

## **Abstract**

Using narrative inquiry, the purpose of this research is to explore volunteer involvement at a mega-sports event (MSE). It responds to a call for research to provide insight into the background of MSE volunteers (Baum and Lockstone 2007). This need reflects the limitations of past MSE volunteer studies that have at a large extent merely generated large lists of expectations and motivations through a predominantly survey based approach. The context used for this study is the Frontrunner pre-event volunteer programme for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and a narrative approach is applied allowing the volunteer experience to be considered from both the individual and group perspectives. The stories suggest that the individuals arrive at volunteering at Glasgow 2014 as a result of a dynamic process informed by the pragmatist school of thought. The stories also highlight the underlying meaning of volunteers' involvement through consideration of past lived experiences.

## ***Keywords***

Mega-event volunteers, volunteer involvement, narrative

## **Introduction**

The term 'mega-sports event' (MSE) encompasses a wide range of diverse events. Baum and Lockstone (2007) suggest two key features which characterise MSEs. Firstly that they are time-bound, and secondly, that they receive a global interest. The existing literature echoes this perspective suggesting that MSEs include world cups and large international sports gatherings such as the Olympic, Pan-American and Commonwealth Games (Gold and Gold

2008). Furthermore, MSEs typically take place over a short-term period of time and are either one-time or periodic in nature (Doherty 2009).

Volunteers have become an increasingly important economic and cultural component in managing such events (Ingerson 2001). Without their contributions, many MSEs would be unable to function (Kemp 2002). Considerable debate has taken place within the volunteerism literature regarding the motives and expectations of volunteers, both in the relation to MSEs and volunteering more generally. A large proportion of studies have adopted a quantitative, survey-based approach which has generated large lists of volunteer motives (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al. 2010) that arguably provides a very limited understanding of volunteer involvement. Furthermore, it has been argued that motives of MSE volunteers are distinct from those involved in other volunteer activities (Farrell, Johnston et al. 1998) as previous research has shown that these events attract a different type of volunteer (Hoye and Cuskelly 2009). However, it has been argued that relatively little is known about these individuals (Baum and Lockstone 2007). Given the increasing importance of this group and the ongoing debate regarding volunteer patterns, there is justification for a study offering a richer, more contextualised view of volunteer involvement at MSEs drawing on the concept of 'reflexive' volunteering. This form of new volunteerism is linked to the biographies of volunteers (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003) and it merits further research.

Adding to the ongoing changing panorama in assessing volunteerism this paper explores volunteer involvement at an MSE introducing the metaphorical volunteer journey and it contends that volunteering is the result of a reflexive dynamic process informed by the volunteers' pragmatism and past lived experiences. To this end firstly this paper examines the literature surrounding volunteering at MSEs while it also introduces the metaphorical volunteer journey and the ontology of becoming. Secondly the empirical work of the study is

discussed along with the limitations of this work. Thirdly the findings and discussion of the papers findings follow before the study concludes with a summative section.

## Literature Review

### Reflexive Volunteering: A New Hope for Civic Engagement?

The roots of volunteering vary across cultures and time, and volunteer commitment has manifested itself within different political, religious and social frameworks from religious communes to military service (Burns, Reid et al. 2008). According to the National Centre for Volunteering (UK) volunteering can be defined as “...*any activity which involves spending time unpaid doing something which aims to benefit someone (individual or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment*” (Lynn and Davis Smith, 1992: 16. Wilson defines volunteering as “...*any action in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organisation*” (2000: 215). Subsequently, the volunteer is “...*someone who chooses to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit and gain beyond one’s basic obligations*” (Ellis and Noyes, 1990: 3) or “...*someone who contributes services without financial gain to a functional sub-community or cause*” (Henderson, 1981: 31)

In spite of the existence of such definitions, it is difficult to conceptualise the specific act of volunteering because it has many forms and thus the picture that has emerged could be described as rather ‘sketchy’ (Handy, Cnaan et al. 2000, Tuan 2005). In addition, to a large extent, the majority of volunteer studies have examined volunteers as a homogeneous group not taking into account the diversity and proliferation of volunteer activities, but they do agree on certain distinct features of volunteering. First, volunteerism is often associated with a lack of pay or remuneration and refers to people doing something they are not required to

do (Lohmann and Van Til 1992) because this is how they choose to spend their leisure time (Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley 2002). Second, it stems from emotional commitment and the volunteers take time to decide whether to volunteer and to whom to offer their services to (Reinke and Keneson). Finally, the participants choose to volunteer because the activity fits their goals and needs or perceive some expected (presumably positive) outcome (Clary, Snyder & Stukas 1996). According to (Ilsley 1990) there are nine elements of the act of volunteering; namely altruism, commitment, free will, learning, absence of financial remuneration, organisation, psychological benefits and sacrifice. These elements suggest that the forces behind volunteering acts could be best described as a mixture of altruism and self-interest. Writing in 1985, Henderson suggested that “...*social and economic forces are increasingly making volunteerism a luxury that can only be undertaken by the wealthy*”, before adding that “...*the days of altruism are over*” (1985: 32). He perceived that a new breed of volunteers was seeking personal growth and self-satisfaction while helping others. This trend has more recently been examined by other researchers who have highlighted a shift towards more episodic, noncommittal, and self-oriented types of volunteering (Wollebaek and Selle 2002, Rehberg 2005, Macduff 2011) tailored to meet the needs of a new generation of volunteers typified by aversion to commitment and highly individualistic orientations (Dekker and Halman 2003, Hustinx, Cnaan et al. 2010).

