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Talking 'bout my generation: Generational differences in the attitudes of volunteers at the 2012 Olympic Games

Abstract

This article assesses whether the values underpinning the motivations to volunteer of older and younger people are different. It does this through in-depth interviews with 38 volunteers at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Analysis using the framework of the psychological contract and narrative biographies distinguished between value led and market led motives. An initial coding of interviews showed that older volunteers were more likely to express altruistic values and younger volunteers' motivations were related to improving their employability. However, this age-dichotomy became less distinct as qualitative analysis demonstrated how the older volunteers were also motivated by self-interest in certain ways. In particular, a motivation to express a self-identity as a 'volunteer' led them to continue volunteering despite other rewards not being present. The analysis illustrates the interplay of values, circumstances and experience in influencing motivations to volunteer, and thus the difficulty in making generalisations about differences in values between generations.

Introduction

In order to understand differences in motivations to volunteer between younger and older people it is necessary to distinguish between the effects of underlying values, the circumstances in which volunteering takes place, and the experience of volunteering. This article seeks to do this by comparing younger and older volunteers at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. This provides the opportunity to study young and old volunteers fulfilling the same role at the same time.

In the UK there are differences in both the rate of volunteering and recent changes in volunteering, by age. The Community Life Survey (Cabinet Office, 2013) shows that a 5% rise in formal volunteering between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (in a group, club or organisation in the last 12 months), was driven by full-time students, whose volunteering rate increased from 47% to 60%, and young people aged 16 – 19, whose volunteering rate rose from 42% to 58%. The rise in volunteering by students and young people considerably exceeds that by full-time workers. The Taking Part Survey, cited in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's post-2012 Olympic Games meta evaluation (DCMS, 2013:29), similarly shows that a general rise in the percentage of people 'volunteering at least once in the last year' occurred between 2011/12 and the period January 2012 – December 2012 and was most significant for the 16-24 age group. (The Taking Part Survey used a broader definition of volunteering than the Community Life Survey which included informal volunteering.) The Taking Part survey also shows consistent differences between volunteering rates by age. The age groups most likely to volunteer are the 16-24 year olds, followed by the 65-74 year olds. The groups least likely to volunteer are the 75+ age group, followed by the 25-44 age group. The 45-64 year olds volunteer at a rate between these two.

These statistics raise a set of questions which have been explored by the literature: is the recent increase in volunteering by 16-24 year olds a reflection of this group's need to gain marketable experience in a more competitive labour market; is the high rate amongst 65 – 74 year olds a reflection of their values and the satisfactions they have gained from previous

volunteering; do the 75+ group volunteer least because they are constrained by their health, and the 25 – 44 year olds because they are constrained by the demands of parenthood and a competitive work situation? The question addressed by this paper is whether the values underpinning the motives of older and younger people to volunteer are different.

The paper first considers how motivations to volunteer can be explained. It reviews research into the values underpinning motives of young volunteers and places this in the context of the extensive debate on whether these values are changing. The theoretical framework of the psychological contract is introduced as a tool for analysis. The management of volunteers at the 2012 Olympic Games is described followed by the methods used in this study and the analysis. Results summarize the coding of the interview sample and then use a set of biographies to illustrate the complex interplay of values, circumstances and experience in determining motives.

Explaining volunteering by the effects of values, circumstances and experience

The statistics above give a picture of trends and differences in volunteering by age group but explaining them requires disentangling the effects of values, circumstances and experience. The Pathways through Participation study used in-depth interviews with 101 volunteers to understand their changing involvements in volunteering over their life-times (Brodie et al., 2011, p.17). A strength of this research is that it used the method of participants reflecting on their 'life stories' to understand the influences on their movements in and out of volunteering through their life course. This inductive approach to understanding volunteers' experience in their own terms leads to a greater understanding of why people volunteer and what it means to them than does responses to closed options in a questionnaire.

The Pathways research understood values and ethics as underpinning motivation, rather like letters in a stick of rock. These tend to be established at an early age through parental influence and are affected by wider societal and global influences, but they provide a continuity through the life course and are reflected in engagement in volunteering. If, for example, the predominant social values changed between the 1960s and the 1990s it might be possible to see these reflected in a contrast in attitudes between older and younger volunteers, interviewed in 2010 when the Pathways research was conducted. The Pathways research did not examine differences in attitude by generation but it did show the importance of trying to distinguish between the effect of values and of circumstances. For example, is the relatively high volunteer rate of young people because they are particularly altruistic, or because of their circumstances? A complication is that the values of younger and older volunteers will themselves be affected by their circumstances and their experiences of volunteering, so values, circumstances and experiences interact.

Researching the values of young people

Limited research has identified the values underpinning volunteering in young people. A study of 158 young Italian adults (Marta and Pozzi, 2008) measured motivation to volunteer, integration, and satisfaction with the organization, social support, identity, and intention to volunteer, at two occasions, a year apart. The sample involved participants volunteering in the same organisation at both times. This found that 'role identity' was the best predictor of volunteering. The authors conclude that: 'Voluntary engagement is the expression of the need to build one's own social identity. In this sense, the volunteer's group and organization become fundamental in measuring one's own maturity and to be more receptive to social

issues and society in general' (Marta and Pozzi, 2008: 44). For these authors a self-identity which promotes volunteering will be influenced by positive experiences of volunteering and the values of significant others. This could be taken to illustrate the importance of a constant set of values in determining volunteering, but also how those values are determined by the experience of volunteering. Similarly, a nine year panel survey of 1000 people aged 18 – 27 (Oesterle, et al, 2004) found that values developed in adolescence were strong predictors of a continuity of volunteering. A conclusion was that involvement in organisations which encourage volunteering and pro-social values at adolescence, especially religious organisations which promoted altruism and the opportunity to practice it, instilled values which persisted through life. Again this study emphasised the importance of a continuity of values in explaining volunteering.

