

PROUD TO BE BRITISH: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF WORKING AS A GAMES MAKER AT LONDON 2012

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This autoethnographic study of working as a Games Maker at London 2012 demonstrates the motivational challenges behind volunteering for an event nearly 2 years in the future and the issues this causes. The task of keeping 70,000 international volunteers motivated over a long time frame, while not providing any financial incentive, was a huge risk and investment; yet, the response from athletes, media, and the general public when the Games ended was that the Games Makers were a vital part of the success of London 2012. This study shows how the initial stages of the volunteer program suggest that even though the author was preselected, the generic training, primary knowledge exchange, and pre-Games engagement were potential demotivators. It was only once that the role-specific and venue training were undertaken, that the volunteer enthusiasm returned. This study follows a personal journey of one such volunteer. The article modifies Bang and Chelladurai's original motivational pull theory, by arguing through an autoethnographic study, that motivations will change over the timescale of the volunteer experience and involvement. It does this in contrast to previous studies that have favored quantitative methods, with data collected at one point in time, as opposed to this study, which captures motivation over a 24-month period.

Key words: London 2012; Volunteering; Games makers; Motivation; Mega-events

Introduction

Mega-events, and in particular the Olympic Games, rely on a large volunteer workforce to fulfill many of the roles needed to organize and run a successful large-scale sporting event. The large numbers of volunteers required are an important element of the financial structure of the organization

of many sporting events. For example, Nichols and Ralston (2014) estimated the total monetary contribution of the Games Maker program equates to approximately £35million based on Addleys' (2012) volunteer hours costing of £500 per volunteer.

For London 2012, the volunteers were called "Games Makers," as they were tasked with helping to make the Games happen. In total 70,000 Games

Makers were recruited from all walks of life and backgrounds to fulfill a wide variety of roles across all venues (LOCOG, 2012). These tasks included welcoming visitors; transporting athletes; and helping out behind the scenes in the technology team to make sure the results got displayed as quickly and accurately as possible (LOCOG, 2012). This demonstrates how crucial volunteers are to the successful running and organization of large-scale events. The program for recruiting the volunteers began in 2010, accompanied by extensive media coverage. The first online applications began with preselection of certain applicants and then the general application process commenced. Over 200,000 applications were received for the 70,000 places and once applications had been reviewed, the interview process began in early 2011 and offers made by Christmas 2011. Formal training began in early 2012.

The article is based on an autoethnographic study exploring the experiences of a Games Maker during the preparation and operations of the 2012 Olympics. Autoethnography is defined by Ellis (2004) as a style of research and writing that tries to find, describe, and analyze personal experience. This is in order to discover components of the inclusive culture but should be undertaken in such a way as to provide a story that allows the reader to connect with the storyteller. The writings will be my subjective experiences through the study of the group dynamics, in order to understand the role of the volunteer within the Games as argued by Farrell, Johnston, and Twynam (1998). They suggested that group cohesion can be a strong volunteer motivator as formally no volunteer operates in isolation of a larger workforce. The understanding of mega-event volunteer motivations can lead to a better appreciation of the development, recruitment, and retention of the volunteers over a long-time period based on the “experiences” discussed in this article. There are few studies previously undertaken on mega-events the size of the Olympic Games that look at such detailed qualitative methods as autoethnography over a sustained time period and therefore this is an addition to knowledge in the area of volunteering, event, and festival literature.

Although this research does also acknowledge that there are many arguments around how these costs savings are managed through the use of a

volunteer workforce, there are still many unanswered questions surrounding the motives of the organizers, both politically and socially, as discussed by Warburton and Openheimer (2005), of the use of free labor to underpin a commercially driven, financially robust global event.

Undertaking Mega-Event Volunteering

Sport event volunteering has developed since the middle of the 20th century (Andrew, 1996; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995) and relates specifically to those volunteers who help out at sporting events, often through clubs or governing bodies, with no financial remuneration. However, Gellweiler (2011) further suggested that sport event volunteering goes beyond general sport volunteering discussions, because of the scope of the volunteering required for events and so needs its own definition, as shown here within the scope and scale of the planning required. She argued that it is an overlap of three distinct and independent components—sport, event, and volunteering—and although there is an abundance of research on volunteering in terms of studies on the demographics of volunteers, their values, behavior, motives, and commitment is still a developing area of research. Therefore, this research has augmented the literature on festival and event volunteering motivations, as it has studied motivations over the timeframe of the planning, training, and operations of one mega-sport event as opposed to previous studies that focused on gaining data at one point in time only.

The act of volunteering is not limited to a specific area, yet a sport event volunteering definition builds on the perspective that this type of volunteering differs from others, as it does not necessarily have to be subject to repetition, but may be a “one-off” activity (Grammatikopoulos, Koustelios, & Tsigilis, 2006) or episodic volunteering (Brudney, 2005). However, here it is more the “one-off” activity even though it stretches in duration over a long timeframe. Thus, sport event volunteering may be initially conceptualized as any activity in which time and energy are given either formally or informally for assisting with staging one-time, infrequently, and/or regular sport events of various scale, duration, and scope (Gellweiler, 2011). It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for

financial gain and serving the benefit of the own person, another person, group, and/or organization. Indeed, as shown here, it is becoming a key component of the successful running of these events, yet one that potentially saves the organizers millions of pounds in staff wages (Nichols & Ralston, 2014). Sport event volunteering may be carried out as a marginal form of serious and/or casual leisure, although references can be made to the “work” aspect through the terminology and hierarchical management systems in place.

