

What knits a theatre and its volunteers together?

'It was always a release to sort of finish work and do something different, live out your dreams sort of thing. So, there's performers inside us wanting to, you know! So, it's like realising a dream really... We're giving something but we're doing it for ourselves as well!'
(Katherine, personal communication, 8 May 2018)

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Abstract

Retired people have time to give and seek fulfilling activities providing fun and structure. Volunteering is popular in the United Kingdom and an increasingly ageing population potentially provides a pool of willing support. In some cases, volunteers give immense amounts of time, freely. My research asks what knits together a theatre and its volunteers? Taking an ethnographic approach with a modified grounded theory I conducted interviews with a cohort of retired people who volunteer in a theatre, in a market town in rural northern England. I offer visual metaphors regarding how they navigated their transitions from the world of paid work into a third phase of life, how they made meaning for themselves during that journey and the role a theatre plays in that process. In studying these visual metaphors, I propose that what knits together a theatre and its volunteers is buzz, fun and commitment, created through a relationship by which mutual needs are met and fulfilled.

Key words

Volunteering, theatre, retirement, culture, England

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the volunteers and staff at the theatre for being so generous with their time. They know who they are and their willingness to talk to me candidly, despite being busy, is greatly appreciated. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Doctor Evert Bisschop Boele for his extraordinarily calm guidance, generosity of time and interesting, stimulating conversations. There is a choir who need some thanks. You provided me with musical respite every Monday evening and you have no idea how much you helped keep me grounded. Finally, to G who played the dame in the pantomime in this theatre. With those first lively conversations combined with a chance to see you perform, you set off something neither of us could have imagined!

Contents

Abstract.....	2
Key words.....	2
Acknowledgements	2
Prologue	5
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1. Personal motives.....	6
1.2. Research context	7
1.3. Research goals	8
1.4. Research Question	10
2. Method	12
2.1. Qualitative research	12
2.2. Methods used.....	13
2.3. General steps in the process	15
2.4. Art practice relevance	17
2.5. Modes of learning.....	18
3. Theoretical framework.....	21
3.1. General theory.....	22
3.2. Secondary theories	24
3.3. General research into volunteering.....	25
3.4. Motives	25
3.5. Age/cohort.....	26
3.6. Specific research into cultural volunteering	28
4. Results	31
4.1. The journey begins.....	31
4.2. Separation from the world of paid employment	32
4.3. Transition.....	34
4.4. Incorporation	36
4.4.1. Commitment as a volunteer	36
4.4.2. Duty.....	37
4.4.3. Buzz/energy.....	38
4.5. The relationship of orbiting worlds	40
4.6. The professional volunteer.....	41
4.7. Skills and interests develop together in the new environment	42
4.8. The theatre's world.....	44

4.9.	The worlds knit together	45
4.10.	The future journey	47
4.11	The whole picture	48
5.	Discussion	50
5.1.	Returning to general theory	51
5.1.1.	Presenting the self and the role of a team	51
5.1.2.	Ritual and rite of passage.....	52
5.1.3.	Cultural capital and habitus	53
5.2.	Secondary theories	55
5.3.	General research into volunteering.....	57
5.3.1.	Volunteer motives	57
5.3.2.	Age/cohort	58
5.3.3.	Cultural volunteering.....	61
5.3.4.	Economics	62
5.4.	Chapter conclusion	63
6.	Conclusion.....	65
6.1.	Revisiting the research question.....	65
6.2.	Summary of the findings	66
6.3.	Limitations and critical reflection	66
6.4.	Recommendations for further research	68
7.	Epilogue	71
	References	2
	Appendix 1: Theatre pen portrait.....	6
	Appendix 2: Table of interviewees	7
	Appendix 3: Interview guide	9
	Appendix 4: Introductory letter	12
	Appendix 5: Consent request for participating in research.....	13
	Appendix 6: Codes	15

Prologue

To begin at the beginning. It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobbled streets silent... time passes. Listen. Time passes.

Come closer now. (Thomas, 1954, p.1)

Imagine a town. A small town. A market town. Somewhere near a national park, somewhere in northern England. Imagine in that town, young people, families, tourists and adventurers; people born and brought up; blow-ins and dreamers and those in search of a quiet life. In its heart sits a building, not far from the cobbled streets. Harbours ghosts from a time of bawdy plays and pantomime; strolling players and Shakespeare; of chattering gossip, drinking and philandering; of groping and carousing and servants sent to warm the seats. Of a time when actors lived, breathed and walked their trade across the northern hills. Imagine a town of the wealthy in their carriages, traders and people on the make, ne'er-do-wells coming in, to chance-their-arm, to love and be entertained. Come close. Imagine a town with a theatre, sleeping.

Time passes.

Imagine a market town alive with shops and traders, with ice-cream eaters and lycra'd cyclists; walkers and those out for a drive, pootling about, searching for cups of tea and places to escape the rain. Come closer still. Imagine a town with a theatre. Imagine volunteers and workers, audiences and visitors, actors and stagehands loving a building with a passion. Painting, singing, acting, pantomiming. Think of dames and maidens; of bands, pints and poems; of knitters and guiders; of love and laughter. Imagine a theatre, not sleeping but breathing.

Come closer now.

1. Introduction

1.1. Personal motives

I have worked professionally in the UK arts sector for some time. I began my career as an arts practitioner; working with community groups devising community theatre and music projects. I then wandered into arts policy, local government and, missing creativity, returned to a role of a company director managing strategic arts projects, supported by public arts funding. I have always been driven to enable people to engage in the arts on their own terms; whether it is facilitating the production of a community play, or empowering rural volunteers in a village hall to promote live music.

Some anecdotes from arts professionals where I now live and work motivated me to begin this research. It is a lively manufacturing town in northern England, pulling itself out of post-industrial decline, finding its feet again; but defined by the English Arts Council as being an area of 'low arts engagement' (Arts Council England 2016). One arts professional considered 'if you have only ever been to pantomime, how can you appreciate theatre' (Anonymous, personal communication January 2017).

Pantomime (also known as panto) is a distinctively British traditional performing art form which many amateur dramatic groups, professional theatres and commercial producers will present every Christmas. Taylor (2007) describes pantomime as typically involving the telling of a well-known story with easily recognisable and familiar characters who will send up the performance and interact with the audiences. It usually involves physical comedy, music, dance, scenic illusions, and innuendo. The arts professional's comment above was, to me, a negative judgment on the audiences who attend such pantomimes. Another arts professional considered if they should run a training programme for local amateur arts organisations to 'bring in professionals to help improve their activity' (Anonymous, personal communication, May 2016). Knowing the town as I do, and singing regularly in a choir with 100 participants, I was struck by the contrast of what a survey could say about the place, and what I observed in real life. My thoughts were: come into this town, tell them to their faces that they are not creative, and see

how long you survive. As one of my interviewees in this research said: 'they'll give you ecky-thump' (Alison, personal communication, 8 March 2018).

Matarasso (2015) comments that:

English arts policy is preoccupied with how to increase people's engagement in the arts. Most people already are engaged in the arts – walk down a train and see how many people are watching, reading or listening to something if you doubt it – what that really means is increasing engagement in the arts that policy *chooses to subsidise* (section Making 'Arts Engagement' a Reality. para.1. Author's italics).

1.2. Research context

I will begin this section by briefly contextualising the role of volunteering in arts and culture in England. In 2015, the United Kingdom's (UK) Government Department of Culture, Media and Sport identified that as many as 9.4 million people participated in arts and cultural activities. In addition, there were 49,140 voluntary and amateur arts groups across England, with a total of 5.9 million members. A further 3.5 million people volunteered as extras or helpers (Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, 2015. p.36)

Arts Council England, the country's national development and funding agency for arts, libraries and museum; published a rural arts investment review in 2015. It reported that people living in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to actively participate in a rehearsal or performance of a play and were generally more interested in cultural engagement than their urban counterparts. However, it also states that people in rural areas may also have fewer competing demands for their leisure time or fewer personal, social or economic barriers to engagement, enabling them to attend more arts events. Socio-economic situation, age, gender and ethnicity may also influence the levels of engagement among people living in rural areas (Blackburn, Brant & Poole, 2015).

In 2015, the Warwick Commission report, reiterating the Arts Council report above, noted that across the UK the two most highly culturally engaged groups account for 15% of the population and they tended to have a high socio-economic background, a university education and a professional occupation. These elements

were the most reliable predictors of engagement and participation in a wide range of cultural activities. It observed that 'the wealthiest, better educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of the population forms the most culturally active segment of all' (Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, 2015. p.36).

Taking this above data into consideration and setting some further context, I will discuss here one research paper. I will return to this paper later in my theoretical framework. Bussell and Forbes (2007) discussed volunteers in a theatre in a market town with 5000 residents. Fortuitously, through industry knowledge, I recognised the description of the theatre. Knowing the artistic director's leadership style, I knew the theatre's ethos would be community/people focussed. It could be assumed that such a 500-seater venue in a small town cannot function without community goodwill and would have to be embraced and owned by the local community to survive economically. However, a clue exists in one comment made about the volunteers' involvement: 'There's no division between professionals and volunteers whatsoever, which you might expect, but there never is' (p.23) Why would anyone expect division? What is the evidence for this assumption? Although the researchers conducted 20 in-depth interviews, my awareness of the circumstances surrounding the development of the building suggests that the paper did not go deeply enough into the wider influencing reasons as to why the venue is successful with volunteer management. Whilst the article's methodology argues a breadth of analysis; depth of leadership vision, embeddedness in the community, and the reality of life in a small rural town is not fully acknowledged or explored. Further, UK public policy towards volunteer engagement and investment in the arts has changed significantly since the article was published (2007). I propose that the true driver for the successful relationship is not revealed. I have therefore taken up their recommendation of further research by both seeking to test out the findings and explore if the role of the community and town surrounding the venue is a significant operator in the relationship.

1.3. Research goals

The arts professionals' comments, noted in my opening paragraph, stayed with me and I began my preliminary research initially questioning the role pantomime

plays in the cultural habits of those who engage with it. My initial literature review showed historical references to the artform, but I was unable to access academic discussion around the motivations of audiences, actors, and participants towards the work. I considered the scale of the art form in the UK. For example, professional theatres took over £55 million in box office receipts for pantomime in 2016 (UK theatres 2016) and I therefore became curious as to how this traditional artform had become so popular and what had caused it to endure. I initially intending to research the experience of pantomime through the eyes of those who produce and watch it, in one theatre, in one town, in one moment in time. I have outlined a short, anonymous description of the theatre in appendix 1.

During my preliminary research phase, I noticed the extent to which a small regional theatre was thriving and surviving, with limited public funds, supported and driven by nearly 100 volunteers and I wondered how this was possible and sustainable. This evolved into a second, revised research question: **what knits a theatre and its volunteers together?**

In terms of my personal learning goals, I was embarking on research in a new venue and town I had not visited before. I anticipated learning something of the locality and about the theatre in general. The methodology was also new to me. I could only learn more from pursuing it. In terms of learning for my own arts practise, my goal for the research was to come to an understanding of what it is that keeps volunteers' giving their time to the arts and how I might apply that knowledge in my work. I work in a context of supporting over 200 volunteers in rural communities to promote live arts events and I am impressed by their resilience and willingness to keep going, to keep selling tickets, and to always be enthusiastic. Further, the development of work that my company does with volunteers in two local authority venues may also be informed by my findings. Finally, potential outcomes for academia would be an insightful, in depth understanding of a cohort of English theatre volunteers' lives and whether existing theories bear relevance to those people's worlds.

1.4. Research Question

After observing a pantomime production, talking to actors, staff and volunteers, my final research question became: **what knits a theatre and its volunteers together?** In the heart of the activity, I found volunteers willing to give time and energy to sustaining their local theatre; not just a small amount of time, an hour or so a week for example, but where volunteering activity was a very central part of their life. They were the theatre, and the theatre was them: the same. What causes this to happen and is there a golden recipe that makes it work? Is it a policy? A good manager? A great creative programme? Why do they keep coming back, and in some cases stay there for many years? I choose the word 'knits' deliberately. I found that this theatre, every year, invites its wider community to knit props for its Christmas pantomime. Last year, they received over 2000. People were willing to give their free time to sit, be creative and support the venue. Knitting, as well as a creative activity, also means to unite (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/knit>) and has synonyms such as combine, spin, weave, heal, connect, link and bind. (<http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/knit>). Subsequent questions followed: what operates at the centre of the relationship between a theatre's needs and a volunteer's needs? What binds them together in a mutually symbiotic relationship where they are meeting each other's needs sufficient to not only enable a theatre to thrive but also affords the volunteer to talk about their volunteering experience using words such as love, buzz, passion and enjoy? As I demonstrate, volunteering at this theatre is more than just giving time freely for no pay; it is about seeking a buzz, finding one's element, fulfilling a dream, being free to play seriously: a place where giving time to something that you love becomes addictive.

My research seeks to develop those findings, to explore and identify, through open interviews, how strongly if at all, is social identification with a venue a motivating factor and what meaning does this bring to those who engage in it. In other words, what knits a theatre and its volunteers together? A deliberately open question relating to my subsequent grounded theory research process (Charmaz 2014). It also explores the relationship between volunteer and theatre in more depth arguing that the volunteers' needs and the theatres' needs are mutually beneficial and symbiotic. Bussell and Forbes' (2007) conclusion emphasised one side of the

theatre/volunteer relationship - that of the volunteer - and implies a hierarchical relationship: with the organisation at the top and volunteers coming in to sustain it. In a way, commodities supporting a venue's operations. I argue that this is a much more mutual and co-dependent relationship. Ethnographic methods, grounded in a considered analysis of interviewees' stories provide a deeper, magnified view, offering up discussion and consideration in the subjects' own words. I will demonstrate that for a theatre venue to be successful in a small market town like the one in their study, a mutual, and powerful symbiotic relationship where volunteer, staff and venue all operate together is necessary. There is a gravitational pull between these operators that keeps the whole system functioning smoothly. Social identification could be an explainer for some deeper need, satisfying a sense of a creative self, displaced by a working life but within the framework of the theatre allowed freedom of time and space to be dominant. The volunteers are giving time, but also, in the third life of retirement, finding self-fulfilment.

In this introduction I outlined my personal motives for the research and the broader national context of volunteering and cultural participation in England. I discussed a serendipitous connection I found with one research paper in general which led me to reconsider my original research goals and question. I shall now outline the methodology I used with which I sought to untangle **what knits a theatre and its volunteers together.**

2. Method

2.1. Qualitative research

I will outline in this section my reasons for choosing a qualitative, ethnographic approach; the methods used; the steps I used to gain access to the field and provide some observations on my experience as the reality of my research process played out. In my theoretical framework, existing research into volunteering motives mostly focuses on quantitative methodology: surveys, either by phone or post. It seems curious that the authors apparently never actually directly asked any volunteers to articulate, in their own words, the reasons for doing what they do. Turkle (2015) comments on a conversation with a colleague, referring to sociology, teaching and psychology as being 'the talking trades...conversation is not just ...about answers, it's about what the answers mean' (p.8)

In the subsequent research, where qualitative methods were used, for example, Nesteruk and Price (2011); the stories and analysis provided a richer, deeper narrative and revealed analysis which was strong in its social roots, providing an authentic, but analytical voice. A qualitative process, engaging directly with people in their social settings, encouraging space to talk, allows for a deeper picture of attitudes, feelings, emotions to reveal themselves. It is 'about what is missed by official statistics: the things that matter in people's lives' (Matarasso, 2012, back cover).

