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Abstract

The purpose of this case study of volunteers at the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games was to explore their motivations utilizing Bang and Ross’s (2009) seven factors of volunteer motivation. Interviews were conducted with 10 volunteers via videoconference and e-mail about their motivation to work the Paralympic Games. Findings revealed that four of Bang and Ross’s (2009) seven motivational factors were present: Expression of Values, Interpersonal Contacts, Career Orientation, and Personal Growth. Participants also identified an additional motive–Travel–that was unique from Bang and Ross’s factors. Findings were significant because Paralympic volunteers were not motivated due to a connection with the sports, the event, or the community, all of which were in contrast from prior volunteer motivation research. Rather, volunteers for this mega-event desired a global experience resulting in personal and professional growth. Event managers for mega-events can use these findings to recruit volunteers seeking to travel, establish social connections with people from other cultures, and enhance their resumes.

Keywords: Volunteers, Motivation, Paralympic Games, Case Study, Event Management
Introduction

Volunteers are essential for the sport industry as they enable event managers to maximize economic efficiency by minimizing staff costs, and contribute innovative ideas in their area of expertise (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Cuskelly, Auld, Harrington, & Coleman, 2004; Shin & Kleiner, 2003). Prior research has indicated the value of volunteers, noting the critical role they play in the success of sport-related organizations and sporting events (Cuskelly, 1998; Green & Chalip, 1998; Shilbury & Moore, 2006). More specifically to the sport industry, volunteers are essential for the successful operation and overall management of sporting events (Berlonghi, 1994; Daly, 1991; Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Green & Chalip, 1998; Strigas & Jackson, 2003a; 2003b; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995). This is particularly true for annual events or one-time events requiring a plethora of personnel for a limited amount of time. Event organizers have a variety of responsibilities and turn to volunteers to assist in operating the event and help offset the costs of staging an event (Farrell et al., 1998; Strigas & Jackson, 2003a). The use of volunteers at sporting events and the importance of volunteers to the successful operation of sporting events makes volunteer recruitment, management, and retention essential duties of sport managers and event planners. Researchers, however, have yet to thoroughly explore volunteering in a Paralympic Games setting given the unique qualities of the mega-event and individual connections to disability. More specifically, this study aimed to explore the motivations behind volunteering at the Paralympic Games.

Clary et al. (1998) used a functional approach in examining volunteer motivations and proposed six dimensions as to why people volunteer: (a) values—volunteering on principles, (b) understanding—to desire to gain knowledge or skills, (c) self-enhancement—volunteering for sense of fulfillment, (d) career—volunteering for career advancement or networking, (e) social—volunteering to meet people or spend time with friends, and (f) protective—volunteering as a way of escape from life’s everyday worries. Wang and Wu (2014) found motivations consisted of doing something good for the community and for career enhancement. Patriotism also motivates volunteers to work at large-scale events held on a world stage as individuals want their country to be put in a positive light (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003). Other motivations that have been identified include tangible rewards such as clothing, access, tickets, and food (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003); continuing a tradition in volunteering and the pure enjoyment of volunteering (Wollebaek, Skirstad, & Hanstad, 2014); as well as a need for volunteers to believe their services are useful and beneficial to the organization or event (Wollebaek et al., 2014).

Khoo, Surujlal, and Engelhorn (2011) examined volunteer motivations at five disability sport events in Malaysia, South Africa, and the United States and found
that volunteers were motivated by altruism. Volunteers in South Africa and the United States were motivated to contribute to their community and the event’s overall success, whereas volunteers in Malaysia held motives of self-improvement and gaining work experience. Similarly, Kumnig et al. (2015) found altruistic and purposive motives as the underlying volunteer motivations at the 2008 Winter Special Olympics. In comparison to volunteers at disability sport events, Olympic volunteers were also motivated by personal development, a desire to give back, and an intent to support the community (Georgiadis, Spiliopoulos, Rampotas, & Rampotas, 2006). Furthermore, altruistic reasons motivated volunteers at the 2010 Shanghai World Expo by providing services to an organization and society as a whole (Wang & Wu, 2014) while volunteers at the International Ski Federation (FIS) Nordic World Ski Championships cited professional development among the motives to volunteer (Wollebaek et al., 2014).

