



The effects of volunteer service on Chinese college students' social responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - Growing involvement by Chinese college students in volunteer service has been greeted as a sign of the rising social responsibility among the young. While commitment to volunteer service is growing, there is limited evidence of its impact on participants. There are even some misinterpretations or controversy on the effect of volunteer service. The purpose of this paper is to answer the question: can volunteer service experience of limited intensity and duration have an impact on the development of Chinese college students' social responsibility?

Methods - College student volunteers, who served for approximately one month, were administered a pre- and post-test assessment to determine if a student's social responsibility would increase as a result of their volunteer service. Some interviews were done to collect information about the changes of volunteers. The final sample included 130 students. Among them, 107 students participated in voluntary teaching in rural areas in China and 27 students participated in the Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales (AIESEC) international volunteer service organization. The Scale of Social Responsibility Development (SSRD) was chosen as the instrument for this study.

Findings - Based on the survey and interview data, the results show that students' social responsibility increased significantly after volunteer service regardless of the service type. The length and the service experience have significant impact on the development of college students' social responsibility. No significant effects were found in gender or parental education level.

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1.0 Introduction

Western China Program, voluntary teaching Program, and other voluntary community service programs now engage a substantial proportion of Chinese youth, with the most active participation typically occurring among college students. According to a survey in 2014 in China, college students have the highest enthusiasm for participating in volunteer service program (Jia, 2014). Observers in the popular media have attached enormous significance to this trend, regarding it as a herald of social awareness among young people. Likewise, educational policymakers look toward volunteer service as a potentially valuable supplement to conventional forms of moral education. Meanwhile, with the growing attention on students' social responsibility, Chinese colleges and universities are increasingly providing required and optional programs of community service for their students. In all kinds of activities designed to foster college students' social responsibility, the most common one is

volunteer service activity. While commitment to volunteer service is growing, there is limited evidence of its impact on participants. This exploratory study attempts to answer the question: can volunteer service experience of limited intensity and duration have an impact on the development of Chinese college students' social responsibility?

2.0 Literature Review

A number of studies are related with college students' social responsibility development. Generally speaking, the arguments focus on two aspects: one is if it is possible to improve students' social responsibility when they are in college; the other one is if the volunteer service activities are effective in advancing college students' social responsibility. In terms of the possibility of improving college students' social responsibility, a variety of research indicate that college experience has facilitating influence on students' social responsibility development. Swaner (2004) concludes: "There is ample evidence that cognitive aspects of personal and social responsibility—namely moral reasoning—continue to development during the college years. This evidence would suggest that educating for personal and social responsibility is indeed a legitimate consideration for higher education" (p.44). Gutmann (1987), Hamrick (1998), Hurtado (2007), and Reason (2011, 2013) have all argued that higher education institutions have a civic mission. Preparing active citizens willing to engage in community life is an essential component of higher education's civic mission. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) estimate that individuals with at least a bachelor's degree are "perhaps 30 percentage points more likely than those with no postsecondary education to volunteer for a community service group" (p.278). The relationship between college attendance and openness to diverse perspectives is well established in the research of higher education (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Hurtado (2007) linked development of openness to diverse perspectives directly to the development of citizen leaders: "This emerging work on the educational benefits of diversity is part of a long-term effort to transform undergraduate education which will prepare the next generation of citizens for a multicultural society" (p.186). Students' self-reported gains reflected from the Personal and Social Responsibility Index grow consistently over time during college (Dey& Associates, 2010). Meanwhile, some researchers believe there is no big change of students' personal and social responsibility during college. Trosset (2013) analyzed institutions with different value profiles and found that even in cases in which an individual student attended a college dominated by a different set of values, the importance assigned to both social and personal responsibility were, on average, unchanged overtime (p.28). The Wabash Center of Inquiry report titled "Summary of Four-Year Change" showed that the average score on the Political and Social Involvement scale actually goes down over 4 years in college. The same report states that although 35% of students displayed moderate to high growth on this measure, 58% experienced either no growth or a decline in this area.