A critique of volunteering cannot overlook altruism, as it is also evident in the definition provided by the Volunteering Unit (1995) that defines volunteering as “the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community; the environment; or individuals outside one’s own immediate family and that it is undertaken freely and by choice without concern for financial gain” (p. 3). In a similar way both Clary and Snyder (1991) and Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood, and Craft (1995) highlighted volunteering as a form of helping behavior; the latter suggest that volunteering is not an impulsive act, but carried out in the form of planned helping. This often requires considerably more planning, sorting out priorities, and matching of a person’s capabilities and interests with this type of intervention. This study supports this, as considerable time was invested by all the volunteers in training, travel, and time away from home, in addition to the time and expense of the organizers in order to get the volunteers trained and ready for the Games. Taylor, Darcy, Hoye, and Cuskelly (2003), in their study of sport club volunteers, suggested that there are different levels of expectations and levels of psychological contract between those who volunteer and those responsible for managing and organizing the volunteers. In particular, the administrators had substantial expectations of volunteers in relation to adherence to professional, legal, and regulatory standards, whereas the volunteers focus on doing rewarding work in a pleasant social environment within their time restrictions.

Market Drivers

Hayes and Horne (2011) argued that volunteering for London 2012 is not so much about cultural change or civic participation, but on a market-driven

service delivery initiative in that the Games have to be seen to go well especially with the use of public money. Yet, Morgan (2013) would question that none of the above considers the argument of volunteering being a state promotion of the “big society” ideology in times of economic austerity, when traditional methods of providing social capital are not available through lack of funding initiatives. For London 2012, the volunteering spirit was part of a wider delivery issue to satisfy the IOC and corporate sponsors, as opposed to true bigger society agendas. Therefore, it is questionable as to what extent the volunteering program within London 2012 actually offered social capital advances for society in general. Yet, the other argument is that without this monetary value that volunteering gives an organization, it could not otherwise function, especially in the area of sports volunteers for smaller scale events (Bang & Ross, 2009).

Motivation to Volunteer

Handy et al. (2000) suggested the perceived costs and rewards will impact on the level of volunteering and it is the balance between costs and rewards that determines the level of volunteer commitment. This is based on the assumption that there is no pecuniary benefit to the volunteer as mentioned previously but other perceived awards are the driver to volunteer. Volunteers are often willing to give their time to an activity or organization with a dimension of free will (Baum & Lockstone, 2007). Although there is a financial benefit through using volunteer labor at an event (as argued by Nichols & Ralston, 2014), there are also the social benefits that accrue through social capital and *communitas* through shared volunteer participation as discussed in the previous section.

It is the motivation to volunteer and how this motivation may change over a long build-up period, which this research has addressed through an auto-ethnographic account and has shown how these motivations can be quite different and change over the pre-Games phase. This is an important finding for future volunteer programs that may take a long time to plan. Although Stebbins’ (2000) theory of serious leisure (i.e., that is to say describing the volunteering as much as a form of work as leisure) is often quoted as the basis of volunteering, the pull

of Olympic volunteering has given rise to a variety of authors' suggestions as how to measure the volunteering at these events. Many studies focus on the motivations to volunteer and discuss how complex and diverse these motivations can be, yet this study has highlighted how they can also be better understood through accepting the changes that can take place. Clary et al. (1998), and later Clary and Snyder (1999), developed the volunteer functions inventory to try and measure volunteer motivation to try and understand the different motivations to volunteer. Yet, this inventory was not specific enough for sporting events, as it covered career opportunities and gaining knowledge and skills with more focus on career development. Giannoulakis, Wang, and Gray (2008) developed the Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale (OVMS) and Farrell et al. (1998) the Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS). Although the former specifically covered the Olympic volunteers, and the latter special events, I decided to use Bang and Chelladurai's (2003) definition. Their framework was designed from a quantitative study undertaken with volunteers from the 2002 World Cup. They suggest that the reason people volunteer specifically for sporting mega-events is based around patriotism, concern for the success of the event, pride, social interaction, personal growth, and career experiences: all intrinsic awards yet also extrinsic awards of uniform, food, and admission.

Part of the argument centers around the belief that the values-based approach to offering services as a volunteer is very different from paid employment (Cuskelly, McIntyre, & Boag, 1998), and therefore Bang and Chelladurai's (2003) framework looked at the scale of what motivators are there to support this and the reasons why a cross-section of individuals donate time to help others. The uniqueness of the framework is through it being the first to recognize the strong motivational pull of patriotism, which is particularly pertinent in this context of London 2012. Bang and Chelladurai (2003) further argued that with the London Games being an international sporting event "the reasons for volunteering in the event converged on the event itself rather than the simple reason of helping others" (Bang & Ross, 2009, p. 64). However, a difference here is that the data to support this framework were collected by convenience sampling at one point in time

and analyzed statistically through factor analysis. In contrast, this research was an autoethnographic study over 24 months, showing how motivations can change over a time period.

Maintaining Motivation

To maintain motivation to volunteer at an event there must be a relationship with satisfaction and this comes through rewards described as extrinsic awards within the VSE-IMS framework. Farrell et al. (1998) proposed that there is a relationship among volunteer motivations, volunteer satisfaction, and actual experience. Therefore, volunteers will be motivated and willing to keep volunteering as long as their satisfaction in volunteering and the experiences gained are commensurate with some level of reward. These rewards can be as simple as watching sporting events and experiencing meaningful encounters, so organizers need to ensure that the continued perceived rewards are forthcoming (Bang & Ross, 2009). In order to effectively recruit, retain, and maintain volunteers it is crucial to understand the principles that drive people to volunteer. This is particularly true of such mega-events as the Olympic Games where the lead-in times can be several years and therefore maintaining high levels of commitment is crucial.

Therefore, this research will explore whether these motivations do indeed change over time and can become demotivators through a number of important factors, supporting Farrell et al. (1998), and how these links between satisfaction, motivation, and experience need to be carefully considered in the future by those tasked with major volunteering programs. Jacobsen, Carlton, and Monroe (2012) believed a variety of rewards, depending on their perceived values, will be vital to maintain the volunteers for the various types of activities needed over the long term, which is supported by this research.

