaders are driven by factors such as a desire to find a 'good fit' with a low-risk charity partner that is likely to bring maximum business benefits, whereas shop floor staff prefer to choose charities with which they have a strong emotional connection, for whom fundraising will be fun and personally meaningful.

Another relevant finding when organising CP is that when lower level employees' are given the opportunity to be involved in CP decision-making, they can lack confidence in their own knowledge about, and abilities to make decisions related to, CP, which limits their involvement, and could potentially be mis-read as lack of interest in CP per se. When facilitating employee involvement in CP, it is therefore important to provide all employees with the relevant knowledge and give them enough time, in order to empower them to make meaningful CP decisions.

Table 2 Determinants of CP decision-making by business leaders and shop floor employees

	Rationale for charity choices	Driver for involvement
Business leaders (Board, CEO and senior management)	Appropriate brand alignment (a 'good fit') between the charity and the company	Improving the reputation and credibility of the company
	A respectable partner with the right image, a proven track record and a professional approach to working with the private sector	Marketing opportunities to attract and retain customers
	A strategic partnership offering continuity and potential for a long-term relationship	Access to HR benefits (staff recruitment, retention and development)
	Value for money relative to alternative charities and relative to gaining benefits such as staff development opportunities	Publicity and public relations opportunities
		Other tangible benefits–e.g. access to celebrities and entertainment opportunities for the board and directors
Shop floor staff	Similar rationale to charity choices made in personal life	Supporting causes they personally care about
	Based on personal connection with, and experiences of, charities and causes	Pursuit of 'having a laugh', fun and carnival
	Preference for causes that are easily understood by them, have widespread appeal and are believed to make good use of donations	Desire to relieve the monotony of working day
	Preference for well-known charity brands and local charitable organisations	Subverting normal workplace hierarchies by temporarily asserting shop floor dominance over managers

Conclusions

This study underlines the point that, in order to fully understand the drivers and benefits of CP, all the different actors involved in CP need to be considered, and not just the managers and business owners. Our findings support the 'emergent perspective on CSR' that "a more strategic approach to CSR warrants greater ownership of the initiatives by employees" (Hejjas et al. 2018, p. 3). If a model of greater employee involvement in CP decision-making is found to be robust and increasingly prevalent, this has implications for both sides of corporate–charity partnerships. Companies need to better understand how to involve staff in a way that secures greater meaningful participation and offers the opportunity for a liminal experience whilst maintaining the desired core business and social benefits. And charities need to better understand the more varied motivations for involvement across the whole company, not just its leadership, and the implications of more diffuse decision-making for their efforts to seek and maintain corporate support.

New and enlarged CP initiatives may seem difficult to achieve but companies appear keen to engage with charities, albeit under changing—and arguably more complex—terms of engagement. Whereas the starting point for charities seeking corporate support has traditionally been the Board (Sargeant and Jay 2014), in a more open approach to CP decision-making the chairman's endorsement is no longer the only—or best—route to success for charities seeking support from the private sector. Charities can be self-limiting in their focus solely on the owners and senior management (Elischer 1999), yet this paper shows that if their cause can inspire employees and offer liminal and enjoyable opportunities then lower status and lower paid staff may well decide to support them.

Big charity brands have traditionally been preferred CP partners for corporations as they have usually been best-placed to offer and deliver the greatest business benefits when defined from the perspective of business leaders. But giving a wider group of employees a greater voice in corporate charity choices could open the door for different types of causes to secure corporate support, as employee involvement in decision-making reflects personal rather than professional imperatives, leading—for example—to more local charities attracting support. But in all cases it is important to understand how structures operate to influence the selection of charities because staff decisions will reflect widespread conventions in this area, for example reflecting the normative popularity of cancer research, children and hospices. This need not be viewed as intrinsically problematic on the basis that due respect should be given to the moral claims made by shop floor employees, but the distributional consequences must nonetheless be noted.

This paper reinforces the well-known point that philanthropy as a concern typically dovetails with personal concerns. This is true whether charitable decision-making occurs in the private sphere of home or in public spheres such as the workplace. 'Shop floor' philanthropists and fundraisers are not wealthy, yet they demonstrate similar concerns to rich donors, documented in a growing body of literature (e.g. Breeze and Lloyd 2013; Odendahl 1990; Ostrower 1995; Schervish 2008) in that they need more fulfilment than their daily life and work can offer, and they turn to philanthropy as one means for seeking that greater fulfilment. Charities should therefore not overlook the role and influence of individual staff members, including those on the shop floor, in facilitating CP.

The main limitation of this study relates to the scope of the fieldwork—given the reach of CP across the private sector, it is reasonable to question whether our findings are overly dependent on our choice of field sites, and on the employees with whom we interacted. Further potential limitations relate to problems around access resulting in a convenience sample, lack of spontaneous discussion about fundraising during observations and the possibility that staff felt inhibited about speaking openly in front of the researcher. Also, the results may be particular for the geographical area of observation (South East England) and the timeframe during which the study was conducted (2011–2012). For all these reasons, further research is needed to confirm the findings, and we urge that both qualitative and quantitative studies be undertaken in order to better understand the drivers for philanthropic activity across the entire workforce and in different workplace contexts and countries.

We already knew from previous research that companies and charities have distinct motivations and gain different benefits from engaging in CP. But this article highlights the different drivers for involvement, differences in the philanthropic decision-making processes, and different experiences of engaging with charity, for those at the top and the bottom of workplace hierarchies.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest All the authors declared that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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