This shift in emphasis is argued to present those administering and arranging volunteering with certain challenges and opportunities, particularly in the management and marketing areas (Putnam 1993, Stolle and Hooghe 2005). This challenge, according to key authors on volunteering, could be met by reinventing the concept of volunteering as “revolving-door”, “drop-by”, or “plug-in” volunteering (Dekker and Halman, 2003; Eliasoph, 1998). To others, the turn to individualism is not perceived as a challenge or a long term threat to volunteering, but the direct opposite. They offer the argument that self-driven and self-centred volunteering

could provide a new impetus for an alternative volunteer movement using an army of dedicated individuals serving others while meeting their own needs and writing their own narrative of self-actualization. This “new volunteerism” (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002; Hustinx, 2001) which asserts volunteers as autonomous and self-conscious actors challenging the boundaries between altruism and self-interest has been captured by Hustinx and Lammertyn as “reflexive volunteering”, fundamentally entrenched in the active (re)design of individualised biographies and lifestyles (2003: 238). Subsequently, depending on individual biographical needs and conditions, reflexive volunteers invest a restricted amount of time, and perform a limited set of activities (Hustinx et al, 2010).

‘Reflexive volunteering’ shifts the focus from the collective to the individual. Reflexive volunteering is presented against the backdrop of changing lifestyles and working patterns (Cnaan and Handy 2005). As a result of busier lifestyles and increased working hours, individuals often feel that they lack time and skills to be involved in volunteering (Wilson and Musick 1997, Ralston, Downward et al. 2004). Meijs and Brudney (2007) summarise the change to reflexive volunteering as being ultimately, a change in volunteer availability. From this perspective, the volunteer activity is frequently deemed ‘episodic’; a term first coined by MacDuff (1991) which is now widely used across the literature and it typically takes place in short-term, isolated patterns (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003, Cnaan and Handy 2005, Hustinx 2010). Inevitably, the rise of reflexive volunteering has considerable implications on practice and the organisations in which individuals volunteer (Meijs and Brudney 2007). Given that reflexive volunteering is rooted in the biography of the individual (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003), the creation of a fit between the organisation and the individual becomes crucial to the recruitment and retention of volunteers (Meijs and Brudney 2007, Hustinx 2010).

## **Reflexive Volunteering at MSEs: Out with the Old and in with the New?**

It has been argued that MSEs provide a context in which reflexive volunteering can be practiced (Harrison 1995, Baum and Lockstone 2007). This can be attributed to the ‘time-bound’ dimension of the definition of MSE volunteering used for this paper. Arguably, the volunteer experience at an MSE can be viewed as a volunteer episode. However, it could be questioned to what extent volunteer involvement at MSEs is rooted in the individual or the collective. This is particularly relevant to an ongoing debate within the literature which relates to the replacement of collective volunteering with reflexive volunteering. The rise of reflexive volunteering has been negatively perceived by some within the literature (Hustinx 2010). Schudson (2006) suggests scholars such as Putnam are critical of these new forms of civic engagement given the focus on the individual as opposed to the collective. This has been countered by arguments that the experience can have transformational qualities for the individual whilst contributing to a volunteer cause (Hustinx, Meijs et al. 2012). Furthermore, it has been widely suggested that caution should be taken when suggesting that traditional volunteering has been replaced by reflexive volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003). Polarising volunteering into two distinct patterns has been viewed as problematic within the field (Cnaan and Handy 2005) as it neglects the diverse and complex nature of volunteer activities (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003, Hustinx, Meijs et al. 2012).

Although discussions of volunteer patterns have the potential to be advantageous with regards to highlighting the complexity of volunteering, it has been argued that the impact of the volunteer experience on the volunteer has been neglected (Baum and Lockstone 2007). In light of suggestions that MSE volunteering can be described as reflexive in nature, this is arguably an important area of inquiry. Since emergent volunteer forms are understood to be

rooted in the biography of the individual (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003), there arguably needs to be greater attention placed on the biography of the individual as opposed to consideration of factors such as motives and expectations in isolation from lived experience. Furthermore, the temporal nature of MSE volunteering has been highlighted by its time-bound and episodic characteristics while the episodic volunteer experience is embedded in the continuity of the life of the individual. Therefore, limiting the research focus to the timeframe of the event-itself provides limited insight of the ways in which volunteering fits with the life of the individual in the longer term.

### **Studying Volunteer Involvement through an Ontology of Becoming**

John Dewey highlights the emerging nature of selves through action. “The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action” (Dewey 1916, p.336). Thus, being continuously engaged in a process of change, prohibits stepping in Heraclitus’s metaphorical river for a second time (cited in Knowles, 1999, p.371). Furthermore, the importance of action is fundamental to this worldview; individuals have agency in their destiny and are not simply passive and subject to external forces (Bernstein 1992). This agency is a form of social engagement, situated in the flow of time (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). As a result, individuals have potential to undergo transformation and self-actualisation (Wilcock 1999) achieved through reflexively orientating oneself towards the past or anticipated future, and, on the basis of these orientations, adjusting action (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). This does not however, take place within a vacuum; the social dimension of agency is fundamental to this perspective as individuals are inherently social are therefore relational individuals (Simpson 2009). To encapsulate these dynamics, the ontological position of this paper is one of becoming as opposed to being. Being views reality as rooted