To define rewards associated with volunteering, it is important to recognize that they are separated into intrinsic and extrinsic categories (Meier & Stutzer, 2008). Although Bang and Chelladurai focused more on the extrinsic awards, intrinsic includes the satisfaction of seeing the results of the activity whereas extrinsic are the tangible rewards. To further place these rewards into context, it is

necessary to consider Stebbin's (1996) earlier definition of rewards being split into those that are deemed personal such as enrichment, self-actualization, and financial rewards (similar in VSE-IMS framework), to those social rewards being social interaction and group accomplishments (again in VSE-IMS). This definition includes consideration of associating with others and accomplishing tasks through group efforts; very topical for the Games Maker program, as supported through the reflections here. Although volunteers may recognize rewards differently, it is the collective experiences and how they may regard the rewards of interaction and experiences that outweigh any personal financial outlay (the average Games Maker had to outlay accommodation, long distance travel, and subsistence costs). Although individual responses to rewards may vary, even letters of thanks and appreciation can be deemed as important a reward as much as free lunches and taxis late at night, as these satisfy the social reward need.

One of the most important aspects of volunteering and the notion of rewards can be seen through an exploration of social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976), whereby social behavior involves exchanges and interactions. Sherr (2008) argued that the concept of rewards affords useful perspectives for effective volunteer programs, because volunteer commitment is directly connected to the concept of reciprocal exchanges in social exchange theory. Within this notion is also the argument that the more rewarded an individual is the more likely they are to continue to volunteer, but the conundrum arises as to how can this volunteering spirit be maintained in the lead up to an event happening in 24/30 months, such as the London 2012 Games.

Context of my Volunteering Experience

I began volunteering alongside my parents as a teenager and throughout my adult life, culminating in assisting my children by volunteering nearly 8 hr each week at school, church, sports clubs, and local charities. I was nominated to be a torch bearer for the London 2012 Games based on my volunteering. The chance to be involved in the biggest mega-event in the UK for many years was a huge opportunity, and so my journey to be a Games Maker began with a visit to my University from a LOCOG representative in 2010 when I mentioned it

was something I would consider and completed an initial application. Within a few weeks, I received an email inviting me to apply as a "preselected" volunteer. At first, I ignored it, as I couldn't understand why I would be "preselected," as the e-mail referred to doctors, nurses, and sports specialists. However, after a reminder from LOCOG, I completed the application, was interviewed locally in March 2011, and then in late December 2011 I was offered a role. At no point did I try to hide the fact that I have written critically in an academic capacity about the planning of the Games and resultant resident/community impacts, and so I was partly expecting my application to be rejected.

My first proper encounter with other Games Makers was the welcome day in February 2012, when I went to Wembley Arena, London. This was a compulsory 4-hr orientation event, including motivational and inspirational talks and videos; however, there were nearly 10,000 volunteers at each one, which served as a reminder of the size and scale of the volunteer program. Various other generic and role-specific training days were completed before I began working on July 25 for 16 days until August 11, 2012, in the Press Operations Centre at one of the Olympic Park's most popular arenas. This role included looking after journalists and photographers covering all the sporting activities. I worked shifts in teams of between six and eight people within our unit, but also alongside other teams involved in press work too.

Study Methods

The chosen method was an autoethnographic study of being a Games Maker during the preparation and operations of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Ellis (2004) observed that people do not generally deliberately undergo an experience in order to be able to write an autoethnography about it; rather they retroactively and selectively write about past experiences that are assembled using hindsight. I decided to keep a diary as a memento of my experience and these recollections now form the basis of this reflection. To know something, without claiming to know everything, does not allow a generalization (Richardson, 2005), as having partial knowledge is still knowing in the context of the study, "whilst accepting the situational limits

of the knower” (Ellis, 2004, p. 961). Autoethnography aims are not to look for generalization but to find rich description, so through recounting the diary entries of my experiences it could help future policy makers to see inside the experience with the associated motivations and demotivations. There is no objectivity here, “but there is still plenty to say as a situated speaker, subjectively engaged in telling about the world as they perceive it” (Ellis, 2004, p. 961), and the reader deserves to know how the writer claims to know. As Maréchal and Linstead (2010) argued, autoethnography involves self-observation and reflexivity, previously known as insider ethnography, but whatever the definition, it must be acknowledged that it differs from ethnography in that it embraces and accepts the researcher’s subjectivity and the researcher is the primary subject telling their personal stories and reflections. It is more about the reflexivity and the way the researcher is aware of his or her relationship to the research through their role within the research. One of the main criticisms of adopting an autoethnographic approach to research arises through the inability to be objective with accusations of the research being only “exploratory, personal and full of bias . . . unreliable, impressionistic and not objective” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4).

However, to fully understand the role of the volunteer, through being an actual volunteer, there has to be some subjectivity acknowledged explicitly, not only regarding my background to undertaking the role, but also within the context of the event. My background as an academic and as an individual with an interest in the Olympics is all part of the reflection, as this cannot take place in a vacuum. In an autoethnographic study there has to be some acknowledgement of the author’s own ideological stance in order to set the context for the interpretation and understanding of the reflexive nature of the story telling (Richardson, 2005). I have been an avid follower of the Olympic Games since a child and have always followed them through the media while also being aware of the huge controversy and political undercurrents associated with the bidding and host selection process. Furthermore, it was only through entering into academia as a “second” career that I began to research and write about the bidding process, the social impacts, and the community relocations that occur as a result

of the infrastructure building programs. Therefore, as already mentioned, I did wonder whether I would pass the vetting process to be a volunteer as a search of my academic writings would show a critical standpoint of aspects of the IOC movement. Therefore, I approached this research as someone who perhaps has a more balanced view of some of the consequences of running this spectacle, although not wishing to miss the opportunity to immerse myself within this experience within my own country. Hence, I claim an element of bias through a deeper understanding of some of the political, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the London Games.

Through undertaking a volunteer role, I was allowed to become immersed in the “field” by becoming a central part of the running and organization of the biggest mega-event in UK history. There was no need to become “accepted” as ethnographers would be within the research field (by joining a tourist group or sporting team), other than being selected to be a volunteer, yet I had to get through the institutional “gatekeeper” to be accepted.