Controversy exists in academia regarding the effects of participation in volunteer activities on the development of college students' social responsibility. Two major viewpoints exist. One viewpoint states that a positive correlation exists between volunteer service and cultivating college students' social responsibility. For example, Hobfoll (1980) found that college student volunteers score higher on social responsibility; Rubin (2004) found that the combination of active-learning and reflective journaling in public health settings outside of the dental realm enhanced cultural understanding and community spirit in the majority of students. Some literature suggested that personal and social development are the best documented outcomes of secondary school sponsored community service programs (Conrad and Hedin, 1989; Williams, 1991). Jiang (2010) found that volunteer service participation can help students to develop good moral character, to help others in need, to build social responsibility and to participate in public affairs. Volunteers were also found to be more prosocially oriented than non-volunteers and more tolerant toward client populations (Cowen, Zax, & Laird, 1966). Some research indicated that participation in community service is associated with positive developmental outcomes, including an enhanced sense of responsibility and concern for others (Hedin and Conrad, 1980; Newmann and Rutter, 1983). While another viewpoint shows skepticism. For example, research has shown that volunteers are more concerned with individual goals instead of society's; helping others only manifests individual ability that is similar to earn higher scores, or attend club activities (Serow, 1991; Serow, Ciechalski, & Daye, 1990; Marotta& Nashman, 1998). Galston (2003) also thinks that there is no smooth path that links volunteering to wider civic engagement.

Compared with western college students who possess a long volunteer service tradition, Chinese college students have a relatively short history in terms of volunteer service. In the late 1980s, China officially launched its own volunteer service activities. In the following 20 years, its' volunteer services are still at the beginning developmental stage. Many Chinese college students will not start participating in volunteer service until college. Most Chinese students who first time participate volunteer service share the following distinctive characteristics: comparatively mature cognitive ability, value system and limited volunteer service experience. Reason, Terenzini, and Domingo (2007) found that students' involvement in public participation is shaped by their precollege experiences that predispose them to engage with learning opportunities that may enhance their personal and

social responsibility. Thus, the volunteer service has a certain uniqueness toward the development of Chinese college students' social responsibility. It is highly necessary to examine the effects of volunteer service participation on the development of Chinese college students' social responsibility because this is an emerging area of research. A review of the literature yielded little direct evidence of an impact of voluntary service activity on social responsibility outcomes at the post-secondary level. More evidence is needed to establish these outcomes for college students.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the research design and methodology. Section 3 presents a detailed description of the studies and offers a discussion on the findings. Finally, section 4 presents our conclusion, implications for the policy and practice, limitations of this paper and suggestions for future research.

3.0 Research design

Participants

The survey was administered to a random sample of college student volunteers (N=130), 107 (82.3%) who participated in voluntary teaching in rural areas in China and 27 (17.70%) who participated in the Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales (AIESEC) international volunteer service. Of the group, 101 (78.30%) were female and 29 (21.70%) were male. Students identified their level of involvement in volunteer activities: 4 (3.10%) indicated that they had never participated in volunteer activities, 85 (65.4%) had participated in volunteer activities occasionally, 17 (13.1%) had participated regularly, and 24 (18.5%) had participated passionately.

Instruments

The conceptual framework for the study is a multidimensional, multi-phasic model of service learning (Delve, Mintz, & Stewart, 1990). Delve et al. (1990) identified personal development to five phases, which are *Exploration, Clarification, Realization, Activation, and Internalization*. In the *Exploration* phase, students seek many opportunities for service involvement and are enthusiastic to serve, but do not connect their service to the social issues at hand. Students in the *Clarification* phase may take a "salad bar approach" to service and continue to serve in a variety of settings while deciding where they most identify and relate. The *Realization* phase is a phase of greater awareness and transformation. Students better grasp the larger social context and become more focused on singular issues or populations. The *Activation* phase is one of greater advocacy and identification. Students become more active participants in their service and are motivated by social justice issues within the service context. Finally, students in the *Internalization* phase are those who have fully integrated service into their lives and professional careers.