in “*substances, things and events*” whilst becoming embraces “*flux, flow and continuity*” (Elkjaer and Simpson 2011, p.75). This ontological position has important implications for the epistemological perspective of this paper that views knowledge as inseparable from action. It is not, therefore finite and static, but a process, understood from Deweyan thinking, as evolving “*as we live*” (Hildebrand 2008, p.48). This relates to the temporal nature of knowledge whereby past experiences have an anticipatory influence upon future experiences (Elkjaer and Simpson 2011). However, this does not imply a direct process of causation. Knowledge emerges from both experiential and reflexive activity and the interplay between them (Elkjaer and Simpson 2011). Thus, knowledge is continuously subject to change as a result of active and reflexive capabilities. With regards to reflexive thinking, Cohen (2007, p.780) asserts from a Deweyan standpoint that “*experience always generates some learning*”. This draws upon the notion of inquiry, a process of thinking initiated by experience, through which individuals deliberate due to the unsettling of an established course of action (Elkjaer and Simpson 2011). Despite our ability to think reflexively about experience, it should not be assumed that knowledge is solely determined at the individual level. George Herbert Mead offers valuable insights into the process by which knowledge is formed through relational action. “*It is only by taking the roles of others that we have been able to come back to ourselves*” (Mead 1925, p.268). This quote relates to Mead’s discussion of self-consciousness in which the relational nature of individuals is emphasised by arguing that individuals ‘take on the roles of others’ to inform action. This forms an “ongoing cycle of communication” (Elkjaer and Simpson 2011) whereby actions are adapted in relation to the actions of others. Therefore, knowledge is constructed both reflexively and relationally through a continuously emerging process. This paper encapsulates this emerging process as the metaphorical volunteer journey.

## The Metaphorical Volunteer Journey as an Alternative Approach to Volunteer Involvement Research

In light of the temporal and biographical dynamics of emerging volunteer patterns, it is proposed that the metaphorical volunteer journey, as applied to volunteer tourists (Tomazos and Butler, 2010) offers an alternative approach to the study of volunteer involvement. A review of the existing MSE literature suggests that the volunteer journey has not, to date, been applied to this context and secondly the temporality of the journey can also be extended through its application in this paper. Given the preceding discussion regarding the importance of the biography of the individual the application of the metaphorical volunteer journey seeks to incorporate the past, the present and anticipated future. The processes upon which the metaphorical volunteer journey is founded for this paper are based upon four themes outlined by Elkjaer and Simpson (2011). The four themes derive from the pragmatist school of thought and focus upon the relational and reflexive capabilities of individuals. They should be viewed as a dynamic process in which the themes cannot be separated from one another.

1. **Experience** – the interplay between past and future which informs social action in the present.
2. **Inquiry** – a process of deliberative, reflexive thinking whereby the individual seeks to correct a course of action for a given situation.
3. **Habit** – action which is repeated to respond to given situations over time.
4. **Transaction** – a process in which social selves are subject to change through the relational actions of individuals.

The metaphorical volunteer journey seeks to embrace the four themes as a process and generate an alternative lens through which volunteer involvement can be viewed. The journey has no apparent beginning or end, representing temporality and continuity of life as lived (MacIntyre 1984, p.212). This metaphorical volunteer journey embraces this perspective. The volunteer begins the journey in the present, informed by past experiences which allow the formation of habits. Along the journey, the volunteer encounters social situations with others. This sparks the process of transaction through the bringing together of the social selves and situations. The encounter forms an experience on which the volunteer can reflect, and through this reflexive process of inquiry it is established that a new course of action is required. This triggers formation of a new habit and the transformation of the volunteer. This dynamic process continues along the journey as the volunteer encounters additional social situations and goes through more changes. While encountering these processes the volunteer acts in the present, always moving towards the future since “experience is a process continually passing into the future” (Mead 1925, p.273).

By incorporating these processes into the lens of the metaphorical journey, it is anticipated that richer insights can be generated with regards to volunteer involvement at MSEs. Exploration of the past lived experiences and anticipated future of the volunteer, offers a more holistic approach in addition to exploring the processes which can allow transformation of the individual through the volunteer experience. It is considered that individuals volunteering at an MSE will follow a journey which is unique to them. This journey begins before they engage with the organisation and concludes long after the event draws to a close. In becoming involved with MSE volunteering, the volunteer crosses paths with fellow volunteers for a time-bound period, before parting company and continuing along their individual journey.

## **Research Context for Application of the Volunteer Journey: The Front Runner Program at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games**

The context within which the metaphorical volunteer journey will be applied for this study is the Frontrunner volunteer programme at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. It is evident that volunteers will play an important part in the hosting of Glasgow 2014, from the pre-event stage and beyond as volunteering opportunities at MSEs can be beneficial in creating developments for individuals and the community (Downward and Ralston 2006). However, volunteer legacies are often neglected. It has been suggested that this can be attributed to a lack strategic objectives for a volunteer legacy (Nichols and Ralston 2012) potentially linked to the disbanding of organising committees shortly after completion of the event. This leaves the vested interest in the creation of a volunteer legacy with the local community rather than the organising committee (Agha, Fairley et al. 2012). In achieving this form of legacy, the volunteer experience becomes crucial as it may impact upon the decision of individuals to be involved in future voluntary opportunities (Doherty 2009).