Clearly young people are more likely to be focused on making the transition from education to employment. Surveys in 12 countries of student motivations to volunteer extracted three clusters of motivation from responses to 14 questions about motivation (Handy et al, 2010) . These were: 1) résumé building and career-related motivations; 2) altruistic and value-driven reasons; 3) social and ego-defensive reasons for volunteering, which were related to the views of friends and a cathartic escape from feelings of guilt or personal problems. Across all countries altruistic and value-driven reasons for volunteering were the highest of the three, followed by résumé building motivations and social and ego-defensive reasons. However a difficulty is accounting for responses being themselves led by 'social desirability', that is, students wishing to give the more socially acceptable response of being led by altruism (op cit, 517). This means we may learn more from the relative differences between countries and relating this to the circumstances of young people. 'Résumé building' was rated more important in England, Canada and the U.S. and least important in Finland, Japan and Korea (Handy et al, 2010). This could reflect differences in competitiveness of the job markets, or in the way volunteering is presented to young people. The research suggests the second explanation - in countries such as in North America where résumé building is a normative expectation, larger numbers of students responded that this was their motivation.

There is further evidence that young people in England are being persuaded to volunteer to promote their employment prospects and that this may determine their perceptions of volunteering. Holdsworth and Brewis, (2013) adopt the term 'mass credentialism' in describing Universities' view of volunteering as another field in which students can gain a market advantage within the increased marketization of higher education to enhance employability. Dean (2014) confirms this attitude is held by brokers of youth volunteer programmes, such as Millennium Volunteers and International Baccalaureate. He claims that 'the traditional discourse of volunteering as a purely self-sacrificial activity may have become an unrealistic old-fashioned idea' (p. 233). The view is summed up by a volunteer centre brokerage worker: 'Whilst the whole nature of volunteering is about free will, I suppose the stick is if you don't do it and someone else is going for the same job as you …, then chances are the person with more volunteering experience will get it.' (p 241). Drawing on Hustinx and Meijis (2011), Dean claims that younger volunteers will be presented with the opportunity to volunteer as a means to their own ends, rather than as an altruistic act. Thus in recruiting and managing volunteers an optimal adjustment is required between the volunteers' own needs and those of the organisation. The relationship is increasingly transactional – from both sides, rather than an expression of shared values. This may be an inevitable reaction to structural circumstances on both the part of the young volunteer and the organisation; whether it is to the relation of organisations to the employment market, or to fragmented and disjointed life experiences (Bauman, 2005; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

The expectations of young people and organisations that volunteering enhances employability may be more important than reality. A study conducted for British University and Colleges Sport (Allen et al., 2013) found that employers preferred students who had sporting and volunteering experience at university because they believed this developed desirable employment attributes – without having any evidence that this was the case. A survey of 5,838 graduates in the same research found that those who had played sport and volunteered in sport at university had higher than average incomes, but not as high as those who only played sport and did not volunteer.   However, as the report points out (p.23) 'sports participation is highly correlated with socio-economic group' so social class could be the stronger determining influence on both sports participation and volunteering at university, and on post-university earnings. In contrast, longitudinal analysis of the British Household Panel Survey was able to assess the link between volunteering in one year with a move into employment in the next. It found no clear relationship between the two. (Ellis Paine, et al. 2013, Kamerade and Ellis Paine, 2014).

The focus of this review on the values of young people reflects the discourse, discussed below, that values are changing.   Research into the motivations of older volunteers has identified continuities of interests with previous experiences in work or leisure (Atchley, 1999) and the need to establish a valued self-identity during a change in circumstances (Hardill and Baines, 2009; Harlow and Cantor, 1996; Lie et al, 2009; Nichols and Ralston, 2011; Riach and Loretto, 2009).

Are the values underpinning motivations changing?

The review above illustrates the difficulty of disentangling values, circumstances and experience. Examining if values are changing by generation is more difficult as it requires longitudinal studies. For example, Dean's (2014) interviews with 31 brokers of youth volunteer programmes had to rely on interviewees' perceptions of change, and it is not clear over what period they had observed change. Handy et al.'s (2010) examination of student volunteering could only imply a change was taking place. Similarly, while Hustinx and Meijs (2011) suggest that 're-embedding' of volunteering may lead to changes in our common perceptions of its defining characteristic as altruism, this is still theoretical speculation. Similarly, the moral philosopher Michael Sandel (2012) has concluded that there has been a general marketisation of social exchanges in 'recent decades' which are increasingly represented in terms of market values: non-market values are crowded out (examples would be paying for naming rights to football stadia, pollution rights, surrogate parenthood, or higher education). Sandel's main point is that when a relationship is subject to market forces this gradually changes the way we think about it – the 'market' is not actually morally neutral, it replaces other values. In relation to volunteering, altruism would be replaced by calculation of personal contributions and rewards.

