

FRONT LINE INSIGHT: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF THE VANCOUVER 2010 VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Author:
Alison Doherty

email:
adoherty@uwo.ca

Co-authors:
Kodama, Erin (1st author)
Popovich, Megan (3rd author)

University:
University of Western Ontario

Faculty:
Sport Management Program, School of Kinesiology,
Faculty of Health Sciences

purpose was to describe her lived experience in order to gain further insight into the personal and cultural context of volunteering. Consistent with the autoethnographic approach, she kept a personal journal throughout the seven-week experience, recording both objective (i.e., sight, sound, and action) and subjective (i.e., memories, thoughts, and feelings) observations and experiences (Fleming & Fullagar, 2007; Giles & Williams, 2007). All Games-related photographs, emails, newsletters, forms, schedules, training, and clothing were included as "data." A reflective analytic process was used to identify the nature and personal meaning of her critical experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Fleming & Fullagar, 2007).

FINDINGS

Themes that represent those critical experiences were labelled: "Making the Cut," "Uncertainty: Going with the Flow," "The Basics," "Blue Team': Volunteer Culture," "Leisure," "A Little Goes a Long Way," and "My Return: Prestige." These themes relate the first author's experience with getting selected as a volunteer, role ambiguity, orientation and training, group and organizational culture, leisure time during a major event, volunteer appreciation, and Olympic volunteer status. The findings are compared and contrasted with the existing research on sport event volunteerism in order to understand their alignment with that literature, and to consider the further insights they provide. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research.

Abstract

BACKGROUND

A growing body of research provides insight into the expectations, motivation, experience, satisfaction, and future intentions of sport event volunteers (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009; Costa, Chalip, Green, & Simes, 2006; Doherty, 2009; Elstad, 1996; Fairley, Kellet, & Green, 2007; Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Maclean & Hamm, 2007; Ralston, Downward, & Lumsdon, 2004; Shaw, 2009). A solid foundation of knowledge regarding who volunteers for special sport events, why they volunteer (and why not), their satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) with various aspects of the event, and their likelihood of volunteering again has developed largely from broad field research (e.g., surveys). Autoethnography (or narrative of self) is a qualitative method that provides richer insight into a phenomenon by exploring an individual's personal experience in depth (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). One of the main tenets of autoethnography is that it puts the researcher back into the study, rather than keeping him or her quietly on the sidelines (Parry & Johnson, 2007; Sparkes, 2000). It also allows for extraordinary and real life aspects of personal experiences to be expressed. It has been used recently to examine individuals' sport and leisure practices in a variety of context (e.g., Douglas, 2009; Jones, 2009; Lashua & Fox, 2006; Purdy, Potrac, & Jones, 2008), extending our understanding of the personal and social forces that shape one's experience.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

The current study used autoethnography to examine the first author's personal experience as an Olympic and Paralympic volunteer for the Vancouver 2010 Games. The

References:

- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), pp. 733-779. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fleming, C., & Fullagar, S. (2007). Reflexive methodologies: An autoethnography of the gendered performance of sport/management. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 10, 238-256.
- Giles, A.R., & Williams, D.J. (2007). Are we afraid of our selves? Self narrative research in leisure studies. *World Leisure Journal*, 49, 189-198.
- Parry, D.C., & Johnson, C.W. (2007). Contextualizing leisure research to encompass complexity in lived leisure experience: The need for creative analytic practice. *Leisure Sciences*, 29, 119-131.
- Sparkes, A.C. (2000). Autoethnography and narratives of self: Reflections on criteria in action. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17, 21-43.