### **Method**

#### **Choice of Methods**

Previous studies investigating future intentions to volunteer have relied upon survey based methods (Downward and Ralston 2006, Doherty 2009). This arguably provides limited insight and contextualisation of the volunteers' future intentions. Using the volunteer journey to explore the volunteer experience and potential for volunteer legacy it is anticipated that valuable insights could be established at the pre-event stage and that justifies the use of front-runners for the purposes of this study. Furthermore, it is evident that the Frontrunners' involvement with Glasgow 2014 is considerably longer than a typical MSE volunteer role

during the event itself and it requires greater commitment. This provides an opportunity to explore the dynamics of the volunteer experience with a group who are embedded in an MSE for an extended timeframe.

The data collection method adopted is narrative inquiry and is aligned with the underpinnings of the metaphorical volunteer journey and allows the temporal dynamics of experience to be explored (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Narrative is an appropriate strategy for understanding the volunteer journey as it has potential to reveal insights into the multiple dimensions of reflexivity, relationality and temporality which are fundamental to the philosophical underpinnings of the study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The application of narrative inquiry has taken place on two levels; the individual and collective level. Although volunteers follow personal journeys, individuals come together with a common purpose for a given period of time. By exploring stories both on a one-to-one (participant and researcher) and a group level, it is intended that the volunteer journey can be explored from multiple perspectives. This has been achieved with two methods which have been developed for this particular study. These methods are individual story-sharing sessions (ISS) followed by group-based reflexive story-sharing sessions (GRSS). Fourteen Individual story-sharing sessions (ISS) were employed as an interview-based method with the objective of exploring the volunteer journey. These sessions were designed for volunteers to share stories of their journey in their own way. As a result, rather than the session being a purely information gathering exercise in which the participant responds to structured pre-determined questions, a conversational interview style was adopted (Anderson and Jack 1991). The group-based reflexive story-sharing sessions (GRSS) were designed to proceed the ISS sessions and allow the sharing of stories and collective reflection upon these accounts. Conducting the GRSS after the ISS was intended to allow a relationship to be established

between the researcher and participants prior to the participant sharing stories in a group setting. In addition, participants were able to share their stories in the individual sessions without being influenced by group dynamics and discussion.

The GRSS method has been devised especially for this project through examination and adaptation of the focus group and listening post methods. Focus groups seek to generate insights through collective interaction which would not be possible through one-to-one discussion (Morgan 1988). Meanwhile, listening posts offer “potential to surface the collective (and possibly unconscious) assumptions, hopes, anxieties and desires of members of this population in a way that more structured and individually orientated surveys and interviews would be unlikely to reveal” (Bolden, Gosling et al. 2013, p.4). The GRSS method is a tool for exploring the volunteer journey, drawing on both the individual and collective experience of the group, with the potential to generate richer insights for the study.

Both the ISS and GRSS sessions were audio recorded with participant consent. The session could therefore be played back and transcribed after the event. The subsequent analysis seeks to represent the metaphorical volunteer journey in a coherent, storied form.

## **Limitations**

The philosophical positioning of this research inevitably has implications for ‘truth’; a search for which is often the cornerstone of research projects. The term ‘truth’ implies certainty and finality (Hildebrand 2008) which is misaligned with the continuous nature of reality.

Therefore, this study does not seek to establish ‘the truth’. The relatively small (fourteen) frontrunner stories do not offer truths but instead, reflections on past events at a given moment in time (Riessman 2008). These reflections are a result of a reflexive and relational process between the participants and researcher whereby both are intertwined in the outcomes of the research (Rhodes 2000).

## Findings and Discussion

The findings of this paper are structured in line with the metaphorical volunteer journey which is a narrative of before, during and after. The first section provided an overview or profile of the participants and their involvement. The second section looks at how individuals arrived at the Front runners program, their expectations and motivations. The third section places emphasis on the point of the journey where the paths of different volunteers cross and the effect of this crossing. And finally the fourth section discusses how the volunteers envisage their future as a result of their involvement in the Frontrunner program. All participants for anonymity purposes have been assigned an alias which will be used when referring to them during the discussion.

### Profile of Participants

(For anonymity purposes the real names of participants have been replaced with random aliases that reflect the gender of the participant)

As presented in Table 1 the age of the participants for this study ranged from 22 to 66 years old, with the majority of the participants being over 40 years old. In terms of the engagement of MSE in the past, seven of the participants had no previous MSE volunteering experience while five volunteered at London 2012, one at the Glasgow 2007 UEFA Cup Final and one at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. Finally Table 1 also illustrates how the participants to this study volunteered regularly within their own communities. Ten out of fourteen participants indicated that they had some sort of regular involvement with volunteering or some other pro-social activity.

(PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 HERE)

## Before: Getting Involved with the Frontrunners Program

Individuals arrive at the Frontrunner programme through a journey consisting of social events and situations. Therefore, it is argued that the decision to volunteer at Glasgow 2014 cannot be explored in isolation from the past and indeed an anticipated future. This is justified by the position that we act in the present, influenced by the experiential past and an anticipated future (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, Elkjaer and Simpson 2011).

