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### Volunteering and wellbeing

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# 13 Volunteering and wellbeing

## Case study of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games volunteer Programmes

*Briony Sharp*

### Introduction

Recent studies have highlighted the potential volunteering holds to support a more multi-dimensional and interrelated legacy from major events, suggesting improvements in volunteer activity numbers, social inclusion in volunteers, contribution to the economy and development of skilled volunteer workforce (Nichols and Ralston 2012). With regard to research surrounding this topic, typical major event volunteer research findings are concerned with the experience, likelihood to re-volunteer in the future (Jones and Yates 2015) and motivations and satisfaction (Kristiansen 2015); however, there is scope to widen this research to explore further the links between major event volunteering and individual wellbeing and confidence.

McCartney et al. (2013) propose volunteering opportunities may lead to a direct health, social and wellbeing impacts. Similarly, Minnaert (2012) suggests volunteering has been used as a tool for the reduction of social exclusion, development of urban communities and reduction in crime as well as an opportunity for the host cities of sporting events to realise potential to create long-term social legacies.

There are a number of ways in which volunteering can be categorised: informal or formal, episodic or discrete, continuous or successive, collective or unconditional (McGillivray et al. 2013). Each of the volunteer categories provides routes for participants' contributions to society in a satisfying and important way. These routes include using existing skills, developing new skills, positively contributing to the lives of others and developing community engagement (Jones and Yates 2015; Kristiansen et al. 2015). Sadd (2010, p. 269) proposes that sport and social regeneration 'is more about participation and especially the role the voluntary sector can play in that'. As well as being used by policy makers to enhance social inclusion and cohesion (Kristiansen et al. 2015), volunteering also had been found to have a positive impact on personal health, with research suggesting encouraging results in wellbeing, life satisfaction, mortality and depression (Jones and Yates 2015). Furthermore, Lee et al. (2014) suggests participating in volunteer activity increases community and individual wellbeing in addition to generating feeling of self-satisfaction, accomplishment and enhance self-confidence (Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2012).

### Context

Links between volunteering and wellbeing are evident within the literature in a number of different areas, including promoting social inclusion and wellbeing through arts programmes (Secker et al. 2011), formal volunteering and self-reported health and happiness (Borgonovi, 2008) and the

relationship between volunteering, wellbeing and public policy (Binder and Freytag, 2012). The majority of this research reports increased levels of wellbeing in people who participate in regular volunteer activities (Binder and Freytag, 2012). Nichols and Ralston (2012), in their review of volunteer legacies, highlight that only Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games had a positive influence on volunteering in sport, which could be attributed to the creation of the Manchester Event Volunteers (MEV) directly after the event that enabled the pool of volunteers to be accessed for future volunteering opportunities. The increased interest in providing a lasting legacy has led Games hosts, public policy makers and academics to embrace the growth in research concerning legacy and social legacies; however, the potential has yet to be researched fully with regard to the large number of volunteers and possible legacy of such programmes (Downward and Ralston 2006; Nichols and Ralston 2012). The growth in research concerning voluntary work and wellbeing continues to develop. This is much like the growth in the emerging body of literature on legacy potential of major sporting events. The over-lap within these academic fields with regard to large numbers of volunteers and potential legacy of such programmes, provides a research opportunity yet to be fully studied.

Minnaert (2012) highlights the potential social legacy through skills enhancement including employment and volunteering opportunities. McCartney et al. (2013, p. 25) also acknowledges this subcategory as a critical pathway for generating a positive health, wellbeing and social impact in Glasgow from hosting the Commonwealth Games, 'where members of the community would gain new skills and confidence by being valued for the voluntary input during the event'. Volunteer programmes are commonly employed to encourage economic and social regeneration for local communities (Smith and Fox 2007). They offer training and employment experience, which aims to provide volunteers with the environment to nurture new skills, in turn offering an occasion for individual and community development (Doherty 2009).

