Introduction

Successfully staging a mega-event, such as an Olympic Games, requires a significant amount of volunteer labor (Green & Chalip, 2004; Kemp, 2002; Preuss, 2004), with over 40,000 volunteers utilized over any Olympic Games period (de Moragas, Moreno, & Pangiagua, 2000; Cuskelley, Hoye, & Auld, 2006). This unpaid workforce provides considerable economic benefits to event organizers in addition to providing opportunities for community development (Downward & Ralston, 2006). Research suggests that volunteering at mega-sport events may be the impetus for a volunteering “career”—both at future Olympic Games and for local community organizations (Fairley, Green, O’Brien, & Chalip, 2015; Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007; Nichols & Ralston, 2011a, 2011b).

Specifically, a positive experience volunteering at an event is believed to make an individual more likely to develop a volunteer “identity” in which helping becomes not so much what one does, but who one is recognized as being (Finkelstein, 2009; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Piliavin, Grube,
Repeat Volunteerism

The strength of such an identity has been shown to, in turn, correlate with an increased intention to volunteer at future events, engage in community volunteering, and improve one’s perceptions of volunteering (Doherty, 2009; Downward & Ralston, 2006; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005; Grube & Piliavin, 2000).

The increased commitment individuals develop towards engaging in future volunteerism may be considered a form of legacy that develops after volunteering at an event such as the Olympics. Thus, given the considerable number of volunteers involved in the staging of an Olympic Games, it may also be suggested that volunteering at an Olympic Games results in a lasting legacy for the host city and country (Waitt, 2003). However, little is known about the volunteer legacies that may result from volunteering that occurs at such mega-events (Doherty, 2009).

The increased importance of role legacy plays in the hosting of mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, is demonstrated by the inclusion of a specific focus on legacy within the Olympic Charter by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Furthermore, cities that host sport events often use potential legacies of events to justify the spending of public monies. Event legacy has taken on many different definitions (c.f., Cashman, 2003; Preuss, 2007). Preuss (2007) posits that legacy is a three-dimensional construct including that which is planned or unplanned, positive or negative, and tangible or intangible. Pruess also highlights that legacy is of an undetermined duration, making it a difficult concept to assess. Cashman (2003) suggests that legacies may include: economic impacts, built and physical environment, information and education, public life, political impacts culture, sport, symbols, memory, and history. Despite the considerable discussion of Olympic legacy, one lasting impact that has not received adequate attention is the legacy of volunteerism (Doherty, 2009; Nichols & Ralston, 2011a, 2011b). This study examines the legacies that result from volunteering at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Specifically, this study focuses on how volunteering at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games has influenced those individuals who were involved. In addition to advancing our understanding of volunteer legacy, this study derives practical implications for the recruitment and retention of volunteers, as well as providing insight for those who are concerned with devising an event legacy strategy.

Literature Review

Repeat Volunteerism

Research concerned with recruiting and retaining volunteers has typically focused on motives for volunteering (Dickson, Benson, Blackman, & Terwiel, 2013; Elstad, 1996; Fairley, Lee, Green, Kim, 2013; Green & Chalip, 2004; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995) and less frequently on the motives for repeat volunteerism (Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Fairley et al., 2007; Jiménez, Chacón, & Sueiro, 2010). Retaining or attracting repeat volunteers is something event organizers should aim for given that such volunteers often have enhanced skills, knowledge, and experience with the event, which can be utilized by managers to reduce the duration and cost of volunteer training (Elstad, 1996). Although repeat volunteerism is most often associated with stationary, single-destination events that occur on a regular basis, it also occurs with nonstationary events, where individuals travel to volunteer at events such as the Olympic Games (Fairley et al., 2007) or motorsport events (Costa, Chalip, Green, & Simes, 2006).

Repeat Volunteerism: The Development of a Role Identity. It has been suggested that a key causal mechanism that strengthens the likelihood of repeat volunteering behavior is the development of a volunteer role identity (Callero, Howard, & Piliavin, 1987; Chacón, Vecina, & Dávila, 2007; Jiménez et al., 2010; Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005). Role identity theory predicts that over time the volunteer role an individual undertakes becomes incorporated into that individual’s self-concept (Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005). In the development of such a self-concept, role identity theory emphasizes the importance of the social context: a volunteer identity emerges from ongoing social interactions, as well as from the perceived expectations of others (Brennan, 2005). Of particular importance are the positive reactions an individual receives from others when acting in their volunteer role (Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005).
and the positive interactions among volunteers while performing the volunteer activity (Brennan, 2005). The internalized self-concept an individual develops as a consequence of such positive social interactions then guides their future behaviors as that individual strives to remain consistent with the changed or newly formed self-concept (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein, 2009; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Piliavin et al., 2002). From a practical perspective, research has shown that volunteers who develop a positive volunteer role identity are more likely to engage in volunteering in the future (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein, 2006; Piliavin et al., 2002).