Considering for example Claire's story, the complexity and dynamic nature of her journey is visible through her narrative. In the past, Claire was not particularly proactive, a course of action which implies habit. She then suffered a health scare which ruptured this habit. The transaction of the health scare formed an experience upon which Claire could reflect. Her new-found drive and determination and a passion for all things Glasgow fuelled this decision. *"I'm proud of my city, I love my city. And I think that people only see one side and it would be nice for them to see this other side. I mean it's very, [ehm], cultural city, it's full of art, it's full of architecture, it's beautiful!"* said Claire passionately. The experience sparked a process of inquiry which caused her to change her course of action to be more proactive, thus forming a new habit. This habit leads to the act of being involved with the Frontrunner programme. However, her decision to volunteer is more complex than being simply attributed to one particular life event. Additional events and situations have featured along the course of her journey. Having lived in Glasgow all her life, social situations have formed experiences for Claire to refer to. Though her story she also shares her experiences of the London 2012 Olympics. She had been pessimistic before the event but through a transactional process of seeing the enjoyment of Games Maker volunteers through television coverage, she forms a process of inquiry and alters her action to volunteer at Glasgow 2014, anticipating a similar experience. *"During London you saw how an amazing time the Games Makers had and they were the faces of the Games. And the people had fun and they seemed to be having a great*

*time and I thought, 'Wouldn't that be brilliant to actually be a part of that in Glasgow!'*”.

Examination of Claire's journey demonstrates the processes by which the decision to volunteer at the Games is taken and the complex and changing nature of lived experience in the lead up. Although this is only one example, each of the Frontrunner stories gives an impression of the dynamic processes underlying the decision to volunteer.

Through the lens of the volunteer journey greater insights are presented into how individuals come to be involved in MSE volunteering. This is achieved by rooting the decision in lived experience. In addition, the metaphorical volunteer journey also provides suggestions of the underlying meaning of the volunteers' involvement at Glasgow 2014. This can be related to the existing literature on volunteering at MSEs, notably the areas of volunteer expectations, motivations and volunteering patterns as both expectations and motivations are used as predictors of voluntary action. However, the processes constituting the metaphorical volunteer journey provide an alternative means of understanding a course of action. Although expectations and motivations have been widely used throughout the volunteer literature (Andrew 1996, Clary, Snyder et al. 1996, Farrell, Johnston et al. 1998, Downward and Ralston 2005) and are viewed as useful concepts for understanding volunteering involvement, there are considerable limitations to this approach which the Frontrunner stories bring to light.

Typically explored via quantitative survey based methods, many studies of volunteer expectations and motivations arguably provide limited insights into the meaning behind the decision to volunteer. However, through consideration of the lived experience of the individual focusing on the past, present and anticipated future, there is potential to reconceptualise volunteer motives and expectations by viewing them through the lens of the volunteer journey. In doing so, meaning and contextualisation of the volunteer experience at MSEs can be unearthed.

With regards to expectations, the volunteer stories indicate how volunteer expectations are formed. The Frontrunners make various references to expectations. Alice, for example, suggests that her expectations have been formed through multiple social situations. *“It was completely different to what I thought it was and I didn’t think I would enjoy it as much as I did, it was amazing and I met really nice people”*. Expectations appear to have also been formed in relation to experiences which are not directly related to the Frontrunner programme. For example Claire’s expectations are derived from her work experience in mass recruitment which meant she expected volunteer interviewing to be impersonal and extend no further than her shifts. Others’ expectations are influenced by the experience of other MSE and Richard using a trip to spectate at the London Marathon as a reference point to the atmosphere he expects Glasgow 2014 to provide. *“I wasn’t at the Olympics, I wasn’t even a spectator, but my daughter was running the London Marathon. And there was such a buzz about London that day. You could just feel the excitement. And I think Glasgow is going to be like that too.”* Richard hopes to be a part of the exciting atmosphere as a Games Time volunteer. *“I’ve not applied for anything in particular, just anything that they’ll let me do”* he laughs, *“I don’t care, selling programmes somewhere!”* There is one day on which he really hopes to be involved, his birthday. *“I’ll be 64”* Richard laughs. *“What a way to spend your 64th birthday isn’t it?”* Susan has expectations of Games Time based around her previous roles at Vancouver 2010 in which she gained skills and knowledge in spectator services. She expected to be volunteering in that area again at Glasgow 2014; however, she has been offered a potential position in games workforce. Susan welcomes the new challenge to some extent; however, the group story highlights an anecdote shared amongst the Frontrunners of a lady who quit after her expectations were not met over a Games Time position. Such occurrences emphasise the importance for organisations to understand volunteer expectations to minimise drop-out rates. This has been emphasised in the existing literature (Farmer and

Fedor 1999, Downward and Ralston 2005). The Frontrunner stories suggest that the formation of expectations will take place for some in organisational and previous volunteering contexts. They do however also indicate that a wider focus on the past experiences of the individual could offer a more insightful view of volunteer expectations.