I approached my preliminary research question ethnographically. I decided to work in the field, conducting interviews with people in their everyday situations, gathering primary data with a general area of enquiry but without a pre-formed hypothesis. From this, my approach orientated around the voices of a range participants who lived, worked and played in one single theatre, in one small town. I used a mixture of ethnographic methods to draw analysis and meaning from stories including interviews, observation and artefact analysis. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). My research methodology is a modified form of grounded theory. Grounded in that I worked between data, analysis forming, theoretical support and back again (Charmaz 2014). Modified in that I acknowledge that the timescales and realities of a master's thesis meant that I had a few months, not years, to create and develop my

analysis; in comparison to the work produced in some fields of ethnographic study it is therefore a snapshot. Nevertheless, whilst I had limited time available in the field, my research is an authentic observation in time of a small cohort of 16 people in one venue, in one town over a period of six months. My pragmatic process offers up a middle-range theoretical analysis (Merton 1957) of the authentic stories and voices of that particular cohort at that particular time. However, it is a sufficient research level from which to seek answers to my research question. Charmaz (2014) and Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) became reassuring, guiding voices in the process of what felt to me like stepping out into the unknown and were authors I frequently returned to when I looked at my transcripts, notes and diagrams and wondered: 'What do I do with it now?' (Bryman, 2012, p.565)

2.2. Methods used

I began by conducting open, narrative interviews focussing on inviting the interviewee to talk about their relationship with pantomime in the theatre with follow up questions around their understanding of the popularity of it in the town and its general longevity as a theatre experience. I used a broad open interview guide around themes which I would then either use as a prompt or on occasion dismiss as the interview progressed. As I outline below, my research questions changed after I had analysed the first phase of interviews and as such, so too did my guide. I also had different interview guides for whether I was talking to volunteers or paid staff. The second cohort of interviewees were invited to talk about their volunteering activity at the theatre and what led them to want to spend their time there, with follow up questions about their hobbies and work life. I also returned to the volunteers I had met with in my first phase of conversations, to ask further questions about their volunteering practice. I allowed the interviewees as much time as they needed, but in reality, the interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 66 minutes and were governed by everyday issues such as car parking, family commitments and duty rotas. The interviews were transcribed virtually verbatim: I left out some recorded preamble /icebreaking conversation and final goodbyes but left the recorder running throughout as I quickly learned that the interviewees often said more when they thought the interview had ended. This proved useful on several occasions and is also a sign of



Table 1. Process diagram Process diagram (modified from Bryman, 2012, p.571)

trust and openness (Turkle 2015). I have retained all the original recordings. I also conducted an observation at a matinee performance of the theatre's professional pantomime noting audience reactions. I gathered artefacts and documents linked to

the venue, including programmes, photographs of posters and information boards, copies of published historical accounts, the pantomime script and I studied the venue's website and public Facebook page.

Reflexively I was able to draw on my arts background in the same English region. My professional connection to an actor who held a highly regarded status in the venue helped me to ice-break, build trust and find common ground with the staff and volunteers, but also, I had to use this reflexivity to be aware of not making assumptions around meaning, both in my interviews and subsequent analysis and description. Trust operated in terms of establishing a line of communication enabling the theatre to open up to me, and trust in that without the theatre's active investment of time in the process, I would have been unable to go no further with my research. Ultimately trust enforced an ethical approach in my final analysis. With this in mind, I gained the interviewees' informed consent firstly by making a formal approach to the theatre staff and asking for their cooperation. This then precipitated in a phone conversation with the director and an email outlining my area of research and my research needs. Following this, the theatre undertook to find the interviewees for me, asking permission on my behalf for them to spend time with me. I gave them a letter describing my work and asked each interviewee to sign a consent form. Both are attached in appendices 4 and 5. As my research question changed, whilst I was conducting the interviews, I returned to the theatre explaining my change in research direction and asked for further assistance in finding additional volunteers to interview. I also interviewed my first cohort of volunteers a second time, after first asking their permission in writing and explaining my change of focus. For ethical reasons, I have chosen to anonymise the venue, town and interviewees and all given names are pseudonyms. An anonymised overview of the interviewees is provided in appendix 2 and a short, anonymous pen portrait outlining the theatre is in appendix 1.

2.3. General steps in the process

Using personal networks, I contacted a professional actor who was performing in the Christmas pantomime in a 200-seater theatre in a market town of 8000 residents, close to a popular tourist area in northern England. It is in the same region as the venue featured in Bussell & Forbes (2007). After this first open interview, my

contact gave me the name of the theatre's director and I made a direct approach requesting the theatre's permission and cooperation in conducting my research. Their permission and subsequent cooperation were vital and I became reliant on the time and capacity of the paid staff to broker interviews with volunteers. Initially, I asked them to help me contact staff and volunteers who were willing to give their time to talk about pantomime. I told them I was seeking a sample of staff, seasonal actors, volunteers and the audience. As I refined my research question, for the second phase of interviews I asked the theatre again for assistance in accessing what they should self-define as a representative group of 8-10 volunteers and ask their permission to meet with me. Data protection issues prevented me from having direct access to a volunteer database, so I had to rely on theatre to do this. The selected representative group who were willing to make the time to meet with me all happened to be retired people. I also deployed snowball sampling in seeking an audience member and policy officer to interview (Atkinson & Flint 2004). I had to take into consideration the fact that the staff could, with the best intentions, end up acting as gatekeepers: managing whom I spoke to and, as such, influencing the final direction of my research. This was unavoidable, the consent of the venue was key to the feasibility of my research. I have allowed for this in my analysis. In fact, one staff member did confirm that the volunteers they had found for me were prolific in their work and 'knew most about the theatre' (Chris, personal communication 20/4/2018). Whilst other volunteers perhaps did indeed do a lesser amount of activity, it was not possible for me to interview them. I do not feel this affected the focus of my research. The conversations I had were open and my subsequent awareness of their commonality of motivations for being such prolific volunteers became a cornerstone of my final analysis.

I conducted nineteen open interviews over six months between December 2017 and May 2018. Fifteen were one to one meetings in person; the others over Skype. Interviews were conducted with staff, visiting actors, volunteers, audience members, young participants and cultural commentators (policy makers). Three volunteers were interviewed a second time.

All the volunteers I interviewed had either retired or given up work due to a spouse's retirement. I did not seek to interview specifically retired volunteers. This demographic is a commonality of the cohort which emerged from the process.

However, it transpired from interviews that their retirement status was typical; 'they are very much town based, very much retired' (Chris, personal communication. 20 April 2018) and that they were fairly typical of the town's age demographic as Stephie said to me: 'to be fair if you look at [names town] there aren't many young people... there are people with families who are too busy to volunteer and there's nobody in their late 20's and 30's, there's just hardly anyone here' (Stephie, personal communication, 25 April 2018)

Anne also reinforced for me the sheer quantity of the volunteers within the context of the local community: We are a town of volunteers...we run the library now, that's a volunteer library. Any do, anything that goes on, the volunteers come out to help with the Duck club...they put up the Christmas decorations. The Duck club get money in to do the town's Christmas decorations because the council can't afford it. Yes, so yeah, we are a town of volunteers. Talk to most people in town and you'll find that they volunteer for something' (Anne, personal communication, 24 April 2018)

Once I had completed and transcribed the interviews, I chose a pragmatic route and aimed for a two-stage coding process. The diagram below shows my method set against a timeline. I began coding with open codes, then I grouped the coded text into themes based around in vivo codes. This was followed by a second, more focused, approach of sifting and sorting leading to identifying linking concepts, and finally, an emergent path of analysis. Charmaz (2014) encouraged me to resist the urge to jump too quickly to conclusions. Instead, I tried to allow time for the codes and connections to emerge and the analysis to evolve outwards. I moved through various thought processes, between text, codes and theory and back again. I would frequently look at clusters of codes, move them around, forming and reforming the jigsaw puzzle. I then drew small maps and diagrams of each cluster, considering how the words connected, exploring and identifying where the emphasis and deeper stories seemed to be. I also wrote short memos and kept a journal of the process.

2.4. Art practice relevance

My own background in community arts as a producer and project manager meant I realised how familiar this research process was known to me by other names and definitions: a creative process making sense and bring a depth of analysis to

stories and narratives through rendering them into theatrical form. Drawing on this learned practise, I worked out how to respond to each problem the process presented me by trusting the expert guiding voices of Charmaz (2014) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) who reminded me that the practise of ethnography has roots in how we as humans makes sense of our lives and other's actions (p.4). Fusing my own arts practise with ethnography's more structured processes enabled me to consider how the process should evolve if it were, instead of research, a piece of co-authored community theatre. Gathering data and coding it is not unlike co-collaboration in producing ideas for a show with a community group. Ideas form, must be noted, respected, valued, explored, themed and analysed. Pragmatic decisions must be made. What can I use without causing harm? What should be archived for other shows? Where are the connecting narratives and stories? What can be realistically produced in the time available and how can the story best be told with the tools available? Which characters' voices come to the fore? What is the best and most honest representation of the story possible? What are people really saying? The theatrical dramaturg revises and rethinks possible storylines and is a tough editor heading towards the eventual final theme. Combining the ethnographic processes, with a modified grounded theory and my arts practice, I was able to synthesise a process. Further, the process was abductive, beginning as I did with a research question formulated from my work context, but refined and focussed as my access to the field increased. I was able to consider in more depth the motivations and worlds of the volunteers and analyse and understand more deeply what led them to give so much time to their volunteering. This process took me from a study of audience engagement in a particular artform, to a wider but re-orientated analysis of the volunteers in the theatre in which that art experience is made, abduction, after all 'brings creativity into enquiry' (Charmaz,2014, p.341).

2.5. Modes of learning

As well as drawing on my professional arts experience, I recognise my own preferences for problem-solving. Not mentioning these here would be a dishonest representation of my methodology, as they slowly became vital anchors in seeking

answers to sticky problems and assisting me in resolving the next step in each process of my analysis.

Firstly, I am a visual thinker and rather than use computer software to analyse the data; I resorted to old-fashioned artist tools of coloured pencils, scissors and sticky notes. After having coded and themed each script using a colour code, as well as a word codes; I physically cut up the transcripts and created thematic piles of paper. First, each pile was either sorted according to in vivo codes used (“living the dream, “community spirit” for example) and then they were moved around to form connecting clusters (“retirement”, “making a journey”, “mutual need”).

Secondly, I realised that I problem solve kinaesthetically. Physically picking up and moving around the themed “piles” of transcript helped the codes and narratives embed and bring clarity. Each evening during this coding/forming process, with the words of Charmaz (2014) in my ears: ‘grappling with analytic problems is part of the research process. Feeling confused and uncertain but learning to tolerate the ambiguity-shows your growth’ (p.212), I would take my dilemmas out for a walk and often return, able to find deeper connections and themes. It was a long walk which moved me from being overwhelmed with all the connections and data to then considering the journey the volunteers made regarding changing phases of life since retirement and how the theatre facilitates this. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe a funnel structure to coding with the analysis becoming progressively focussed. ‘It is frequently *well into the process of inquiry* [my italics] that one discovers what the research is really about and not uncommonly it turns out to be about something rather different from the initial foreshadowed problems’ (p.160). A reassuring comment to find given the timescales and depth of data with which I was working. At least the cutting, colouring, drawing, moving and walking were a vital and normal part of the methodology.

To conclude this section, I began my research by exploring a popular British art form and considering how audiences, staff and volunteers engaged in it. I outlined how I gained access to the field and the challenges and limitations of this; the nature of the interviewees, the context in which I was able to meet with them and the extent to which my research questions evolved and changed. I discussed my reasons for following an ethnographic method focussing on people’s narratives, with a modified abductive, grounded theory. I related this methodology to my own arts practice and

described my process of data analysis. Through analysing the emerging data and subsequent preliminary concepts I was able to develop and refine my research. The methodology of grounded theory meant that as concepts emerged, my theoretical framework continuously evolved and amended itself and as such I have chosen to present it after this methodology chapter.

On a pragmatic note, it is worth remembering the realities of researching in the field. Sometimes life operates to get in the way of a beautiful plan. In my case, conducting research in northern England in Spring meant I was caught in a March snowstorm and unable to make the two-hour drive to the venue (they too were snowed in) and as such lost a week of time. Research in the field (particularly northern English upland fields) has its unplanned moments.

3. Theoretical framework

This research focuses on the relationship between volunteers and their local theatre and what knits them together. It almost seems too tempting to draw on dramaturgical theories of ritual, rules and roles. Performances as guides, amateur actors or stagehands mirror such performance metaphors as playing a role, wearing a mask. This is, after all, a critical discussion about a theatre: a place where people come together; stories are played and told. Volunteers can be guides, cast members, technicians and financial managers. Each one acts out their own narratives and motivations in their role as volunteers but also equally part of the tradition of making theatre.

In figure 1. Below, I show six circles in two rows. This is a visual representation of my theoretical framework. The first row is general theory, on the second row I have two subsidiary, supporting, middle range theorists, and the final circle is some smaller sector research in the field of volunteers, their motives and demographics and how volunteers are engaged and defined by theatres and other similar venues.

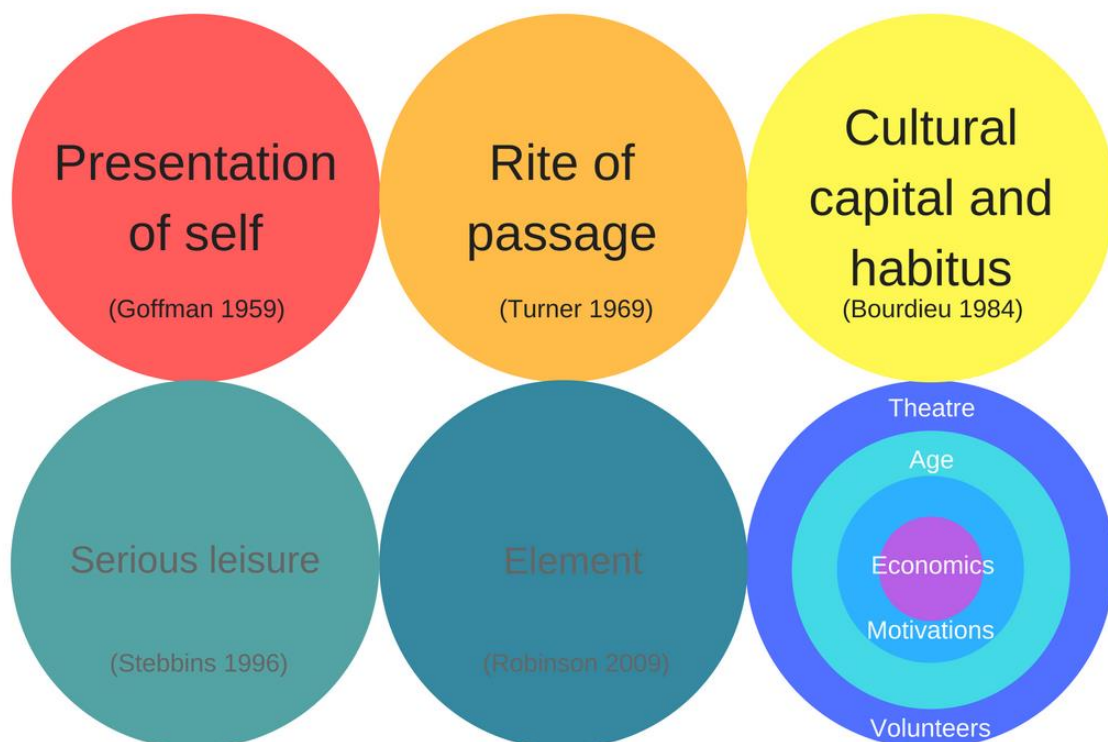


FIGURE 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. General theory

My first line of reference in my framework are Goffman (1959), Turner (1969,1982) and Bourdieu (1984). I shall discuss each one's theories in order and outline their relevance to my research. Goffman's theory of self (1959) draws heavily on a theatrical lexicon. His concept of scene settings provides a useful metaphorical understanding as to how and why we behave and what we do socially; an individual creates a plausible character to convince an onlooking audience. Goffman observed how an organisation defines its cultural values subsequently affects how the people who engage with it feel about the organisation and how they should play their role within it. In particular relevance are his concepts around teams and how they operate collectively to be plausible to an audience (or onlookers). Goffman's work on teams, audience and performance are also a useful framework for how people play roles to unite a team and avoid undermining it. This is valuable in exploring the role of a volunteer within the theatre context; especially if the role is unpaid and operating in an environment where audiences and actors have preconceived expectations of those volunteers' role. For example, a stagehand, an usher, a box officer staffer. Reliance on others performing the role of a professional within the theatre, albeit an unpaid one, is a performance function of the team. Further, maintaining the effect of professionalism is also a factor, the presenting of a role believed by the audience. This relevance of teams and performances to my research is that a theatre is of course both a place to enjoy a performance but also a functioning micro system reliant on people performing working, plausible, authentic roles.

Turner's (1982) anthropological view of the world of ritual as theatre builds on Goffman's themes but leans further towards his own interest in ritual and theatre. The theatre is about presenting persona, stories, worlds and patterns. Turner (1969) refers to van Gennep's anthropological work in Australia in 1909 where he identified the process of rite of passage with three stages being: separation (detachment from a social group) marginal (liminal) and the incorporation to a new, stable position in the social structure. I do not intend to make any comparisons between research conducted in rural African societies over a hundred years ago, with 21st century England. However, Turner interprets these rites of passage for a contemporary western world and as such it becomes an instructive device for interpreting the

volunteers' world revealing a deeper analysis of their stories. Rite of passage from one place of work to another, changes in social standing, freedom to pursue leisure and the various rituals associated with organised leisure (clubs, games) resonate in particular. Turner also developed the notions of structure and anti-structure particularly within a western industrial context of the world of structured work, and the antithesis, a world of leisure or freedom. This developed into the idea of freedom from work, and freedom to pursue hobbies and leisure activities. Therefore, the notions of liminal transition, role and social change act as metaphors in a modern, modified form to apply to retirement and seeking purpose in new roles in a leisured life. In the case of volunteers, emerging changes to a new status and phase of life.