**Future Intent to Volunteer**

In predicting future intent to volunteer, role identity theorists suggest the stronger one identifies with their role as a volunteer, the more likely they will be to continue to engage in the activity (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Piliavin et al., 2002; Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005). In an event-specific context, research (e.g., Doherty, 2009; Downward & Ralston, 2006; Twynam, Farrell, & Johnston, 2002) has also found that individuals who have a good experience while volunteering at an event are more likely to volunteer at future events. For example, 49% of volunteers from the World Junior Curling Tournament (Twynam et al., 2002); 85% of 2002 Commonwealth Games volunteers (Downward & Ralston, 2006); and 98% of volunteers sampled from the Canada Games (Doherty, 2009) indicated that they would volunteer again after a positive experience at their respective events.

Interestingly, despite the importance role identity theorists give to the social context in the development of an individual’s volunteer role identity, Doherty (2009) found social enrichment to be only a mild predictor of future intent to volunteer for individuals volunteering at events. Instead, to predict future intention to volunteer, Doherty (2009) utilized social exchange theory. This theory posits that individuals will continue to engage in activities where they expect benefits to outweigh costs (Homans, 1958). Thus, it is apparent that the benefits of volunteering, such as creating new friends and learning new skills, must outweigh the costs, such as time required for volunteering and financial opportunity costs associated with unpaid versus paid work for the individual to become a repeat volunteer. For those volunteers involved in the planning stages of an event, Doherty (2009) cited contributing to the community and a positive life experience as predictors of future intent to volunteer. For the volunteers actively working at an event, social enrichment, community contribution, and positive life experience were predictors of future intent to volunteer. Downward and Ralston (2006) also found that opportunities for personal development were a key predictor of intention. From a legacy perspective, although insight into future behavioral intent is important, the actual behaviors engaged in by volunteers following their volunteer experience at a mega-event provide a more quantifiable indication of volunteer legacies that actually occur.

**Legacy of Volunteerism**

Cashman (2006) suggests that evidence of the existence of a volunteer legacy following the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games was the development of a website through which volunteers were able to remain in contact with each other as well as keep informed of future events. It is debatable, however, whether the simple existence of such a website is evidence of a sustainable volunteerism legacy. Instead, monitoring the repeat volunteerism incidence and behaviors of the volunteers involved in the 2000 Games may have provided more convincing evidence of the sustainability of the volunteering legacy. Nichols and Ralston (2011a, 2011b) examined the volunteer legacy that existed 7 years after the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games. In this instance, the volunteer legacy was planned and promoted. A prevolunteer program was established to encourage socially and economically disadvantaged community members to volunteer at the Manchester Commonwealth Games, with the long-term goal of obtaining employment post-Games. After the Games a Post-Games Volunteer Project was funded and launched to continue the work of the prevolunteer program and ensure a volunteer legacy. The program has since been rebranded as Manchester Events Volunteers (MEV). Nichols and Ralston (2011b) found this program was successful in enriching people’s
lives and as a means of bolstering the employability of volunteers.

Nichols and Ralston (2011a) note that through the provision of a volunteer database the MEV program was able to: create awareness of volunteering opportunities; permit volunteers to select the events that they wanted to work on; keep the volunteers informed of events in the local city; allow individuals to volunteer as little or as much as they wanted; and let individuals volunteer when they were able according to their schedule. Essentially, the MEV acted as a broker between volunteers and events. They found that 81% of volunteers indicated volunteering more frequently after the Games through MEV programming and 85% indicated that they had volunteered for a wider array of organizations following the Games.

Nichols and Ralston (2011b) further found that through the MEV program, volunteers from the Commonwealth Games increased their confidence and skills and were moving towards paid employment, had obtained paid employment, or were continuing to garner the benefits from volunteer work. This case highlights the legacy that can be captured through converting mega-event volunteers into long-term volunteers within the host city. Nichols and Ralston (2011a) suggest that better coordination between planning and delivery of the Games legacy would have further facilitated success.

Nichols and Ralston’s (2011a, 2011b) research on the MEV informs our understanding of planned volunteer legacies, that is, legacies that are structured and supported by governmental agencies and other stakeholder groups. Other research on volunteerism that does not specifically investigate legacy effects may provide possible insights into unplanned legacies that may occur. The development of a volunteer role identity is one example. Research on volunteering using role identity theory has shown that as an individual develops a commitment to a prosocial role identity, such identities then lead to subsequent repeated prosocial actions (Piliavin et al., 2002). In such cases the subsequent prosocial actions that occur can be seen as legacies. Motives may also be an example of an unplanned legacy. For example, Fairley et al. (2007) examined the motives of a group of individuals who volunteered at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and who were preparing to volunteer at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. These authors found that nostalgia, camaraderie, friendship, a connection with the Olympics, as well as sharing and acknowledgement of their experience became key motives to volunteer at the next Olympic Games. Furthermore, altruism and interactions with other volunteers were central to the continuation of volunteer intentions (Brennan, 2005; Nichols & Ralston, 2011a, 2011b).