The research settings were the various venues for training purposes as well as the main source of engagement between LOCOG and the volunteers—The Games Maker internet site. All the data for this article were my personal diary entries written in the journal given to all Games Maker volunteers to record their experiences and notes. The journal was completed from the first date of being accepted as a volunteer, firstly in my own journal and then the LOCOG one. Most entries were completed the same day on the journey home, some a day or two later. I found it easy to complete the entries, as there was always time on the train or shortly after getting home that I could relax, think, and reflect. Although I was often tired, so many things had happened each day that I thought it important to capture the stories as soon as possible so as not to forget anything. I tried to record at least one full page each day and sometimes more, so could write for 30–45 min some days.

The entries have been systematically analyzed using the Bang and Chelladuai (2003) VSE-IMS scale. They suggest that the reason people volunteer specifically for sporting mega-events is based around patriotism being the strongest motivational factor, and a study referring to this scale

has more applicability to other large-scale events than just the Olympics. The rationale was to see whether the quantitative findings from the original study by Bang and Chelladurai (2003) bear any relation to the autoethnographic understanding of feeling and emotions from my own experiences, over a much longer time frame. The reflexivity has helped me to place the context of some experiences firmly into new perspectives of understanding, having reread the entries a while after the Games have finished. Although autoethnography requires an analysis of the experiences to frame the story within mega-event cultural experiences, it is also the relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences for the purpose of helping *insiders* (other volunteers) and *outsiders* (general public, athletes, etc.) that is important here in the volunteering role (Geertz, 1973). The question of reliability comes from the production of factual evidence, whereas validity comes from the trustworthiness and ethical approaches adopted in relation to confidentiality and reporting of shared experiences with other Games Makers, the organizers, and interacting with the public. It is important for the reader to be able to enter the Games Maker role to see it from my point of view (Ellis, 2004). Criticisms of lack of rigor or theory can be overcome by explanations that these are my reflections and my personal experiences that are both realistic and transferrable. This research approach began by specifically looking into motivational factors through immersion into the culture of the volunteer and gaining an insight into volunteers' experiences, the meanings, and the understanding the other volunteers give to these experiences in relation to the VSE-IMS framework.

Reflections

Front Row at Wembley!

At the interviewing stage, despite no promises being made of successful interview outcomes, full security details were taken, including official security ID pictures (which later appeared on all accreditation) and passport checks, even before the interview had taken place. This gave some people positive assurances that perhaps the decision to recruit them had already been made.

Why did they take our photos and passport details before the interview? Some of the other interviewees said it was because I had already been chosen through being preselected . . . that sounds good, but not so sure as nowhere have I seen this. Yes, I have had all the e-mails saying you have been "preselected," but I just assumed that meant for interview and not that my role was confirmed . . . the e-mails mentioned Doctors and other specialist professions to which I don't belong so to be honest I ignored them.

The poor guy who interviewed me seemed so nervous and took reassurances from me . . . basic interview asking you to sell yourself so no different really to many I have already done, therefore it all seemed too easy and I wondered if I had handled it right . . . enjoyed the day as first opportunity to start to see branding and actually realise that after months of talking this thing is really going to happen . . . however, if now I have blown it at interview, I will be so annoyed but is that all they really needed to know especially if have been preselected? Was everyone preselected today, so therefore it means very little and it is just a charm offensive?

Although this reflection suggests motivations of extrinsic rewards, it also considers whether the notion of being preselected lie in the arguments of Meier and Stutzer (2008), suggesting a mix of different motivators is needed, both intrinsic and extrinsic, proposing that the preselection was an intrinsic motivator, as something in my skillset/professional status was being additionally rewarded. This further supports Handy et al.'s (2000) suggestion that it is the balance between the costs and rewards of volunteering that determine the volunteering support, so while the organizers cannot give many extrinsic rewards at the outset, the offer of intrinsic rewards (being preselected) can act as a positive motivator, particularly for those volunteers from busy professions.

Gosh, I've been preselected but why? What do I have to offer apart from speaking to a LOCOG rep about wanting to volunteer on a visit to work? Wonder what it all means and does this confirm I am a confirmed volunteer or what? I hope I haven't overextended myself to a position I may not be qualified for, but I was being honest on the application and in the interview.

At the first major gathering of volunteers (10,000 at a time) at Wembley Arena in London during

February 2012, which were more inspirational and motivational events rather than training sessions, it appeared that the preselected volunteers sat nearest to the stage, as all the people sitting around me were preselected. In many ways this was an intrinsic reward, as the impression was given that I had one of the best seats in the house as all of us were “professionals,” chosen for our daily jobs.

Again, same comment,

Sat today with doctors, nurses, security personnel, special branch officers, and little old me (these are all the occupations listed in the preselection e-mails) . . . interesting to meet with everyone, but why bring us all to Wembley—for what? Seen my uniform had a chat and (but) I guess it was more to make us feel exclusive, special, rewarded which in a way I felt, but I was glad I wasn't shoved up the back of the arena, as I would not have seen much. Furthermore, the door I was told to enter by took me straight to my seat, with no queues, but some of the other entrances had massive queues of people waiting to get in and it was so freezing cold today. Is this another perk to being preselected I wonder and made to make me feel a bit special. This doesn't seem to apply to all the volunteers, just us sitting near the front, who seem to be all professionals. I found today a bit over the top on the back slapping and motivational speeches. Too much for 4 hours! Many of those sitting around me were checking their watches and some didn't come back at all from the break.

Whether the impression of preselection was given to keep our motivations high, as all of us had busy jobs and careers from which some had to take unpaid breaks, perhaps the “preselection” was a positive motivator (Farrell et al. 1998) supporting the VSE-IMS motivators of values and interpersonal contacts and perhaps even career orientation. Other than this, there was no further mention of the preselection. At all subsequent training, generic and specific, no mention was ever made of the preselection, but many mentions were made of the exclusivity of being a volunteer. This was a motivator in itself, as often the training involved mentioning of representing my country, pride, and patriotism (Bang & Ross, 2009), and also the VSE-IMS motivator of patriotism. Those with busy professional lives needed extra motivators to get them engaged and show long-term commitment.