## Case Study

In November 2007, Glasgow was announced as the city that would host the 2014 Commonwealth Games. From the bidding stage, a partnership between Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government made a concerted effort to demonstrate the potential benefits for the host community from hosting such an event. Drawing from established and emerging research combining major events with post-industrial regeneration, place marketing and social impacts, the bid included a variety of possible legacies across infrastructure, employment and health (Christie and Gibb 2015). The Organising Committee for the Games, Glasgow 2014 Ltd, brought Commonwealth Games Scotland, the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council together into the partnership responsible for delivering the bid documents. Glasgow as a case study of event-led regeneration and legacy research has generated a considerable amount of academic interest (see Porter et al. 2009; Matheson 2010; McCartney et al. 2010; McCartney et al. 2013; Rogerson 2016; Christie and Gibb 2015; Misener et al. 2015). The links between post-industrial cities and event-led regeneration as well as Glasgow's history as an events city are examined in combination with the emerging area of major events' potential to create a social legacy.

From the outset of Glasgow's bidding documents, the emphasis on both economic and civic development is evident. Not only from the newly designed city-wide branding, 'People Make Glasgow', but also the pre-Games vision of:

Glasgow 2014 will help achieve a healthier, more vibrant city with its citizens enjoying and realising the benefits of sport and the wider, longer term economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits that Glasgow 2014 can help deliver (Glasgow City Council 2009, p. 4).

Here, Glasgow City Council demonstrates the wide reaching aspirations the hosting of such an event would enable. The holistic nature of this vision is aligned with the shifting paradigm of major event research to include more focused attention on the longer-term impacts of major events (Smith 2012; Misener et al. 2015). Due to the wide-ranging nature of potential benefits and ability to examine the social legacy potential, this case study has enabled a focused approach concerning the social legacy for individuals from volunteering at a major sporting event.

Delivered in collaboration with city volunteering developments, the Games volunteer programmes provided opportunities for people to get involved with the Commonwealth Games. Figures from Glasgow 2014's (2015) post-Games report state an estimated 12,500 Clyde-siders and 1,200 Host City Volunteers participated in Games volunteering initiatives. The Clyde-sider programme saw Glasgow embark on its largest peacetime volunteer project, 'with a record 50,811 volunteer applications' received (Glasgow 2014 2015, p. 15). Volunteers within Glasgow 2014 also played a crucial part for Glasgow within the Queens Baton Relay project, pre-Games Frontrunner volunteer programme and ceremonies Cast Member volunteers. From post-Games figures, an approximate 3,000 volunteers took part in the opening and closing ceremonies. In addition to this, Glasgow Life also established the Host City Volunteer programme. This programme 'supported volunteer from part of the community least likely to take up volunteer opportunities as part of a 3-year project' (Misener et al. 2015, p. 458). Glasgow Life describe the purpose of the Host City Volunteer project as:

The HCV project was designed to form the first part of a wider Host City Glasgow programme which is planned to run from Dec 2013 until Dec 2016. Its aim is to enable Glasgow's communities to engage better with the delivery of future major event opportunities, building on the experiences from the Commonwealth Games and supported by a programme of flexible learning, citizenship, and volunteering. The programme intends to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased learning opportunities for Glaswegians to understand, develop and sustain local and city-wide concepts of identity and civic pride;
- Increased awareness of and engagement with the city's cultural and sporting assets;
- Increased uptake and active participation by Glaswegians in volunteering and delivery opportunities associated with major cultural and sporting events.

(Rogerson et al. 2016, p. 6).

The large numbers of people involved in Games-related volunteer initiatives allows for critical research to be undertaken concerning social legacies. Volunteer populations are essential to the success of any major event (Nichols and Ralston 2012); therefore, it is important to develop further understanding of the potential social outcomes from being involved in major event volunteering.

The quantitative findings for this chapter are based on responses to an online survey made available to every volunteer who participated in a Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games related volunteer

initiative. Two focus groups with Games volunteers were carried out in Glasgow as a pilot to decide upon the online survey questions. The volunteer sample (n=229) in this study was not from a specific region or place; rather, the targeted sample required a general sample of volunteers required only to have volunteered as part of a Glasgow 2014 related programme. The largest group of Games volunteers were the Clyde-siders; the Commonwealth Games official Games time volunteers. Also included were the Baton Bearers, Cast and Ceremonies volunteers and Frontrunners, the latter being the pre-Games volunteers who were responsible for interviewing, training, protocol, mascots and PR events. Further to these groups, Glasgow Life, part of Glasgow City Council, implemented a Host City Volunteer programme.