The current study extends understanding of Olympic legacy by examining the lasting impact resulting from volunteerism at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. The study focuses on a group of individuals who volunteered at the Sydney Olympics and explores the unplanned legacy outcomes emerging from volunteering at the event. In making this exploration, data were collected from a volunteer contingent called the “Spirit of Sydney” over 10 years after the group’s volunteer experience. The method employed to collect this data is detailed next.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study are members of a volunteer group called the “Spirit of Sydney,” all of whom volunteered at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Originally called the “Sydney Olympic Volunteer (SOV) Social Club,” this group was formed at the completion of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games by individuals who wanted to “keep the spirit alive.” The group’s primary mandate is “celebrating the spirit of friendship from the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games” (www.spiritofsydney.com). In addition to communicating via the group’s website, at the time this study was conducted group members met on a quarterly basis for a luncheon. During the meetings individuals shared volunteering stories and discussed opportunities to volunteer, both within and outside of the Olympic Movement. A guest speaker usually connected with past or future Olympic Games also delivered a presentation at each luncheon. The location of the luncheon is themed according to future Olympic Games. For instance, the luncheon was held at a Greek restaurant in the
lead up to the Athens Olympic Games, and a Chinese restaurant in the lead up to the Beijing Olympic Games. The group’s organizer and the website manager were both contacted via e-mail to seek the group’s involvement in this study and inform them of the research plan.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study included two phases of data collection. The first phase was an online survey of the Spirit of Sydney members. An e-mail was sent out by the group’s organizer to 40 Spirit of Sydney members inviting them to participate in the survey. The survey was used as a means of data collection, but was primarily used as a way to recruit interview participants. The survey included open-ended questions that asked respondents to describe the role volunteering played in their life; the types of volunteering activities in which they regularly partake; their role and experience at the Sydney Olympic Games; how that experience influenced their future volunteer intentions; and barriers to volunteering. There were 15 responses to the survey—a 37.5% response rate. Individuals were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview within the questionnaire. On average, participants took 20 min to complete the survey. No incentive was offered for participation.

The second phase of data collection was designed to garner more in-depth responses to the survey data. Respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview were contacted, which yielded 10 interviewees with whom semistructured telephone interviews were conducted. Telephone interviews were utilized as the lead author did not reside in the same country as the respondents. Interviewees were asked to describe their volunteering experience prior to the Games and how their role at the Games impacted their future volunteer intentions and volunteering roles and skills. Respondents were also given the opportunity to discuss any other legacies they believed stemmed from their volunteer experience at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Nondirective probing of respondents’ answers was employed to encourage respondents to provide in-depth responses to the researcher’s questions and ensure the correct interpretation (Fowler & Mangione, 1990). Interviews ranged from 25 to 45 min.

Data Analysis

Interview data were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim and entered into NVivo. Both the survey and interview data were thematically analyzed following the procedures set forth by Marshall and Rossman (1999). The authors met regularly throughout the course of data collection to discuss emerging themes. On completion of all interviews the authors undertook informal thematic analysis by reading the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data. Consistent with the process of constant comparison, open coding was initially developed, followed by axial and selective coding. The lead researcher developed the initial codes and then conferred with the second and third researcher to confirm the findings. Data analysis was an iterative process working dialectically between the transcripts and the literature.

Results

Five key legacy outcomes were identified: (1) starting and rekindling a volunteer career; (2) developing skills and abilities; (3) nostalgia for the experience and Olympic ideals; (4) a volunteer group; and (5) memorabilia and sharing stories with family. These themes are described below. Quotes from the survey and interviews have been included as they best describe the views of respondents. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the respondents to protect their anonymity.

Legacy 1: Starting and/or Rekindling a Volunteer Career

Respondents frequently made reference to how their experience volunteering at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games started, or rekindled, their interest in volunteering: almost all of the survey respondents (13 out of the 15) indicated they increased their time spent volunteering following the Games. For some, volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games created not only an awareness of volunteering opportunities to which they were previously
unaware, but also to an interest in developing a career in their role as a volunteer:

Well that [volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games] really started it [volunteer “career”], I didn’t know about any opportunities before that and what started it was the center for volunteering. But it really did start with the Olympics as far as I was concerned as I was still working until that point. I actually retired in the year 2000 which fitted in with the volunteer aspect of the Games. (Mary)

Note that the above respondent’s life stage, retiring in the year of the Sydney Olympic Games, was not only conducive to further volunteer pursuits but lead to a change in her “social” context, which may have subsequently been important in reshaping her self-concept to identify more strongly with her volunteer role. Another respondent described her volunteer career this way: “That was where it all started. From there we registered with Volunteering NSW and were given information about upcoming events” (Sandra). For this volunteer, finding out about other volunteering opportunities was not only the impetus to increase her volunteer activities, but was also an integral part in the development of a volunteer career. Yet another volunteer put it this way:

It [volunteering] is something I always wanted to do, but that sort of expanded it because there are so many other things [volunteer opportunities] you can do really. There are always events on, the marathon is on and that and they always need people to help. There are also charities that do different things like fun runs and they do want people to help out...there’s always something to do. (Tracey)

The increased volunteerism by the research participants included both sport-related and cause-related volunteering with organizations including the Heart Association, Breast Cancer Awareness, Diabetes, as well as hospitals and hospices, community events, and festivals. Four of the respondents had also volunteered for at least one other Olympic Games since Sydney 2000.