Therefore, while the excitement and anticipation was growing with the impending Games, the

motivational experiences were not all positive, thus supporting Bang and Chelladurai's (2003) framework as to the important motivators with these reflections highlighting key potential demotivators. It was interesting to see and hear other Games Makers' comments, not dissimilar to my own experiences.

“I do Know Really”

From the outset of applying to be a volunteer, LOCOG were very explicit in reminding all potential Games Makers that volunteering meant all applicants had to make their own arrangements for accommodation and travel to and from London or to whatever location they were volunteering. The only rewards to be supplied would be an oyster card for travel around London (to and from volunteering) and uniform, yet the wearing of just the uniform could be a motivator itself according to the VSE-IMS framework.

The discussion today at training centered on all of us coming from well-educated and professional backgrounds—probably as we are the only ones who can afford the financial outlay that volunteering will cost us. You have to be VERY dedicated and a keen volunteer to outlay that much, so again I wonder whether there actually is a true social, cultural and ethnic representation within the volunteer programme, despite all the promises of using the Games to provide key skills to aid people to gain long-term employment as a result of volunteering at the Games as everyone I have met, including some of the younger volunteers, have jobs or are students.

However, contrary to these reflections, the giving of additional responsibility is not always deemed a reward as per the study of Taylor et al. (2003). They argued that volunteers are not concerned with the associated legal, professional, or regulatory aspects of what they were doing as this is considered the responsibility of the managers and not always an aspect they want to be involved in.

Poor communication often led to frustration, but the only option would have been to withdraw from the program. Compounded to this was the frustration over the lack of specific role or venue identification. Although I was advised that I would be working in press operations, there were a wide

variety of roles and a multitude of venues that this role could have been performed at. Finally, when the offer was made as to the venue, a very short window was given to accept the role otherwise the role would be offered to another volunteer.

Why was I the only one at role specific training today to not know my specific role or venue . . . where did I miss that message? I felt pretty stupid being the only one who hadn't got a clue what specific role they had and so managed to blag my way through the session. I wonder if I had deleted the email or whether I really haven't been assigned yet.

Further frustrations arose out of the level of the initial generic training, which was so basic it was deemed a waste of time by many, considering the expenses of attending were down to each volunteer to cover. Some volunteers traveled and stayed overnight in local hotels, others came on 4-hour return train trips for basic training, hence leaving extremely frustrated. All the people who I undertook initial training with were mature business people and so we all laughed at how basic and frustrating this initial training was.

Felt today like I have been trained for an award in customer service (I later found out I actually had)—it was so basic and it wasn't just me who appeared to feel this way as we began to laugh and felt a bit sorry for the poor woman trying to train us. Felt sorry for XX who had travelled all the way from Devon and it cost him £150. He seemed so well trained that he probably could have done a better job. When we walked back to the station he seemed very demotivated but I spoke to him about how I felt too, and the time and money each of us had invested to date that surely it was important to overcome these disappointments and setbacks to realise the bigger picture of being able to be part of the Olympics and, in our own small ways, to contribute to the success of the event. Furthermore, I mentioned how proud I was to have been accepted and would miss his company if I didn't get the chance to work with him having had such a laugh at training—like minded individuals!

These entries perhaps question the role of personal growth and career orientation from the VSE-IMS framework and the reflection agrees that the training is acting as a potential demotivator at this stage. Even when I went into more role-specific training, it was hard to simulate how it would

function within the Games themselves, as I did not have “customers” to work with and had to mock up situations. Other volunteers who had more specialist sporting roles were able to train within their respective sports on test events, but the more customer-focused, role-specific training was hard to undertake prior to the Games themselves. The best training was 2 weeks before the Games when I finally got inside my venue. This was also when I met my managers and then could relate more to my roles and meet my actual colleagues, with whom I would be volunteering: very motivating to meet them finally. It was at this point when I also realized the rigidity of the service delivery that we were all expected to meet regarding the requirements of both the IOC and LOCOG, as there were professional and managerial volunteers being told what to do by young inexperienced paid LOCOG managers. An interesting combination, but for the sake of the Games being a success, I kept quiet in situations where maybe under other circumstances suggestions may have been forthcoming.

Best day yet today, despite the rain and the cold, got to see our venue, our work space and xxx made it up from Devon, so he is still part of the team and that was lovely to see. I am soooo excited now, I can hardly wait . . . so bring on the Games! Also met the “managers” who seem young and friendly although not sure how experienced they are either . . . several times I wanted to ask the “why” question and even suggest a simpler solution but I have to remember I am not in the position to do that . . . (or at least training has told me not to) . . . I feel my skills are not being utilised to the full.

These young managers were being paid, which gave them an air of authority and leadership that in other walks of life would not have been acceptable. However, being restricted within the boundaries of volunteering for the London 2012 Games meant I had to work with these young managers, respect them, and take our instructions from them without question, which thus reversed our roles. According to Hayes and Horne (2011) this was needed for the market-driven service delivery of the event. Furthermore, the group cohesion, as suggested by Farrell et al. (1998) and the VSE-IMS framework social interaction appears a stronger motivator here. However, the time delays could have been used to

build suspense, but again they were slightly demotivating and at all stages of training. I met people who were demotivated and withdrawing from the program because of the long gaps between each stage. Here the intrinsic motivators and the relationship with volunteer satisfaction are crucial as volunteers were still thinking of “resigning.”

Long periods of hearing nothing from LOCOG led to periods of frustration, as did the prospect of spending long periods away from family. However, as soon as mention was made in the press of the Games, then the feelings of being part of the London 2012 Olympics and helping to contribute to its organization soon, albeit temporarily, pushed negative feelings to one side. This supports the VSE-IMS framework view of patriotism being an important motivator and in Bang and Ross’s (2009) argument the strongest motivator and what kept many volunteers still motivated despite other elements being possible demotivators.