Other studies have claimed to show a change in attitudes over time by cross-sectional analysis. For example, Inglehart (1971) used a simple set of questions to measure political attitudes. He was able to show that the generation whose attitudes had been formed pre 1945 were more acquisitive (explained by their early experience of economic scarcity); while the generation born after 1945 put a higher value on freedom of political expression (explained by their formative experience of economic affluence). The general attitudinal categorisations were found to predict more specific opinions; for example, the 'post-1945' group were more likely to be sympathetic to large scale student demonstrations (a feature of 1960s Britain).

Inglehart considered the possibility that the different values might just reflect stages in life-style, such as the youngest cohort could afford to have 'post-bourgeois' values as they had fewer economic responsibilities to a partner and family. He rejected this because his large data set allowed analysis across social classes, which showed that experience of economic and physical security during a formative period accounted for both age cohort and socioeconomic differences; i.e. lower social classes tended to be more 'acquisitive'. Analysis across countries also showed differences in attitude reflected economic circumstances. Thus, by identifying economic circumstances as a key variable determining attitudes, he concluded that underlying attitudes vary by generation, are socialized early and retained through life, and do not just reflect stages in life-cycle. Following on from this, if economic conditions are the main determining factor, we might expect the generation born between 1945 and 1960 to have an approach to volunteering which was more a reflection of 'post-bourgeois' values. However, the generation born after this period might have an approach more consistent with the greater economic insecurity of the period from the 1980s.

A further analysis of the World Values Survey (Inglehart, 2003) concluded that modernization of societies, meaning economic development, is associated with a shift from Traditional to Secular-rational values and lower rates of civic activism, especially in certain types of associations. However, the emergence of a knowledge based society is conducive to higher levels of civic activism in general, and volunteering in particular (p. 57). In analysis using 1999-2001 data, young and older cohorts were compared across 48 countries (these age groups were not defined). In the 17 rich countries, the young were significantly less likely to be members of associations than the old, except for youth organisations and sporting organisations. However, in the 31 less developed societies, the young were more likely to be members of associations. The conclusion was that as societies develop, young people's membership of associations reduces. However, the pattern is different for volunteering. In rich countries the young are not less likely to be involved in volunteering, as illustrated by volunteering rates in the UK, shown above.

However, Inglehart's (2003) analysis illustrates a further difficulty in trying to identify value changes: active membership in civic associations may not be an accurate proxy for particular values. This is illustrated by Putnam's analysis of a decline in civic participation in the United States. For Putnam (2000) the most important single driving force explaining this is a generational shift, in which younger birth cohorts show lower rates of civic engagement than older birth cohorts. Putnam shows that membership of civic associations falls steadily from the 1920s to the 1960s and this is accounted for by generational differences in membership levels between those born before and after the Second World War. Plotting forms of civic engagement between 1972 and 1998, disengagement is concentrated in the younger cohorts (Putnam 2000: 252) representing a shift from collective to individual activity: that is 'bowling alone'. Putman concludes that approximately 50% of the decline in engagement is attributable to this generational change. In speculating about the cause of this change Putnam is 'led to the conclusion that the dynamics of civic engagement in the last several decades have been shaped in part by social habits and values influenced in turn by the great mid-century global cataclysm' (p. 275). In other words, the collective experience of the social response to the Great Depression and the Second World War engendered a particular set of values which promoted civic engagement. For Putnam the implication, citing William James (1910), is that civic renewal requires the search for the 'moral equivalent of war'.

By contrast Putnam notes that the years 1990 – 2000 have seen a substantial increase in volunteering and community service by young people. He speculates if this is due to 'official

pressure', by which he presumably means the type identified by Dean (2014) and Holdworth and Brewis (2013), or by an 'undergirding of a broader civic infrastructure of community organisations' by which he means those which nurture and develop values traditionally underpinning volunteering (Oesterle, et al, 2004). This illustrates that without a longitudinal data set measuring changing values Putnam, and others, have to speculate about their role in social change. His willingness to do this reflects a discourse that the young have become less altruistic. In contrast to Putnam's speculation on the impact of economic depression promoting volunteering, Lim and Laurence (2015) found that informal and formal volunteering declined after the UK 2008 recession. This was most apparent in informal volunteering, and in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with a weaker civic organizational infrastructure and lower cultural norms of trust. Interestingly the decline was significantly less in the USA over the same period. Lim and Laurence attribute this to the greater institutionalization of the voluntary sector in the USA and its stronger role in compensating for the state's weaker social safety net.

Thus, while the importance attached to values in the Pathways through Participation research (Brodie et al., 2011) can explain the continuity of volunteering, in the few studies which have longitudinal data (Oesterle, et al, 2004; Marta and Pozzi, 2008) the speculation that values have changed between generations is difficult to substantiate and explain. Volunteering rates for young people remain high, but this will reflect a mix of values, motivations and circumstances. A further complication is that, even if values can be isolated, altruism and self-interest are not necessarily alternatives, but can exist together. One might balance the other, but both may be at a high or low level. Thus, the key question we explore is if younger and older volunteers have different values and attitudes, or if they are just responding to different personal circumstances.