For some first-time volunteers, it was realizing the impact of volunteering through their Sydney Olympic Games experience that encouraged them to seek out further volunteerism: “What we learned most of all was how powerful volunteering can be—when properly organized” (Sandra). Another respondent put it this way: “It showed me that we can make a difference to other events and events cannot go ahead without volunteers” (Tracey).

For those who had significant volunteer experience prior to the Sydney Olympics, the Games reignited their passion for volunteering:

Having already been volunteering since 1981...I was already very orientated to volunteering, but with the incredible experience of Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, have been more motivated to keep on with many beautiful friendships made and continuing my volunteer work of 30 years. (Martha)

Another respondent explains it this way: “It reaffirmed my interest in all of those sorts of things, particularly the sporting side of things and it taught me a lot. I’m still involved in similar types of things to what I was before” (Donna). For this respondent the level of volunteering did not increase, but the passion for her existing volunteer pursuits, particularly those in the sporting realm, was rekindled.

In summary, volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games started the volunteering career of first-time volunteers through both showcasing the ways in which volunteer positions can make a difference to an event or organization and providing a social context that shaped those volunteers’ behaviors. The experience and interacting with other more senior volunteers exposed these individuals to the vast array of organizations that rely on volunteers and the multitude of volunteer roles that exist. It also provided a new social context within which their experiences become embedded. For many existing volunteers, the Sydney Olympic Games served to reignite a passion for volunteering and stimulated the reintegration of the volunteer role identity. As suggested by Chacón et al. (2007), when a volunteer role becomes part of one’s personal identity, role identity then becomes more strongly related to long-term service as a volunteer and thus repeat volunteerism. Indeed, this study has shown that the majority of existing volunteers continued or increased their volunteerism following the Sydney Olympic Games.

Legacy 2: Developing Skills and Abilities

The training and experience from the Sydney Olympic Games provided individuals with a variety
of skills and abilities that could be transferred to future volunteer pursuits, as well as life in general. One volunteer described it this way: “Sydney provided me with the knowledge that I have been able to use to assist so many aspects of the Olympic Games . . . planning, preparing, and then carrying out at Games time” (Mary). Note that while this quote specifically references skills useful for future Olympic Games, other respondents believed the skills developed would benefit all volunteer activities. For example, one respondent stated: “All this training has left volunteers more capable and efficient to carry out various volunteer activities in the future” (Martha). Given many of the respondents were pioneer volunteers, meaning that they volunteered for years in the lead up to the actual event and thus were involved in managing a group of volunteers during the Games, it is not surprising that they cited the skill of managing people as an outcome from the Games: “I feel it gave me great training and experience in managing people including volunteers” (Donna); “The training was excellent, that SOCOG [Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games] gave us. I did learn a lot—mainly about people and how to handle volunteers” (Jean).

In addition to knowledge and familiarity with event procedures, respondents cited familiarity with the venues as assisting them with their future volunteer efforts. For example, one respondent explained: “we also worked at all the major swimming events that were held in the aquatic center, so I knew the center like the back of my hand” (Sandra). This volunteer went on to discuss how this positioned her well for volunteer positions at the venue after the Sydney Olympic Games. Thus, learning about both the facility and operational roles specific to certain sports were an important legacy. Other volunteers noted how they could transfer the skills and procedures acquired at the Sydney Olympic Games to their existing volunteer pursuits; for example, one respondent stated:

I suppose it’s taught me lots of organizational things that I can do a little bit better. I think it’s more the spirit and that that it has engendered. I know how important it is for not only elite athletes, but grassroots sport people. Before the Olympics when we were organizing things [running events], looking back it was good, but when we look at it now it was a bit haphazard. You’d write a number on a bit of paper and pin it to your chest. Now since the Olympics we have electronic timing and those sorts of things. It’s advanced our organizational skills a lot in sport in general. (Donna)

Other learning resulted from interacting with people from diverse backgrounds:

Well, with the training we learnt about protocol and addressing people from different nationalities as well as people with different disabilities, learning how to treat them with respect and come down to their level and speak with them as simply as possible. It was just a confidence boost. It wasn’t that I didn’t have confidence, but it extended my belief in myself. (Andrea)

Note that in addition to the skills of interacting with others, the above quote emphasizes that the role of volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games engendered a sense of confidence in one’s own abilities. This view was expressed by many of the respondents. Another respondent put it this way: “The experience has given me the confidence to apply for [volunteer positions in] other high profile events” (Sandra). Experiencing different roles and responsibilities as part of their Olympic volunteer experience provided individuals with an opportunity to reconceptualize who they are. In several cases, they expanded their capabilities and improved their self-confidence as a result. For example, one respondent reflected on changes to her self-concept as a result of volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games: “Probably realizing all of your abilities. I never thought I would be a protocol type person as I was a bit of a rebel, and I ended up in a protocol role and really enjoyed it” (Tracey). Another respondent stated:

It occurred to me that being a volunteer at the Olympics and prior has left me with another “legacy.” I now have much more self-confidence than before. When the volunteers were formed into teams I was one of the inaugural team leaders and I surprised myself with my organization and drive. I was determined that my team would be as well informed on as many aspects as possible. . . . I wrote poems about various events and happenings and they were printed in both the staff and volunteer newsletters. Lois Appelby, CEO for the Paralympic Games, liked the one I wrote about that so much that when their first choice, Rupert McCall, a very
well-known poet, could not attend the launch of the Paralympic torch relay in Canberra, they asked me to go and read my poem instead. This was in Parliament House in front of the Prime Minister, Leader of the Senate, Minister for the Olympics, national media, etc. I was very nervous but now, I figure if I could do that I can do anything. Like most people I was nervous of public speaking but now quite enjoy it. (Sandra)

Note from this quote, the respondent defines the self-confidence achieved through the Olympic volunteering experience as a lasting legacy, which she has been able to enact in various environments since the Olympic Games.

The skill set and confidence that was acquired at the Sydney Olympic Games encouraged individuals to seek further volunteer roles. One volunteer put it this way: “I think because I had experience from the Olympic Games, I got the Commonwealth Games [volunteer role]. My volunteer role at the Olympics has been appreciated” (Tracey). There were instances, however, where some individuals believed that their experience and training was not acknowledged or appreciated in other volunteer roles. For example:

I feel the biggest problem with being such an experienced volunteer is sometimes when you go to a different event, the people running it don’t necessarily appreciate the level of experience you have and it’s not utilized. . . . They did offer me a job in spectator services, which is ushering, and that’s fine, I’ve done plenty of that and I enjoy that, but I thought if I’m going to Melbourne I wanted to be able to contribute my talent and experience and not just do something that anyone could pick up. So I didn’t go. (Nicole)

Another respondent noted a similar experience at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games:

They didn’t really like me. They gave me all the worst jobs. They didn’t utilize my experience and my background and everything I have to offer. They put me in a job that anybody and everybody could have done, rather than utilizing everything that I could have offered. It’s like I was an afterthought. (Sandra)

Thus, while the training and experience of the Sydney Olympic Games has provided a very experienced volunteer base there is an expectation among some volunteers that their expertise should be effectively utilized by volunteer managers at future events.

In summary, the training and experience of volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games provided individuals with various skills, including both personal and organizational skills, which they have been able to utilize since that experience. These skills have been used as a precursor to other volunteering opportunities, while setting a standard for future volunteer experiences.

Legacy 3: Nostalgia for the Experience and Olympic Ideals

One key legacy that all of the volunteers identified was the memory of the Sydney Olympic Games atmosphere and how that was different from everyday life. Specifically, they yearned to return to the type of atmosphere that was evident in Sydney during the Olympic Games:

The lasting legacy would be the actual experience of the Games, given that it was in our city and looking back at the atmosphere, the spirit that was around. Not only with the people who were working, but the entire population of Sydney. (Sandra)

A key part of this experience and atmosphere was the way in which individuals throughout the city interacted and communicated with each other in the lead up to the Games, as well as throughout the Games:

Realizing the lovely true Olympic spirit is alive and well. It’s hard to put in tangible things. It all stems from friendships that were made in the pre-Games time, from 1997, right up until after the Games. A special bond is formed and that goes for all people in each country. The interaction with other people from other parts of the world just brings this Olympic spirit to the fore. (Martha)

Similar to the above quote, many of the volunteers associated this experience as stemming from the Olympic ideals:

I think during the Sydney Games I learnt about the philosophy and ideals and the history of the Olympics, and the philosophy of Olympism. You know—peace, goodwill, international understanding—and then you see it working in reality at the Games experience. You feel like if I could just bottle that, the whole world would be a better
place. If we could just make it a permanent fixture. So I think it’s kind of taken on the philosophy of Olympism. (Dawn)

Another respondent put it this way:

One thing that was really impressive when the Games were here in 2000—people traveling to the varying events on busses and trains would talk to each other like they were friends. That was a lovely thing and that carried right through the Games. It was so noticeable; it was remarked on in the press. Then the Paralympic Games came along and it still happened, but not quite as much. People talk to each other on the bus. I wish that that had kept going. I don’t know why it stopped, but after the Paralympic Games finished, people went back to not talking on the bus and just reading their newspapers and doing what you normally do. That spirit over the Games was just beautiful, being able to talk to each other on the bus. I think that’s a legacy that I wish could be continued. I’m sure we’d have more world peace, but how do we do that, I do not know. It was a beautiful thing and I wish it would happen more. (Martha)

Note that in this quote, it is not just at the event sites where this atmosphere was evident, but throughout the whole city. Another respondent described how he did not expect the atmosphere to return to the city of Sydney:

I don’t think Sydney will ever be the same again as it was during the Olympic Games. The streets were crowded, the people were happy, everybody felt safe. They had a cheery hello. The city did a lot of good from the point of view of making it a place where you want to go. Unfortunately, that situation has changed now, but it was great to see people absolutely enjoy themselves as they were walking through the city. (Jim)

As explained by these volunteers, nostalgia and fond memories of the atmosphere at the event and surrounding area throughout the duration of the Games is a legacy, and individuals want to return to times where this atmosphere is present.