Not long now and a bit apprehensive about where I am going to stay, moving around between three addresses, getting home on days off and leaving family behind, but I am so excited about the prospect of being part of the Olympics. I suppose the upheaval and uncertainty are part of the excitement, but I still feel a lot is taken for granted regarding who can afford to spend nearly 3 weeks working unpaid and spending on accommodation—it doesn’t seem to include many unemployed people or people in need of specific skill training. Nearly all the volunteers I have met are teachers, retired people, mums, nurses, or people who have negotiated time off around their jobs to be able to work on the Games. Not all of them volunteer on a regular basis, but just saw the once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of the Games. This highlights my misgivings about the whole process being more market driven, than a means to give people key skillsets for future employment opportunities, despite the initial LOCOG promises to do this.

This also supports Morgan’s (2013) suggestion that the volunteering program from the Games is not really part of the Big Society ideal of community enrichment, as how many of the volunteers are ever going to volunteer again to support their local communities, or benefit from career orientation from the VSE-IMS framework. Furthermore, the expense of being a volunteer at the Games has resulted in a certain social grouping emerging (at

least within the environment where I worked) made up of professional and semiprofessional volunteers only, with none being that interested in career experiences as in the framework.

“Just a Case Number”

From the initial application until the final Games themselves in July 2012, the communication was always one way from LOCOG. For a successful volunteering program, there needs to be open and two-way communication (Hager & Brudney, 2004), but the communication was solely through web postings and the onus was often upon me to keep checking the Games Maker website for any messages regarding the details and times of interviews. If I ever needed to contact LOCOG it had to be made via a 0845 number, which went through to LOCOG headquarters. Each time a “case number” was created, and the operator had to go through a convoluted process of identification and form filling, which felt impersonal, inefficient, and powerless. If I was lucky, someone would call back, but not always.

Had to phone LOCOG about training arrangements and their computer wasn’t working again (grrrr), so the lady asked me to telephone back later, what a waste of time as the computer seems to control everything they do, as nobody seems allowed to use their own initiative and everything has to be logged—this is so annoying and frustrating—hope the Games themselves are organised better! I don’t think they realise how busy some of us are and I cannot just drop things to fit in with LOCOG.

This reflection seems to question Sherr’s (2008) argument that volunteer commitment is linked to the notion of reciprocal exchanges, yet supports the Bang and Chedallurai’s (2003) framework where they argue interpersonal contacts are crucial to relationship forming. Here it is clear that the exchange is not occurring, nor are the relationships forming leading to demotivation with one-sided communication leading to frustration. Everything was being logged into a database within a central computer system, which was then passed on to another person to deal with and on two occasions when I had to make such a call, the computer system was down, and I was asked to call back, which

was a demotivator. Furthermore, it seems to be all about logging everything for record keeping and justification of time and effort, perhaps echoing the market-driven service delivery approach as suggested by Hayes and Horne (2011). No one dares to go “off message” and say something that is not scripted—hence the need for computer-based communication.

In training, I was surprised how many of the others were so negative already about how they have been treated. Many of them have had similar experiences to me, but they seem very angry. Maybe they were expecting to be treated differently and made to feel special, but I can't believe that even at this late stage they may still withdraw . . . surely I have invested time and money to get this far, that it would be a waste to walk away now and just end up watching the TV. I know I would be really fed up to have given up hours of my time at my expense, yet to not get to be part of the Games.

This shows a subjective perception of the ways many of the volunteers expected to be treated. However, despite my own reservations of the experiences I had received to date, on hearing their stories I was still shocked that at this late stage that they may yet walk away from the opportunity. Thousands of others would be only too keen to undertake this role and all because they are frustrated over communication. At training, I was regularly reminded of how lucky each volunteer was to be selected, which overshadowed any opportunities to raise concerns or worries as I felt they were swamping me with positive messages to perhaps reinforce the VSE-IMS framework's motivator of interpersonal contact and also of personal growth and of feeling important and needed. The social exchange theory element of volunteering as suggested by Emerson (1976) does occur once training begins with these positive reinforcements for the volunteers, yet before this there appeared to be little two-way exchange.

They were making a fuss of us and going a bit overboard with the sugary welcome, or at least that is how I felt (perhaps I've attended too many sales pitches and team building events) . . . it was nice to be made to feel so special, but there is a limit to the amount of “back slapping” one can take. However, it is nice to receive all these positive affirmations of being a volunteer and I still haven't been in the Park yet. I certainly went back

to the station with a spring in my step and found myself looking at people and wondering if they had a role in the Games or not, but feeling a bit—not so much smug—but feeling chuffed to bits to have an insider role in the Games.

These intangible rewards support the VSE-IMS framework as well as Jacobsen et al.'s (2012) proposal that a variety of rewards both tangible and intangible are needed, and it is how these rewards are perceived by the volunteers that will maintain support in the long run. Furthermore, as already mentioned, Handy et al. (2000) argued that the balance between costs and rewards will be vital and dependent on rewards that are still forthcoming whether intrinsic or extrinsic. Even though time frames and schedules had to be strict and tightly adhered to, the tone of some e-mails was very daunting. This research has also shown how despite rigid guidelines being issued from training manuals and management, in the actual day-to-day operations of the Games volunteers focused more on the success of the Games as much as, if not more at times, the reward systems. It was only basic rewards, such as food and safety, that became overriding concerns, as there was more concern for a successful outcome of the volunteer roles.

Gosh, have to remember to check all e-mails and then the website to see one from LOCOG telling me what job I will be doing . . . xxxx knows what she is doing but I still haven't been allocated my role or venue yet. I wonder how long but hope they haven't offered me and as I didn't pick it up it has been withdrawn.

The fear of rejection, or being withdrawn from the volunteering program, was one that was discussed at length by volunteers, as they had all, at this stage, told family and friends and the excitement was already building. The fear of being withdrawn from the program reflected the motivation around the sense of feeling important and part of a huge international event and how they would feel to lose that. This is an interesting point in relation to where the power lies within the volunteering relationship, as at this stage it resided within LOCOG, through informational power and to a smaller extent coercive power (French & Raven, 1959).