The online survey was made available online 10 months post-Games in June 2015. This decision was made in an attempt to avoid the 'feel-good' factor (see Porsche and Maennig 2008; Smith 2009) commonly reported in research conducted directly after a major event. It was found that an online survey would reach a wider sample and not be restricted by location or ability to attend a focus group (Case et al. 2013). The mix of questions is supported by evidence suggesting that when participants fill out open-ended questions they tend to use more words and provide more in-depth answers. Furthermore, the survey called for respondents to be reflective; therefore, it needed to be some time after the event in order to allow for capacity to reflect on past experiences (Woodall et al. 2016). It was advertised through social media (e.g., Facebook volunteer groups, Twitter) as well as posted on Volunteer Scotland's website. The survey information and web link was also published in Volunteer Scotland's newsletter twice, complimented by a blog written by the author highlighting the importance and potential impact of this research on major event volunteer legacies. The survey remained open for six months until December 2015.

The survey comprised qualitative open-ended questions, supported by demographic information questions and the use of the Edinburgh Warwick Mental Health Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) to provide quantitative data from this sample. Questions included 'Can you describe your experience in being involved in the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games?', 'What impact will the Games have on your life? e.g. has it changed anything for you? Or not? Do you do anything now you didn't before or are planning on?'. The WEMWBS was selected due to its personal wellbeing focus and the inclusion of measures such as confidence and positivity. Defined in the user guide, the WEMWBS 'is worded positively and together they cover most, but not all, attributes of mental wellbeing including both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. Areas not covered include spirituality or purpose in life. These were deemed to extend beyond the general populations' current understanding of mental wellbeing and their inclusion was thought likely to increase non-response' (Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed 2008, p. 3). Aligned with the growing research interest in wellbeing measurement (Tennant et al. 2007; Pawlowski et al. 2014), the measurement of perceived wellbeing improvement was used to determine if volunteering at Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games has the potential to leave a social legacy.

With regard to the self-reported, retrospective wellbeing scale (WEMWBS) (See table 1 below), the participants were asked to fill out a portion of demographic questions followed by the scale while thinking about how they thought and felt before taking part in a Games related volunteer programme. The use of the retrospective survey can be seen to be used within similar studies of health and wellbeing (Graham et al. 2014), the impact of the Commonwealth Games on Glasgow's health (McCartney et al. 2013), volunteering (Wahrendorf et al. 2016) and resident social cohesion and

interactions (Zhu et al. 2014). From previous research, it is suggested retrospective surveys may be subject to error when remembering past experiences, possible honeymoon effect (Zhu et al. 2014) or recall bias (Wahrendorf et al. 2016). Despite these limitations, this study addressed important gaps in research concerning major event volunteering and its potential legacy. The respondents were then asked to reflect on their experience of being involved in a volunteer programme and fill out the WEMWBS scale for the second time. That was followed by questions regarding their thoughts on the impact for Glasgow and Scotland, on their life and their overall satisfaction of their involvement. The use of the scale was intended to show how the participants feel about themselves pre- and post-Games having been part of a volunteer programme. This was completely anonymous.

#### \*Table 1\*

As suggested by the WEMWBS user guide, the data is presented, firstly, as a mean score for the sample with 95% confidence interval. By analysing the mean score from this data sample, it enabled a useful comparison between quantitative data collected in this study and the wider population mean score. As this research is concerning differences between scores of the same group at different times, the user guide suggest statistical testing is employed; therefore, paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare each before and after thoughts and feelings. A basic statistical tool, t-tests measure group variances by investigating the difference and mean in each group (Andrew et al. 2011).