In contrast, other studies have found volunteer motives at mega-events to include building relationships and connectivity. Fairley, Kellett, and Green (2007) summarized Olympic volunteer motives for working the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the 2004 Athens Olympic Games into four key reasons: (a) nostalgia, (b) camaraderie, (c) Olympic connection, and (d) sharing expertise. Kodama, Doherty, and Popovic (2013) offered a first-person account of Olympic volunteerism through an autoethnography. Findings relevant to the current study included the desire of the first author to be involved with a mega-event such as the Olympic Games and to be connected to an elite sporting event as motivations for volunteering.

Personal motivations may change as one’s life circumstances change and can also be influenced by demographic factors such as gender, educational level, or family structure (Kumnig et al., 2015). For example, parents of youth sport participants were found to be motivated by the involvement of their children in those activities as well as a sense of obligation, and non-parents were motivated by their prior involvement in a sport and wanting to give something back to that sport (Engelberg, Skinner, & Zakus, 2014). Similarly and more in line with the current study, Ryan and Cole (2009) found that people with a relationship to disability frequently become advocates, while Khoo et al. (2011) found that friends and family of people with disabilities often are the ones to promote disability sport. Thus, one may expect Paralympic volunteers to have a connection with disability in some way that motivates them to volunteer.

Connectivity to the event, or love of the sport or event, has been found among volunteers who worked at marathons due to their association with running (Bang & Ross, 2009) golf (Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Love, Hardin, Koo, & Morse, 2011), tennis (Pauline & Pauline, 2009), soccer (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003), and snow skiing (Wollebaek et al., 2014). Volunteers working in a Paralympic setting also want to provide the best experience possible for the athletes (Kim, Zhang, & Connaughton, 2010). Wang and Wu (2014) found this desire for creating a positive experience
for athletes in their examination of volunteers for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Volunteers reported love for the event itself rather than love of a particular sport at the World Expo (Ferrell et al., 1998; Wang & Wu, 2014). Wilson (2012) proposed examining volunteerism in the context of the organization or the event, and the Paralympic Games provide an excellent opportunity for such an exploration.

Bang and Chelladurai’s (2003) examination of volunteer motivational factors at an international sporting event focused on volunteers working the 2002 FIFA World Cup. The authors established six factors that embodied volunteerism at international sporting events through the Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE): Expression of Values, Patriotism, Interpersonal Contacts, Personal Growth, Career Orientation, and Extrinsic Rewards. Bang and Chelladurai (2003) defined Expression of Values as exhibiting concern for others and the society overall, and volunteering so the event’s success serves as an aide in helping others. Patriotism emerged from the study as a strong motivation for international sport volunteerism as a person may volunteer to exhibit pride in his/her home country and become a home country representative during the event. Interpersonal Contacts was defined as meeting and interacting with others as a motive for volunteering. Personal Growth was defined as the volunteer work allowing individuals to feel needed and their work appearing important. Career Orientation explained volunteers’ motive to enhance their resumes and career paths. Extrinsic Rewards related to the tangible gifts offered to volunteers for their work, such as uniforms and clothing, food, and accommodations.

Bang and Chelladurai’s (2003) study added to prior work examining volunteer motivations with the emergence of Patriotism as a motive because it suggests that the ‘motivational pattern of volunteers at large-scale sporting events is different from that of volunteers in other contexts’ (Bang & Ross, 2009, p. 64). Yet, the study did not account for one’s love of sport as a motivational factor, and more recent work has included an individual’s tie to a single sport as a reason for volunteering (Bang & Ross, 2009; Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Love, et al., 2011; Pauline & Pauline, 2009). Therefore, Bang and Ross (2009) modified the work done by Bang and Chelladurai (2003) through their study of volunteers at the 2004 Twin Cities Marathon. Bang and Ross (2009) identified seven factors of volunteer motivation: Expression of Values, Community Involvement, Interpersonal Contacts, Career Orientation, Personal Growth, Extrinsic Rewards, and Love of Sport. The significance of Bang and Ross’s (2009) study lies in its establishing Love of Sport as a motivational factor for volunteers as well as reclassifying Bang and Chelladurai’s (2003) factor of Patriotism into a factor of Community Involvement. The Community Involvement factor applies more toward local and regional events but may also still embody the patriotic motive to represent one’s country through volunteerism.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the motivations of volunteers at the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games through Bang and Ross’s (2009) sev-
en factors. Determining volunteer motivation can be beneficial in assisting organizations in developing messages for volunteer recruitment (Welty Peachy, Lyras, Cohen, Bruening, & Cunningham, 2014). Understanding the motives of volunteers is crucial because the likelihood one continues to volunteer increases as the experience more closely aligns with the motives or needs of the volunteer (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Finkelstein, 2008). Understanding motivation is important because the information can be used to recruit volunteers, and people will volunteer if they believe the activity will be a positive experience (Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000). Therefore, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What were the motivations for individuals who volunteered at the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games?