The 'psychological contract' as a theoretical framework for understanding volunteering

As a tool for analysis we use the concept of a 'psychological contract' to describe the subjective 'deal' expected by a volunteer. It allows a distinction to be made between interviewees' emphasis on transactional, relational and ideological components of the contract (Nichols, 2013). The concept of a psychological contract has been adapted from its usual application to employees to understand volunteering. Examples include: Farmer and Fedor (1999), Kim, et al. (2009), Liao-Troth (2005), Nichols and Ojala (2009), O'Donohue and Nelson (2009), Taylor et al. (2006), Thompson and Bunderson (2003) and Vantilborgh, et al. (2011). A transactional contract focuses on short-term, monetizable exchange of obligation and entitlements (Rousseau, 1995). Typical components might include the employees' perception of the wage, conditions of work and other benefits. Components of a relational contract include socio-emotional exchanges of trust, high responsibility and good working relationships and tend to characterise longer-term relationships. Ideological components include values and beliefs. One might expect these to be especially relevant to volunteers' motivations, in contrast to employees, as volunteers have greater freedom to choose their 'work' to reflect their own values. This was found to be the case in a study of volunteer hospital workers (O'Donohue and Nelson, 2009). Thus transactional expectations corresponded to a more market oriented approach to volunteering, such as to improve employability: which is consistent with a general marketization of social exchanges (Sandel, 2012). Ideological expectations correspond to a belief in a cause, such as promotion of sport, an Olympic ideal or a general value of volunteering as an expression of altruism. In the same way as an individual may balance motives of altruism and self-interest, they may also have both transactional and ideological expectations.

Methods

Volunteering for the 2012 Olympic and Paralymic Games

Our study is of Games Makers, the term used to describe the volunteers recruited to support the 2012 London Olympic Games. A description of the process of application, interview, selection and training helps understand the experiences of our interviewees. 240,000 people applied, from which 100,000 were interviewed in London and eight regional centres between February 2011 and March 2012; up to 16 months after applying. As much as a further 18 months after their interview applicants were informed if they were successful (for some the period post-interview was much shorter) following which they were required to attend two training events in London and a third at their Olympic venue (usually in London). They might also attend test events in the summer of 2012 and had to make an additional visit to London to pick up their accreditation and uniform. No support was provided for travel to any of the components of this process, or to arrange accommodation in London so the personal costs of volunteering were high. Eighty percent of the Games Makers responding to the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)'s post Games survey, and who were willing to report their incomes, had gross household incomes of over £22,000 p.a. (Alexander, et al. 2015) and 36% had gross household incomes over £50,000. So Games Makers tended to be more wealthy members of society.

Volunteers were informed of their shifts from May 2012 onwards. LOCOG was responsible for delivering the Games but the recruitment and training of the volunteers was delivered by McDonalds, the fast food company, as corporate sponsorship (Nichols and Ralston, 2014). McDonalds designed the training materials, and the interview and selection process, although interviewing of applicants was conducted by a group of volunteers and students who had applied specifically to be Games Maker interviewers. Studying Games Makers allows us to contrast older and younger volunteers who were volunteering for the same opportunity.

Interviews and sampling

Following the methods in the Pathways research (Brodie et al., 2011), we conducted 53 in-depth interviews between February and June 2012 with individuals who had volunteered for the Games. By this time our interviewees had experience of application, interview, being given a place, orientation training, role and venue training, being notified of shifts, and possibly test events; although not all interviewees had completed all these stages — only a few had attended test events. To compare younger (under 30) and older (over 55) volunteers in this analysis we reduced the sample to 38.

The initial sample was obtained as a result of promotion of the research to staff and students at Manchester Metropolitan University, at Sheffield University, through Manchester Event Volunteers -a volunteer development organization established after the 2002 Commonwealth Games (Nichols and Ralston, 2012), and through further 'snowballing'. Others were recommended by other interviewees. By the time of the initial research interview, thirteen of the 53 interviewees had withdrawn from the Games Maker recruitment process, giving a useful perspective on reasons for withdrawal. Interviews followed a simple chronological schedule, asking volunteers to describe the stages of their recruitment and training and how these affected their motivation. Interviews were between 20 and 90 minutes in length, allowing volunteers ample time to contextualise their experiences. Our volunteers were

untypical in that they predominantly came from the Manchester and Sheffield areas, both approximately 200 miles north of London. Four percent of all Games Makers came from the North West, and 4% from Yorkshire and the Humber (Dickson and Benson, 2013), the regions of the UK in which the cities of Manchester and Sheffield are located respectively, while 34% came from London. Thus our sample had greater travel costs and was more likely to have to arrange their own accommodation in London, at their own expense. This bias in our sample affected older and younger volunteers in the same way, so does not limit our conclusions. The prime focus of our interviews was the experience of being recruited and trained as a Games Maker, however, as full transcripts were made it was also possible to use them to examine the values of volunteers.

Coding and analysis

Transcripts were coded using the NVIVO analysis software package to identify ideological or market led values by applying a set of codes to the transcripts. The codes were refined by two researchers each independently coding the same initial four transcripts. The revised codes were validated by independent coding of four further transcripts. This process also helped eliminate codes which were unhelpful in distinguishing between the two sets of values. For example; volunteers with either set of values might resent LOCOG taking advantage of their market position or feel they had not been treated with sufficient respect so codes recording this were not used. Similarly the motive of being part of a once in a life-time-event ('being part of it'), has been shown to dominate in volunteering for the Olympic Games (Dickson, et al. 2014) but across all age groups. Codes are described in Table 1.