The Scale of Social Responsibility Development (SSRD) was chosen as the instrument to measure the developmental phases of college students' social responsibility. The SSRD was created by Olney & Grande (1995) and derived from the developmental phases of Delve et al. (1990). Olney & Grande (1995) refined their instrument to assess three independent phases of development (titled *Exploration, Realization, and Activation*). The SSRD is intended to measure student development of social responsibility as they progress through *Exploration, Realization, and Activation* phases. The first phase is *Exploration*, in which students participate in volunteer work mainly for fun or to be part of a peer group. The second phase is *Realization*, in which students begin to commit to an issue, site, or activity. The third phase is *Internalization*, where students are aware of the complexities and importance of social justice issues and are committed to work toward social equality and equity. In consideration of the difference between U.S. and Chinese college students, the SSRD was revised based on the data collected from 1,040 Chinese college students. Factor analyses (principal components), using orthogonal varimax rotations, were performed on the data to examine the relationship between the items and scales. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal reliability of the three SSRD subscales and showed moderate to high consistency of the subscales: the *Exploration* subscale was 0.67, the *Realization* subscale was 0.72, and the *Internalization* was 0.86. Convergent validity of SSRD looked at whether predicted interrelations among the SSRD subscales were achieved. The *Exploration* and *Internalization* phases had a significant negative correlation, and the *Realization* and *Internalization* phases had a significant positive correlation. The results supported the revised SSRD as a measure of the development of social responsibility. The revised scale contains 35 items in the main questionnaire. Among them, 6 items belong to the *Exploration* phase, 9 to the *Realization* phase, and 20 to the *Activation* phase.

The final formalized survey includes information from two sources. One source is demographic information of the participants, including gender, parents' educational level, and type, length, and participating experience of

volunteer service; the other source is the development of college students' social responsibility, which encompasses 35 items and adopts a 5-point Likert scale as scoring method (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Data collection

We used SSRD (Olney& Grande, 1995; 1998) to gather data two weeks before and after the volunteer service. Before the volunteer service, all subjects completed an instrument which asked for demographic data and information on previous volunteer work. Following these questions was the SSRD (the pre-test). After all volunteer services were concluded, a similar instrument (with some modified demographic questions) was administered (the post-test). We has a set of two complete questionnaires for 130 college student volunteers. Most of the data reported here are the pre- and post-test data. Interviews were conducted with volunteers and translated from Chinese.

4.0 Results and analysis

Volunteer service has significant influence on the improvement of college students' sense of social responsibility

Based on the stage division on the development of social responsibility originated from the SSRD scale and relevant study results, the lower the score in the *Activation* stage but the higher the scores in the *Exploration* and *Realization* stages the students have, the stronger sense of social responsibility they will obtain.

In this study, the increase of the level of college students' sense of social responsibility was represented through the significant decrease of the scores in the *Exploration* stage or significant increase of the scores in the *Realization* and *Activation* stages after volunteer service participation.

The results of paired sample *t*-tests (Table 1) show that volunteer service participation has a certain impact on the improvement of college students' social responsibility, particularly on the scores in the *Activation* stage ($t = 3.48$, $p = .001$, $SD = 2.21$) which indicates that college students' participation in volunteer service is conducive to enhancing the level of their social responsibility, especially in the aspect of helping college students advance their self perception, and integrate social service into their daily and professional lives.

Table 1: The influence of volunteer service on college students' social responsibility (Paired sample *t* test)

	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	SD		
Exploration	13.6723	3.54178	13.1176 (-3.20428)	3.62706	-1.843	0.068
Realization	35.622	4.54768	36.1732 (0.5384)	3.81953	1.602	0.112
Activation	72.6557	8.53749	74.9672 (2.21212)	9.09449	3.483**	0.001

** $p < 0.01$

The variation trend of the *Realization* stage and the *Activation* stage is consistent, which was shown from their average scores. In addition, they are contrary to the *Exploration* stage in terms of variation trend. This result is consistent with the visualization of the development theory of social responsibility.

In addition, through conducting paired sample *t*-tests on the college students who participated in two types of volunteer service, the results show that (See Table 2 and Table 3) the college students who participated in volunteer service in rural areas in China changed significantly only in the *Activation* stage, while the college students who participated in the AIESEC international volunteer service changed significantly in both *Exploration* and *Activation* stages. This indicates that differences exist on the change of sense of social responsibility between college students who participated in different types of volunteer service.