RQ2: How do those motivations to volunteer compare to Bang and Ross’s (2009) seven factors of motivation?

Material and Methods

This case study of the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games volunteers was conducted using qualitative methodology to investigate motivations and experiences within a bounded system, meaning a unit with boundaries that contain it (Merriam, 2009). For this case, the bounded system was Paralympic Games volunteers. While many volunteer studies use quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires, qualitative methods provide a different lens. MacLean and Hamm (2007) advocated adopting qualitative methods which could provide a more in-depth understanding of volunteer motives. Qualitative methods can provide a richer description and analysis of volunteer motives (Creswell, 2013; Welty Peachy et al., 2014). Welty Peachy et al. (2014) used qualitative methods in their examination of volunteers at the World Scholar-Athlete Games.

This case adhered to the constructivist approach where meaning was constructed through interviews with participants giving the opportunity for multiple truths to emerge (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). This approach preserved the voices of the participants by allowing them to share their own motivations and experiences without limitations.

Participants were invited to participate in this study through convenience sampling and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013). Convenience sampling was used by recruiting volunteers while one of the co-authors worked as an on-site volunteer during the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games. The co-author invited individuals serving as volunteers at those Games to participate in the study, then collected contact information for reconnecting following the conclusion of the event. Snowball sampling was conducted by posting invitations to participate in a closed group
on Facebook specifically for 2014 Sochi Olympic and Paralympic volunteers. The Facebook invitation, posted following the 2014 Paralympic Games, explained the study and asked volunteers to direct message one of the co-authors if interested in participating. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at James Madison University, and all participants were age 18 years and older and gave consent. All participants were assigned a pseudonym.

The final sample included 10 participants from seven countries: Canada, France, Latvia, Poland, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States. Semi-structured Skype interviews were conducted with eight of the participants who had Skype accounts, while structured e-mail interviews were conducted with two participants who did not have Skype capabilities. Examples of questions were ‘Why did you volunteer for the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games?’; ‘What about the volunteer experience interested you most?’; and ‘Describe your level of satisfaction with your decision to volunteer at the Paralympic Games’ (see Appendix A).

**Appendix A**

*Questions Asked of Participants*

1. Why did you volunteer to work the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games?
2. What about the volunteer experience interested you most?
3. How did your interest in the Paralympic Games relate to this volunteer opportunity?
4. Have you volunteered at sporting events before? If yes, what events?
5. Describe your level of satisfaction with your decision to volunteer at the Paralympic Games.
6. Did your experience meet expectations?
7. How did (or didn’t) your experience meet expectations?
8. Can you offer an example of how the experience did or didn’t meet expectations?
9. Would you consider volunteering at another mega-event in the future such as this one?
10. Explain why you would or would not volunteer at another mega-event in the future.

Skype interviews lasted between 16:14 and 37:37 for an average of 24 minutes and were audio recorded using a digital recording device. The audio of each interview was then transcribed into a word processing file. While the number of participants falls short of recommended 12-15 participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Latham, 2013), data collection ceased after 10 interviews because saturation was
reached regarding the ways in which volunteers were describing their motives and experiences. The participants had an average age of 31.2 years, above the average age of 25 years for all Sochi Games volunteers (International Olympic Committee, 2013). See Table 1 for participant demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Event Services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deandre</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Team Host</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Flash Quotes Reporter</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shavonda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Press Assistant</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collene</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Flash Quotes Reporter</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takako</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Athlete Marshal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Flash Quotes Reporter</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renata</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Race Secretary Crew</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richie</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Flash Quotes Reporter</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23:01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chere</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Event Services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24:07</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The eight Skype interview transcripts and two e-mail interview transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparative method, comparing segments of data with prior segments to examine for differences and similarities (Merriam, 2009). Data were analyzed by two of the three researchers in relation to Bang and Ross’s (2009) seven factors of motivation. The seven factors of Expression of Values, Community Involvement, Interpersonal Contacts, Career Orientation, Personal Growth, Extrinsic Rewards, and Love of Sport were established as a priori codes during analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Stuckey, 2015). The two researchers then compared their independent findings. Any differences in the findings among the two researchers were discussed until an agreement could be reached.
Results