The representative demographic from the data collected (n = 229) in this study contained: 59% Clydesider volunteers, 16% Frontrunners, 10% Ceremonies Cast Members, 7% Host City Volunteers, 4% Queens Baton Relay and 5% stating other to include team assistants and casting support; 75% female, 24% male, <1% transgender and prefer not to say; 8% 16 – 24 year old, 23% 25 – 44 year old, 60% 45 – 64 year old and 9% 65 years old and over; 49% employed/self-employed, 28% retired, 9% student, 7% volunteer, 4% unemployed and 3% job-seeking.

#### Discussion

Despite existing theoretical links between events volunteering and wellbeing (Pi et al. 2014), quality of life (Binder and Freytag 2012), employment and work production (Li 2013), Horne (2007) suggests research varies vastly in rigour and quality often being carried out prior to the event. Therefore, while the emerging dialogue on maximising the potential positive legacies has stimulated a more cohesive approach to assessing said impacts, currently there has been inadequate measurement of post-event outputs as well as inputs, particularly social or 'softer' impacts, which are arguably more difficult to measure (Swart et al. 2011).

This research presents an area for further research aligned with wider volunteering and wellbeing research (Borgonovi, 2008; Secker et al. 2011; Binder and Freytag 2012). It is suggested by the findings in this research that wellbeing improvements from volunteering at a one off event present potential to create a social legacy similar to recognised volunteering benefits from longer-term volunteer commitment. The implications of such a notion highlight the emergence of a broader volunteer legacy to include additional themes on top of volunteer motivations and likelihood to continue to volunteer.

McCartney et al. (2013) proposed volunteering as a critical pathway for generating a positive Games legacy. They suggest that by providing volunteering opportunities as a key ingredient for change,

potential direct impacts include increased future volunteering, increased skills and health, wellbeing and social impacts. The premise behind compiling self-reported survey data for this research was to gain access to a broad and varied sample and provide insight into the reach of potential social legacy on a personal level. To analyse the wellbeing element of Games legacy, the WEMWBS provides an average self-reported wellbeing score (scoring valued from 1 – 5, minimum 14 and maximum 70 total) with a 95% confidence interval. From the data collected in this research before the Games provided a mean score of 52 (51.6); this is representative of the average population score of 51 (Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed 2008). Therefore, it provides a reliable base line assessing self-reported wellbeing levels. The mean score when the participants were asked to consider their wellbeing level post-Games has increased by 5 points to 57 (56.7); hence, the data in this study suggest a significant increase on the population average in wellbeing levels from participating in a Games volunteer programme. Additionally, the increase in perceived wellbeing level post-Games is further confirmed by a more stable standard deviation result. The post-Games value of 8.1 standard deviation informs the analysis of a standard range (+/- 8.1) either side of the average wellbeing score. Therefore, the participants were more similar and sure of an increase in wellbeing when reporting their feelings and thoughts post-Games, compared to pre-Games standard deviation of 9.3 +/- range below or above the average score which suggests a slightly more uncertain feeling surround their perceived wellbeing.

The table below provides data regarding the presented results (Table 2). This is consistent with suggestions made by McCartney et al. (2013) that volunteering opportunities have the potential to encourage wellbeing improvements; this data demonstrates encouraging results from Glasgow's volunteer programmes.

\*Table 2\*

From the WEMWBS user guide, Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed (2008) suggest when examining before and after feelings, further statistical analysis should be employed. Therefore, the analysis in this chapter adopted established practice from the literature. When analysed using paired-samples t-test through SPSS, the overall basic results demonstrated each element of the WEMWBS reported a strongly significant improvement in overall self-reported wellbeing;  $P < .005$ . The following section details the analysis conducted for each wellbeing indicator. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare each before and after thoughts and feelings to assess the likeliness of the results happening by chance. The table below (Table 3) includes each element and the corresponding data analysis results.

There was a significant difference in the scores for reported for all before and after. The table below (Table 3) details the paired-sample t-test for each element including the statistical data of each mean (M), standard deviation (SD), total sample (t) and significance indicator (p). Importantly, the statically significance is interpreted due to the 'p' value being less than 0.05 in each of the wellbeing indicators. Furthermore, a 'p' value of less than 0.05 is also small enough to justify the rejection of an insignificant hypothesis (Higgins and Green 2011).