**Legacy 4: A Volunteer Group**

Although all volunteers noted that the atmosphere was truly special, it was this atmosphere, and the desire to “keep the spirit alive” that lead to the formation of the Spirit of Sydney Group.

The formation of this group is another legacy of the Sydney Olympic Games. The group plays an important role in maintaining friendships, as well as expanding volunteer networks. One respondent described how the group was formed this way:

At the Paralympic Games there were five of us sitting together and singing “The Carnival is Over,” and we said oh, no, it can’t be, so we decided we would try and get a group to go to Athens together. From that we formed Spirit of Sydney Olympic Games Group. We started off with 15 and we now have about 70 on the database. The spirit has grown. (Martha)

This group still exists over 10 years after the event, so it is not surprising that the group itself is considered a lasting legacy from the Sydney Olympic Games:

There’s a lot of lasting legacies from us. Look at us—we’ve been meeting for 10 years for lunch. If that’s not a legacy, then what is? We’re from all different areas [volunteer roles], so something must have left an impression on all of us. (Sandra)

The group acts as an outlet to remember and reminisce about the experiences of the Sydney Olympic Games—bringing individuals together based on shared experience: “I think it’s the awesome experience of the Olympic Games. Purely and simply that—I really do. We will never forget it and its one common thing that we’re all interested in” (Donna).

Another respondent put it this way:

It’s a good excuse to sit around and chat about experiences. We have this thing in common—we’ve been meeting for 10 years for lunch. If that’s not a legacy, then what is? We’re from all different areas [volunteer roles], so something must have left an impression on all of us. (Sandra)

In addition to acting as a social reminder of the spirit felt during the Sydney Olympic Games and friendships formed based on the shared experience, the group also functions to inform members of other volunteer opportunities:

If there’s something on [a volunteering opportunity] somebody may have found out about it and you can find out about where you can go and help
somebody. It opens up your ideas for other places you can go and help. (Sandra)

Thus, the group acts as a network to the volunteering community at large, which includes the Sydney Olympic Games:

It ensures that we keep the spirit that we all had during the 2000 Games alive. It shows that friendships formed outside your normal circle last. Being part of Spirit of Sydney makes it easier to know about events to volunteer at as there is a network. This was shown last year when the Spirit of Sydney members volunteered at the Sydney 2000 volunteers’ reunion. (Tracey)

Group members strongly identify with the Spirit of Sydney group so much so that the group has created and sold their own unique Spirit of Sydney monogramed polo shirts, the proceeds of which were donated to the Beijing Olympic Team. Group members wear their Spirit of Sydney shirts when they attend group meetings and also when they are representing the group giving informational talks or media interviews. Additionally, the group participates in activities and events such as the Ten Year Reunion of the Sydney Olympic Games, an event that rekindled and perpetuated the volunteer experience and subsequent legacy.

Many of the respondents noted that they believe the reunion could spur on further volunteering:

I think it could be because they [the volunteers] turned out in their uniforms and met up with other people who had been volunteering. What we did, we sectioned off part of the showground and we sectioned off these were cycling, these were basketball, these were swimming, so if you just went along and volunteered and you didn’t go with your group, you gravitated to that area. So then hopefully you met up with people who you had been working with at the Games. Therefore, if you met up with somebody who had been volunteering at the swimming championships they might have said let’s come along. (Sandra)

Thus, the reunion was structured in a way that could possibly connect volunteers who had worked together or interacted during the Sydney Olympic Games. One respondent described the experience this way:

We lighted the light again so to speak. At the Olympic site there were hundreds that came along and it was just like Games time all over again. There was entertainment and a large barbeque, and hundreds of volunteers were there all in their uniforms. It was just as though the Olympics were there again. The Spirit of Sydney group did help to be a support team for that. That was an exciting event for our group. (Martha)

As evidenced by the above quote, the Spirit of Sydney group was called upon to be volunteers at the staging of the volunteer reunion. However, they were aware that the Spirit of Sydney group would not be sufficient in size to cater for the number of volunteers needed for the event. Thus, the group sourced local high school students to assist with the event. One respondent involved in the planning of the event put it this way:

So when I was at one of the planning meetings with the AOC and the government I said why don’t we, legacy is a big deal in the Olympic movement, you know what is the legacy, and so I said to them why don’t we involve three local schools around the Olympic Park and get some kids from the schools who are interested in sport or community service or whatever and we can mentor them with one of our oldies, and they can find out firsthand what was your experience in Sydney [during the Olympic Games], why did you enjoy it, and maybe in their lifetime the Games will come back to Sydney and they can be involved. (Sandra)

The utilization of high school students was intended to instill the ideals of volunteerism in the youth:

So when I was at one of the planning meetings with the AOC and the government I said why don’t we, legacy is a big deal in the Olympic movement, you know what is the legacy, and so I said to them why don’t we involve three local schools around the Olympic Park and get some kids from the schools who are interested in sport or community service or whatever and we can mentor them with one of our oldies, and they can find out firsthand what was your experience in Sydney [during the Olympic Games], why did you enjoy it, and maybe in their lifetime the Games will come back to Sydney and they can be involved. (Sandra)

Thus, the reunion was structured in a way that could possibly connect volunteers who had worked together or interacted during the Sydney Olympic Games. One respondent described the experience this way:

We lighted the light again so to speak. At the Olympic site there were hundreds that came along
The legacy of volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games, as well as the mementos collected by the volunteers act as a remaining legacy of the experience. This is also enhanced by the general community acknowledging and asking these individuals for their recollections, experience, and expertise of volunteering at this event.