Table 2: The influence of volunteer service in rural areas in China on college students' social responsibility (Paired sample *t* test)

	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Sd		
Exploration	13.3021	3.32176	13.0208 (-8.71226)	3.49128	-0.860	0.392
Realization	35.7692	4.45524	36.3077 (0.53846)	3.72886	1.453	0.149
Activation	71.9091	8.49981	74.1212 (2.21212)	8.71226	2.903**	0.005

** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: The influence of AIESEC international volunteer service on college students' sense of social responsibility (Paired sample *t* test)

	Pre-test		Mean Difference	Post-test		t	p
	Mean	SD		SD			
Exploration	15.217	4.06712	13.5217 (-1.69565)	4.20897	-2.371*	0.027	
Realization	34.9565	4.99525	35.5652 (0.60870)	4.24078	0.667	0.512	
Activation	75.8696	8.10894	78.6087 (2.73913)	9.98517	2.098*	0.048	

* $p < 0.05$

For the college students whose social responsibility is in the *Exploration* stage, the AIESEC international volunteer service brings them with more significant impact. The possible reason could be the service objects of AIESEC international volunteers are mainly vulnerable groups from Africa, India, and other developing countries. Therefore, the conflict they experienced was more intense. It was said by the interviewee that "I realized that there is still such a small corner outside my narrow world after all. The people living there are in need of our help and concern so bad" (Volunteer I, September, 2013). Another interviewee said, "In Tanzania I experienced the local culture difference, the difference of food hygiene and the current situations of inequality between male and female. Tanzania is different from China from many perspectives. It is just because of the huge cultural difference that it is worthwhile to thoroughly experience the different cultural shocks caused by ways of living" (Volunteer II, September, 2013). Beyond that, many interviewees mentioned the gains the volunteer service brought to them. For instance, "It altered the personal value system and the manner of dealing with others and the way of thinking in the future." "Regardless of the project, or of living together with volunteers from different nations, I've seen lots of different things which made me to consider my life and things happening around me from various perspectives" (Volunteer III, September, 2013). "In general, I felt the small growth in me. It mainly changed my attitude about life...During the volunteer time in India, what I gained was more than what I expected with the little kids in NGO. I got new understanding toward life, new gratitude to the society, new understanding of the world, several foreign friendships, survival training and the least important one is the improvement on language level" (Volunteer IV, September, 2013).

In terms of volunteer service in rural areas in China, interviewee pointed out, "attending a number of volunteer activities for right now might not be very realistic. However, an idea originated from my heart that I would like to donate goods, materials, or money. I feel it necessary to help those people after the experience down in the countryside" (Volunteer V, September, 2013). Another volunteer said, "I think going to volunteer service in rural areas in China has an impact. If I didn't attend it, I would never even pay attention to this sort of volunteers. I might pay attention, but wouldn't feel like going...It (volunteering) has comparatively big influence on us. Because it endows you with a sense of responsibility when the first time being a teacher, first time leading a group of kids who shared a different childhood than yours" (Volunteer VI, September, 2013).

The type of volunteer service activities has no significant influence on the development of college students' social responsibility

Is the difference in college student's change in their social responsibility significantly correlated with the type of their volunteer service? In order to address this question, we need to first verify if there is difference of the social responsibility between the two groups of college students before and after service participation. The data from the independent *t*-test (Table 4) shows that there was no significant difference between the two groups of college students before and after service, which was mainly shown in the *Exploration* stage ($F = 0.564$, $t = -2.433$, $p = 0.016 < 0.05$, $SD = -1.99$) and *Activation* stage ($F = 0.655$, $t = -1.99$, $p = 0.049 < 0.05$, $SD = -3.87$). What is more, the college students who participated in the AIESEC international volunteer service had higher average scores than the ones who participated in volunteer service in rural areas in China on the two previously mentioned stages. Thus, the researcher treated the previously tested data as covariate and later tested data as dependent variable and conducted ANCOVA analysis in order to eliminate the difference in the aspect of college student's social responsibility before the service. The ANCOVA data analysis shows that the type of volunteer service has no significant influence on the change of college students' social responsibility. The relevant data were shown below: in the *Activation* stage, $F = 0.901$, $p = 0.344 > 0.05$; in the *Exploration* stage, $F = 0.230$, $p = 0.632 > 0.05$; in the *Activation* stage, $F = 1.204$, $p = 0.275 > 0.05$.

Combined with the previous results regarding volunteer service's impact on college students' social responsibility, it could be concluded that both of the two types of volunteer service can help increase college students' social responsibility, and there is no significant correlation between type of volunteer service and the development of college students' social responsibility. In other words, in terms of affecting college students' social responsibility, the type of volunteer service is not a determining factor. The difference of the development

of the social responsibility from the two groups of college students are primarily determined by their difference before service. The possible reason might be related with the stricter screening system and more complete training system that the college students who participated in AIESEC international volunteer service possess. Before departing to the volunteer destination they've already had several experience exchange and pep rally meetings so that they had a clearer interpretation and anticipation toward the objectives of the volunteer service. AIESEC produced more obvious alteration in terms of social responsibility compared with the volunteer service in rural areas in China.