Findings revealed that four of Bang and Ross’s (2009) seven factors were present among Paralympic Games volunteers in this case study: Expression of Values, Interpersonal Contacts, Career Orientation, and Personal Growth. The three factors that were not present among volunteers in this study were Community Involvement, Extrinsic Rewards, and Love of Sport. A new motive of Travel was expressed by five of the 10 participants. See Table 2 for data examples aligned with each motive.

Table 2

Data Related to Bang and Ross’s (2009) Seven Factors of Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Data Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Values</td>
<td>‘It sounds a bit naïve, but to meet the objectives of the Olympic Movement, that is to say in terms of worldwide friendship, competition, correct behavior. I kind of believe in all of those principles and wanted to see what I could do to contribute to that.’ (Richie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Contacts</td>
<td>‘I knew volunteering would be a great chance to have more friends in different parts of the world and getting to know different cultures—and getting to know Russia, as well.’ (Abby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Orientation</td>
<td>‘So basically I wanted to gain as much experience as possible, so I thought that staying for the Olympics for three weeks and then staying for the Paralympics for about two weeks would add up to the experience. It would be something more I can present on my CV and something more I can talk about.’ (Abby)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Growth  
‘I felt big responsibility for this Games. I understood that success of the Games depends on all people from the Organizing Committee and all the volunteers. And I had to do my best to make this Games the best.’ (Deandre)

Extrinsic Rewards  
*  

Love of Sport  
*  

Travel  
‘For me, the motivation was less about the Paralympics themselves but more on I wanted to stay in Russia. I wanted to see both Games and I wanted to spend as much time as I could there.’

* denotes factor was not supported by data

1. Expression of values

Expression of Values was a factor present because participants indicated their concern for others was a motive behind volunteering at the Paralympic Games. Latia best summarized by saying the volunteer culture among peers is nonexistent because people are critical of the idea of working without being paid. However, their motives were more for contributing to a greater cause and for helping other people.

‘It’s hard to explain. You are not going there for money. You’re going there for emotions. You are going there for experience. You are going there for people. You are going for some great ideas where you can meet the people who think the same.’

Richie’s response also summarized the idea that motives stemmed from personal values rather than rewards.

‘It sounds a bit naïve, but to meet the objectives of the Olympic Movement, that is to say in terms of worldwide friendship, competition, correct behavior. I kind of believe in all of those principles and wanted to see what I could do to contribute to that.’

Deandre supported such claims, also, stating he expressed a desire to fill the greatest need as a volunteer. ‘They told me that most want to volunteer at Olympic Games, so they need volunteers at Paralympic, and if I don’t care where to work,
it would be better to volunteer at Paralympic. OK, I said.’ Deandre volunteered for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

2. Interpersonal contacts

Participants indicated Interpersonal Contacts as a motive when they said they desired social networking opportunities during their time volunteering. Participants in this study who had volunteered at prior events said their social interactions at those events were so enjoyable that it became a motive to volunteer at the Sochi Paralympic Games. Other participants who had not previously volunteered at sport events said they desired to meet people from different areas of the world and they knew the Paralympic and Olympic Games would provide that.

Shavonda summarized the participants’ desire to meet and interact with others: ‘You get to know more people. You can meet people from different continents at the Paralympics.’ Deandre agreed that the social opportunities to network with like-minded people from different countries was an attraction: ‘Of course I was interested in new friends who share volunteer principles. And it was great opportunity to meet very interesting people and to communicate with them.’