Commentators believe the kind of leisure choices we make, and our confidence in doing so is influenced by our habits and upbringing and our capacity to draw on our inculcated cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984) has been influential in the world of cultural sociology debates (Santoro & Solaroli 2016). Cultural capital provides a means of interpreting how and why someone's education and upbringing enable them to move freely through society. It combines with habitus; how learned habits can inform social decisions and behaviour (Bourdieu 1984). In the field of volunteer motivations and the arts, it could be necessary to consider if people's decisions to give time freely to a theatre or museum come from newly acquired interests, curiosity or reminders of past positive experiences such as a career, education, childhood or family memories. Each one of these could empower them with the language and confidence to be comfortable in such an environment. Cultural capital becomes a symbolic currency and a language by which opportunities can be accessed, enjoyed and sustained. Habitus 'is a stable way of relating to the world that develops in early years and adapts to changing circumstances' (Reeves, 2016, p 118)

Bourdieu made some relevant comments on Goffman, describing him as the 'discoverer of the infinitely small' (1983, p.112). Something which is deemed banal and every day, if closely observed, orientates itself into a place of symbolic meaning. Bourdieu praised Goffman with noticing those things which others may not and audaciously suggested that some academics failed to notice the everyday as being 'too obvious'. (p.112). Volunteers in a theatre can seem every day but understanding how and why they come to be there requires closer study.

3.2. Secondary theories

Continuing into the second line of my framework, I present Stebbins (2007) and Robinson (2009 [no relation]) as useful stable mates providing two additional supportive theories. Stebbins' serious leisure theory and the status of volunteering within that provides a useful framework with which to explore the professional approach the volunteers took to their activities. Serious leisure involves someone following a hobby or volunteering role to the extent it is almost a career in which they may build skills and experience. Benefits can include a sense of self-fulfilment or belonging and If the activity is part of a group experience, then there will be common shared attitudes and practices. People who engage in serious leisure identify strongly with their activities and often immerse themselves fully. Taking the notion of strong activity identity and immersion one step further, it is possible to draw in and combine serious leisure with Robinson's proposal (2009) of the notion of tribe and element: finding the group you feel most comfortable with and then functioning at your best within it. His hypothesis is that people can generally be better at everything if they can do the thing they really love in the same way that Stebbins' (2007) argues those that engage in serious leisure in a group context, are entirely positively focussed in their delivery of their hobby or leisure time. Finding the thing you love and pursuing it with a passion may well be something people are able to do in their working lives. However, others may have hobbies or withheld dreams which ultimately only get fully met on retirement. Robinson's notion of element resonates with the language the volunteers used to describe their connection to the theatre's culture and their love of their work. When I was listening to their stories and the enthusiasm of language and the passion which the stories were told, this was a group of people engaged in a group, pursuing a hobby, in their element:

Fifty is the new thirty and seventy is the new forty...Many older people in the developed world have much greater financial stability...what comes is a second stretch where healthy, accomplished people can set off to reach their next set of goals. 'if we have an entire extra 'middle age'...we get additional opportunities to do more with our lives as part of the package... (Robinson, 2009. p.193)

3.3. General research into volunteering

The final circle in my framework encompasses research regarding volunteers, their motives, the economics of volunteering within the theatre sector and the relevance of age or cohort. Firstly, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of a volunteer in the context of my research. The UK's National Council for Volunteer Organisations describes a volunteer as 'someone spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone who they're not closely related to. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual' (www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering, para.1)

For the purposes of this research I will use Stebbins' (2007) definition of volunteering within the context of his serious leisure model, which he has derived from others within the field such as Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth (1996). He describes volunteering in a manner similar to the one above: 'uncoerced help offered either formally or informally with no or, at most, token pay and done for the benefit of both other people (beyond the volunteer's family) and the volunteer...A key element in the leisure conception of volunteering is the felt absence of moral coercion to do the volunteer activity' (p.9). Although the definition of who a volunteer is clear for these purposes, the reasons why people are motivated to volunteer are more complex.

3.4. Motives

There is considerable existing research around volunteering and volunteers' motivations. Most of this research is based on various quantitative approaches and the broad general agreement is that people give time freely to a cause or organisation for various reasons and gain a range of benefits in return. I will begin with Shye (2010) who research volunteer motivations. Shye observed that research often asks why people volunteer or refers to a previously designed list of reasons which can lead answers or confirm the researcher's agenda. Instead of asking what motivates volunteers, Shye considers how volunteering rewards participants. His study showed that people of higher income, had higher levels of education and who are religious were more likely to volunteer and the needs which

respondents perceived to be satisfied by volunteering are cultural, social, physical, or mental wellbeing. Continuing in this quantitative vein, Brown, Hoyer and Nicholson (2012) sought to explore links between wellbeing and volunteering. They did this through a random sample survey and found self-esteem, self-efficacy and feeling socially connected were significant elements linking volunteering to a sense of wellbeing. Hibbert, Piacentini and Al Dajani (2003) in contrast, conducted qualitative interview-based research and found the volunteers gained skills, self-esteem and confidence and experienced personal empowerment. Themes running through these closer studies of volunteerism show that economic status, a sense of wellbeing and fulfilment operate across a range of findings. However, qualitative data research has its critics. Musick & Wilson (2007) question the reliability of respondent surveys, since repeating similar methods seems to repeat findings rather than advancing conceptual understanding. In their view 'a complete understanding as to why people initiate and continue to volunteer remains elusive' (p.447). Something which I intend to address in my results.

3.5. Age/cohort

Laslett (1987) showed that in developed countries ageing populations could enjoy a time after work when they would still be healthy and enjoy a positive outlook on life, with the concept of a third age emerging in the UK and other western countries in the 1950s. The first and second ages are youth and adult responsibility and the fourth age is a time of dependency towards death. The second age ends at retirement. The quality of the third age is contingent on the person's health and economic status. Finding purpose in retirement could be linked to family, hobbies and social influences. We may find ourselves caring for family members in some way. Illness may curtail dreams held, or opportunities may be presented to explore new skills which did not exist 30 or 40 years ago when making career choices. We can do more with our leisure time, and there are choices to be made. Some may well throw their energy into their family; others have second careers or jobs to create a structure or provide much needed extra income; others still may take a hobby or an unfulfilled passion and pursue it relentlessly. Older people take their work skills into

charities as trustees, or support fundraising initiatives; or may join evening classes or walking groups. Finding purpose and structure can be important to many.

Wellbeing, and particularly the notion of enjoyment is explored by Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Smith and Baum (2010). Their overview of a range of social science perspectives regarding volunteering and the use of leisure time identified a gap in the research around whether a volunteer's sense of obligation to their roles and host changes over time. In addition, they showed that older adults, who do more than 15 hours a week, have lower levels of wellbeing, with motivations moving from a sense of leisure or self-satisfaction to one of duty. Although it is not clear as to whether the context of that volunteering creates a feeling of duty and obligation. The elements of duration of time given, class and educational background, sense of self-fulfilment and wellbeing combine as a useful benchmark for my research analysis.

Reeves (2016) asks if patterns of cultural activity change across time and ageing and if engagement in cultural activity increases or decreases with age. He comments that social research into age cohorts shows new thinking about how cultural preferences are generated and sustained but wants to understand why socio-cultural norms are reproduced. Reeves considers that Bourdieu's account of social-cultural issues did not fully engage with ageing and cultural preferences and asks if an age cohort would shape or influence cultural practice over time. He notes that the UK Taking Part data (2006- 2008) shows that the number of people who take part in arts activities remains stable until aged 60 at which point the data shows a decline in activity which could be evidence of age effect. However, changing access to cultural offers, as well as declining health and economic status could also be influencing factors.

Pruchno (2012) comments in particular on the Baby Boom generation. Dohm (2000) defines this as a cohort who were born between 1946 and 1964 and the large number of births in this time has led to an impact on western economies with regard to a rise in an ageing population and their subsequent health and social needs. However, Baby Boomers are highly educated and likely to occupy professional and managerial positions. On average, they are healthier than previous generations and have longer life expectancies at age 65. As Boomers think ahead to their retirement years, Pruchno comments that many contemplate volunteer roles. This reflects

Robinson (2009), mentioned earlier and his reference to older people having a new middle age in which to pursue goals.

3.6. Specific research into cultural volunteering

As I mentioned earlier in my introduction, research had found that people in rural areas were more likely to take part in the arts than their urban counterparts. Further, 17.6 per cent of the population of England lives in rural areas (Blackburn, Brant & Poole, 2015). The Warwick Commission noted that 29% of people who take part in voluntary and amateur creative activities are retired and noted that such levels of participation is correlated to their socio-economic situation. (Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, 2015)

Bussell and Forbes (2007) provided me with my primary motivating research paper for exploring the world of volunteers. They considered that there had been little previous research into volunteers in arts organisations. They conducted interviews and observations of volunteers at an unidentified theatre based in a market town in northern England. Their findings were that 'volunteers at this theatre *differ from other groups* [my italics] in their level of social identification and commitment' (p.26). They found that volunteers identify closely with the theatre and saw themselves as part of the organisation. The existence of a charismatic leader (in this instance a front-of-house manager) further supported positive volunteer relationships. They also observed commonalities between their interviewees, with some stating that being at the theatre improved their social life and it enabled them to enjoy an art form in which they were interested. The demographic was mostly of mature or retired people who had been interested in the arts in their previous lives, either in their careers or hobbies. They also volunteered elsewhere, for other arts organisations. The volunteers were proud of the theatre and enjoyed being part of a group. Ultimately, Bussell and Forbes concluded that social identification is **the** motivating factor of a cultural volunteer [my emphasis]. Stets and Burke (2000) describe social identity as 'being at one with a certain group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective' (p.226). Also, almost as an aside, Bussell and Forbes observed that the theatre had a close relationship with its community. However, they appeared to not probe into the theatre's needs other than identifying that volunteers

played a role in the arts organisation's ability to function; which in turn supports its ability to survive financially.

Researching volunteering in libraries and museums in the UK, Hewlett (2002) found that volunteers were key to the institutions and highly valued. However, he argues, that more can be done to support the volunteer infrastructure in museums libraries and archives and comments: 'in the cultural sector, volunteering is a key activity, allowing many organisations to carry out work and activities that would otherwise not be possible' (p.63). He notes that it is hard to prove the impact volunteers have on the sector and that competition for volunteers is high. Lalor (2013) studied volunteering in cultural institutions in Ireland and observed that there are grey areas of definition between volunteers and unpaid interns. Volunteers, she argues, should add value rather than fill vital roles.

Fitzgibbons and Kelly (1997) have observed that cultural sector managerial structures are, in general, a small core of full-time people supported by contract and part-time workers and volunteers. Lalor (2013) argues that volunteering is a gift in the form of private giving, referring to Gunyon (2004) 'Volunteering is work without pay, the branch of philanthropy in which time replaces a cheque book' (p.30)

I began this section by presenting a framework image of six circles. The first row explored general theory and I discussed Bourdieu (1984), Turner (1969,1982) and Goffman (1959). Goffman provides a camera obscura through which it is possible to see the volunteer's everyday activity in a new light and consider what roles the volunteers are really undertaking; be it simply filling a place in a rota, or actually living a dream. Turner (1969) provides a contemporary application of van Gennep's concept of a rite of passage (1909) in significant life phases in western societies particularly within the context of the world of work and play. His notion of freedom from work and freedom to play sets the theatre in its western social/economic context, particularly one where retirement from work is a significant marker in the phases of modern life. Bourdieu (1984) provides the tools with which people can comfortably engage in a range of social settings offering up reasons why, in this time, in this town, this theatre exists because of the needs, interests and desire of the volunteers.

In the second row of my framework, Stebbins (2007) and Robinson (2009) offered up a view around which a volunteer's sense of self-fulfilment could be considered by them being in their element and engaging in a serious form of group leisure activity. Finally, I discussed some sector-specific research regarding motivations, age/cohort relevance, economics of volunteering and the notion of cultural volunteering in particular. Combined with Stebbins' (2007) definition of a volunteer, this framework supports my subsequent results and analysis, which I shall now discuss in my next chapter.

4. Results

4.1. The journey begins

In this chapter, I outline my findings and observations regarding my interviewees' accounts of their relationship with the theatre and each other. Using visual metaphors derived from the emergent concepts, I shall show a transformational journey from the world of work, through to their volunteering; how this relates to the needs of the theatre and finally how the volunteers' and theatre's worlds knit together to create a cohesive, symbiotic, mutually dependent environment. A journey denoting freedom from work, freedom to enjoy leisure and freedom to thrive in a new environment of new roles and responsibilities but with fun and buzz at the heart of everything:

It's people who've had a successful and happy and enjoyable career, that they've done well and now are doing something that they've already been interested in, heavily interested in but can now do more of than they could when they were working...It's true, they couldn't do, because they had another career...I think here's an opportunity, I can now pursue an interest. As opposed to a profession as it were (Derek, personal communication, April 21, 2018).

Over the course of four field trips to the theatre I had face-to-face interviews with eight volunteers, three members of staff, two visiting actors and a child performer. I conducted phone interviews with an audience member, a professional from Arts Council England and conducted secondary follow-up interviews with three of the volunteers. Approximately 13 hours of interviews took place and around 94,000 words of conversations transcribed and coded. 23 different thematic codes evolved with seven overlapping core concepts. From these concepts, a central theme emerged which showed the volunteers leaving one phase of life and transitioning into a volunteer world developing a mutual, symbiotic relationship with the theatre. The eight volunteers I interviewed, three men, five women, ranged in age from 55 to 74. They self-defined their nationality as variously British, English or White British. All of them had retired from a paid job and six had moved to the town because of retirement; either their own or their spouse's. They were a representation of a team of around 100 volunteers who supported paid staff in the running of the

theatre. Of the two who had moved because of their spouse's retirement they were also now either retired, or had decided to stop work and both they, and their husbands, were volunteers at the theatre. They also talked about their husbands' volunteering activities. The volunteering activities of ten, now retired, people were therefore explored through conversations with eight people either as personal accounts or anecdotal references to other's activities. The amount of time that the interviewees had been with the theatre ranged from eight months to nearly 16 years.