I was offered roles at both the main Games and also at the Paralympics, which I had to recognize

would involve too much time away from work and family, in addition to the extra expenses involved, which were not to be covered at all by LOCOG (apart from a preloaded Oyster card for travel to and from work within London). However, things did not go according to plan here either, as the website was so badly designed, cancelling the Paralympic offer meant that my entire application was withdrawn just a few weeks before the Games began. An e-mail arrived confirming my withdrawal, at which point a frantic phone call was made to LOCOG's headquarters, where a sympathetic operator managed to get someone to reinstate the application immediately. A very different approach to the one I had received earlier, when trying to contact people at LOCOG. Perhaps the concern of me withdrawing prompted a different level of response than generic queries.

Oh noooooo. . . . Tried to withdraw from Paras and now have withdrawn application altogether . . . this is a disaster . . . what if they can't reinstate me, oh the disappointment? The loss of face at this stage would be unbearable as I have now told so many people about what I am doing and not to be able to be part of it having already invested time, money, and emotions, would be too much. So, at this stage it would be awful not to take part. On the other hand, trying to stay positive and realistic, if I was not involved I could watch it all from home with the family . . . no . . . now I want to be there in London having invested all this time. I hope they can get it sorted and the woman on the phone was lovely and so helpful—first one to actually be nice and friendly and not cool and efficient, so maybe they are worried about cancelling my role. At this stage they must think they have invested a lot of time and resources in my training, that they don't want to lose me and neither do I want to miss out on being there.

Thus, considering the VMS-ISE framework from Bang and Chelladurai (2003), the sense of loss of being able to show pride and patriotism through being a Games Maker would have been impacted greatly if the accreditation had not been reinstated. In addition to this, some days the schedule rosters were not accurate and despite e-mails confirming shifts, often arriving at 6:30am, many volunteers were told that they were not rostered. Although this might have felt like rejection, a quick security check then enabled everyone to start. The thought of not being "wanted" was a little demoralizing, but nobody was turned away.

Our point of checking in every shift was called the "workforce" check in and our place to volunteer the "workroom" despite us being the volunteers. This supports Stebbins' (2000) arguments of serious leisure being akin to work, as many references were still made to work despite us being Games Maker volunteers and therefore am I part of this exploitation of free labor or not, as argued by Warburton and Oppenheimer (2005). It is interesting that while much was made of us giving our services for free in exchange for a "once in a lifetime experience" and being "lucky to have been part of a selected group," there were still very hierarchical management structures in place and constant references to working environments, thus the comparisons with serious leisure and the argument that I was more an unpaid employee than volunteer.

First day in uniform and in park, but it nearly didn't happen, it was so embarrassing. I was turned away by the soldier on the security gate as my accreditation didn't work. I didn't panic as I guessed it was probably to do with my offer being cancelled. Got a new one issued straight away and everyone was so helpful and efficient. At workforce book-in again not listed, but probably due to change in accreditation so once that sorted really pleased to see others and managers in the work room. . . . First day was brill getting everything ready . . . can't wait until tomorrow despite receiving two knock backs about getting even in on my first day, not demotivated at all, to the contrary, as excitement building. Loved leaving the park in my uniform today as felt so proud.

Perhaps my self-awareness of the exclusivity of the team with whom I was working with was more to do with the unique training that was required to undertake our role and the long shift patterns I was required to operate. When our work patterns were sent to us, it became clear that I would be working long hours, often into the early hours of the next day and therefore concerns surfaced about how I was expected to get home at 2:00 in the morning. The young managers were not sure, but said they would make enquiries. In fact, this didn't become an issue, as LOCOG paid for taxis home after late shifts thus showing, according to the VSE-IMS framework, extrinsic awards; values through the concern for others, and personal growth to a lesser extent, through perhaps being made to feel important.

Well this is nice, I'm sitting in my own personal taxi home after finishing at 1:30am and they have organised this very well. Hate to think how much this is costing but what a very nice gesture from LOCOG and it is a shame we didn't know about this arrangement earlier as I bet others would have been able to use this and maybe not have dropped out over unfounded concerns over long hours and costs.

It is expected good practice to pay volunteer expenses (www.gov.uk/volunteering) and in many ways an Oyster Card, preloaded with £90 worth of travel, was covering some expenses, yet the taxis home after working late shifts were excellent. However, these extrinsic rewards only appeared during the actual Games and were not part of the motivational package during training. It could be argued that they only became rewards once it was clear to the organizers how demotivating the absence of perceived support to get home late at night was, in that there was no concern as to my or other volunteers' welfare once I had left the park prior to this.

From the outset, the managers were told to keep their distance from the volunteers and not to engage in personal conversation (later confirmed by them). In fact, on our second morning when I turned up my manager made such a fuss and said "lovely to see you have come back for your second shift." I thought he was being sarcastic at first. However, this supports the argument of Stebbins (1996) that enrichment through collective experiences acts as a strong reward system.

Really surprised today when I turned up early, as I was so excited to be in the park, that XX said he was sooo pleased to see I had turned up for a second day. I think he could see by my reaction that I was unsure what he meant and he explained that in their training they were told to expect people not to turn up on their second day and keep the uniform and security pass. I was shocked by this and he said the reality of what some people may have been doing may not meet their expectations and therefore after one shift that would be it. No way from me as I had such a buzz yesterday and today was even better . . . today at 6:30am I wandered into the XX arena and had the place to myself before 1000's of people descend. . . . Wow couldn't believe it as it was so quiet and looked amazing . . . I had to remind myself of the enormity of where I was . . . however; I was buzzing with excitement and couldn't wait to begin.

The collective experiences were further manifested in that backgrounds and careers seemed irrelevant, as everyone was working towards the same goals of successful Games, supporting the framework motivator of values and concern for the success of the event. Initial conversations were mostly centered on why each person had volunteered and only after several days did conversations about occupations and home life emerge. It is interesting that despite some of my fellow volunteers coming from backgrounds with high levels of responsibility, volunteering responsibility was not deemed a reward as Taylor et al. (2003) argued. This is despite possibly being senior executives and experienced managers in everyday life, yet as volunteers this aspect is forgotten or deliberately avoided as the responsibility resides elsewhere. It was almost as if everyone was assuming an identity of a Games Maker, being dressed identically, and so our "other" lives were irrelevant as was social status, background, or education.