Abby said she knew the Paralympic Games would provide that opportunity for her, and it was a strong motive for her to pursue volunteering. ‘I knew volunteering would be a great chance to have more friends in different parts of the world and getting to know different cultures—and getting to know Russia, as well.’ Collene reinforced Interpersonal Contacts as a motive because it provided an opportunity to interact with others, saying ‘You get to meet other people from different countries and tell them about your country and what it is like.’ While Collene’s response offered signs of Patriotism (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003) and Community Involvement (Bang & Ross, 2009; Georgiadis et al., 2006), for the purposes of this study it was coded within the Interpersonal Contacts motivational factor because it emphasized the opportunity of meeting and interacting with others (Bang & Ross, 2009; Clary et al., 1998).

3. Career orientation

The Career Orientation factor was present because volunteers wanted to enhance their resumes or CVs through volunteering. Participants said they recognized the value working the Paralympic Games could have on their CVs and desired to gain professional experience on an international stage. Abby, for example, said her main motive for volunteering was enhancing her career experience on her CV. She studied journalism in college and desired a career in media and winter sports.
'So basically I wanted to gain as much experience as possible, so I thought that staying for the Olympics for three weeks and then staying for the Paralympics for about two weeks would add up to the experience. It would be something more I can present on my CV and something more I can talk about.’

Abby said that since her volunteer experience in Sochi, potential employers often ask about her Paralympic volunteering experience. ‘Every time I go now for some job and present my CV, everyone asks me about Sochi. Not that it may be related to the job, but they’re just interested.’

In another example, Takako said the possibility of volunteering at the Paralympic and Olympic Games was professionally interesting for her because she was still a college student when she applied to volunteer. ‘For me, it was a big project and I just wanted to be involved as much as possible. I didn’t know what I would do in 2014.’ More experienced volunteers viewed the experience as an opportunity to share their own knowledge while gaining professional skills. Renata, for example, worked the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games, but had prior professional experience working in winter sports. The opportunity to volunteer at a mega-event for winter sports drew her to apply for the Sochi Games. ‘My background had been ski racing and ski cross and so on. I sort of took a bit of leap into the unknown and thought let’s go for it.’

4. Personal growth

Personal Growth as a motive was present because participants desired to feel needed or feel their work was important for the Paralympic Games. Latia said the importance of her work was a motive for her to pursue volunteering. She had experience working in media and was assigned media work during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. ‘For us, we were working with ONS [Olympic News Service] and Paralympic News Service, so it was really professional work. It’s not like greeting somebody. You are really developing not only personally, but professionally as well.’

Deandre offered another example of Personal Growth as a motive for volunteering, noting the weight of the Paralympic Games as an international sport event and his role within the event. ‘I felt big responsibility for the Games. I understood that success of the Games depends on all people from the Organizing Committee and all the volunteers. And I had to do my best to make the Games the best.’

5. Travel

Participants said the opportunity to visit Russia and experience the culture motivated them to volunteer, establishing Travel as a new factor emerging from this
case study. Latia stayed in Russia 50 days, longer than any participant in this study, to capitalize on the traveling opportunity:

‘I didn’t know anything about the Paralympic Games, and I decided I would spend more time in Sochi. So to prolong this adventure, I said OK, I’ll stay for both and I’ll see what it is to get a new experience.’

Rosena said that free lodging for volunteers who worked the Olympic and Paralympic Games made the decision to travel easy: ‘The 2014 Sochi Paralympic Committee was offering the opportunity to stay in the country, interact with locals, and make a difference, all with little to no cost to me.’ While Rosena’s comment highlights Extrinsic Rewards in lodging, for the purposes of this study, her comment was coded as Travel because of emphasis on the ‘opportunity to stay in the country.’

In another example, Collene said, ‘For me, the motivation was less about the Paralympics themselves but more on I wanted to stay in Russia. I wanted to see both Games and I wanted to spend as much time as I could there.’ Collene, who volunteered at the 2010 Paralympic Games in her hometown of Vancouver, said traveling to Russia to experience a different culture was among her primary motivations.