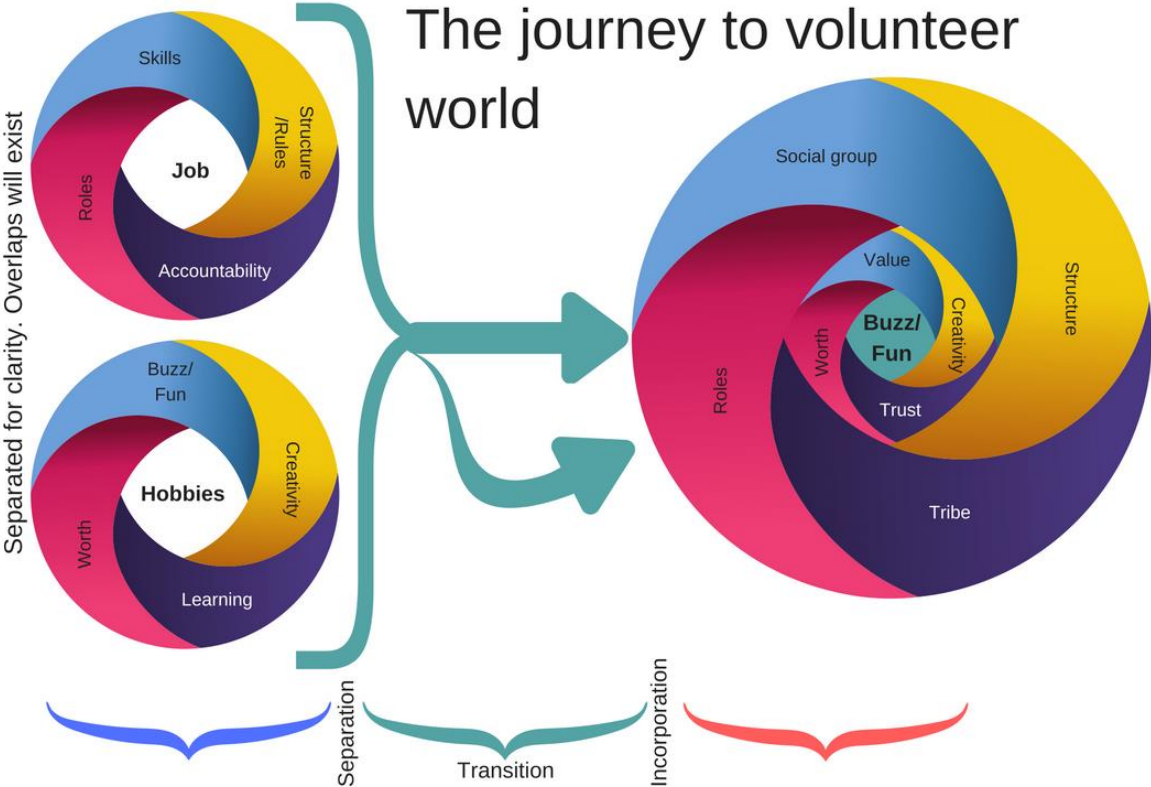


FIGURE 2 THE JOURNEY FROM THE WORLD OF WORK TO THE WORLD OF A VOLUNTEER

4.2. Separation from the world of paid employment

I began each of my interviews by asking the volunteers to tell me how their relationship with the theatre came about. This resulted in biographical narratives, including personal accounts of working life and hobbies or interests. The interviewees all began their accounts with similar phrases for example: 'when I retired I...' and 'we were wanting to retire'. Concepts such as 'retirement', 'ending a phase in life' and 'looking for something new to do' resonated strongly; each denoting

a sense of time passing and transitional moments. Derek articulates here the notion of moving to a new place for a new phase of life, but also to desire to find something to do:

The theatre, in a sense, is one of the reasons why we moved to [town] when I retired, or several years after I retired.... We knew the town and knew the theatre... So, the theatre was quite an attraction when you say [town] you think of the theatre. So, less than a week after we moved here, which was four years ago, I went to the theatre and picked up a volunteer's form, filled it in. (Derek, personal communication, April 21, 2018)

The interviewees' work history variously covered teaching, selling/marketing, customer care, the public (local government/armed forces/health care) and private sector (hospitality). From these working lives, further thematic words evolved from the text analysis which reflected and mirrored across their working and volunteering worlds. These are also identified in figure 2. Skills they mentioned from previous paid work included customer care, managing, listening, communication, administration and teaching. Katherine articulated this in her conversation with me:

I've always been told, throughout my career, that I've got good interpersonal skills? You know I treat different people no matter who I come across, I treat everybody in a friendly professional manner and so customer service was my, I was a customer service champion at work because I really got into it! (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

When they discussed their hobbies these variously included making music, amateur acting or singing, visiting the theatre, sewing/knitting, literature, science and history. Some expressed an interest in walking and nature conservation. Others mentioned that creativity, in some form, featured in their work, particularly the teachers:

...my teaching qualification is in maths and drama... I only used the drama, although my teaching qualification is in that, in my teaching practise...but you go to primary schools and I ended up doing drama with primary children which was enjoyable, but I always had that love of theatre. (Fiona, personal communication, 19 April 2018)

4.3. Transition

The interviewees' relationship with the theatre derived from either a memory of visiting it in the past, living in the town or moving to it from somewhere else. Commitment to the theatre is palpable in the volunteers' language and operates strongly in their reasons for being there. However, this is an inevitable bias to be aware of since I am, of course, interviewing volunteers at a theatre. It was very clear from the transcripts that the volunteers had made a transition from employee to volunteer after retirement and for some of them, this was a physical journey. I have represented this notion of a transitional journey in diagram 2 with two types of arrows leading towards the final role of a volunteer. As Liz articulates:

We moved up here... I was newly retired... we saw an advert in the paper saying the theatre would be re-opening and they needed volunteers. And I've always loved the theatre, so I thought, Oh, I'd go and have a see and got involved like that...But I really loved it and still do love it! (Liz, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

Liz expresses here both an interest in the theatre but also a desire to find something to do. She moved to the area as a retiree and in this text, refers frequently to the theatre as something she loves and has always loved. This connection leads through from a previous phase of her life, into her new world and provides a link. Whilst I did not interrogate Liz on her meaning of the word love, my journal notes emphasised the enthusiasm and energy in her tone as she talked. This is a positive investment in a creative activity and is a recurrent theme in not only Liz's accounts, but in others', for example Derek commented on how he was looking for something after retiring:

I'd been retired for a few years when we moved here and I hadn't been lying down in a darkened room doing nothing, I'd done bits and pieces, but at that time I wasn't doing anything, and I wanted to do something. So, I came, not being 100% certain, but being fairly certain that the theatre would provide me with something to do. (Derek, personal communication, 20 April 2018).

In the interviewees' actions and motives, themes emerge: seeking meaning, something to do, structure, being busy. Between work and settling into volunteering, there are some who had also been looking for somewhere to live after retirement, researching around, finding new things to do. This is again reflected in Derek's account above. The interviewees each talked about the process of retirement or

leaving their job precipitating their move to a new active phase. Six of the interviewees had all moved to the town or nearby countryside to retire. In some cases, they had moved several hundred miles with some of the motivations being family connections, memories or holidays, or work links. They cited the appeal of the town and most emphatically the presence of the theatre and its offer as a key player in their decision to make a move and consider volunteering at it. For some the transition to volunteer at the theatre was deliberate and direct; with a straight line from leaving work, to being in the theatre. For others, the journey involved more turns: either trying volunteering with other organisations or considering where to live. In the diagram, these journeys are denoted by two different arrows.

This journeying from one geographical place to another to mark the move from work to retirement was common in six interviews and whilst a real transition for some; it was also an emotional transition marking movement towards a new phase in life. Katherine recounts how she and her husband took several years to make the move from another town in the region. Starting with being involved in the venue during their working lives, performing as amateurs, then living in the town at weekends to see if they liked it, before finally making the transition permanently:

We ... enjoyed the drama side of things and we loved the theatre and loved the area. We're both avid walkers. So, we decided we'd like to settle here when he retired. So, what we initially did was buy a caravan... to see if we liked it here, to settle here... then we made the move (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018).

As Katherine recounted, this transition is not always hard cut, but can emerge slowly perhaps with reducing time at work, making changes in lifestyle or gradually moving to a new geographical area; but eventually, the volunteer is in a new place of activity. Letting go of one world, being fluid until settling into a new status. David's story shows the keenness and enthusiasm he had for this:

I retired 7 years ago...and I wanted an involvement when I came here. I had a couple of local amateur drama groups, but it was a bit too narrow and so I saw a leaflet in a pub, come and volunteer at the [theatre] so I thought I'd give that a try. And I thought I'd do anything. I'd work in the shop, I'd do whatever but fairly quickly I was asked to be a tour guide and so I trained up to be a tour guide and loved it. Of course, a large part of being a tour guide is putting on a performance

but it's acting. It's involved with the theatre and its enjoyable (David, personal communication, 18 April 2018).

In David's conversation above he not only accounts for how his interest in theatre was very different from his work as a civil servant but shows that this hobby interest attracted him to a local advert for the theatre. Here he also considers the role of guide to be acting but in a different manner.

4.4. Incorporation

4.4.1. Commitment as a volunteer

In figure 2, the volunteer completes their move from the world of work into their new volunteering world. In the large circle on the right of the diagram I have combined words from their work and hobby lives to show figuratively how they have merged in to a new volunteering phase. I did not need to explicitly question the volunteers about their work lives since the subject emerged naturally in the course of our conversations and ultimately greatly informed my analysis. During this, I noted none of the interviewees brought up any complaints about their work lives in any way. However, it was evident that what they loved about their hobbies was something which they were then able to foreground in their volunteering life. The volunteers each discussed with me the amount of time they gave to their activities and the various roles they undertook. A usual shift would be four hours long and they would describe themselves as "doing a Saturday afternoon", or a "Tuesday morning". A few did several shifts and also served on theatre consultative committees or chaired themed subgroups. During the Christmas pantomime season, the volunteering activity becomes almost full time for some of them often allowing it to take over their live. As Alison comments:

Well, I do Monday mornings, Wednesday mornings, I used to do Thursday mornings as well, but that's a bit iffy, and Friday afternoons. And then it's, I mainly do front of house or back stage as and when but panto I just try to live there every day (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018).

Fiona's story, in particular, struck me as commitment beyond the call of duty:

I mean I'm twenty miles away and in the bad weather that does interfere, and I come along the [names road], and that does cut off, and there was one

memorable occasion... when I came through on a Saturday and got stuck... because of the snow! I had not been able to get through the previous week, and I really was disappointed. So, it was snowing at home, and my husband said: 'Do you think you should go, its sticking' and of course I said: 'Oh it's just a little flurry', but by the time I got here it was thick. They had been gritting but things were sliding all over the place but then it continued, and the police closed the [names road] for safety. I tried a few times to get back but couldn't but then [names friends] 'look it's dangerous to try and go back in the dark. Stay the night'. So, I stayed the night! (Fiona, personal communication, 19 April 2018)

This volunteer was motivated to drive 20 miles to give her time freely. She expressed such disappointment at not being able to do her usual shift that she would attempt to risk her life the following week in a snowstorm. It appears, in some of the stories I heard, that volunteers are giving an incredible amount of time, freely, to the theatre. As one staff member commented in front of one of the volunteers: 'She might as well have a bed here'. The volunteers identify strongly with the venue, speaking positively and affectionately about it and what it means to them.

4.4.2. Duty

In our conversations, the volunteers discussed other forms of volunteering they had done. A couple of them had worked for local charities or in a local museum. They saw their motivations for volunteering at the theatre and for other organisations as being very different and demonstrated different allegiances. Duty seems to be a motivating factor for the charity work, but love for the theatre wins out as this comment exemplifies:

But I think for the museum more it's a little bit of 'oh, they're desperately short of volunteers. I can do it. I ought to do it' whereas for the theatre it's 'oh, Chris says we need more 'Oh yes! I'll do it!' and jump in. At the museum, you meet and greet... it's a nice chance to read and have coffee, but it's not the same involvement. (Liz, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

Katherine referred to her work in a local charity as a means of giving something back and trying to help a cause. Another volunteer said her charity work was about helping people and wanting to do something for the local community. In contrast, the

time given to the theatre was more personal and more passionately communicated, as Katherine states:

When I first gave up working I was volunteering in [names charity] but I felt as though, I didn't have enough time for that 'cause I had other things so I gave that up after a couple years...

SR: Was there a difference for you in volunteering for [the charity] and volunteering here?

Katherine: To give something back really. I felt because I wanted to do something, to give something back, rather than, with not working myself it's nice to do something, to try and help some other cause. This is like, it's a personal thing, we are giving something but we're doing it for ourselves as well (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

It would seem here that the volunteers' love for the theatre activity and enjoyment it brings, encourages them to give more time and energy than volunteering work linked to duty or giving something back to society. Where they talk about volunteering through duty, or obligation, the activity appears to be short-lived, or takes a secondary role in their lives. This difference could be connected to the feelings of buzz which they gain from their activity. Which leads me on to the next section.

4.4.3. Buzz/energy

'You get a buzz every single time' (Liz, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

The volunteers all talked clearly about their activity as a new chosen social world. They used words such as 'value', 'structure', 'love', 'appreciation', 'worth' and 'professional' when describing their activities. 'Buzz', 'love' and 'enjoy' were particularly frequent. These are denoted in figure 2 and ascribed to the separate worlds of work and hobby, which then, over an undetermined time period, integrate cohesively into the volunteer world. This ascription is figurative to provide some visual representation of the stories. It is not evident in the interviews if buzz or fun was something only available to them in their hobbies and/or their working lives. I have created the differentiation in the picture for ease of comprehension of their different worlds. Further, different volunteers' experience of work and hobbies would create different emphasis in the words used.

Liz articulates this buzz and energy:

I've always loved the theatre, so I thought I'd go along and have a see... My favourite thing of everything now I'm retired is doing the guided tours. Because you get a buzz every single time. When it [the theatre] is closed after the pantomime. Thursday afternoons you know, 'oh, what am I going to do now, there's no theatre!' Or if [names staff member] rings up and says we've got a school group coming "oh goody! [rubbing hands] 'cause I do love the touring! (Liz, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

Fiona talked about her love of history and learning and enjoys being a guide with a passion:

I think I've brought enthusiasm I would say. Passion, a lot of the feedback you get from the visitor's book or directly from people and Trip Advisor talks about the passion and commitment of volunteers...The danger when you retire is that you take on too much and you don't have time to relax and do the things you longed to do when you are at work...We don't start again until February [after pantomime] and you really notice it because you miss it! You miss the theatre and are looking forward to getting back to it! (Fiona, personal communication, 19 April 2018).

Volunteering at the theatre permits retirees to play and enjoy a hobby. Being social, being part of a group, feeling valued, having structure and form to the week and avoiding isolation are also motives. Alison mentioned the social element in conversation:

Because you're retired you look for things to do to get you out and talking to people. I mean it's vital for me. Because I'm on my own I've got to come out, 'cause I'm a social bunny anyway. I really am, I was always a chatterbox at school so to just sit at home with my own company drives me bonkers. (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018)

However, fun and enjoyment here is for Alison still the primary motivator and the theatre offers this to the volunteers in a way that perhaps a local charity or museum is unable to. Alison again recounts working with a dance company:

It's not like work. Yes, we have fun and a giggle...We did have a South African dance troupe in, we just tap on the banisters at the top if they want a five or a ten-minute call, we can shout, you know, 5 minutes or whatever and some of the guys asked me to come downstairs [backstage] because they wanted to ask me something and three of them were absolutely starkers! So, there are benefits to

working backstage as well! I didn't know where to look!... You just carry it off and go back upstairs and pretend you haven't seen anything at all! So, you can have fun! (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018)

In this section I showed the transition from the world of work and over time, the physical or emotional journey (rite of passage) to the world of being a volunteer. I visually depicted how various elements of the world of work, and/or hobbies can become merged and re-formed in a new volunteering environment in a new social group or tribe (Robinson 2009). In this new world, the central motivation or perhaps even reward of buzz and fun is strongly identified. Although the volunteers also sometimes gave their time to other causes, this appeared to be more out of duty, than a sense of passion or fun. In many cases, the volunteers gave a high level of commitment, ranging from immersion in the Christmas show, or being willing to risk their lives in winter to 'do a Saturday'. They appear to be in their element in their theatre volunteering role.

4.5. The relationship of orbiting worlds

The relationship of orbiting worlds

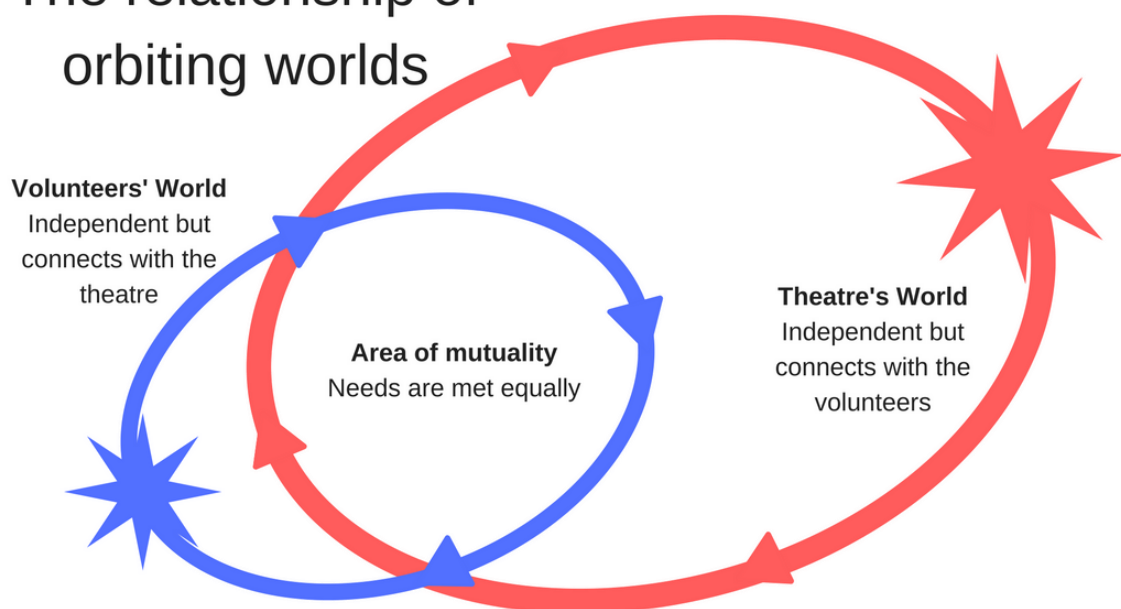


FIGURE 3 THE RELATIONSHIP OF ORBITING WORLDS

In figure 3 above, I show the relationship between the volunteer and the theatre as it emerged from the transcript codes. Both can exist as their own entities

but exert influence upon each other: either in the time given, skills developed, or social networks provided. Between the two is an area of optimum operation where the needs of the venue and volunteer are fully met. There is, from conversations, a palpable sense of pride and ownership in the building. The volunteers strongly identify with the venue, often referring in conversation to “we” do the panto(mime) or “we do this” denoting an identification and ownership. Alison’s description of the development of the Christmas pantomime exemplifies this:

We started quite a bit smaller. We started sort of into December and just go to New Year. Now we're starting at the beginning of December and running right through to a week past New Year. Five, six weeks? We have schools in early and it can be fun watching the kids now (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018).