Discussion

The data revealed five themes related to the legacy of volunteering at the Sydney Olympic Games. First, the Sydney Olympic Games volunteer experience served to continue or increase time spent volunteering as individuals described the development of a volunteer career. Second, volunteering at this event enabled individuals to attain skills and abilities that impacted their ongoing volunteer career, as well as influenced their life in general. Third, volunteers described an ongoing nostalgia and fondness for the volunteer experience and the overall atmosphere created by the Sydney Olympic Games. Fourth, an official group was created in the aftermath of the volunteer experience to allow individuals to continue to share their connection and maintain contact. Finally, the merchandise and memorabilia obtained during the experience as well as the stories collected via all of the memories shared were detailed as a lasting legacy.

The legacy outcomes of volunteering at events such as the Olympic Games are not limited to a future intent to volunteer, nor are they limited to a legacy that is planned or formally organized. The findings of this study extend our understanding of volunteer legacies emphasizing that like other legacies, volunteer legacies may emerge organically, without planned and coordinated efforts of the event organizers, and can create a sustained change in attitudes and behavior of those who volunteer at these events. This study also expands on the work of Doherty (2009), who suggests that satisfied volunteers will likely volunteer in the future, as well as on the work of role identity theorists (Callero et al., 1987; Chacón et al., 2007; Finkelstein, 2009; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Jiménez et al., 2010; Piliavin et al., 2002; Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005) who

Legacy 5: Memorabilia and Sharing Stories with Family

Volunteers continually referenced the documented account of the Sydney Olympic Games volunteer experience that they established and maintained. This included both tangible items such as memorabilia, as well as the generation of stories about the experience, which allowed the volunteers to be authorities on the subject of Olympic volunteering, or volunteering in general. For some, this included keeping all merchandise and memorabilia relating to the Sydney Olympic Games:

I have boxes and boxes. I have all my uniforms, I have the Olympic torch and the Paralympic torch—I ran with both. I have pins put away. Most of it is all put away now; I displayed it for a while. It’s all precious to me. I also have every letter they sent me, it’s all put away, but maybe one day I will sort it out and get it all in order and relive the experience. I’d like to get it all in order and write it all down for my grandchildren at some stage. (Nicole)

For others this legacy manifests through family:

I think the lasting affect as far as my grandchildren go. They’re really interested in what went on, in what I did, and all that sort of thing. So it goes through to a younger generation. So them not being old enough at that particular point in time, some of them weren’t even born, but they know that I was involved, and they seem to play on that,
show that engagement in the volunteer experience can be the impetus for the development of a volunteer role identity and hence a volunteering career.

The Olympic volunteer experience provides individuals with opportunities to develop their interest and skills in volunteering in various capacities for other events and organizations. This finding is consistent with what Stebbins (1982) refers to as a serious leisure career as individuals “find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of [a leisure activity’s] special skills, knowledge, and experiences” (p. 3). Volunteers in this study did indeed display all six markers of serious leisure: perseverance, development of a commitment to a long-term volunteer “career,” utilization of significant personal effort, attainment of a range of durable benefits, development of a unique ethos, and a strong identification with the volunteer activity. Thus, the findings support the notion that volunteering can be a serious leisure pursuit and that the legacy of volunteering may include encouraging individuals to progress down a career in volunteerism.

Individuals developed considerable skills, knowledge, and abilities through their tenure as volunteer. Specifically, participants in this study listed skills such as understanding international protocols, people management, and various organizational skills as outcomes of their Olympic volunteer experience. Although organizational learning within the Olympic Movement is limited given the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (OCOG) for each Games disbands soon after the related Games are staged, the enhanced skill set obtained from their Olympic experience by the volunteers can be utilized in future volunteering and life pursuits. Volunteers who are familiar with sport, events, and facility related procedures can be utilized by event and volunteer managers in order to reduce the cost and time it takes to train new volunteers. Furthermore, organizations outside of sport and events that rely heavily on volunteer workers could directly target event volunteers to advertise opportunities for volunteering that emphasize how the skill set from the event can be transferred into general volunteering.

The volunteer legacy of a mega-event is not only a salient memory that may encourage individuals to continue volunteering. Further, the nostalgic recollections also related to the ideals of the Olympic Games, highlighting the tendency for volunteers to internalize the culture of the event. Volunteer managers should therefore emphasize the official ideals of the event and its organizing entity in communications with volunteers in order to capitalize on the development of such a culture among volunteers.