A similar view can be taken in relation to volunteer motivations. Table 2 provides an illustration of the espoused key motivating factor for the participants. It has been suggested that volunteers at MSEs are driven by a series of distinct motives (Farrell, Johnston et al. 1998, Giannoulakis, Wang et al. 2008). The Frontrunners' reasons for getting involved in the programme have echoed some of the motives previously identified by studies of MSE volunteers. These have included for example, 'to gain job contacts' (Giannoulakis, Wang et al. 2008) as Alice's story indicates. 'To be part of a once in a lifetime opportunity' (Reeser, Berg et al. 2005) as Susan explained. 'To change my life' (Downward and Ralston 2005) as Rosie described in her story. 'Being passionate about the Games' (Giannoulakis, Wang et al. 2008) as Ian expressed. As well as 'to support the city' (Downward and Ralston 2005) which many of the Frontrunners mentioned, including David, Karen, Catriona, Sarah and Elaine. Although these reasons give some indication of the meaning behind Frontrunners' decisions to volunteer, without linking these reasons to the experiences they relate to, there is little contextualisation provided in relation to the volunteers' involvement.

As the stories suggest, Alice is keen to gain job contacts as she is coming to the end of her studies and worries about finding employment. Susan believes it is a once in a lifetime despite having volunteered for other MSEs, and for Sarah it is the fact that the Commonwealth Games are taking place in her home city which makes it particularly special. Ian has always followed Olympic and Commonwealth Games and therefore is very passionate about them and the most of the Frontrunners who expressed a desire to support Glasgow have lived in the city all of their lives and have an affinity to the city. These provide

examples of the multiplicity of reasons featured in the Frontrunner stories and are by no means exhaustive.

The use of the narrative method and the metaphorical volunteer journey has therefore provided additional contextualisation relating to the formation of volunteer expectations and motivations. As opposed to studying these concepts to present generalizable findings, the collection of Frontrunner stories indicate that richer insights can be drawn by considering the particular of individuals' lived experiences in relation to their decision to volunteer.

(PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2 HERE)

### **During: Training, Involvement and Crossing of Journeys**

The decision to become a Frontrunner volunteer unites this group of diverse individuals who have each followed different paths to Glasgow 2014. Inevitably, by taking the decision to engage with the Frontrunner programme the paths of the Frontrunners cross within the organisational setting. Indeed, Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, p.175) suggest that the organisation is "*an important locus for socialization and the strengthening of group ties*" amongst volunteers. The Frontrunners' group story suggests that there are a series of organisational dynamics which assist the process of coming together. Firstly, the volunteer story suggests that the group are united by a common goal to deliver a successful event for Glasgow. This was identified by the Frontrunners through a reflexive process within the GRSS sessions. Interestingly, this overarching commitment is aligned with the vision of the Organising Committee (Glasgow 2014 2013). Despite close consideration of the Frontrunner accounts, it is difficult to decipher if the organisation has sought to play a deliberate and active role in the co-construction of this collective objective or if there is simply a commonality between the underlying goals of each individual. The existing volunteering

literature suggests that episodic volunteers can have a strong loyalty to the organisation despite intuitive suggestions that such volunteers would be less committed than those engaged in long-term collective volunteering (Hustinx 2010). The Frontrunner group story appears to reflect this assertion. However, by relating the collective objective back to the individual Frontrunner stories, the stories reveal that most of the Frontrunners have an affinity with Glasgow and Scotland which could alternatively be the foundation for such objectives. Furthermore, the Frontrunners question if their counterparts who do not have the same geographical connection share such a collective objective. Therefore, the findings highlights potential complexities in the formation of a collective objective relating to past lived experience of each individual, the present in the organisational setting and an anticipated future of the delivery of the Games.

An additional area for consideration is the use of organisational training. All but one of the participants, Alice, has undergone training for their Frontrunner roles. The Frontrunners' accounts suggest that training is particularly important. For others, such as David, who had no recruitment experience, it was raised that there could have been further role-specific support provided. *"See I've got a lot more experience training than I had interviewing. When I, I thought I wouldn't get this because I had never conducted an interview in my life before. I had no recruitment experience at all".*

As the individual Frontrunner stories suggest, there is a range of levels of recruitment experience amongst the group. An organisational understanding of the volunteers' past experiences could potentially allow for a more efficient balance to be struck in allowing a sense community to be forged whilst providing sufficient support for the Frontrunner role. Therefore, the Frontrunners' story highlights that there can be differing priorities for training amongst the group.

Having completed their training, most of the Frontrunners commenced their shifts, interviewing in the volunteer centre. As the Fronrunner story emphasises, the shifts are seen by many as a way of meeting other Frontrunners. Given the flexibility of the shift patterns, the Frontrunners tend to meet different individuals at each shift. The paid staff also play a part in the coming together of Frontrunners in the organisational setting. Baum and Lockstone (2007) identify that relatively little is known about the relationship between paid staff and volunteers at MSEs. Although this area has been considered to some extent within the wider volunteering literature, it has been argued that paid staff benefit from a superior status within the organisation compared with volunteers (Macduff 2011). Inevitably, this can lead to conflict between the two parties. Pearce (1993, p.142) suggested that tensions between volunteers and paid staff are one of the “*unpleasant secrets of non-profit organizations*”. However, the experiences of the Fronrunner group appear to largely contrast this view. Only Heather’s individual account of a one-off incident which was resolved alludes to any tensions between the paid staff and the Fronrunner group. *“I had to, and I did once say something because a male member of staff was telling me how to wash the t-shirt. So I just told him to go back in his pod and keep quiet. And not tell a woman how to do the washing. And certainly don’t tell a Scottish woman how to do the washing. And you just go back in your pod! ((laughs))”* Instead, the paid staff have been portrayed as particularly supportive of the Frontrunners, assisting them in the creation of a Fronrunner newsletter, providing them with their own break room and a permissive environment in which to do their shifts. Furthermore, the Frontrunners appear to have a considerable level of autonomy within their roles as Ian suggests within the story. *“The interviews that we do, the way that it’s done, it’s WAY better, it’s more personable, it’s friendlier, it makes people feel much better about the whole experience”*. This therefore alludes to management practices within Glasgow 2014. It appears that the management style in relation to the Fronrunner group is relatively informal

which has been argued to be a most effective approach to volunteer management (Paull 2002, Leonard, Onyx et al. 2004). It appears that through this relational understanding the Frontrunners are able to act in a manner which fosters group cohesion but also is effective in supporting the organisation through their roles.