4.6. The professional volunteer

The volunteers revealed a deep sense of ownership and strong regard for the staff. In addition to feeling deeply attached, they discussed the importance of a professional attitude, from phone manner, to dealing with the public, to observing house rules. Derek was emphatic about the importance of being professional as a volunteer:

If you opt to do a job... you owe it to everybody, including yourself to do the very best of your ability. But if I'm in the box office, for example, and I'm on the phone to somebody, inevitably sometimes things go wrong... NEVER [his emphasis] at that stage do you say in my view 'I'm sorry, I'm only a volunteer' that's a total no-no... I utterly hate it when I hear people say that!... It's a way out of a crisis situation... I work here, No, I don't get paid, but I WORK here doing this job to the best of my ability, and that's as professionally as I possibly can (Derek, personal communication, 20 April 2018).

Others felt concern for how things should be done correctly and that standards should be upheld in the theatre. A sense of pride in delivering a good job, even if unpaid pervades. Katherine talked about some praise she received: 'one of the trustees said 'oh I do wish everybody could answer like Katherine! She has such a lovely phone manner I wish everybody could answer the phone like that!' '(Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

A sense of concern for making things easier for the staff is important. Liz commented on this and shows her exasperation at other's less exacting standards:

I think some of them, they're not doing it right [she emphasises the phrase as a whisper]! [laughs]...There are procedures to follow. And they say quite clearly what you should do. Of the things like making sure you ask if they're willing to gift aid your contribution. And some say, 'Oh, I forgot. It doesn't matter'. It does matter! Or using the till. It's straightforward, but some people say 'oh, I just put the money in' So that means the staff don't have a record of what you've sold, whether its a guidebook, daytime coffees or whatever. I'm afraid I'm a sad sort of person, I follow the rules. You know, if I'm told this is the way I'll do it. I will, even if I don't agree (Liz, personal communication, 20 April 2018).

4.7. Skills and interests develop together in the new environment

Building on from the professional approach to their role, the volunteers articulated how they brought their work skills into their new environment, and they also considered if they had gained new skills as a result of their time within the theatre. For the relationship between the volunteer and the theatre, this central area of mutuality in diagram 3 is as much about having fun as also providing a professional level of service combining with personal learning and development. The volunteers are enjoying a leisure activity, seriously, and also, either consciously or unconsciously continuously learning and this is met in the area of mutuality. The theatre benefits from a highly trained volunteer force. Some new skills were creative, others were linked to customer care. Fiona discussed how she learned more about the venue's and town's history through her guiding work and that her pre-existing sewing skills had been enhanced by getting involved in making costumes:

...so actually, very practical sewing skills. ...I did take part in the sewing sessions and the people who came every week worked with a professional historical theatre person and they made some magnificent costumes (Fiona, personal communication, 19 April 2018).

Continuing the creative skills, Katherine talked about how she used her amateur acting to play historical characters from the theatre's history and also she was: 'learning all these backstage skills and learning what all the curtains

are called and all these technical terms are (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018).

Alison reiterated the creative learning element of her volunteering but also mentioned her skills that she brought from her work world:

I've learned to knit 'cause I've never knitted before, never knitted anything 'till we had to knit the bananas. I've always been front-based in the company... You've got to be friendly and talk to them and you can't pick up the phone and shout at them because you're in a bad mood! ... Know the person that you're speaking to. Which you've got from all the skills you've had from when you're working... So it's utilising the old skills but I've been a bean stuffer as well! (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018)

David pontificated on the extent to which he was able to draw on his confidence as a manager but that he was enjoying the new learning experience of being part of a team:

From my work life, I think a degree of confidence in different circumstances, confidence with people... I've spent my working life for the most part as a manager and as a manager, I was rarely a part of a team and now to do this where I am a member of a team on equal terms is really quite... I've thoroughly enjoyed it. It's very refreshing and it's kept my intellect reasonable healthy, stimulating, it stretches me from time to time (David, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

Here David ends with referring to how he feels intellectually stimulated. Collectively, the volunteers articulated continuous learning, creative development, responsibility, fun, enjoyment and buzz in their activities. In my discussion above I also explored the sense of professionalism they bring to their volunteering world. In many ways, this cohort has found a new form of work, a sense of structure, a place to be valued, a sense of being in a team, and finding something to do which is entirely enriching and rewarding. The volunteers have responsibility but also a place where they can pursue a hobby or leisure activity seriously whilst making a real contribution to an organisation and their local community. In this way, a mutual, symbiotic relationship emerges, with both the volunteers' and theatre connecting, with both sides benefiting from their relationship. I shall finish this section with Derek's voice:

... I almost feel, in an interesting way, I said I'd done nothing for a while after retirement and I'm back to what almost feels like a full-time job. And I almost feel

as if I've done my retirement and I've gone back to work! But that's not a complaint. It's a really enjoyable situation. So, the skills you had, almost automatically when you were working, have now either automatically come back or you see and think I used to do that I need to get back into that again. So, I think it is almost going back to work again in a nice way. Except nobody pays you! (Derek, personal communication, 20 April 201)

4.8. The theatre's world

In figure 3 the theatre's world is also depicted; its needs, its staff and its audiences all operate separately to the volunteers' sphere of interaction and yet, as shown, mutual needs are met. The volunteers' needs have been articulated above, but here I shall outline the theatre's perspective. In conversation, the staff referred to the need for 21 volunteers for each pantomime performance and there are over 100 volunteers connected to the theatre. The theatre's website outlines how important volunteers are to them, and what perks people who volunteer can gain from being involved. It refers to the volunteers as being the 'lifblood of the theatre. We simply couldn't operate without them' (source not cited to protect anonymity). The venue also has a policy statement, an application form, volunteer agreement and a small article promoting the volunteer of the month. The volunteer numbers mentioned above do not include those who give their time to the board of trustees and the wider constituency of volunteers who help occasionally, knitting props for the annual pantomime. The volunteers each emphasised how important the theatre was to them and their work and as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, they also considered what they think would happen to the theatre if it was not able to rely on a team of volunteers. This reality of the need for volunteers was articulated to me in one conversation, where the volunteer Anne outlined how many volunteers were needed on a daily basis:

You need at least two bar staff, that's five people, you need a front of house, that's six. If [names staff member] gets rushed off to do something else and [names technician] sometimes need technicians, to operate lights and do stage work for people. So, you're looking at 8 people per performance. And that has nothing to do with the volunteers who work in the archives or who do the guiding. You have two guides on morning or afternoon. You have somebody who

volunteers to sit in the first-floor bar whilst the guide is making a tour 'round. So that's three people per session. You've then got box office. Box office has to be manned from 10 o'clock in the morning then of course if you've got a show on you need box office staff to put the show in. And, yeah, it is huge. It's the same structure as any theatre but of course it's only got 214 seats to pay for it. So yeah it would come to, they would have to not put on as many shows if volunteering dropped off, and if volunteering dropped dead for whatever reason, they just physically wouldn't be able to open (Anne, personal communication, 24 April 2018).

The sense of the impact of the volunteers' contribution is highlighted vividly in Anne's account. The extent to which she was able to list at ease and speed the volunteer roles whilst barely drawing a breath reveals a strong awareness of the theatre's organisational structure and everyday challenges. The volunteers talk about loving and appreciating it; but the venue staff also acknowledge that the theatre desperately needs the volunteers to stay open:

A few don't stay longer than a year, but most stay here for decades, and they really feel part of the theatre... I hope they feel valued, I mean a lot of places in [town] use volunteers so, in the economic state of [the town] it's a common thing... I think [Director] totted up the hours, it's just unbelievable... they volunteer because they love theatre... Some because they love to watch theatre, some because they love the social side, mixing with other volunteers, working in the team, and they feel like part of the team. I hope. Because they most certainly are [valued] (Chris, personal communication, 20 April 2018).

4.9. The worlds knit together

In the fourth visual representation (figure 4) below, the volunteer and the theatre ecology combine and merge over time (not measured). The mutual dependency or pull, has drawn the two spheres together. The strong appeal and influence of the theatre leads the volunteer to become part of the theatre world, effectively immersed in its identity and being the means by which it survives and thrives. They are the theatre. I asked the volunteers if they could describe for me what they believed knitted the volunteers and the theatre together. Aside from the obvious connection to theatre, which I assume is a given in this research context;

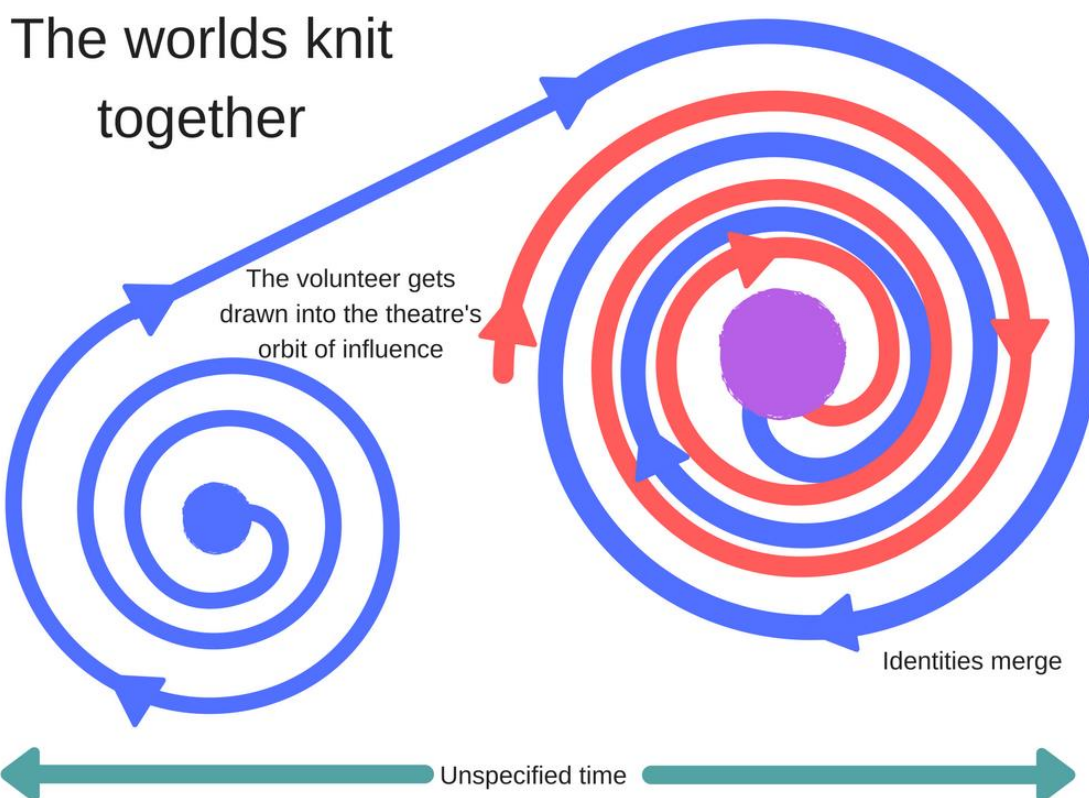


FIGURE 4 THE WORLDS KNIT TOGETHER

community spirit, commitment to the role and the theatre itself, a sense of making a positive contribution and a sense of belonging and being in a team were emphasised. Further, whilst initial interest in the theatre may be based on curiosity or looking to fill time during retirement, being part of the theatre world builds ownership. David summarises this eloquently and for this reason I have included his full account of the mutual relationship:

I think there's a sense of commitment to the theatre ...I think that characterises most of the volunteers. They do care very strongly that the theatre should be protected, preserved and used. And so, they do grow together. Now whether they have that concern for the theatre when they start volunteering or acquire it as they get to know it. For myself I acquired it. I didn't know the theatre before I came here but having had an involvement I do care very strongly about the theatre. So, I think that's something that binds the volunteers together. And, also there's a sense of, there's quite a sense of camaraderie among the volunteers. That we're all doing the same thing. We have a bit of a team spirit. It's nice to belong. I think that sense of belonging is important. It's a place we feel

comfortable, we feel valued. Where we can make a positive and effective contribution. The staff are all very good at making you feel valued. I think they genuinely do recognise that without the volunteers they'd struggle to keep the place running. Because it would have to generate a lot more income to pay people to do the things the volunteers do. But I think the staff are all very appreciate of the efforts the volunteers make. So, there is a cohesion. A sense of team, belonging (David, personal communication, 18 April 2018).

4.10. The future journey

Circles feature in my three metaphorical interpretations of the volunteers' journeys. Whilst this is designed to be a visual representation of gradually of merging worlds, it also suggests movement. The volunteers are enjoying a third phase of their lives, but this, invariably moves on to a fourth phase where inevitable ageing may well prevent them from being so prolific. In my conversations, the volunteers refused to entertain the notion that they may stop what they are doing. Aside from a couple suggesting that if they had a disagreement with the management they may leave, they all insisted they wished to continue. Katherine was very emphatic, almost defiant:

I won't stop. No, I definitely wouldn't stop. I really enjoy being part of this environment. It's part of my life and I wouldn't stop. I wouldn't stop (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

Alison also had an idea of what other activities she could do if she found herself struggling:

Even if you're not so mobile you can still do the reception and the box office. They can stand and sell the ice creams basically. (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018)

I mentioned Robinson (2009) above as positing the idea that seventy is perhaps the new forty. Derek, who is 74, commented on the possibility of a future sedentary role:

Even when you're decrepit and you can't properly do ushering, you can work in the archives, which is one of the thing I don't do. So you can have a sedentary job if you want as well, but I trust that's a few years down the line! (Derek, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

Liz wondered if, when she was incapable, the staff would tell her:

I'm just thinking how will I know? Will somebody have the guts to say 'thank you very much Liz, you've been great'. You know! They probably won't (Liz, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

The inevitabilities of ageing are real issues when relying on an older cohort of volunteers and the group themselves have already referred to the volunteering ethos in the town. Anne considers here the possible impact of the increase of the UK retirement age for accessing the state pension:

Because of course now it's gone up to 67. I know that we are finding it harder now to recruit people to do the bar... We're now up to 54 shows for panto. Now when it started it was a fortnight. So, two shows a day for umpty-ump weeks up to Christmas the staff in the theatre have to get more involved in leaving their own work to come and help with panto because it's an awful lot to demand of your volunteers to work for 54 shows in a row...with the increase in retirement we might sort of meet a peak whereby this can't progress because of that. A has consequences because of B, and B has consequences to A. but certainly at the moment they're fine. And if retirement age goes up to 70 which I think will be pretty grim but they are talking about it (Anne, personal communication, 24 April 2018)

My research findings have focussed on the journey from work to the theatre world of a volunteer. But the journey of course continues. The next stage of transition, to another fourth life phase, is for further research and exploration.