Really surprised to find out how many other Games makers are from education whether actual teachers or administration and xx being a retired head of education in xxx. We must be all good at people skills, hence why we are doing this role.

We were all treated the same by the managers and accepted our instructions, despite the average age of the managers (paid staff) being considerably less than most of the volunteers. In many cases it was on the job training, this applying as much to some of the managers as the volunteers and the joint learning provided a unique bonding as well as opportunities for interpersonal contacts and personal growth.

"Proud to be British"

Patriotism was evident as a strong motivational factor for nearly everyone in our team. Experience ranged from a hospital consultant to a retired government official, teachers, lecturers, high level corporate directors, students, and housewives. Religions, cultures, beliefs, values were all aligned to the feeling of being British and wanting to show the world what a good job we could do so as to make the Games a success, despite concerns of the true social representativeness of the crew. This manifested

itself every day when dealing with the global media and in the amount of praise and thanks they gave to the team. Training had given the impression that it would be hard to keep these individuals happy and nerves in the first few days were high as anticipation mounted as to the relationship the volunteers would forge with the press.

Wow on leaving tonight it took ages to get out of the park as I stopped to talk to so many people who wanted to speak to Games Makers. Lots of them were from overseas and they really wanted to meet and chat yet I am not an athlete. All these photos that will be shown in the future and I will be in them!! It is lovely to be able to represent UK and London in the eyes of all these visitors and the press. Almost feel famous but then again I and some of the other volunteers went celebrity spotting and tried to get in on the David Beckham interview . . . at least Jonathan Edwards (Olympic Triple Jump Gold medalist and now BBC commentator) stopped to say hello and chat.

This turned out to be a very rewarding and mutually beneficial encounter, with many evenings in the workroom spent watching medals being won and records broken in the company of international journalists and photographers all cheering alongside the volunteers. The press often said the patriotism shown by the volunteers was infectious and despite working on many Games, this atmosphere in London was different. This arose out of a concern for the event to be a resounding success, but mainly through pride and patriotism, in support of the VMS-ISE framework. There were also values through concern for the success of the event, interpersonal contacts whereby genuine friendships were formed, and personal growth through feeling important and needed.

“Made in Britain”

During our shifts, I would be given incentives with badges in bronze, silver, and gold. Pin badges became quite a collectable item and so I was given several different ones as rewards. Additionally, letters from Lord Seb Coe and Jacques Rogge accompanied these badges. Hearing special mentions at the closing ceremonies in speeches from Lord Seb Coe, David Cameron, and Boris Johnson also acted

as extrinsic awards. However, for me the biggest extrinsic award came after the Games: being invited to the special part of the athletes’ parade in London reserved for the Games Makers, and meeting up with the team again. This supports Stebbin’s (1996) suggestion of enrichment coming from team accomplishments and the framework motivator, forming friendships. Here it is the whole team of Games Makers celebrating our overall team success.

Today was the final day to wear my uniform and meet up with fellow volunteers, felt very honoured to be in The Mall celebrations and see everyone else wearing their accreditation and all their pin badges. Last day as a Games Maker and life goes on tomorrow.

The rewards, the sense of belonging, the team spirit, and the enrichment all came to a conclusion for me at the parade. I was very glad to have been a part of the experience, but I was also glad to be returning to normal life.

Ethics of the Autoethnography

In relation to the collection of data while working as a volunteer, there must be some sensitivity given to the other volunteers’ anonymity. I am only repeating my observations that were contained in the diary, provided by LOCOG, as part of my volunteering duties, but supplementing this with recollections of the process reaching the point of London 2012 itself. Furthermore, subsequent to the Games, many volunteers are readily discussing their roles and motivations for partaking in the Games and my observations are adding to a substantial reserve of volunteering stories. Although Fleming (2012) discussed the exceptions of informed consent and the notion of “openness” of the role of the researcher, in this context there is an element of “guilty knowledge.” However, as it is my role and the interaction of myself within the context on an event volunteer that forms the focus of the research, I do not consider that informed consent is required from my fellow Games Makers. Furthermore, to have asked permission for informed consent from every person with whom I was interacting, fellow Games Makers, members of the general public, athletes, media,

sponsors, and LOCOG employees would have been impossible. In addition, according to Fleming's arguments for justifying the omission of informed consent, this research is worth doing to highlight the motivations of a volunteer during London 2012 and how these motivations change. There is no other way to have undertaken this research other than through a Games Maker role.

Conclusion

This article has shown aspects of the personal reflections of one the Games Maker's journey and has highlighted some key issues to consider in relation to motivation against some of the more traditional literature through suggesting that sport event volunteers have a diverse range of motivations. The reflections have been based around whether the motivators, and by default the demotivators, relate in this qualitative study to the same motivators listed in the quantitative study that developed the VSE-IMS framework (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003). Despite the journey resulting in occasions when demotivators could have been a reason to withdraw from the program and other incidents questioning the volunteer motivation, the pull of pride, patriotism, and team work became the powerful motivators to maintain the support over the long term. The friendships made and the memories from the event will remain. For any future managers of mega-events who need large-scale volunteering programs in place to support the running of their events, the experiences here would point to the consideration of the VMS-ISE framework, but to recognize how motivations do change over time. Additionally, for all large-scale volunteer programs, it is the longer-term extrinsic awards that will maintain the volunteers' enthusiasm and these perceived rewards must be constantly mentioned (often subliminally) to focus attention onto the main event. The usefulness of the story comes from lessons to be learned for the management of possible volunteering programs for mega-events, where it is a distinctive one-off motivation to volunteer for many, which changes throughout the volunteering experience, often influenced by what has happened earlier in the journey.

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