The Frontrunner stories suggest that the crossing of volunteer paths is not limited to within the organisation. It has been suggested by the previous MSE studies that cohesion with fellow volunteers is a source of satisfaction (Elstad 1996, Coyne and Coyne 2001, Downward and Ralston 2006). Despite this, little consideration has been given to the processes through which this is achieved. Insights could be argued to be even more limited in relation to the processes taking place out with the organisation. In the case of the Frontrunner group, it appears that select individuals take ownership of the experience and act to bring the group together whilst fulfilling their own interests. For example, within the individual Frontrunner stories, Elaine's recent move to Glasgow meant that she considered the Frontrunner programme as a valuable means by which to meet others. In addition, Rosie seeks a new lease of life from volunteering so that she is not stuck at home. Both of these individuals have assumed informal positions as social convenors within the Frontrunner group, informally organising a series of social events for their colleagues. Their events include going to restaurants or bars together as a group and will also include in the future bus tours of the city for the benefit of those Frontrunners who are not familiar with Glasgow. Whilst this pertains to interests of Rosie and Elaine as suggested in their individual stories, they do so with a view to improving others' perceptions of the city to make them better volunteers. It has been highlighted in the literature that MSEs tend to incorporate individuals who can be considered to be 'visiting tourists', however, relatively little is known about these volunteers (Baum and Lockstone 2007). Although due to the limited geographical spread of the Frontrunners participating in the study prevents insights being created in relation to this group itself, the

stories do offer some indication of the means by which they are initiated into the wider group. By providing visiting Frontrunners with social situations in which transactions can occur, there is potential for changing perceptions within the team.

The Frontrunners' group story also indicates that the group comes together in addition to the various face-to-face activities via social media. The Frontrunners have created a group on Facebook which has over 200 members, allowing them to interact when not in each other's physical presence. This group expands the social situations through which the Frontrunners can form transactions and develop the group further. Although it has been used for light-hearted topics such as '*what's your favourite old fashioned sweet?*' it has also played host to supportive discussions with other team members who have been dissatisfied with their allocated Games Time volunteer roles. An additional widely used function of the group is to organise the cover of shifts without having to burden the paid staff. Given the nature of this form of technology, its constant accessibility expands the time-frame of the volunteer experience beyond the formal shift pattern.

Such activities portray a sense of community amongst the group. Although Frontrunning is a relatively short-term, episodic volunteer activity which would typically be critiqued by scholars of civic engagement such as Putnam (Schudson 2006), the Frontrunners' group story highlights that a real community spirit has been developed within the team. It is underpinned by a passion for Glasgow, helping one another with shift cover and problem resolution, alongside social, recreational and charitable activity. This therefore suggests that categorising these individuals as reflexive volunteers is much more complex than simply measuring motives and patterns of involvement. Furthermore, the Frontrunners' group story provides support for the argument that diverse forms of civic engagement can take place within society which should be embraced rather than criticised for not conforming to the traditional model (Hustinx, Cnaan et al. 2010).

## **After: Evaluating the Transformational Potential of the Frontrunner Experience**

Central to the anticipated future is the ontology of becoming. In the same way that the Frontrunners journey to involvement at the Games is underpinned by the four processes, it is through these four processes that transformation is possible through the volunteer experience. Indeed, Kemp (2002) argues that the lives of volunteers can be enriched through their involvement with volunteering. Throughout the duration of the Frontrunner programme, the volunteers encounter social situations which form transactions, providing new reference points on which they can reflect. This can therefore lead to a change in their course of action. The individual Frontrunner stories illustrate this. For example, meeting Frontrunners commuting from England has impacted upon Karen and Claire. Karen may now consider volunteering at events around the UK. Meanwhile, Claire has already expressed an interest at volunteering at the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England. Previously, she planned to attend as a spectator but through her Frontrunner experience, Claire now intends to travel and volunteer at the event.

There are apparent anticipated transformations for David and Alice who hope to gain from the experience by way of employability. Although some transformations such as these are anticipated to come to fruition in the future, the Frontrunner stories also illustrate that some ongoing transformations are taking place. For Lynne as a single parent, Frontrunning is transforming her life from a social perspective. Furthermore, she is redeveloping interviewing skills which she has not used for a number of years. For Rosie, with her involvement in the social side of the Frontrunner programme, her lifestyle is being transformed for the better and she no longer feels she has a mundane routine. There are also some more subtle

transformations taking place as Ian's story suggests. He explains that before being involved in the Frontrunner programme the sporting side of the event had always been his focal point, however, through encountering fellow Frontrunners who consider the importance of the social and legacy dynamics of their involvement, Ian has started to change the way in which he views his volunteer experience. *"And that's one, just when I was thinking about, there's a couple of, there was one guy that came in and he said 'well it's going to be a big year next year and I want this to be a really good Games because then it'll run from then then we'll have our own country again'. And I was like 'well that's, that's fair enough'"*.