Discussion

Volunteer motivation factors found in this case study support prior literature on the topic, while a new factor of Travel was found to be a motive for volunteers in this particular study. The presence of Expression of Values supports prior work in volunteer motivations that suggests individuals volunteer based on principles and values outlined by the work and/or organization (Clary et al., 1998). Bang and Chelladurai (2003) later argued that values are a motive for volunteering because the individual exhibits concern for others and society overall. The volunteer, according to Bang and Chelladurai (2003) and later Bang and Ross (2009) and Georgiadis et al. (2006), serves so the event’s success may serve others and to give back to society. This selfless, altruistic motive was found to be true among volunteers in multiple prior studies (Khoo et al., 2011; Kumnig et al., 2015; Wang & Wu, 2014). More specifically, this study’s participants identified with the motive of providing a positive experience for all involved, similar to prior motivation studies among volunteers (Kim et al., 2010; Wang & Wu, 2014). Yet, participants did not identify their motive to be connected with the Paralympic Games specifically or an elite sporting event like prior research on volunteer motives has shown (Fairley et al., 2007; Kodama et al., 2013). Participants in this study volunteered because their personal values aligned with the values of the Olympic and Paralympic Move-
ments, and they desired to contribute to that cause in an altruistic way, supporting prior literature on volunteer motivations in sport settings.

Volunteers in this study identified a motive to develop relationships and interact with people from other parts of the world, supporting prior work by Clary et al. (1998), which found that volunteers serve in order to meet people and spend time with friends. Furthermore, Fairley et al. (2007) found that motives to volunteer include the camaraderie developed among peers within the volunteer setting. Participants in this study supported this notion by stating their desire to meet new people from different cultures, develop friendships, and spend time with peers in the work setting. Similarly, within personal development, participants recognized the potential for career enhancement and were motivated to volunteer because the work could strengthen their CV, supporting existing literature on career orientation as a motive (Wang & Wu, 2014). Participants desired to volunteer in the mega-event setting because they were motivated by an opportunity to share their expertise with others in a professional setting (Fairley et al., 2007).

Volunteers in this study desired for their work to be useful and beneficial to the organization, or in this case the Paralympic Games overall (Wollebaek et al., 2014). Latia, for example, felt her work with the news service was important and needed, as did Richie regarding his work with the news service and Renata in race services due to her prior work experience. The work responsibility then translated into feeling responsibility for the entire Games, as Deandre noted was an attraction to volunteer because it made the work feel necessary and important (Berlonghi, 1994; Daly, 1991; Farrell et al., 1998; Green & Chalip, 1998; Strigas & Jackson, 2003a; 2003b; Williams et al., 1995; Wollebaek et al., 2014).

Prior literature identified Personal Growth as a motive (Bang & Ross, 2009; Georgiadis et al., 2006; Wollebaek et al., 2014), but emphasis was placed on feeling needed and feeling their work was of worth to the organization and/or event. Travel in the current study was solely identified as a motive to be immersed in a foreign culture and experience living in a different country for a brief period of time while completing the volunteer assignment. This is important for sport event managers in the recruiting of international volunteers as they may consider informing the volunteers of cultural activities and traditions, or they may consider formally organizing opportunities for volunteers to experience the cultural setting where the event takes place. This type of ancillary activity may attract and engage volunteers in a holistic manner to further reinforce their importance to the event and organization.

Participants in this study did not cite Community Involvement or Patriotism (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003; Bang & Ross, 2009), nor did they cite Extrinsic Rewards as motives to volunteer (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003). Volunteers received a uniform kit that included 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games-branded shirts, pants, shoes, hats, jackets, gloves, and two sizes of backpacks, and it was advertised to
volunteers they would receive the apparel. Volunteers also received meals during their work shifts and lodging during their stay in Sochi. However, volunteers did not indicate the rewards were a reason they signed on to work. Finally, participants in this study did not generally cite Love of Sport—whether love of a specific sport or love of an event—as a motive for volunteering. Interest in the Olympic Games was mentioned (Bang & Ross, 2009; Ferrell et al., 1998; Wang & Wu, 2014), as was a passion for volunteering (Wolleback et al., 2014), but were not identified as motives.