Table 4: Summary of social responsibility of college students participating in different types of volunteer services (independent sample *t*-test)

	Volunteer service in rural areas in China		AIESEC		Mean Difference	t	F
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Exploration	13.2286	3.43135	15.2174	4.06712	-1.98882	-2.433 *	0.564
Realization	35.7692	4.45524	34.9565	4.99525	0.81271	0.774	1.019
Activation	72.0000	8.47467	75.8696	8.10894	-3.86957	-1.992 *	0.655
Sample Size	107			23			

*p<0.05

The length of volunteer service has significant impact on the development of college students' social responsibility

In order to analyze the influence of the length of volunteer service on the development of college students' social responsibility, we firstly put the development stages of social responsibility as dependent variables and the length of service as an independent variable and conducted single factor Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The results are shown in Table 5. The average score of BOX is 6.90 and was transformed to the *F* value of .53, with *p* = .90 which didn't achieve the significant value of .05, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated in the MANOVA analysis.

Table 5: The influence of length of volunteer service on the development of college students' social responsibility with MANOVA

	df	SSCP			MANOVA Wilk'sΛ	Trial Stage	F value in ANOVA	
		Exploring	Action Stage	Exploring			Action Stage	
Between groups	3	58.028	-5.524	56.817	.853*	1.465 n.s.	.280 n.s.	3.302*
		-5.524	17.691	-91.607				
Within groups	119	56.817	-91.607	684.439				
		1570.964	644.516	-494.549				
		644.516	2503.301	1004.875				
		-494.549	1004.875	8221.708				

n.s. *p*>0.05 **p*<0.05

The Hotelling Trace value of MANOVA is .17, *p* = .02 and it has achieved the significant level of .05, indicating that at least one dependent variable is significantly predicted by the independent variable; that is, the length of volunteer service made a significant difference on at least one of the dependent variables of social responsibility development. The one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post-hoc analysis are then required. The *F* values of the three dimensions' homogeneity of variance are 1.40, 1.16, and .20, and their corresponding *p* values are .25, .33, and .90, respectively. None of them achieved a significant level, which is in accordance with the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

The effect of testing between subjects shows that (See Table 6), subjects' values of the One-Way ANOVA on the dependent variable are 1.47 (*p* = .23), .28 (*p* = .84), and 3.30 (*p* = .02) respectively, indicating that the length of service has significant influence on the development of college students' social responsibility. The three-way ANOVA significant test achieved significant level, which is determined by the dependent variable of the third stage. No significant difference exists in the first two stages. The post-hoc LSD tests manifest that the score of "10-15 days" is lower than "15-30 days". The difference of the two average scores is -5.36, *p* = .03. The score of "15-30 days" is lower than "above 30 days". The difference of these two average scores is -5.37, *p* = .01.

Table 6: The influence of length of volunteer service on the development of college students' social responsibility with univariate ANOVA

	stage	SS	df	MS	F	Post-hoc
Participation (Between group)	Exploration	58.028	3	19.343	1.465 n.s.	--
	Realization	17.691	3	5.897	.280 n.s.	--
	Activation	684.439	3	228.146	3.302*	B<C<D
Error	Exploration	1570.964	119	13.201		
	Realization	2503.301	119	21.036		
	Activation	8221.708	119	69.090		

n.s. $p > 0.05$ * $p < 0.05$ A: 5-10 days, B: 10-15 days, C: 15-30 days, D: Above 30 days

One interviewee’s answer also illustrates this result. “Actually the volunteer service in rural areas in China is only 15 days in length. Returning in 15 days really cannot teach them (the kids) much at all. They didn’t learn much either. Sometimes I feel it’s really cruel, that is, kids miss the teachers a lot and hope we can continue teaching them, but we won’t. Only 15 days cannot bring much to them in fact” (Volunteer VII, September, 2013). How to deal with the relationship between study on campus and volunteer service, solving the problem about the length of volunteer service and sustainability is a significant factor influencing the success of effectively carrying out volunteer activities at present.