\*Table 3\*

By splitting the data into the age groups (16-19, 20-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 +), the specific wellbeing results can be seen to differ in each age category. The age groups were specified by the Scottish Government's definition of adult age as 16 and aligned with Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games welcoming applications from aged 16 and over (Legacy 2014 2012). Firstly, participants aged

16 – 19 only reported significant wellbeing increases in four of the fourteen indicators (29%). The areas that did significantly improve for this age group were optimism interested in other people, feeling good about myself and confidence. Interestingly, this age group of 16 – 19 year olds reported the least impact in wellbeing improvement post-Games. This is perhaps due to the small sample gathered. In the next age category (20 – 24), a greater wellbeing impact was reported post-Games. From the paired sample t-tests, 50% of wellbeing indicators presented a significant increase including: feeling useful, interested in other people, dealing with problems well, feeling close to other people, confident, able to make up my own mind, and cheerful. With regard to the next age group (25 – 34), an increased wellbeing impact was reported after the Games compared to the youngest participants, but slightly less of an impact than 20 – 24. Five out of the 14 wellbeing indicators reported a significant increased post-Games (36%), these included: feeling useful, interested in other people, feeling good about myself, feeling close to other people, and confidence. Participants aged 35 – 44 reported a significant improvement in twelve out of a possible 14 wellbeing indicators after the Games (86%), only optimism and having energy to spare did not display a significant improvement. Respondents from the age group of 45 – 54, interestingly, reported a strongly significant improvement in all of the wellbeing indicators, therefore presenting a 100% increase in overall wellbeing after participating in a Games volunteer programme. While slightly lower, participants aged 55 – 64 reported an improvement in 13 of the 14 wellbeing indicators (93%). The only element not reporting a significant improvement was interested in other people. Lastly, participants ages 65 + reported an overall positive improvement with 10 of the 14 wellbeing indicators displaying a significant improvement post-Games (71%).

An interesting finding across all age groups is the significant increase in reported confidence after the Games. The results from this study are in agreement with similar findings reported by Woodall et al. (2016) in their examination of volunteer impacts and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. This is reflected in the data collected in this study as each age group did report an increase in overall wellbeing at some level across each indicator. More specifically, when analysing the reported confidence level, confidence was the only wellbeing indicator that conclusively increased regardless of age. Thus, there are links between volunteering and increased wellbeing impact. Similarly, 80% of participants in this study reported a significant increase in confidence as well as an interest in trying new things. Although this early stage research may not be definite, this area of research presents many future study opportunities to explore the evident themes proposed by studies of Games time volunteering and increased in overall wellbeing impacts.

While there remains a lack of evidence to directly relate regeneration or sporting success to improved wellbeing of the host nation, an improvement within mental health, wellbeing and confidence for the population was an aspiration noted in the bid document submitted by Glasgow for the Commonwealth Games (Glasgow 2014 2005). The above data suggests the major event volunteer initiatives may be a pathway that requires further attention for future host nation wishing to enhance national wellbeing and in particularly confidence levels across all age groups of the population.

The following section discusses the data collected from the online survey while split into non-volunteers and participants who have volunteered previously. In addition to results previously examined, the data collected for this study demonstrates further agreement that states there are links between volunteering and wellbeing (Morrow-Howell et al. 2003; Brown et al. 2012; Lee et al. 2014). This affirmation is clearly displayed in both groups (those who had and those who had not volunteered before the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games). Table 4 shows that the group who had not volunteered before increased significantly post-Games with the majority of levels going up in the WEMWBS scale. Similarly, Table 5, shows those who had previous volunteer experience also increased

post-Games; however, that group had a notably higher starting point with the vast majority of the starting levels being similar to the first group's post-Games reported levels. This is consistent with previous studies (Borgonovi 2008). It should be noted that the second group, Table 5, were also the majority of the sample (n= 169, 74%), which also supports the claim that individuals with higher wellbeing levels are more likely to participate in volunteering.