The sample was divided into those aged 30 and under (born after 1982) and who would have had their values formed in the 1990s (19); and those aged 55 and over (born before 1957) (19): who's values would have been formed in the years corresponding to Inglehart's 'post-bourgeois' generation. This excluded from analysis the 15 interviewees who could not be allocated to these categories.

Results

We first describe the results of a coding of the interviews to contrast older and younger volunteers. We then illustrate the experience these codes represent with biographical narratives; consistent with the approach of the Pathways research; to show the interplay of values, circumstances and experience for each individual. Eight interviewees were selected to contrast the older and younger volunteers, but also because they illustrated the different permutations of ideological and market led values within each group.

Results of coding are shown in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

In Table 1 figures in the columns represent the number of volunteers who could be clearly attributed to codes recording a particular attitude or psychological contract component. Thus five volunteers who were 55 or over could clearly be identified as expressing altruism and ten volunteers who were aged 30 and below explicitly stated that they were volunteering to gain experience to add to their CV. This shows that ideological components of the psychological contract dominate for older volunteers, and the transactional ones for younger volunteers, although there was some overlap. To illustrate the two types of motivation but understand

them in greater depth we present examples of older and younger volunteers 'stories'. These examples have been selected to illustrate different combinations of values, circumstances and experience.

Older volunteers:

Mandy

Mandy was retired and in her early 60s. She had volunteered at the Munich Olympics in 1972 and 'just thought it was somehow appropriate to [do so again] 40 years later, at the beginning and end of [her] working life'. She was also very interested in sport in general, especially athletics and gymnastics. This was related to her working life as a physiotherapist. She was clear about the costs involved in volunteering and accepted these, taking care with her budget. 'I've always known that I would have to find my own accommodation, pay to get to London or pay to get to the events … we get a pass within zone 1 to 6 in London and if your shift is however long, like 8 hours or whatever, then you get a break and a meal ticket during that time so those are the only perks as it were but I knew I would have to travel to and from London, it was always clear that you had to pay for that yourself and accommodation you would have to find yourself .' She was happy to accept this as sacrifices she needed to make to volunteer. However travel costs could all be made as reasonable as possible with good planning, purchasing cheap train tickets in advance, and taking advantage of a special rate for over 60s. She accepted that she had to attend an interview in a different town and training in London. This, and the associated travel time and cost were 'part of the test – can you follow instructions – have you got the initiative to find your way to this building?'. Her main concern was that she would get too tired while volunteering and this would affect her ability to perform as a volunteer.

Mandy illustrates a combination of altruism and favourable circumstances. She valued sport and the Olympics. She was also motivated by the opportunity to repeat her experience of the Munich Games. The costs of volunteering were a consideration, but accepted as inevitable and something she had to budget and plan for rather than being weighed against the rewards of volunteering. Her circumstances made it easier for her to do this. We have interpreted her concern about being too tired during the event as a concern she would not be able to give everything she wanted to at the event.

Marge

Marge was also retired and in her early 60s. In contrast to Mandy she was a very experienced volunteer and had been involved in volunteer management for several years having helped found a charity in 1982 and been involved in its management since at national level. She volunteered because she 'had such a good experience (volunteering) in the World Student Games in 1991, enjoying working with a group of really motivated volunteers'. She also wanted to use her specialist skills in training volunteers and described in detail how she had previously trained inexperienced groups from diverse backgrounds. She had assumed that there would be opportunities to take this role at the 2012 Olympic Games. She explained that she was 'highly motivated' and had 'worked in the voluntary sector all of my life'. She was frustrated at not being able to explain what she could contribute in the highly structured interview process, conducted by an inexperienced interviewer reading from a script. When she was offered a role it was 'giving out dinner tickets … something I am not hugely motivated to do I can't tell you'.

The e-mail confirming her role told her that; 'Electing the volunteers was a tough job but we were really impressed with your interview. We know you've got the passion and enthusiasm'. For Marge these were 'just words and I don't believe them'. At that point she realised she would not be able to use her specialist skills, and these would not be recognised. She felt 'undervalued, really undervalued, I've got all this experience …. I thought you have missed out here'. However she took the view that 'somebody has to do the not so attractive glamorous jobs and OK I will do it'. A further set of de-motivating aspects of the process where being given two day's notice of a training event – which she could not attend as she was abroad; being informed of her shifts in a way that she could not access on her particular computer; being spoken to condescendingly when she enquired about this; and being given shifts which meant she would have to get up at 3.00am – given the travelling arrangements in London. All these had the effect of her motivation being 'slowly turned down like a dimmer switch'. Two months before the Games she reported: 'I have worked in the voluntary sector all of my life. I am highly motivated and I am that far from pulling out'.
Despite this she described her continued motivation: 'my free will still says I have to go, … and it is not in my ethos, it's not in my make-up, to let people down'.

Marge illustrated values very positively supporting volunteering which she had expressed through her life. Her extensive experience of volunteering and volunteer management led her to expect her skills to be used effectively and for her to be treated with consideration and respect. However, her willingness to accept a menial role reflected the strength of her ideological motivations. These kept her involved, despite the disappointment that her skills were not being used and a series of rebuffs to her expectations of being treated in a way consistent with her own experience of managing volunteers, including insincerity in LOCOG's communications. She did not mention the market costs of volunteering, such as travel – possibly because these were not significant to her as a relatively wealthy older person but also because they were not an important component of the relationship. However, she did expect the personal rewards of being able to use her skills in volunteer management, and gain similar rewards to those she had experienced volunteering at the World Student Games in 1991. Thus while we have coded her as predominantly ideologically motivated one can see that she also had strong expectations of personal rewards linked to her self-identity as an experienced volunteer.