Volunteer service experience has significant impact on the development of college students’ social responsibility

Does volunteer service experience have significant impact on the development of college students’ social responsibility? We consider the developmental stages of social responsibility as dependent variables and volunteer experience as an independent variable, and we conducted a one-way MANOVA (See Table 7). The results show that the value of BOX’s M is 9.36 and was transformed to the *F* value of .73, $p = .73$, which didn’t achieve significant level, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. The Hotelling Trace value is equal to .17, $p = .02$ which achieved significance level, indicating that at least one dependent variable has been significantly predicted by the independent variable; in other words, volunteer service experience makes a significant difference on at least one dependent variable of the developmental stages of social responsibility, which requires conducting further separate one-way ANOVA and post-hoc analysis (See Table 8). The test of effect between subjects (Table 7) shows that the *F* values of ANOVA of three stages are .85 ($p = .47$), 2.45 ($p = .07$), and 3.60 ($p = .02$), indicating that college students with different volunteer service experience produced significant difference in the development of social responsibility. The three-way MANOVA achieving significance was determined by the dependent variable from the third stage, while the dependent variables from the first two stages didn’t show significant difference. The post-hoc LSD test manifests that the score of “occasionally attending” is lower than “passionately attending”. The mean difference is -6.35, $p = .00$. The score of “regularly attending” is lower than “passionately attending” and the mean difference is -6.11, $p = .03$.

Table 7: The influence of volunteer service experience on the development of college students’ social responsibility with MANOVA

	df	SSCP			MANOVA Wilk’s Λ	Trial Stage	F value in ANOVA	
		Exploring	Action Stage	Exploring			Action Stage	
Between group	3	33.981	23.137	-87.157	0.85*	0.845n.s.	2.45n.s.	3.601*
		23.137	146.654	59.581				
		-87.157	59.581	741.262				
Within group	119	1595.011	615.855	-350.575				
		615.855	2374.338	853.687				
		-350.575	853.687	8164.884				

n.s. $p > 0.05$ * $p < 0.05$

Table 8: The influence of volunteer service experience on the development of college students’ social responsibility with univariate ANOVA and ANCOVA

	stage	SS	df	MS	F	Post-hoc
Participation (Between group)	Exploration	33.981	3	11.327	0.845 n.s.	--
	Realization	146.654	3	48.885	2.450 n.s.	--
	Activation	741.262	3	247.087	3.601*	D>B, D>C
Error	Exploration	1595.011	119	13.403		
	Realization	2374.338	119	19.952		

	Activation	8164.884	119	68.612		
Covariate (pre-test)	Activation	3252.547	1	3252.547	72.332	
Participation (between group)		440.658	3	146.886	3.267*	D>B
Error		5261.1	117	44.967		

n.s. $p > 0.05$ * $p < 0.05$ A: Never participate, B: Occasionally participate, C: Regularly participate, D: Passionately participate

We are interested in the relationship between the way they attended and their development of social responsibility. We kept the pretest score as covariate and conducted ANCOVA to eliminate the difference of social responsibility among college students who possess various volunteer service experience before participate in the present activity. The results (Table 8) show that only *Activation* stage achieved significant level. The F value from the effect test is 3.27 ($p = .02$) which has achieved significant level, indicating that the “action stage” of college students’ development of social responsibility will produce difference based on their various volunteer experience. Paired comparison shows that the score of “occasionally attending” is lower than “passionately attending”. The mean difference is -4.94, with p value of .01. This illustrates that the college students who passionately attended volunteer service experienced the biggest development in their social responsibility in the present activity and had a larger improvement on their sense of social responsibility than the ones who occasionally attended. Thus, advancing college students’ intrinsic motivation to attend volunteer service has lots of benefits in enhancing their sense of social responsibility.

One interviewee mentioned, “The first time serving in the rural areas in China is primarily aimed for accumulating teaching experience. Having a good relationship with local students and developing one’s teaching ability is one of the reasons for the second time service. A sense of responsibility is the main motivator for the third time service. Leading a group to the countryside by myself pushed me to care more about the disadvantaged group and pay more attention on these things” (Volunteer VIII, September, 2013). There was also an interviewee said, “In the beginning curiosity pushes me to attend (volunteer service) in order to see what would happen if I do. Later with more participating experience, I felt a lot more satisfied every time when I was done, which motivated me to do the next” (Volunteer IX, September, 2013). Thus, encouraging college students to attend more volunteer service activities is conducive to increasing their sense of social responsibility.