4.11 The whole picture

When I embarked on this research I did not anticipate meeting a cohort of retired volunteers. This element was something which emerged during the research process and was very much a product of my reliance on the theatre to assist me in finding interviewees. Although it became transparent that the theatre had tried to find me people they felt were most knowledgeable about the building, in the end, this filter simply resulted in my being presented with a cohort who were all, coincidentally, highly prolific volunteers, retired from work and committed to their new roles. Katherine outlined this to me:

We're doing it for the theatre, and we love the theatre and we couldn't refuse anything really but it's a personal thing as well because we're getting something from it as well as giving. We're taking sort of thing. It's like a mutual advantage I would say' (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

From my analysis of the transcripts, a theme emerged which I subsequently presented in this chapter as three visual metaphors. I began by presenting my first visual metaphor which showed how these volunteers separated from a world of work and transitioned, over an unspecified time, into their new volunteer role. This transition, for some, was direct and for a few volunteers began whilst they were still working. Others moved to the town as part of a retirement plan and sought out the theatre either through prior knowledge, or because they were actively looking for something to do with their time: this was a slightly less direct route. The volunteers as a cohort collectively talked about how much they enjoyed and loved their activity in the theatre, what skills they had gained and which work skills they had brought to their new environment. They showed a commitment to the theatre which in many cases was almost full time; with some saying they would be there quite a lot when the theatre was very busy, for example, during the Christmas pantomime season. Others clearly regard their roles as comparable to professional work environment, albeit unpaid. The volunteers' accounts ultimately define a total theatre world where they give time and energy completely to the venue. Terms were used which resound with dreams being realised, or volunteers getting a buzz from their activity. The volunteers take their leisure time seriously and present a professional image in doing so. Ultimately the volunteers have become the theatre and a mutual, symbiotic relationship exists. I shall end this section as I began, with Katherine's voice:

It was always a release to sort of finish work and do something different, live out your dreams sort of thing. So, there's performers inside us wanting to, you know! So, it's like realising a dream really! (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

5. Discussion

In my theoretical framework, I presented figure1. which I repeat here for clarity. I showed the six theoretical elements underpinning my analysis. There were three general theories: Goffman (1959), Turner (1969,1982), and Bourdieu (1984); two secondary theories proposed by Stebbins (2007) and Robinson (2009) and finally a cluster of smaller sector-specific pieces of research regarding volunteering, age cohorts, economics of volunteering and volunteering in the cultural sector. In this chapter, I shall discuss my research results in the light of these theories to then fully consider what really knits a theatre and its volunteers together.

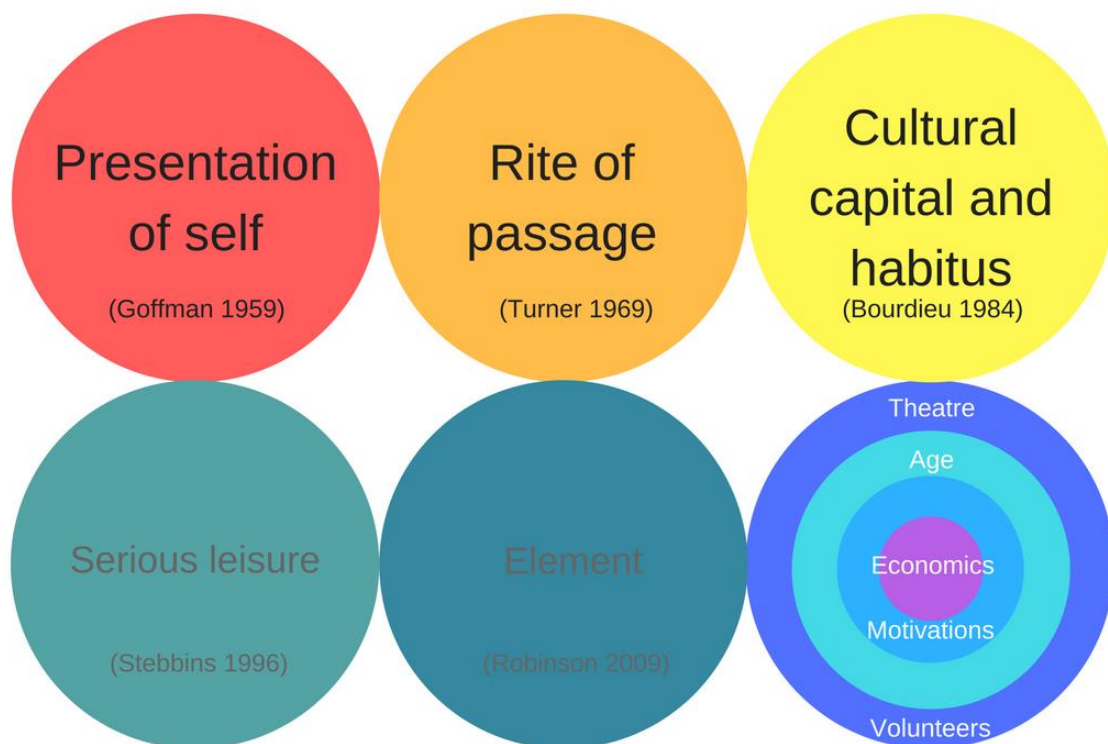


FIGURE 5 FIGURE 1 REVISITED

5.1. Returning to general theory

5.1.1. Presenting the self and the role of a team

Goffman's theory of self (1959) drew heavily on dramatic themes. In this theatrically-orientated research context, the temptation to be over-literal is strong with regards to the notion of volunteers being actors playing a role in their lives. When running the box office or being an usher or guide they are fulfilling a role expectation of themselves imposed by both the audience and the theatre management. Their commitment to doing the job well, and professionally is as much about keeping up high expectations as it is about ensuring that their job is delivered plausibly. The theatre's volunteer agreement states: 'The theatre-going 'experience' depends on quality customer service and the public perception of the theatre is, in large part, defined by your contribution...Each volunteer will be accountable for their own performance' (theatre's volunteer agreement, 2018, not cited for anonymity).

Performing the role as an actor, guide or usher for the audience, or maintaining a performance within the context of high work standards means that either way the volunteer must present a believable public-facing role. Doing things correctly or well became an emergent theme and the notion of being professional, albeit unpaid was strongly represented in the transcripts. This notion of professionalism within a team context is also noted by Goffman who observed how teams attempt to maintain a front to their audience even if some members do not fully follow the rules. Liz and Derek highlighted their frustration in their conversations with people not doing things correctly. Further, keeping a show running smoothly without people knowing the true story is also as much about maintaining the theatrical magic as it is about maintaining standards and presenting a particular public-facing self:

I think they realise, particularly the people who come to regular performances, realise that the volunteers are active. I don't think they probably understand the scale (Fiona, personal communication, 19 April 2018).

However, for some of the volunteers, presenting their self was also about unearthing, or foregrounding aspects of themselves which may have been shadowed by work, or other responsibilities and can now be indulged or enjoyed in their volunteering roles.

Both Katherine and David being amateur actors, talked about letting out the actor inside. This was reflected in Katherine's end comment in my last chapter. David's philosophical view regarding people being actors will close this chapter but here are some of his thoughts:

For most of our lives we are all putting on performances most of the time! And we draw on different characters within ourselves in different circumstances
(David, personal communication, 18 April 2018).

Goffman's theory of self, therefore resonates in my findings, and featured in the three emerging visual metaphors I presented; being the fusing of a work and hobby life (or self) into a volunteer world, the subsequent relationship of that volunteer self with the theatre's world and ultimately over time, becoming part of the theatre world in its entirety.

5.1.2. Ritual and rite of passage

The volunteers' journey from paid work into their volunteering activity resonates extremely strongly with Turner's (1982) western, contemporary interpretation of van Gennep's rite of passage. Each one, in some form, experienced a gradual changing in social status from work which was supported by an accompanying emotional and/or geographical journey to a new volunteering role in retirement, orientated in and around the theatre. This was either directly, because they knew the theatre and wanted to be associated with it, or indirectly, such as finding a leaflet by happenstance. Either way, a transitional journey over a time unspecified, gradually brought them to a new place of incorporation. For some this journey was physical, deliberately moving house to retire to the town, and finding the theatre; or moving to the town to retire, because of the theatre. Further, for some, it was apparent that there was some form of liminality. Derek talked about spending time after retirement doing a few things, but wanted to seek out a new purpose, David referred to his being involved in some amateur groups but wanting more for himself. Katherine and her husband moved house gradually, spending more and more time in the town. Van Gennep's account of ritual journeying and a change in social status, consider over a century ago, is relevant in a moderated form in a western 21st century world.

Turner (1982) builds on rite of passage and contemplates the notion of the concept of freedom from work being an outcome of western industrial societies, where structured work derived from a growing need for contracted labour. Freedom from work (in the form of leisure, hobbies or retirement) eventually leads to a freedom to play, pursue leisure activities or spend free time as we may wish. Each of the volunteers had left the structured world of paid work and, benefiting from a personal economic situation (private income or pension) were able to spend their free time pursuing a leisure activity. However, structure, as Turner mentions, is still necessary. Complete freedom, or anti-structure results in chaos. Each volunteer commented on their need to seek structure, which the volunteering provides them. This could be as a result of being socialised after decades of employment, which ingrains a habit of work structure, or that by being committed to something (a volunteering rota) allows them permission to be committed to hobbies. David mentioned in conversation that he enjoyed volunteering, but also wanted time to relax and pursue other hobbies. Not doing something all day, is for some, not a relaxing situation. A small element of structure makes meaning of leisure:

I do about half a day plus one-off tours. And so, that is mostly half a day week with the odd additional half day. I spend between one and two days a week volunteering. And that's quite a nice ratio, I quite like that. The rest of the time I just indulge other interests. I quite like that. I couldn't be idle. I couldn't just drift my days away (David, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

5.1.3. Cultural capital and habitus

My findings resonate with the concepts of cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu 1984). The volunteers' narratives showed how they drew on either past work, hobbies or training to enable them to function confidently within the theatre's world. Liz and Fiona deployed their teaching skills as guides, Liz, in particular, was keen to be able to work with school groups and love dressing up in costume for them. David noted he had good diplomatic, people skills from his work, and liked to deploy these in his guiding activities whilst Katherine was proud of her phone manner. Using their skills from a work world and deploying their understanding of theatre, combining it with an interest in volunteering; the cohort has built a world and

a new habitat which is comfortable and offers a sense of belonging and self-fulfilment. Obviously, aside from a love of theatre, the other connecting element of this cohort is their retirement status. Bourdieu's observation of cultural capital (1984) is also an explainer as to how people can sustain a social status or use their learned cultural knowledge to maintain power within a hierarchical society. In many of my conversations, comments regarding work life and education status naturally emerged. Derek made an observation about the town's population:

The other demographic I think is related more to the type of town you are. It's the type of town that attracts a certain type of people...people who are interested in that sort of history and the culture that goes with that sort of history. So, it attracts that type, I'm trying not to say that sort of class of person, but I'm going to have to. The person with that sort of background but having said that if you look at the hundred volunteers or so, there'll be a range, there'll be a balance to the direction I've been describing (Derek, personal communication, 20 April 2018).

The economic status of the town was observed by Katherine who also talked about the nearby town she had moved from:

It's a town that feels like a village. I don't know. It just seems like to me, for somebody who's moved from [names town], where, I don't know, it's everybody seems, it seems like a happy place to me...And there's more, more (pauses) poverty there I think? (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

Here they are explaining their sense that the theatre attracts a certain class of person, that it is a middle-class activity. The volunteers certainly enjoyed recounting some tales of the excitement of working with the professional artists. It is not obvious from their accounts whether this is because it invokes a certain status or is part of the fun of the theatre environment. As one of my interviewees said:

In my opinion a lot of them, they quite like the glamour! It's something unusual to do as a volunteer. You know, greasepaint and the roar of the crowd and all of that. ...it's a bit more glamorous than working in the museum for example... And it's quite, it's quite a middle-class thing to do, you're not volunteering at a library, you're volunteering **at a theatre** [her emphasis] and there's a certain amount of prestige which goes with that I think. My mum's close to retirement age and she's always said oh I'd definitely like to be involved in that. (Anonymous, personal communication, 24 April 2018)

The accounts some of them chose to give of their other volunteering work although offered up comments around duty, obligation or giving back, did not

however, come across as hierarchical or critical. The accounts some of them chose to give of their other volunteering work offered up comments around duty, obligation or giving back. However, the stories did not come across as hierarchical or critical. The only negative views were more around being bored or unstimulated in other volunteering situations.

I will comment further on volunteering and cultural participation later in this section. However, the indications from the freely given accounts of work, education status and love of the theatre combined with casual comments regarding the town's economic class, suggest that the cohort I met could be from a high socio-economic background and could be regarded as typical in their choices of activity for the most highly engaged groups, as indicated by both the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value (2015) and Blackburn, Brant & Poole (2015). Whether this habitus then precipitates exclusive cultural activity which excludes other socio-demographic groups from being able to benefit (Bourdieu 1984) is for debate and further research. I met a small representative group from the theatre and Derek himself felt that the volunteers may well cover a range of backgrounds. However, Anne's earlier comment that the town is run by volunteers may be more significant an indicator of the local general economic state of the community. The theatre is there as an opportunity and sustains itself because that opportunity then benefits and attracts those who want to get involved, and in turn provides an offer for a wider demographic community. It is a mutual relationship in which the volunteers have transitioned from the world of work to retirement, found a new purpose or role to perform as a cohesive group with a high level of plausibility through drawing on their cultural capital.

5.2. Secondary theories

Now that I have considered the three general theories' relationships to my findings, I shall now discuss the two secondary, middle theory proposals of Stebbins (2007) and Robinson (2009).

Stebbins (2007) considered a volunteer who is engaged in serious leisure as being someone who is strongly engaged in their activity to the point where it is almost a career and if it is a group activity, they are very strongly associated with that group's identity. They gain a sense of fulfilment and belonging from it. The cohort of

volunteers I met were clearly serious in their pursuit of volunteering at the theatre and derived considerable pleasure and self-fulfilment from it. For most of them, this was not a simple one hour a week commitment to a rota. At Christmas, during the pantomime season, Fiona often took sewing work home to make costumes and another was there nearly every day. Katherine volunteered at twenty pantomime performances. Alison knitted 166 doughnuts as props.

The volunteers' work to a high professional standard but they do it willingly with a considerable level of regard for the venue and the staff. However, they have each signed an agreement with the theatre to contribute to the quality of the audiences' experience of the theatre, and as such, are aware of the venue's expectations on them. In this sense, they also operate in a formal volunteering environment where their commitment is subject to a contractual agreement. In Figure 6. below, I have attempted to find a form of terminology for the volunteers. They commit time in a formalised manner, take their contribution seriously to a high standard and draw on their past hobbies or creative influences to perform the role. Given the high level of time commitment and the sense to which they are such a key and vital element of the theatre's world, I question whether the term volunteer is suitable enough to describe their function. I suggest they are virtually a professional volunteer where the difference between what they do, and what the paid staff do, is only differentiated by the lack of a pay cheque. Stebbins has the phrase 'career volunteer' (2007. p.111). These volunteers are retired but do talk of their work in terms of learning and skills development. It could be that in their third life, they are pursuing a second or third creative, unpaid career. However, their strong enjoyment and buzz from the activity imply that whilst they have a responsible status it is also immense fun. Perhaps a new terminology is needed for their role: a professional volunteer, a creative volunteer, or even a "createer".

The serious leisure undertaken above includes the incorporation of buzz and fun at the centre of the volunteers' new theatre world. The volunteers have a mutual commonality in their volunteering world, or as Robinson (2009) would describe it, 'a tribe' (p.105) and have created this in their retirement phase of life. This sense of fusing of work and hobby together and the self-fulfilment it brings shines through the transcripts and are at the heart of my results and diagrams. Changing life phases, living the dream all come together in a volunteering activity which has become

people's life. They are the theatre and are arguably in their element in the work that they do.

The professional volunteer?

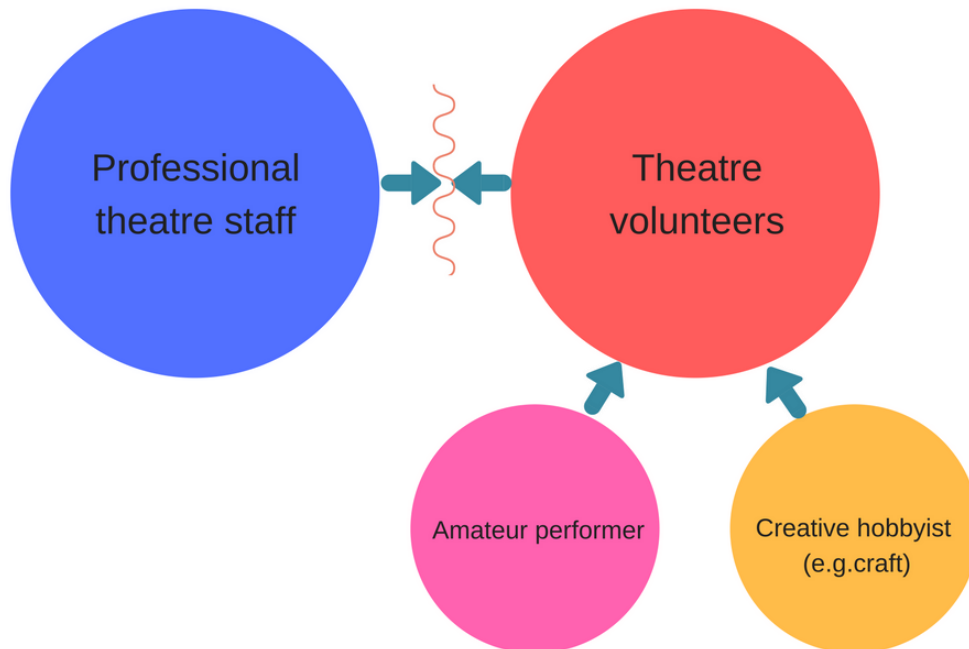


FIGURE 6: THE PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER

5.3. General research into volunteering

My final circle of the framework contained concentric circles around motives, age/cohort, economics and theatre volunteers as a sub-sector. I shall now explore each one in turn in relation to my results.