Bernard

Bernard was a retired engineer in his late 70s. He wanted to volunteer at the Olympics because he had enjoyed volunteering at other large sporting and cultural events so much and he also wanted to support the UK and make sure the Olympics was a success. In addition, he thought his considerable experience as a volunteer and volunteer manager might be useful and enable him to make a positive contribution. He was finally persuaded to apply by one of the organisers of a national sporting championship with whom he'd worked previously. He was given a code to include on his application to ensure he would be volunteering with this particular sport. He was concerned that the interviewer may not have fully understood the extent of his experience. His fears were confirmed when he received his offer.

> 'I'm happy with [the sport] but I've been put on general stewarding, a general dogsbody really. That's the role I put people on if you haven't done any volunteering before … It's very much a junior role and not what I would expect someone with my

level of experience. But if that's all they want me to do, then that's what I'll do. I'm not pleased but I don't fret too much'.

His disappointment continued throughout the training stages which he felt were unfocused and a waste of time for experienced volunteers. His attitude was:

'I might be being bloody-minded but I'll just turn up and do what they've asked me to do and that's that. I've given them the opportunity on a number of occasions to use my expertise and they're not interested. It's their loss. I'll just do what I have to do and no more'.

He was asked why he was still willing to put himself through the cost and inconvenience of staying in a hotel and travelling for over an hour before his 6am shift for a role he did not want.

'If I commit to something, I commit. There may be things that you don't like or don't want, and might be times when you think I'll be glad when all this is over, but if you commit to it, you're the one who committed yourself so you just have to get on with it'.

Again, while we have coded Bernard as predominantly ideologically motivated because of his general commitment to volunteering and his tenacity in continuing to volunteer for this event despite his setbacks, he would have liked the reward and probably the prestige of being able to use his volunteering skills and experience. He made no mention of financial constraints.

Maurice

Maurice was in his 50s with a number of years' experience working in event security. He had been a very active event volunteer for over 10 years, including volunteering in the Beijing Olympics, and was a sports referee at county and regional level. He applied the first day applications were open but heard nothing for 12 months. His first choice was his own sport. He was irritated and dismayed by the inexperienced and 19-year-old, first-year student interviewer who was ignorant about volunteering and couldn't understand why people would volunteer instead of being paid. 'To be honest I thought it was an insult to have someone like that be able to say whether an experienced volunteer like me should be allowed to go to the Olympics'. Nevertheless, Maurice felt the interview process allowed him to give a realistic account of himself and he was optimistic that he would be accepted. 'He said, 'you have said all the buzzwords so you should get in. And I just looked at him and thought, 'of course I said all the buzzwords you idiot I've been doing it for that long''.

Maurice was only offered, and reluctantly accepted, a role at his third choice event. He was never given any explanation for this allocation. Despite repeatedly asking for information about his shifts he felt he had no option by June but to go ahead and book accommodation to cover the whole period of the event. He was very angry when he was eventually only allocated four shifts spread over 14 days but he was continuing to volunteer.

Maurice illustrated a general positive attitude towards volunteering and persistence in honouring his commitment, despite the difficulties in the recruitment process and not being allocated a role consistent with his experience. Nevertheless, as with Bernard and Marge, his

considerable previous experience of volunteering could be understood as reflecting personal rewards of using his skills and experience, but more broadly, his sense of identity as a 'volunteer'. This accounts for his sense of insult at his suitability as a volunteer being judged by someone ignorant about volunteering, and holding different views on volunteering motives.

Younger volunteers

Lindy

Lindy was 17 when she applied to be a Games Maker, and at the time of interview a first year student. Her main motivation was 'the experience of being there to be honest and being involved in it'. She 'wanted to be mainly in one of the stadiums rather than in the background doing things'. Her second motivation was 'because it will be good for my CV and stuff after University hopefully'.

Her previous experience of volunteering had been at a children's sports event and in a nursery. This was part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and 'as part of a scheme that we had to do at school' so reflecting extrinsic rather than ideological motives. Thus her motivation to volunteer for the Olympics was personal reward. She did not express any ideological motivations. She 'applied for the minimum time you could do – 11-14 days' because she wanted 'a bit of my summer … for a holiday and stuff'.

While limiting her time commitment she accepted some early rises for inconvenient shifts and the costs of travelling in London – which she would have to cover from some paid work. The cost of travel to the training was more than she had anticipated, 'quite a lot of money for a student' and her parents helped her pay this. She thought that LOCOG had not given her 'specific details so you can't really work out how much it is going to cost you. If I could do that I may have thought otherwise and thought about not doing it'. She noted that at training volunteers were told 'you are the most important part of the Olympics, but you know that they have to say it really to motivate us so it just goes in one ear and out the other'. Unlike Marge (a far more experienced and older volunteer - above) insincere communications were not affronts to her personal values.

Furthering her CV was the main value expressed by Lindy and her previous 'obliged' volunteering was completely consistent with Dean's (2014) analysis of the dominant discourse presented to young people. She had carefully weighed the costs of travel and volunteering against the benefits, and her parents had helped her meet them.