In relation to connectivity to an event, none of the participants in this study identified a connection with disability aside from previous work at a sporting event such as the 2010 Vancouver Paralympic Games, the 2012 London Paralympic Games, or other championship events. This is of note due to literature that suggests involvement with a sport event for people with disabilities often relies on individuals with connections to disability, advocates for disability, and family and friends who consider themselves as giving back to the disability community (Engelberg et al., 2014; Khoo et al., 2011; Ryan & Cole, 2009). In fact, participants in this study had little or no knowledge of the Paralympic Games or sports within the Paralympic Games prior to volunteering, contradicting prior work citing love for and connectivity to a sport as a motivational factor (Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Love et al., 2011; Pauline & Pauline, 2009; Bang & Chelladurai, 2003; Wolleback et al., 2014). Thus, mega-event planners should recognize the desire of volunteers to travel and the insignificance of sport connectivity for such large-scale, global sport events.

Limitations and future research

This study was limited by the sample and data collection method. The researchers had hoped for a diverse sample given the global nature of the event, but the sample itself did not reflect the demographic composition of Sochi volunteers. In Sochi, the average age of volunteers was 25 years compared to an average age of 31 years for the current study’s sample and most participants were not from Russia.

Data collection during the Paralympic Games would offer a more robust sample and perhaps content due to the timing of discussing the motivation behind volunteering. The International Paralympic Committee requires approval for data collection at the Paralympic Games, which created a barrier for on-site data collection for this study. Thus, future work should seek approval to collect data during the Paralympic Games for the potential of deeper conversations, a more comprehensive and representative sample, and better timing of data collection.

Data were collected for this study via eight Skype interviews and two e-mail
interviews, and that limited the data collected and true depth of the participants’ experiences. Richer data may have been collected through in-person interviews in Sochi where non-verbal cues may have been analyzed and the duration of the interviews may have lasted longer. Again, future work in this area should attempt to collect data at the events or within the city the events are being held, particularly given that the current study revealed that travel to a city was a motive behind volunteering.

Conclusion

This case study sought to identify the motivations for volunteers at the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games. Four of the seven motivational factors identified by Bang and Ross (2009) were present within the current study: Expression of Values, Interpersonal Contacts, Career Orientation, and Personal Growth. An additional motive of Travel was newly identified among volunteers.

Of the motivational factors identified by Bang and Ross (2009) present in the current study, it is noteworthy that volunteers may be seeking to spend their time in unpaid work because they seek to support a larger, global cause that aligns with their personal values. Therefore, it becomes important for an event manager at any level to communicate an event’s values during the volunteer recruitment process. While this certainly may be magnified at large-scale events, international events, and mega-events, one should not underestimate the power of sharing values with potential volunteers in order to gain allies for a cause, a value, a sport, or an event itself.

Participants in this study identified a desire for personal and professional growth. They desired opportunities to develop friendships and network with people within a given industry. Social time was an important motive for participants in this study because they knew people from across the world would be volunteering at the event, and they sought to develop relationships and connections. Event managers should be aware of this desire, specifically within the sport industry as the notion of networking is often cited as an expectation among sport management students and young professionals.

An element that emerged from the findings in this study and coded as a separate motive was Travel. Volunteers at mega-events and particularly international events may see an opportunity to also experience a new culture while working the event, and therefore traveling to a destination becomes a motivation to volunteer. In addition to personal growth, participants also sought to enhance their CV through professional experience, and event managers should work to place qualified volunteers in comparable roles to capitalize on their prior experience and
challenge them to be leaders among other volunteers. The presence of personal and professional development supports the notion that volunteers may not be interested in the event itself, but rather have a desire to grow their personal brand. The sport and event become secondary for the volunteer compared to the social attractiveness and actual work. The individualistic element should be noted to allow event organizers to highlight the attractive incentives of volunteering for social and professional gains.

Motives to volunteer in mega-sport events that were not present in this study were Community Involvement, Extrinsic Rewards, and Love of Sport. Participants in this study found no connection with the community and did not identify pride in their own home countries as a motive to volunteer. They were not motivated by tangible gifts or because of the Paralympic Games and sports. This should be noted because different types of events may illicit a different outcome, but for this study, participants sought a global experience that was not tied to community, rewards, or even the event itself.

As the Paralympic Games continue to grow in size and scope, the need for volunteers will grow in tandem. Understanding volunteer motivation will be critical in securing a strong Paralympic Games workforce and establishing an environment for volunteer success, and therefore, overall event success as well.

References


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