5.3.1. Volunteer motives

As mentioned in my framework, the UK National Council for Voluntary Organisations had published data which showed the national monthly average time given to formal volunteering was eleven hours a month. In her account, Alison told me she did three sets of volunteering each week, which amounts to about 12 weekly hours. Fiona does a duty each Saturday afternoon and David, for example, does about a day and a half each week. During pantomime, Alison gives her time each

day and Fiona helped extensively sewing costumes in the evening. Anne had outlined for me the number of volunteers required each show (about 21 for the pantomime). These volunteers then are above the national average in the time they give to the theatre. Whilst there are other volunteers in the venue who may indeed only offer 8 hours a month, nevertheless, this cohort is unusual in their commitment.

Shye (2010), Brown, Hoyer and Nicholson (2012) and Hibbert, Piacentini and Al Dajani (2003) found collectively through various methods, that economic status, higher level of education and a sense of wellbeing and fulfilment operated in their findings regarding volunteers and their motives. Self-esteem, and feeling connected socially were significant elements. Musick & Wilson (2007) questioned the efficacy of quantitative data wondering if it did not fully achieve a conceptual understanding of why people continue to volunteer. In my findings, the cohort had retired from paid work and some did discuss their education and employment. In this my findings resonate with the research cited. However, words such as wellbeing, fulfilment and self-esteem were not used in the conversations. Instead the volunteers talked about belonging, being valued and having fun. Whether these words are synonyms for wellbeing is a matter for semantic debate but it is not for me to decide if one person's wellbeing is another's buzz. As for why the group continue to volunteer, I would agree with Musick & Wilson (2007) in that a conceptual understanding is required. What appears to keep the volunteers returning to their activity is something deep and intrinsic to their new social world and their mutual orientation with the theatre. This is something which a modified grounded theory approach has unearthed and revealed.

5.3.2. Age/cohort

Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Smith and Baum (2010) found that older volunteers who did more than 15 hours a week had lower levels of self-satisfaction and often gave their time out of duty. In the cohort I studied, this does not appear to be the case. In contrast, it seems, anecdotally, the more time given, the more satisfied the volunteer appeared to be. The volunteers are passionate about their work, but I found no sense of obligation in their tone or narratives.

Laslett (1987) discussed the concept of a third age after retirement developing from the 1950s, which is around the time of the post-World War Two baby boom. All

the volunteers in the cohort I interviewed were no longer in full time paid employment and were aged between 55 and 74. They are clearly from the baby boomer generation. (Dohm 2000). According to Pruchno (2012) baby boomers were predicted to have longer life expectancies after aged 65 and, given the opportunity of considerable free time ahead, would consider volunteering roles. Particularly as, according to her research, Baby boomers are likely to benefit from improved health care, better education and a positive economic outlook. In the instance of this cohort, they do indeed share some commonality of work and education. However, the ability to have free time after retirement, apparently unencumbered by poor health is also a common feature. Lyndsey articulated this, when considering her own mother's recent retirement:

My mum yesterday retired from work. She's 72 and I've been thinking about her like yesterday and then today, just going, what's she doing? She was a complete and utter workaholic. She would still be at her emails at midnight. A complete workaholic...When you've had that big professional life and know you've got this expanse of time in days ahead of you ...I'm not surprised people do it! And if you're financially able to, I mean that's a difference, isn't it?

(Lyndsey, personal communication, 9 May 2018)

Conversations with this cohort also oriented around future generations of volunteers and whether, in the near to mid- future (10-20 years) there would still be a cohort of people available to give time to volunteering. Alison wondered if the volunteering habit was generational and questioned if younger generations had a volunteering culture:

It [the town] was a place to retire to really...The whole demographic is changing. But will the up and coming generations volunteer so much. I don't know. We're still brought up, is it the old-fashioned way, I don't know. We're brought up that things have to be done and now I don't think it such a caring generation coming up really. They could change as they get older? ...I don't know whether generations coming up are as a caring of these things (Alison, personal communication, 23 April 2018)

She was also concerned about the UK government raising the state retirement age and what effect this may have on the ability of people to volunteer. Anne also echoed this, particularly whether people retiring later would have the energy to give time to volunteering. Both described the town as a place for volunteers and a place popular

for people to retire to. However, Liz noted that future workers may have more flexible working pattern, making volunteering an easier option. Stephe and Anne both commented that young people move away from the town for work, education or affordable housing, resulting in an age gap in the town. Stephe, one of the staff team, emphasised this:

I haven't got any who are old enough to be official volunteers yet because none of them have turned 18 so you can't officially sign up as a volunteer until you're 18. I would hope that they would come back but there aren't any universities sort of a decent distance from here. ...they're all at least 40 minutes away so I can't imagine that when people move on they're not going to be able to pop back regularly which is one of the reasons why we do have an older volunteer set. It's also the fact that people don't have the money to not work. So, our volunteers come in when they're retired because then they have the time (Stephe, personal communication, 24 April 2018).

Reeves (2016) considered the role of cohorts regarding arts engagement and questions whether cultural engagement increases with age. Certainly, in this cohort ageing and a desire to use time meaningfully in a volunteering role in the theatre coincide and as such, spending more of their time in the theatre would be an increase in their own cultural engagement. He finds that geographical access to an offer does affect cultural consumption. In this particular instance, whether people attend the theatre because it is there, or the theatre exists because there is a local population willing to support it is a moot point. Clearly, the volunteers were drawn to the theatre. As the volunteers and staff commented, retired people have the time to give to volunteering whereas younger people are focussing on work, study or family commitments. Older people from a baby boomer cohort may well have the means to work for free and enjoy a higher level of cultural engagement, but this requires further research. As to whether there will be volunteers in the future to continue supporting the theatre as Alison and Anne commented, is for speculation. However, the theatre itself was renovated in the early 1960's by local volunteers, so it may be reasonable to suggest if there have been sufficient cohorts of volunteers for the last 55 years to run and sustain it, then there may well be more in the future.

5.3.3. Cultural volunteering

As mentioned in my framework, Blackburn, Brant & Poole (2015) argued that people living in rural areas were more likely to take part in cultural activities than their urban counterparts, probably due to fewer other offers available, or that they had fewer social or economic barriers preventing them. It is also possible that market towns such as the one featured in this research, attract, as the volunteers stated, retired people who then of course have time to give and the resources and inclination to do so. Returning to the paper by Bussell and Forbes (2007), whose research in another regional theatre concluded that a combination of leadership and identification with the venue led to a high level of commitment. They also noted that most of the volunteers there were retired but also suggested surprise that there were no division between staff and volunteers. The cohort I interviewed identify strongly with the theatre and have commonalities with those in the research by Bussell and Forbes. The volunteers hold all the staff in high regard and know they are valued:

They get two volunteer parties a year and they are thanked profusely by members of the board...Every time there is a meeting of whatever, it is always stressed to the volunteers how appreciated they are and I think all the volunteers feel appreciated... And I think that is sometimes quite a nice feeling for volunteers to feel that important. To feel appreciated (Anne, person communication, 24 April 2018).

However, I also questioned, in my introduction, if there are other factors in the research above which operate. The context of the theatre within the town, for example. From my findings, the volunteers do identify strongly with the theatre, but this is because they have in fact, become part of the theatre world. Further, the theatre exists because local people found it, salvaged it and renovated it. It benefits from deep local ownership and as such is not set apart from the community. In this case, the venue could not function without them, so their mutual needs are strongly met. Bussell & Forbes (2007) implied a hierarchical relationship, where volunteers are commodities supporting a venue's operations, yet the transcripts revealed a much more mutually symbiotic relationship. The volunteers are highly committed, but further comparative research would be necessary to identify if other volunteers for say, a football club, are equally passionate.

5.3.4. Economics

In this study, one volunteer referred to the local services as being on a knife edge in terms of their over-reliance on a readily available volunteer base:

But you can't go on needing to attract more and more volunteers and when you add in something like the library, and within the library there's the tourist information centre that the local authority has closed, and the volunteers have taken it on and run it in the library. You can't go on doing this! Without it becoming unacceptably stretched and stretched to breaking point... Almost nationally, the phrase 'that will be volunteer-run' is trotted out. Just think about what that means pal! These people might already be doing four other things. So, I do feel very strongly about it. Yeah, I do feel the whole thing is on a knife edge (Derek, personal communication, 20 April 2018)

The volunteers referred to growing demand and therefore competition for volunteer time in the town: from the theatre to the library. An audience member I spoke to was aware that people were "rattling the tin" more in cultural venues and another volunteer lamented the assumption that people will step up. It is acknowledged by volunteers and staff that the theatre could not function without the volunteers. Lalor (2013) showed that in Ireland there was a thin line between added value, and someone replacing a paid job. The cultural policy officer I talked to expressed concern about the extent to which generally in the English arts sector, volunteers are increasingly relied upon to support theatre activity. When I asked her what she thinks would happen if the volunteer supply dried up, she replied:

Yeah! I think it would certainly have an impact [laughs]..it would be like when you look at all the austerity measures that are happening in local government and how they are impacting on the, certainly in the city I live in ... certainly the hours of our cultural organisations, our libraries and our museums which are not opening as late or as many days as they used to, and that's because they are absolutely restricted to paying their staff as they should be, you know, with unions and all of that and that's absolutely as it should be. But the result is with less money they've had to reduce their hours that I think it would be the same impact

if we removed all the volunteers, you know buildings just wouldn't open. And I think the majority of organisations do the volunteering with the best spirit and it being one of generosity, and it's not one of taking advantage of people. So I think if you removed all those volunteers it's not like those organisations are sitting on loads of money that they're saving because they've got a volunteer it just would mean they wouldn't have any capacity. And I think you know the couple of organisations we've looked at are rural organisations and you know they have less cultural provision, less access, they have barriers in terms of geography and transport it would mean actually we would continue to probably have more cultural provision in urban areas than rural areas.' (Lyndsey, personal communication, 9 May 2018)

Lyndsey's reply here articulates concisely the issues that some cultural organisations may face if they were not to be able to rely on a ready and willing volunteer pool. In particular, her comment regarding the impact this may have on the availability of rural provision resonates with this theatre. Economic realities of rural arts provision are that volunteers do engage in their own cultural provision. As Derek commented above, the assumption is that "at a national level" volunteers will step up and do the necessary work. However, as the volunteers themselves articulated, the other volunteering work that they did out of duty, or to give back to society, seemed short lived and less interesting to them than their theatre activity. Volunteering to run services out of duty, might be a short-lived offer.

5.4. Chapter conclusion

In conclusion to this discussion, what knits a theatre and its volunteers together is a mutually symbiotic relationship where retired volunteers journeying from the world of work to retirement can draw on their cultural capital to find a new rewarding role to perform in a new cohesive, enjoyable social group. What appears to keep the volunteers returning is something deep and intrinsic in their mutual orientation with the theatre. In this cohort, they are the theatre and are in their element in their work.

Potential threats to this relationship are whether future generations, possibly retiring later in life are financially and physically able to enjoy such an active third life. There is also a potential expectation of a pool of volunteers to support other services.

Such competition and demand may spread volunteering goodwill thinly. If people are looking for a new, optimistic, self-fulfilling third life as an active, professional volunteer/createer, then an offer which is mutually rewarding, provides fun and the ability for them to be in their element is vital. Duty is short-lived, fun, it appears, is not.

Finally, I end this section with an observation from David:

I have a little bit of homespun philosophy to the effect that for most of our lives we are all putting on performances most of the time! And we draw on different characters within ourselves in different circumstances. And I think any professional life involves a degree of theatre. It's not a new concept. I can't lay claim to having a ground-breaking philosophy in life. I think plenty of others have expressed that view before me! I mean, all the world's a stage and all the people on it merely players. Yes, it's, well, nothing original about my thinking! [laughs]
(David, personal communication 18 April 2018)

My interviewee quoted Shakespeare, the full stanza being:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages' (Shakespeare 1599)

Which I will recapitulate in full in my epilogue.

6. Conclusion

It's nice to be a part of something and part of something so close-knit ...it's just a nice experience. (Katherine, personal communication, 18 April 2018)

6.1. Revisiting the research question

I began my research by considering how audiences, artists, and actors engage with a pantomime and ended with an analysis of what knits together a theatre and its volunteers. In this short study in time, in one venue, in one town, a cohort of older volunteers have achieved a means of self-fulfilment after retirement by creating a theatre world for themselves. In this world, words such as buzz, love, dream and passion are used to both describe their activity and their affection for the venue. What knits together volunteers and a theatre, in this case, is a symbiotic, open, trusted mutual relationship between a theatre salvaged and protected by the local community, the staff who work there, the audiences and the volunteers who sustain it. This relationship is deeper than the perfunctory giving of time freely on a rota. It is about being in a positive place where emotional and creative needs are met, whilst ensuring the theatre continues functioning and thriving. The identity of the theatre has become that of the volunteers and they are the theatre. It is both building, and people combined. The unique nature of the building, the town in which it sits and the people surrounding it are a functioning micro-system.

Volunteering has a role in retirement, enabling people to create structure, draw on latent work skills, seek social connections and participate in activities linked to hobbies or interests. In this study, the volunteers moved through a journey in time, from a world of paid work, to volunteering. In doing so, they identified an activity which brings structure and worth but fused it successfully with buzz and fun. These elements may, of course, have existed in their work environments; but the absence of responsibility and the freedom to walk away, allow permission for fun to be enjoyed fully. The volunteers take their new role seriously, but it is a hobby. Serious leisure combined with a freedom from work and a freedom to play, is a dynamic mix.

6.2. Summary of the findings

Over the course of six months and four field trips, I interviewed sixteen people, three of whom I returned to a second time, conducting 19 interviews in total. I followed an ethnographic approach building a modified grounded theory. Initially, I did not set out to research the world of a cohort of people who had taken to volunteering at a theatre in their retirement; but the analytical process I followed presented and revealed this opportunity. In doing so I offered some visual metaphors and thoughts regarding how we navigate our transitions from the world of paid work into a third phase of life, how we make meaning for ourselves during that journey and the role a theatre plays in that process. In studying these visual metaphors, I propose that what knits together a theatre and its volunteers is buzz, fun and commitment through a mechanism by which mutual needs are met and fulfilled.

6.3. Limitations and critical reflection

This research is the product of four field trips. Timescales and organisational issues out of my control limited the full extent of whom I could talk to, when and for how long. If I were repeating this process, I would prefer to embed myself in the community; perhaps for a few weeks at least, so I could have both more room for immediate critical reflection and be more available to meet interviewees. If continuing my seam of analysis had been possible, I would have liked to meet more of the volunteers and staff. If time allowed, there is a wider community of people giving their time free to the theatre; the members of the board of trustees, the army of knitters who make the props, the young people who were in the youth theatre, the shopkeepers who make displays at Christmas. This was not possible. I therefore consider how the research shape and focus would have been different if such a wider angle had been available to me. Nevertheless, this was not feasible and as such the research stands as it is: a reflection of the reality of the timespan in which I had to conduct it.

Grounded theory is elegant and powerful. Elegant in that by resisting the urge to jump to conclusions and allowing for time to reflect on emergent themes (Charmaz 2014), I was gradually able to reveal deeper concepts. And when I was surrounded

by piles of transcripts, cut up, and covered with post-it notes; the urge to jump to conclusions and tidy it up is strong. I lived with those piles for two weeks, but I am pleased with how the story ended. Powerful, in that something as seemingly innocuous and gentle as inviting interviewees to talk as they wished about their volunteering world in the theatre, was so capable of resulting in the themes it ultimately revealed. Hindsight, of course, is always an exact science, and perhaps if I had had more insight into the sheer volume of words such a simple open question would produce, or the range of concepts it ultimately revealed, I may have been quicker in focussing my research and my coding practice. But that is a learning point, and I have learned by doing. I have also learned how familiar this practise it is to me and this has been surprising and reassuring. New terminology can often seem alien, but by following a process, referring to academic texts for guidance, I learned much about my own latent skills and knowledge and was able to draw on these.