Laura

Laura was a final year event management student who initially saw volunteering at the Olympics as an opportunity' to experience it and see what the infrastructure was like and to be part of it'. However she also saw the potential career benefits and hoped to 'gain contacts with other event managers who volunteered, finding out how they became an event manager, how they did it'. She was aware that she was not experienced enough to be involved in an organising capacity and was happy to work in any area.

She found the interview process rigid and was frustrated by the interviewer's inability to answer basic questions. Her interviewer responded 'all I can say is what I've been told to say'. After that Laura felt it was pointless seeking further information about accommodation or travel expenses from someone who 'wasn't really representing the Olympics and was probably just another volunteer'. Although she was still motivated after the interview she was beginning to have doubts. LOCOG's attitude of 'this is what we want from you, take it or leave it' and 'this is what we can offer you, which was very little' made her question whether 'they could offer me as much as I could offer them as a volunteer' or even whether they 'cared enough about the volunteers to look after us properly'.

Laura eventually turned down LOCOG's offer. LOCOG's inflexibility, their reluctance to provide practical information and assistance and their arrogant attitude were factors. Most importantly, her estimate of the costs did not match the benefits, she realised that volunteering at the Olympics was unlikely to provide the potential career benefits she had hoped for.

Laura's main motive was to enhance her CV, especially in relation to her degree subject. Unlike the older experienced volunteers above, her motivation was not enough to maintain her commitment in the face of the difficulties presented by the recruitment and training.

Bren

Bren was in her 20s and doing a master's course when she applied for a Games Maker role. Her motivations were that: 'it is going to be such a big event. One of my friends worked at the Vancouver Olympics and she was telling me just how great it was and being involved in it' and she had also enjoyed volunteering the previous year at the British Universities Games. She also,

> 'thought it would be a good experience and something which looks good to have been involved in potentially for the future - I mean it is all experience, isn't it? And it's good to meet new people and that kind of thing'.

She was also interested in sport at school and university as a keen participant. Previously she had done some volunteering helping at a nursery, 'not really proper long-term volunteering, but just here and there' and also at a universities sports event. She was happy to do whatever role she was offered, but withdrew from the interview when she thought that the training dates would clash with an overseas trip which was part of her course and volunteering would have been 'added stress on top of working for my masters dissertation'. Later she found out that the dates would not have clashed, '…it's a shame because I've now found out that I would be back from my placement so I would have been able to (volunteer).'

Bren was motivated by a commitment to sport. Her previous volunteering at a nursery may illustrate altruism, as may volunteering at sports events, but she also explicitly stated volunteering at the Games would 'look good'. The circumstances of her course prevented her volunteering although even when she later found out the dates would not have clashed, the time still had to be weighed against that required to write up her dissertation.

Ruby

Ruby was a second year student. She volunteered because 'it sounded pretty cool'. She was a keen sports participant who presently instructed canoeing and 'was in most of the sports

teams at school … and did PE at GCSE and A level'.   Her first choice venue was the canoe slalom at Lea Valley. Her parents living in London was a factor which made volunteering easier as she could stay with them. Although the Lea Valley venue was further away than other London venues so travelling was more difficult to organise, it was still Ruby's first choice.   Unusually for a student Ruby did not mention any way in which volunteering would help her gain employment or work experience so her main motivation was interest in sport, and canoeing in particular.   She would have preferred to get paid work at the Olympics because she was 'having to take time off [her work as a canoeing instructor] to do it'.   This meant that her volunteering at the Olympics would only be over the five days of canoe competition and suggests a notional calculation of the opportunity cost of volunteering.

Having to make an additional trip to London to pick up her uniform, and the trips to London for training, were made more acceptable because she could combine them with visiting her parents for the weekend.   The need to make some of these trips during the week and at short notice was not a difficulty because her university course had few commitments so she could be very flexible around this. She contrasted this with the inconvenience for 'people with proper jobs and stuff'.   The major difficulty was lack of information about exactly when her shifts would be as she needed to plan her paid work around these.

So Ruby's main motivation was being involved in the sport she was enthusiastic about. This could be interpreted as altruism to promote the sport but she would have preferred to have a related paid job. She had to balance her paid employment with volunteering. However, this reflected her circumstances as a student, and she was able to volunteer because she did not have accommodation costs and could combine travel costs for training with visiting her parents.

Discussion: the interplay of values, circumstances and experience

While the coding of motivations by age, as in Table 1, suggests a generational difference, the volunteers' stories above illustrate the complex interplay of values, circumstances and experience. Amongst older volunteers, altruistic values appeared to be strong in underpinning motivation, however, all were retired, so had time to give. Only one expressed having to be careful with costs, so they could afford to meet the costs of travel to London and accommodation. While the considerable volunteering experience of Maurice, Bernard and Marge could be interpreted as an expression of altruism and a commitment to volunteering in general; this experience would have also contributed to their self-identity as an experienced volunteer, with an expectation that their skills and experience would be recognised. When it was not, this proved a test of their ideological commitment and two of them explicitly stated they would not quit despite this. But perhaps they also felt bound by the need to express the sense of identity they had adopted as a reliable volunteer illustrated by the statement 'it's not in my make-up, to let people down'. Their experience also led them to expect respect and recognition for their contribution. Psychological contract theory explains this as a 'relational reward' based on personal relationships.   When this was not forthcoming, it made a further strain on their commitment.