\*Table 4\*

\*Table 5\*

These findings suggest that wellbeing does increase and a one-off large event volunteer experience does have an impact on reported wellbeing levels, including confidence, optimism and usefulness. Furthermore, results from this study demonstrate that having previous volunteer experience does have an impact upon wellbeing levels since a person who had no previous volunteer experience reported a lower starting level of wellbeing. This study is consistent with Brown et al.'s (2012) findings in proposing that an increase in wellbeing did not show a direct correlation with the amount of time spent volunteering. However, regarding a formal volunteer commitment, this is contradictory to Borgonovi's (2008) findings that demonstrate an increase in frequency of volunteering did increase the level of reported wellbeing. Therefore, it can be suggested that volunteering at a major event does differ in experience than a formal volunteer commitment; however, both volunteering type present opportunities to enhance individual's wellbeing with event volunteer suggesting wellbeing improvements from a shorted involvement. The difference may originate from the different circumstances for the studies being completed.

In addition to examining self-reported wellbeing impact after the Games, the survey participants were asked to predict how long they expected the feeling of wellbeing improvements (if any) would last. Overall, concerning the entire sample, the majority of responses predicted their wellbeing impacts to last years (32%). When only considering respondents who had previously volunteered, the consensus was less sure with 35% of participants reporting they were 'unsure' how long these changes would last. With that being said, 29% and 27% of previous volunteers did report expecting these improvements to last 'years' or 'longer', respectively. Analysis of the participants who were first time volunteers displayed a different picture. From these results, the majority of first volunteers expected their wellbeing changes to last years (36%), closely followed by 'longer' (35%). Interestingly, this group reported much less uncertainty in their expectations with only 22% of responses selecting 'unsure' how long these changes would last. This is perhaps an expected finding due to the research substantiating the links between volunteer activity and increased wellbeing (Morrow-Howell et al. 2003; Brown et al. 2012; Jones and Yates 2015; Liu 2016) and the higher levels of reported wellbeing within previous volunteers from this study. Moreover, the potential wellbeing legacy impact proposed in this study further emphasises the need for more long-term focus research in this area of Games volunteering legacy.

From the qualitative data collected, common themes identified when considering the impact of the Games upon the respondent's future were volunteering, more opportunities that are new and friends (Table 6). The findings in this research are consistent with Jones and Yates (2015) and with Woodall et al.'s (2016) research on the Glasgow 2014 Clyde-siders programme that propose that Games volunteering provided participant with a valuable opportunity to meet and build relationships with people from differing cultures and backgrounds.

\*Table 6\*

## Conclusions

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that volunteering initiatives engender an increased level of self-reported wellbeing, skills increase and social opportunities. Furthermore, the data mirrored previous findings from Jones and Yates (2015) concerning the reported likelihood to continue to volunteer post-Games and, therefore, that an increase in future volunteering activities is likely. The data collected also confirmed previous research that suggests people who volunteer at sporting events place an importance on social connections and interactions (Lee et al. 2016). Furthermore, this research highlights the importance placed on individual self-development through sport event volunteering and, as Downward and Ralston (2006) highlight, the need for organisers to recognise the ability sport event volunteering has to increase confidence, wellbeing and increase skills.

On an individual level, it is argued that volunteering is a pathway to generate a positive social legacy, as suggested by McCartney et al. (2013). In addition, there is evidence to suggest an increase in social capital amongst Games volunteers. The links between Games volunteering and social capital would benefit from further analysis of a larger and varied sample. It is argued that fostering social capital enables wider cultural and social understanding; therefore, it is recommended this concept is utilised to develop understanding within bridging and bonding social capital containing different community, volunteer and social groups. This, notably, also shares links with community development strategies and fosters stronger communities through shared experiences and new networks. The evidence presented in this research is considered in the early stages and should be utilised as a starting point to develop possible avenues where major events can generate a social legacy in areas such as social capital, increased skills, improved wellbeing, and continued volunteering.

## Questions for discussion

1. What other ways could volunteering at a major event benefit the individuals involved?
2. By exploring social capital further, how could this concept help identify wider volunteering legacies?
3. Discuss other intangible legacies that host cities may consider including in their legacy initiatives.

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