This research is a snapshot of a cohort, in one town, in one theatre, in one small period of time. I cannot offer up extrapolated findings. But that cohort has a voice and meaning, and as such I have done my utmost to present that small snapshot as authentically as I can. I would like to know more about the volunteers in the other venues in the town. Comparative research between a library cohort, a museum cohort and the theatre would be worthwhile to see if there are commonalities or differences in expectations and motivations. Further, talking to volunteers who support local charities may also reveal whether they are there for themselves, others, or also for buzz or fun. Finding out why some people do not volunteer would also be advantageous. Exploring what young people think about volunteering would offer thoughts for the theatre's future. The theatre, of course, is unique, much of which I could not reveal for reasons of anonymity. Whether such commitment exists in other theatres, perhaps in a more urban setting, is equally worth exploring. It would be interesting to know if such commitment could be engendered whatever the venue.

I stand by my decision to conduct qualitative research. It is a matter for others to decide if a similar depth of findings would have been possible using other methods. This process is time-consuming; if it were commissioned research, probably expensive. Dealing directly with people is unpredictable, the weather can

get in the way, meetings get cancelled. Perhaps, for some, a computer is more reliable, less contrary than an organic, human conversation.

6.4. Recommendations for further research

Further research in other institutions or settings is recommended to test out the concepts I evolved for example, with a museum or library cohort. Does the need to transition and create a new world exist for all who retire or is the presence of a rewarding activity, such as a local theatre, something which enables such a transition to happen, ensuring a higher quality of retirement? Conversations with retired people who do not volunteer, or volunteer in other situations would be interesting. Further, researching those retired people who perhaps do not volunteer in the way this cohort does, but do choose to participate in arts activities may also reveal a similar journey. In my introduction I referred to a choir I sing in. How many people there have made that choir their world after retiring?

A ready and willing cohort of enthusiastic people with time to give is a valuable resource. Building trust, devolving power and creating a mutual environment for volunteers and staff reaps rewards. Further research into models of theatre management and applications of a model around volunteer trust would be interesting to pursue. If this world in this theatre were to be repeated elsewhere then what would be the implications for venues who are struggling to afford paid staff? If they could find a meaningful way to engage and include volunteers in their organisations to the extent that they combine together as a single entity, then a sustainable future may be feasible. Further, recruitment need careful consideration. Words such as wellbeing and self-esteem are not used in the everyday language spoken by the volunteers. It would be interesting to test out volunteer recruitment language. Is someone more likely to volunteer for an arts activity if it promises buzz and fun, rather than a solution to loneliness or ill health? These are worthy words best kept for funding bodies. People who retired in the last 15 years may still have energy and youthfulness. This cohort grew up with the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, free love and flower power. They were teenagers in the 1960s and 1970s. Some may like a buzz!

However, some tempering is required. Stebbins (2007) noted that in some settings, for example where public services are having budgets cut back, volunteers

are taking up the mantle of running organisations in the absence of paid staff. He considers this to be less a serious leisure model delivered without obligation or duty and more of an example of community activism. The volunteers in the theatre are here in a crossover position. The venue clearly does rely on them for economic reasons and the subtext of some of their narratives contains a real concern that it could not function without their time. However, they do not do their work out of duty but more from a position of passionate commitment and very certainly out of enjoyment. Where they talk of volunteering out of duty, the activity is short lived. Volunteering time is freely given, and volunteers can walk away if they want to. Services, such as libraries, may only be considered viable if managed by volunteers. If the UK cultural sector becomes increasingly reliant on retired volunteers to sustain their core work this may become an issue in the future. Ageing demographics in the UK is causing people to have to work longer before they can claim a state pension. This could affect both the ability of older people to give time freely and the length of time they can do that for. Further, those that do retire early are the ones with the economic means to do so. The potential economic impact on those cultural services, as Lyndsey mentioned earlier, could be disastrous. Further research into the expectations of policy makers regarding future a volunteering pool is needed and as is the extent to which duty may be a short live energy when it comes to saving and preserving less glamorous assets. Libraries may be fine for a year or two, but will volunteers sustain them for ten or twenty years? Also, seeking an agreed mechanism for effectively recording and valuing volunteer time may reveal both the extent to which the balance sheet of many organisations consists of high levels of donated time and also would provide accepted evidence of leverage for other public or charitable funds.

With regard to cultural opportunities in rural areas, the published data discussed earlier observed that people in rural areas are highly likely to take part in arts activities and that retired people were more likely to volunteer. Perhaps as much due to a lack of organised offers, as it is a preference of hobby and interest. Further, retired people have the time to give. Rural communities are often in a position of having to create their own cultural provision and this was reiterated by Lyndsey in her interview in a previous chapter. Volunteers with time to give sustain the cultural venues they value. This creates an attraction for other people with similar interests to

retire to the town and so in turn, continue to sustain the venues that they like, possibly at the expense of less exciting organisations. This does create a potential gap between those who have the means to build the cultural services they want, and the needs of others with less time, or energy to do so. Young people for example, might feel excluded from a community because they do not have the funds or time to create their own services, and are crowded out by a bigger demographic with more time to give. Opportunities for young people to volunteer are limited by economic realities: time needed to study, necessity of work or other family commitments This is something for planners and policy makers to consider.

It is difficult to know, without a longitudinal study, whether in 10 or 20 years' time, there will be a retired population who are willing to give their time to such a venue. Optimistically, however, the theatre in its current form has sustained itself through volunteer support for over fifty years, and as such, could still be attractive to volunteers in the future. What the next generation values culturally is for them to decide but the ongoing appeal of a pretty, rural town with a theatre at its heart will go some way to ensuring a ready supply of people seeking self-fulfilment in their third life and finding fun at the theatre.

7. Epilogue

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely
players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the
infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his
satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like
snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a
soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the
pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in
quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the
justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;

And so, he plays his part.
**'Betwixt and between'¹ ages five
and six comes life leisured.
Of buzz and passion. Of Spring
dreams: liminal.
Of fun and youthful players, with
time to give, to spare.
Love of stage, of theatre, of
everything.²**

Sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on
side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too
wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly
voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of
all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans
everything.
(Shakespeare 1599. Act II, Scene VII)

¹ Turner 1982. p.40

² Author's addition

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Appendix 1: Theatre pen portrait

The theatre in my study is in a pretty, historic, rural market town of 8000 residents in northern England. It is close to three national parks and popular with tourists. My interviewees described it as being a great place to retire to, popular with families and older people. Young people tend to move away to work or university.

Besides the theatre, the town has a castle, independent shops, cinema and several museums.

The theatre seats 214 people and was originally built in the late 18th century. It went out of use in the mid-19th century and reopened in the early 1960s. It was extended in 2003. The theatre was restored and saved by local community activists. It is a charitable trust and receives little revenue funding. It relies on grants and earned income. It has six members of staff and 100 volunteers. It programmes a regular mix of music, dance, theatre, comedy, cabaret and family shows. It is available for private hire. The Christmas pantomime season of 54 shows needs 21 volunteers to help make a show happen as ushers, staff and stagehands.

The volunteers I interviewed mostly gave their time as tour guides but also helped run the box office, work backstage for professional shows, manage the reception, answer the phone and act as ushers. In some cases, they would sew costumes and props or be characters for open days.

Around 2000 small knitted props were created by local people for the last few pantomime seasons. In addition, children and young people are members of the youth group and become part of the seasonal chorus in the pantomime. Schools contribute drawings or models themed to the pantomime each year.

Data sources are a small book produced by the theatre and its website. I have withheld citations to protect anonymity.

Appendix 2: Table of interviewees

Interview number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Role in theatre	Former occupation where relevant	Date of interview
1	Joe	49	M	Contracted paid actor	Freelance actor/musician	20/12/2017
2	Paul	53	M	Contracted paid actor	Freelance actor/musician	08/03/2018
3 (with 2 above)	Lucy	9	F	Volunteer performer	school child	08/03/2018
4	Alison	66	F	Volunteer usher, box office	Retired administrator	08/03/2018
5	Richard	59	M	Volunteer guide and usher	retired(unknown)	08/03/2018
6 (with 5 above)	Liz	73	F	Volunteer guide, usher, box office	Retired teacher	08/03/2018
7	Karen	Not given	F	Paid member of staff		21/3/2018
8	Anne	64	F	Volunteer guide, usher, box office	Retired hospitality/finance	21/3/2018
9	David	67	M	Volunteer guide and usher	Retired civil servant	18/4/2018
10	Katherine	55	F	Volunteer office/marketing	Retired civil servant	18/4/2018
11	Fiona	66	F	Volunteer guide and usher	Retired teacher	19/4/2018
12	Derek	74	M	Volunteer guide, usher, box office	Retired teacher	20/4/2018
13	Chris	Not given	F	Member of staff		20/4/2018

Interview number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Role in theatre	Former occupation where relevant	Date of interview
14	Liz	73	F	Volunteer guide, usher, box office	Retired teacher	20/04/2018 (second interview)
15	Alison	66	F	Volunteer usher, box office	Retired administrator	23/04/2018 (second interview)
16	Stephie	27	F	Paid member of staff	n/a	24/4/2018
17	Anne	64	F	Volunteer guide, usher, box office	Retired hospitality/finance	24/4/2018 (second interview)
18	Mike	Not given	M	Audience member	computer/data systems	24/04/2018
19	Lyndsey	Not given	F	Relationship Manager regional arts funder	n/a	09/05/2018

Appendix 3: Interview guide

These questions operated mainly as prompts. As the research developed, they became slightly more structured in design but were used as and how the conversation developed

1. **Research question: What role does pantomime play in the lives of those who participate in it?**

1.1. Open interview- audience/community

- Could you tell me about how you became interested in the theatre?
- When/how?
- What is it that appeals to you?
- How have you got involved in pantomime?
- As a volunteer/performer?
- Could you talk about what this experience was like for you?
- Could you tell me what you think pantomime is?
- How would you explain it to someone who knows nothing about it?
- What does pantomime mean for you / for the town / for the theatre?
- What is it good for?

1.2. Interview guide: Member of staff

- Could you talk about the effect and impact the panto has on the theatre and the community?
- Could you describe the phenomenon of pantomime as if to a complete outsider?
- If pantomime was a verb “to pantomime” how would you describe the activity of pantomiming?
- What sustains it?
- Who do you believe your audiences are for pantomime, and where do they come from?
- Do you consider it successful?

- What is the secret of your pantomime's success?
- Does panto have a future? (if so, why? If not, why not?)
- What is the demographic of volunteers here and how many?
- What do you believe motivates people to volunteer here?
- What functions do the volunteers have in the theatre when pantomime is on?
- Does the demographic affect your programming?
- Do you have an idea of the economic and social value to the theatre of the volunteers (what is their hourly worth?)

2. **Revised Research question: what knits a theatre and its volunteers together?**

2.1 Interview guide (phase 2): staff

- Could you tell me about your relationship to the theatre (length in post, previous roles)?
- Could you talk to me about what you think glues volunteers and a theatre together?
- What do the volunteers bring to the relationship?
- Why do you think people volunteer? What motivates them?
- How do you manage your volunteers and how do you communicate with them?
- What are the positives and challenges in operating a venue with so many volunteers?
- Do you count the hours and the equivalent value of your volunteers' contributions?
- How long do your volunteers volunteer for? What would make them stop?
- Could you define for me what you think a "cultural volunteer" is?

2.2 Interview guide (phase 2): Volunteers

- Could you tell me about your relationship to the theatre?
- Could you talk to me about what you think glues volunteers and a theatre together?

- What drew you to volunteering?
- Why do you think people volunteer?
- Have/do you volunteer elsewhere and what is different about it to what you do/similar?
- What do you gain from being a volunteer?
- What skills have you brought to your volunteering, and have you learned any new ones?
- Have you ever done paid work in this field or is your interest entirely voluntary?
- How many hours a week do you give?
- How long have you been volunteering for?
- Looking into the future, do you see yourself continuing? What would make you stop?
- Could you define for me what you think a “cultural volunteer” is?
- What interests you about the arts?

2.3. Interview guide: policy officer

- Could you tell me a little about your role?
- What is your understanding of your clients’ relationship with volunteers?
- Do you have any understanding as to why they recruit volunteers?
- Is there, do you think, a typical demographic?
- Do you have an idea of the scale of volunteer involvement in the professional arts organisations in the north?
- What is your organisation’s position on volunteering?
- What would happen to the sector if the volunteers stopped?

Appendix 4: Introductory letter

My name is Sue Robinson and I am a mature student currently studying for a Master's degree in Art, Culture and Society at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The course is international, taught in English and I am from the UK.

I am interested to find out from you, in your own words, all about your involvement in volunteering. I am curious and want to learn more. I am very grateful to the staff and volunteers at the (name of theatre) for their help with this.

Unless you ask me otherwise not to, I will record our conversation. This is to help me remember what we discussed and means I can concentrate on what we are talking about instead of trying to write lots of notes. I also need to ask you to sign a consent form. I can keep our conversation confidential if you wish, so unless you give me permission to use your real name, I will keep your contributions anonymous.

At the end I will also ask you for a few pieces of personal information. This is confidential but helps me if I need to call you and may help with some elements of my final thesis. It is up to you what you tell me. I might get in touch with you afterwards to discuss some topics in more detail, or to clarify anything which I do not understand.

If you go away and think you have anything more you want to say, then please do ring me up on (phone number) or email me (email address).

If you know anyone else who may enjoy having a conversation with me about this subject, then do give them my details.

Thank you for your time.

Sue

Appendix 5: Consent request for participating in research

For questions about my research please contact: Sue Robinson (phone number) Email: (email address)

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in my personal Master's thesis research topic about cultural volunteering.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means you accept to be interviewed. In general terms the interview questions will be related to your own personal experience.

Unless you prefer no recordings to be made, I will use a digital recorder for the interview. The recording is entirely for my personal use to aid my note taking and will not be made public.

You are always free to not answer any particular question

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. I will make sure that you cannot be identified by using a pseudonym unless you state you are happy to be named and identified.

I will use the material from the interview exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take as long as you are able to give me but usually no more than an hour is needed for an interview. You may interrupt your participation at any time

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation

PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept participation in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse an answer to particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, my thesis supervisor Professor Evert Bisschop Boele, Department of History, Culture and Communication, Erasmus University, Rotterdam email: (email inserted here)

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. This, you do not need to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient. I give/do not give consent to being audio taped during this study I wish to be anonymised/I am happy to be named.

Name

Signature

Date

You may keep a copy of this consent form.

Appendix 6: Codes

Thematic codes	In vivo codes (where relevant)	Concepts
1. Ambitions	'Living a dream'	1. Creating fun in retirement through a new role or activity (retirement)
2. Creative hobbies	'always loved the theatre'	
3. Fun and enjoyment	'Passion' 'Love' 'Buzz' 'Feels good'	
4. Playing a role	'All performers inside'	
5. Ageing	'Nothing would stop me'	
6. Structured activity. Being busy with time to fill	'Being active' 'Time to give'	2. Volunteering is to be taken seriously. It is a professional and valued status. It keeps people busy and provides meaningful structure.
7. Status	Appreciation Worth 'Not just a volunteer'	
8. Transferable skills	'Doing it right' 'Being professional'	
9. Like a job. Quality, high standards, done well		
10. Continuous learning		
11. Freedom from responsibility	'Doing what I want' 'No responsibility '	
12. Networks and subgroups	'It's a volunteer town'	3. Networks and groups exist which provide social opportunities in the town. People have time to give to local initiatives.
13. Provides a social opportunity		
14. Ownership and sense of belonging	'We' 'Place for everyone ' 'Community spirit'	14. The volunteers strongly identify with the venue and feel they belong there
15. Cultural volunteering- the group give time in the theatre but also some give time to a festival, the		15. Is there such a thing as a cultural volunteer?

museums and local stately homes. Some sing in choirs and knit or are in the book club		
16. Protecting and preserving cultural assets	'I love this theatre'	16. History, heritage, preserving and protecting, valuing.
17. Love of history and heritage		
18. Economy of the theatre. Volunteers are vital to its existence	'It would close'	4. Cultural assets, are reliant on enthusiastic retired volunteers. What does the future hold 17.
19. Volunteer demand and supply is being stretched.	'Knife edge'	
20. Demographics of an ageing population. Would there be active volunteers in the future?		
21. Mutual need	'We feel valued'	
22. Retiring to the town. New life. Making a journey.	'when I retired we...'	
23. Quality of life, pretty town		