Volunteer legacy can also be maintained and perpetuated through the formation of groups, as the group can act as a vehicle through which members maintain a sense of connection with the event and
the activity of volunteering. Specifically, the group creates a context through which memories of the shared experience of volunteering at the event can be discussed, thus evoking a sense of nostalgia for the past. The group also provides a social context in which ongoing social interactions, as well as the perceived expectations of others can positively influence, for individual group members, the development of a volunteer role identity (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein, 2009; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Piliavin et al., 2002; Van Dyne & Farmer, 2005). As mentioned, individuals who develop a positive volunteer role identity from such positive social interactions are more likely to engage in prosocial future volunteering behaviors (Dávila & Finkelstein, 2010; Finkelstein, 2006; Piliavin et al., 2002). The group further aids individuals in remaining up to date with what is happening within both the event subculture and the broader volunteering community. Regular meetings and communication between group members provide an avenue to keep informed of volunteering opportunities and can increase the members’ volunteer network. The group may form its own identity to which group members strongly identify. The Spirit of Sydney group in this study created markers of the group’s identity, including custom made polo shirts for group members. This is similar to work on sport fans, which suggest that identification with a smaller social group may be a key motivator in continued participation (Fairley, 2003).

Groups are also important as they can utilize strategies to perpetuate volunteer legacy through allowing or encouraging new members to enter the group, as well as through direct initiatives designed to share the experience with future generations. The volunteer culture can be perpetuated through socialization initiatives such as inviting high school students to volunteer with the group, through folklore, or through the use of possessions. As Belk (1990) suggests, possessions can be used in maintaining a sense of past. The volunteers in this study spoke of utilizing their volunteer memorabilia, which included their volunteer uniform and other paraphernalia in order to tell the story of the experience to future generations. Similar to socializing individuals into a sport fan or participant subculture (Donnelly & Young, 1999; Fairley, 2003; Green & Chalip, 1998), the volunteers sought to socialize the next generation into a culture of volunteering.

Although the legacies identified in this study are those that emerged organically, results suggest that the experience could be enhanced through key stakeholders, such as volunteer organizations or event managers making a concerted effort to capitalize on the skills and experiences that are gained from such an event. This is consistent with the work of Nichols and Ralston (2011a, 2011b). As volunteers felt a sense of loss at the completion of the Games given the actual role that had become a central part of their life had ended, individuals were clearly open to opportunities that could substitute for their loss. Similar to how we train and provide suggested pathways to athletes who are at the end of the career, it might be useful to integrate or suggest potential career paths (volunteer or otherwise) to the volunteer population to negate this sense of loss. Pathways where the volunteers could feel that their newly acquired skills and abilities are utilized and appreciated would be most beneficial.

In conclusion, volunteering at an event may be the impetus to: start or rekindle a volunteer career; develop a volunteer role identity that can positively influence future prosocial volunteer behaviors; contribute to the development of a set of skills and abilities; and create nostalgic recollections for the experience and ideals relating to the event. Further, the volunteer legacy can be upheld and perpetuated through the formation of groups that celebrate the experience, as well as through individuals who hold memories of the event. The legacy of volunteerism is not necessarily limited to those who actually volunteered at the event itself. The legacy can be perpetuated through groups and individuals who were directly involved through educating and socializing future generations into the culture and excitement of volunteering. Further, the results suggest that these legacies of volunteerism may emerge organically without planned and coordinated efforts of the event organizers. The findings of this study demonstrate that a legacy can arise based on the formation of a group of individuals who do not want to let go of the volunteer experience. The group then creates a context through which memories of shared volunteer experiences can be discussed. Through the group positive social behaviors related to volunteering are created and reinforced and strategies for the perpetuation of these memories to future generations are formulated.
Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that mega-events may provide a volunteer legacy in the host community. This legacy includes a skilled volunteer base that is motivated to continue volunteering pursuits. Research should explore how to best utilize and transfer the legacy of skill and knowledge of volunteers from one event to another. This research could assume an organizational learning perspective to understand the ways in which sharing of positive and negative experiences, streamlined volunteer procedures, and a volunteer network could increase volunteer retention and satisfaction. Understanding how volunteer legacy can be perpetuated through using existing volunteers to socialize new groups, such as the youth market, into a culture of volunteering may be useful to ensure a continued volunteer legacy. This research should also examine how the staging of regular or symbolic events, such as a volunteer reunion, impacts future volunteer intention.

The current study focused on one particular group and the experiences and perceptions of its members. Future research should examine other volunteer groups to see how the formation of different types of groups either fosters or inhibits the creation of a volunteer legacy. Research should also examine how individual volunteers who are not part of a specific group view the legacy of the volunteer experience, or whether in fact a legacy exists outside of emergent groups. The volunteer legacy from the Sydney Olympic Games was unplanned and developed organically; however, it would be useful to examine whether a legacy is more longstanding if it is planned or organic, or which elements of the two provide lasting results. Specifically, it would be useful to examine the differences in how volunteers perceive both planned and organic legacies that develop as a result of event volunteering.

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