Thus for these older experienced volunteers, their experience had a strong effect both on the rewards they expected, and the need to weigh not obtaining these against their values of promoting volunteering. This supports the view that underlying values can explain a predisposition to volunteer (Brodie, et al. 2011; Oesterle, 2004); but also that these values can become embodied into one's self-identity (Marta and Pozzi, 2008) in which case there is a

convergence between altruism and self-interest as an expression of one's self, involving what might be viewed as altruistic behaviour. This is consistent with other studies of older volunteers which have found it to be a continuing expression of self-identity (Atchley, 1999) This is different to suggesting the 're-embedding' of volunteering leading to changes in our common perceptions of its defining characteristic as altruism (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011). Irrespective of a degree of altruism, some older volunteers also had a strong expectation of personal rewards, illustrating that altruism and self-interest could both be at a high level.

For younger volunteers CV enhancement was important and the examples supported the view that this function of volunteering is promoted to young people (Dean, 2014; Holdsworth and Brewis, 2013) through their previous experience of volunteering. Young people much more commonly expressed rewards in terms of enhanced employability, and were more calculative of the balance of reward and effort as a transactional psychological contract. However, their circumstances and experience were also very different; they were trying to gain employment and they had fewer financial resources. Older volunteers who were retired had more time to make travel arrangements in a way that could take advantage of lower fares, more time to give to the training, greater ability to be flexible around their other commitments, and had more funds to pay for travel and related costs of volunteering. The value of the experience in the job market was irrelevant to them.

Conclusions

In examining differences between the motivations of younger and older people in volunteering the key question is if we can show the two groups have different values and attitudes underpinning motivation, or if they are just responding to different personal circumstances and experiences. Our analysis illustrates the difficulty of doing this. We agree with writers who have identified a dominant discourse in promotion of volunteering to young people, (Dean, 2014; Holdsworth and Brewis, 2013). Transactional components of the psychological contract were dominant for younger volunteers. However, we cannot be sure this reflects a different balance of altruism and self-interest; and if this reflects a marketization of social relationships (Sandel, 2012) in which altruism (Cnaan et al., 1996; Meijs et al., 2003) may be replaced with a view that volunteering is a social exchange, distinguished from paid work mainly by the absence of a wage (Hustinx and Meijs, 2011). When we compare the values of younger and older people, even when volunteering for the same event, we are not comparing like with like as personal circumstances are so different. Inevitably younger volunteers have been influenced by their position in the labour market and having relatively fewer personal resources, compared to older volunteers. This is highlighted in an event such as the 2012 Olympics where the costs of volunteering were high.

A discourse that younger volunteers are less altruistic (Dean, 2014, Putnam 2000) also has to be tempered by understanding the motives of older more experienced volunteers as reflecting self-interest through their previous experiences of positive rewards of volunteering. Further, older volunteers showed that reinforcing and expressing their own self-identity as a volunteer could be just as powerful an explanation of continuity of volunteering as could altruism. In fact it may be impossible to distinguish between a motivation of pure selflessness, and one of expressing one's own identity as an 'altruistic person'.

The two studies which identified a continuity of altruistic values as explaining volunteering concluded that 'voluntary engagement is the expression of the need to build one's own social

identity … to be more receptive to social issues and society in general' (Marta and Pozzi, 2008: 44), and involvement in organisations which encourage volunteering and pro-social values at adolescence, especially religious organisations which promoted altruism and the opportunity to practice it, instilled values which persisted through life (Oesterle, et al, 2004). Thus altruism may be built into self-identity, which then forms the underlying values and attitudes underpinning motivations, as identified in the Pathways research. Rather than concluding, as Putnam (2000: 275) does, that civic renewal requires altruistic values, perhaps a positive experience of relational and ideological rewards of volunteering, which contribute to development of a positive and valued self-image as a 'volunteer', is sufficient to ensure the volunteers of the future. This would counter the implied concern of commentators such as Dean and Putnam, that if young people are socialised into thinking of volunteering in transactional terms it will be difficult to recruit volunteers in 20 years' time to take roles where the transactional rewards are less.

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Table 1. Orientations towards volunteering by age - codes.

	Age range	55 and over	30 and under
Ideological led values			
Altruism (giving time and effort freely without expectation of reward).		5	0
A positive acceptance that financial sacrifices will need to be made to volunteer, such as costs of train fares, finding accommodation.		2	0
Supports Olympic ideal - mentions the Olympic idea specifically.		5	3
Supports the promotion of sports participation because values sport.		2	1
Supports the UK / England / London in presenting itself to the		2	1

world because values national identity and promotion to the world.		
Supports the general value of volunteering as a good thing to do. Could be reflected in previous commitment.	8	3
Commitment; once they said they would do something they will continue with it - expressed in resilience despite de-motivators.	8	0
Market led values		
Motivated to get experience for CV to help in the job market.	0	10
Motivated to get experience to complement academic course or to gain qualifications.	0	4
Personal financial costs are weighed carefully against potential benefits – i.e. cost of train fares, cost of accommodation, own time against anticipated rewards.	0	7
A lack of commitment – expressed as may not continue to volunteer if an alternative opportunity presents itself which could give greater personal reward.	1	1