Besides, no significant influence of gender or parental education level on the development of college students’ social responsibility was found.

5.0 Conclusion and suggestions

To sum up, the conclusion of this research includes:

First, participating in volunteer service is helpful in improving college students’ social responsibility, particularly in helping college students enhance their self perception, and integrate social service into their daily and professional lives. The college students who took part in the volunteer service in rural areas in China experienced significant transformation in the *Activation* stage of their sense of social responsibility. In addition, the participants who engaged in the AIESEC international volunteer service changed significantly in both the *Exploration* and *Activation* stages.

Second, eliminating the difference of social responsibility between the two group of college students before they participated in this activity, service type and the development of social responsibility are not significantly correlated.

Third, the length of volunteer service executes significant influence on the development of college students’ social responsibility, mainly embodied in the *Activation* stage. The longer the service period lasted, the bigger the change would be.

Fourth, the volunteer service experience has a significant impact on the development of college students’ social responsibility. The college students who were passionately involved in volunteer service changed the most. Their prominent performance is having a larger improvement on their sense of social responsibility compared to those who attended occasionally.

Neither gender nor parental education level has a significant influence on the development of college students’ social responsibility.

In order to improve the effects of volunteer service activities and college students’ sense of social responsibility, this study provides the following suggestions:

Regulate volunteer service management system and emphasize the social responsible value of volunteer service

Currently, the volunteer service activities carried out in Chinese colleges are mostly derived from the perspective of “love” or “charity”. What is emphasized is colleges and students’ scarification to the society. Volunteer service is regarded as a non-reciprocal giving. Some colleges and students treat it as a mandatory task to complete without realizing the value of volunteer service in terms of shaping personal life and advancing social responsibility. The prominent performance when organizing and developing volunteer service activities includes lacking purposefulness and standard ability, management inappropriateness, volunteer college students’ ambiguous service objectives and short of service capability, etc. For instance, Hang Yin (2012) reported that some students in rural areas in China appealed “Please don’t come for volunteer teaching”.

In order to improve the effects of volunteer service, Chinese colleges should standardize the management system of volunteer service, and provide an organizational and institutional guarantee for college students participating in volunteer service. First of all, the goal to improve social responsibility of volunteer service should be clearly identified. We should integrate social responsibility into the design of volunteer service activities, not only putting emphasis on inspiring college students’ enthusiasm in volunteer service participation, but also helping them identify the social responsibility goal of volunteer service and its bidirectional property, meanwhile carrying out relevant skills training for volunteer service, avoiding blindness and randomness of volunteer service in order to improve the quality of college students’ volunteer service and their responsibility awareness and practice capability. Second, we should establish specialized volunteer service organization management system. A number of aspects are involved in the development of volunteer service activities which include students, colleges, and society, and which require professional organization and management institution to take charge of them. Most American colleges have established a community service office and hired full-time staff. Take the University of California at Berkeley as an example (UC Berkeley Public Service Center, 2015), the organizational management of its volunteer service project was mainly charged by UC Berkeley Public Service Center which was founded in 1967 with complete organizational management. Its mission is to organize scholars, college-community partnership, and students to develop community service activity. Over 4,000 students become volunteers through this center every year and they contribute to community service through volunteer service, internship, service learning, training and other forms. An administrator of a volunteer program can use what volunteers have learned and pass it onto the next volunteer, making the second volunteer’s experience more efficient. Without an administration, each volunteer may start at the beginning.

Establish multiple-sided collaboration platforms and enrich volunteer service’s forms and patterns

The significance of volunteer service on improving college students’ social responsibility cannot be emphasized more. However, the volunteer service activities carried out currently in Chinese colleges are comparatively lacking in variation in both types and manners and cannot satisfy college students’ multiple needs. In terms of volunteer service types, the major activities include volunteer in rural area, Youth volunteer activity, voluntary teaching, helping the poor, etc. Although these activities brought certain achievements, some still fall into formalism, which is not advantageous to foster college students’ sense of social responsibility, and even worse, could increase college students’ mistrust toward society and weaken their sense of social responsibility. In terms of organizational arrangement of volunteer service, summer vacation or the volunteer month are mainly used to carry out activities. The pattern and time of service are relatively fixed unchanging with lack of flexibility. In addition, a multiple-sided cooperative management platform has not been formed among colleges, governments, and social units for volunteer service. Some situations, such as the organizational management not achieving certain criteria or communication not being smooth, often occur. For example, the recipients of volunteer service often feel that the service was futile, or that simple tasks were done repeatedly in the volunteer month.