It becomes apparent from the Frontrunners' stories that there is potential for transformation as a result of the volunteer experience which will potentially influence the Frontrunners' action in the future. It is notable that the transformations are relatively distinct to each individual and there is continuity between the transformation and their past and present and anticipated future lived experience. This transformation is evident in the effect that past MSE volunteering has on some on participants. It is the atmosphere of the MSE that leaves its mark as Rosie who also volunteered for London 2012 found *"...when it finished, I felt such a low....I went from high to such a low...It was something, I can't describe what it was...em, I do my day job, I've done it for thirty odd years and I love my job but this gave me a feeling that I've not had"*. This feeling of utter loss at the end of involvement highlights a crucial stage of the volunteer journey and it underlines how former MSE volunteers want to relive the experience and feel this buzz again and they are anxious not miss out *"...as soon as it became available I was straight on the website, Googling it, everything, making sure I applied for everything!"*

## **From Wide-Eyed MSE Volunteer to Veteran MSE Volunteer**

The findings of this paper are synthesized into a framework of the MSE volunteer experience over time. Figure 1 illustrates how a person transforms from a naive volunteer to a veteran following their experience. Over time participation is broken down into three phases, before, during and after. The first phase starts as soon as the individual has registered as an MSE volunteer. During this 'before' phase, the first-time volunteer has very little information about the experience and his/her role. Generally, they have limited training, but a surplus of enthusiasm for different reasons. They are motivated by both altruistic and reciprocal motives and are reflexive in terms of their participation and how it fits with their personal narrative. The volunteer at this phase can be described as 'wide-eyed' as he/she stands on the edge of adventure. They have enthusiasm and a mix of altruistic and instrumental motives; in effect they are altruistic instrumentalists.

The second phase, during, begins when the volunteers embark on their new role. Their new roles inevitably present them with new challenges. Overcoming these challenges furnishes the volunteer with experience (illustrated in Figure One). This gain in experience turns the wide-eyed individual into the 'volunteer', a person who will become instrumental to the games success and they draw a sense of pride from it.

The third phase, after, starts with the end of the MSE and with the volunteer getting back to normal routine and normal rhythms. Some of the frontrunners that had volunteered for London found it difficult to leave their role as they found the atmosphere of the Olympic Games intoxicating. They are 'veteran' MSE volunteers and they are distinctly different to the 'wide-eyed' volunteer of phase one. When they seek to feel this buzz again through volunteering for another MSE, they will not start at a low experience point, but they will be building on the experience gained during their previous involvement.

(PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE)

## Conclusion

This paper has provided insights into a variety of areas related to volunteer involvement at MSEs. Firstly, the incorporation of the four pragmatic themes of experience, habit, inquiry and transaction into the metaphorical volunteer journey allows each story to be analysed using these four themes as a dynamic process. However, the stories illustrate that each journey is distinct and unique. Secondly, the decision to volunteer has been shown to be complex and can be influenced by a multiplicity of events and situations and the use of a storied volunteer journey approach provided further insight in relation to the formation of expectations and motivations in relation to past experience. Thirdly, by examining the metaphorical crossing of volunteer paths, processes appear to foster group cohesion within the organisational context and beyond as a common Frontrunner goal emerged from within the group. In seeking to deliver a successful Games for Glasgow, their overarching objective is aligned with the vision of the Organising committee. Finally, in relation to the anticipated future of Frontrunner volunteers, it is considered that transformations are made possible through the four pragmatic themes within the volunteer journey. In relation to the each individual's experiences and journeys, anticipated or ongoing transformations have been identified.

This view of the anticipated future allows tentative indications to have been made in relation to provision of a volunteer legacy for Glasgow 2014 through the Frontrunner programme. The Frontrunners' stories suggest that all of those involved in the study intend to continue volunteering including some first time volunteers. Insights have also been drawn in terms of the relational potential of the sharing of the Frontrunner experience to encourage those not involved in volunteering to get involved. It has also been indicated that there could be scope to influence legacy through the portrayal of Frontrunners through media sources and the

Frontrunners stories indicate that some were positively influenced by images of the London 2012 Games Makers in taking the decision to be involved with Glasgow 2014. In relation to employment, two Frontrunners are recent graduates and one a current student, each hoping that their time as Frontrunners could provide future employment opportunities. Therefore, should suitable opportunities arise, there is scope for the provision of legacy from this perspective too.

Overall this paper has illustrated that individuals volunteering at an MSE will follow a journey which is unique to them. This journey begins before they engage with the organisation and concludes long after the event draws to a close. In becoming involved with MSE volunteering, the volunteer crosses paths with fellow volunteers for a time-bound period, before parting company and continuing along the individual journey. Using this conceptualization as a launch pad, future research could look to expand the exploration of the volunteer journey within a longitudinal research design. By engaging in data collection with MSE volunteers considering their journey to the event, their experiences volunteering at the event at regular intervals as well as after the event, the changing nature of lived experience could be further examined in relation to the past present and future and the legacy of MSEs. Without a doubt the MSE volunteer journey has a powerful effect on volunteers and it merits further research.

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# Appendix

Figure 1: The MSE Volunteer Journey