In order to enrich the forms and manners of college students’ volunteer activities, and fully develop the effects of volunteer service on improving college students’ sense of social responsibility, it is necessary to further explore effective organizational management forms for volunteer service. First, we should establish a cooperative and interactive volunteer service platform among colleges, governments, social units; plan and coordinate all parties’ needs; integrate a variety of social resources; and provide multiple types of volunteer service opportunities for college students. The cultivation of college students’ sense of social responsibility is a systematic educational project involving multiple-sided social entities. Thus, in the respect of social practice management, solely relying on colleges is not wise. It is necessary to fully develop the enthusiasm of government, business and other relevant entities; make an overall plan; and formulate a flexible management system for volunteer service. We should also realize the combination of college student volunteer service’s routine program and exception management, match the needs between servants and their serving objects, and guarantee college student

volunteer service's effectiveness and sustainability. Second, we should enrich the forms of volunteer service and popularize the "multiple choices" or "menu" programs for volunteer service activities. Specifically, in the planning stage of the volunteer service activity project, all parties need to provide a supply and demand plan for volunteer service. College volunteer service management sections should facilitate an organic combination between the types and patterns of volunteer service based on all parties' designs. Flexible organizational patterns of volunteer service activities could effectively match all parties' needs, and increase all parties' rights of choice and initiative. At the same time, it will be useful in combining social service and individual needs, helping students perceive responsibility, and realizing the unification of social value and personal value.

Establish responsible atmosphere in colleges and integrate volunteer service and teaching

Jonathan Kozolonce (Musil, 2013, p.5) pointed out, "It isn't so much a certain type of program that I have in mind, but an entire ethos of ethical responsibility for the nation's greater good that ought to be pervasive in the atmosphere of learning at every college and university in this land...Social responsibility, as opposed to purely mercenary individual self-interest, ought to be part of the curriculum itself — and more than the curriculum, it ought to be part of the milieu... of academic education." The sense of social responsibility is not an inborn moral emotion. It requires individuals' efforts to acquire it through constant perceiving and summarizing in moral practice. Preaching responsibility passionately will only make college students feel numb and repugnant to all kinds of responsibility education, which is not advantageous to the formation and development of college students' sense of social responsibility. Volunteer service activities provide opportunities for college students to practice social responsibility. While in order to further facilitate the development of college students' higher level of social responsibility, it is necessary to effectively integrate social responsibility education into a college's educational system. It can be attempted to connect professional teaching and volunteer service and carry out service learning. Jacoby (1996, p.5) defines service learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning." The largest benefit of popularizing service learning in terms of facilitating college students' development of social responsibility is to achieve a dynamic interaction between theory learning and service practice. We should practice theoretical knowledge in social context; connect knowledge and scenarios through reflection, discussion, and insights writing; explore the different explanations to the source of social problems and discover its multi-layered meaning; and help volunteers fulfill the unification of being a servant and a learner.

This paper offers a closer look at the recent surge of volunteer service by college and university students in China. In particular, it examines the impact of volunteer service on social responsibility outcomes at the post-secondary level. While social responsibility is commonly raised in connection with pro-social behavior, it gains added salience when applied to the current generation of Chinese college and university students, who are often perceived as concerned with private pleasure since most of them are the only child in their family. Viewed from the perspective of the volunteers, volunteer service offers a form of personal empowerment in which one not only acquires and displays competence but attempts to extend its benefits to others. This study has dealt primarily with social responsibility and not with other outcomes of volunteer service. So it is possible that students who start off with narrow aims will experience broader pattern of growth. Future studies also need to consider elements that may affect the impact of volunteer service, such as motives. Furthermore, we did not assess the effects of volunteer service on those being helped; while it is often assumed that students are doing "good" when they do volunteer service, we have not found any evidence in the literature that this is the case. This community impact research will not only respond to the misinterpretations on volunteer service, but also be even more critical as national policy evolves which relies more on community service as a way to meet societal needs and foster responsible citizen.

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