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**THE BENEFITS OF BEING A VOLUNTEER CAMPUS TOUR GUIDE**

A Thesis in  
Recreation, Park and Tourism Management  
by  
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## ABSTRACT

In this study, we investigated benefits received by college students who volunteer as campus tour guides in their leisure time. Leisure researchers have not studied this volunteer activity, nor have they studied benefits of volunteering received by college students. Data were collected using participant observation and in-depth interviews with fifteen volunteer campus tour guides at a public university in the Northeast US. Four types of benefit emerged from the data, including psychological, social, instrumental, and communal. The results confirmed past studies, but also extended the knowledge on benefits of volunteering by demonstrating benefits not identified by previous research. While past studies on benefits of volunteering mainly adopted the serious leisure framework, our study suggested that venturing beyond serious leisure may generate richer findings. The results also provided suggestions on managing volunteer campus tour guides for university administration. Future directions are suggested as well.

**Keywords:** benefit, campus tour guide, college student, serious leisure, volunteer

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

A university campus visit has long served for college applicants and their families to acquire on-site knowledge of a university (McGunagle, 1997). Researchers have found that a campus visit has a significant impact on students' matriculation decisions and on their expectations about the university (King, 1986; Maguire, 1981; Singer, 2003). A vital part of the campus visit is a guided tour of the university campus. Usually, current undergraduate students guide campus tours in their spare time (Phillippi, 2001). Some universities pay their tour guides (Klein, 2004), but many universities do not (Kopischke, 1997); in other words, there are university students who volunteer to be campus tour guides in their leisure time. According to researchers, campus tour guides contribute to both the university admission process and to applicants' enrollment decisions (Dessoff, 1994; Klein, 2004). However, we do not know if tour guides themselves receive any benefits from the volunteering activity.

The purpose of our study is to explore the benefits that college students derive from volunteering as campus tour guides in their leisure time. Our study has implications for leisure research for two reasons. First, most leisure researchers who have studied the benefits of volunteering have adopted the serious leisure framework (Stebbins, 1996), which includes seven personal benefits and two social benefits that people derive from volunteering. Although the framework has contributed to our understanding of benefits of volunteering, we do not know if there might be other benefits that people derive from volunteering. Second, past research found that volunteering can be a leisure activity for college students (Jackson & Strigas, 2004). College students deserve attention, because attending college has been identified as a life stage that is beneficial to future development and well-being (Arnett, 2000; Berk, 2003). While leisure

researchers have studied benefits received by adult volunteers (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Caldwell & Andereck, 1994), no previous study in the leisure field, to our knowledge, has looked at the benefits that college students derive from volunteering.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Researchers in psychology and sociology have studied the benefits of volunteering extensively. They found that individuals were able to boost self-esteem, improve self-efficacy, increase sense of responsibility, and get recognition and respect by volunteering (Presby, et al., 1990; Wilson & Musick, 2000). In addition, volunteering brings social rewards such as a sense of togetherness, helping others and helping the community (Presby, et al., 1990; Wilson & Musick, 2000). Researchers have also studied the benefits of volunteering received by adolescents. Study results showed that adolescent volunteers were able to increase community involvement, decrease risky behaviors, strengthen work values, develop knowledge about themselves and others, and acquire new skills, which are all important to the healthy development of the younger population (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988; Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder, 1998). Volunteering has unique benefits for older adults as well. Researchers found that volunteering is beneficial to elders' perceived health and psychological well-being (Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Young & Glasgow, 1998), although it was also found that a moderate amount of volunteering is ideal for elders' well-being (Windsor, Anstey, & Rodgers, 2008). While these researchers successfully showed the benefits of volunteering across different age groups, they have not studied volunteering in the context of leisure.

Henderson (1984) is the first leisure researcher who advocated studying volunteering from the perspective of leisure. She demonstrated that volunteer activities provided "personal psychological benefits which are very similar to outcomes in leisure" (p. 62), e.g. having fun, feeling accomplished, meeting people, learning new things, making contributions. Since then, a



growing number of leisure researchers have studied benefits that people derive from volunteering in leisure time.

A widely used theoretical framework to study benefits of volunteering is serious leisure (Stebbins, 1996). In his seminal paper, Stebbins (1996) discussed volunteering as serious leisure, and he offered a list of nine benefits, including personal enrichment (personal satisfaction and being altruistic), self-actualization (developing knowledge, skills), self-expression (expressing knowledge and skills already developed), self-image (known to others as a volunteer), self-gratification (hedonistic pleasure), recreation, financial return, social attraction (associating with clients and other volunteers), and group accomplishment (group effort in completing a volunteer project). Stebbins (1996) categorized the first seven benefits as personal rewards, and the last two as social rewards. While Stebbins (1996) made the benefits of self-enrichment, self-actualization, and group accomplishment appear more salient with elaborated discussion, he did not pay much attention to the other six benefits; for example, Stebbins (1996) defined self-gratification as hedonistic pleasure and having fun, but did not provide any further detail, making the benefit appear less laudable. Another argument Stebbins (1996) made is that volunteers mainly derive personal satisfaction from group accomplishment. In other words, since volunteers belong to a certain group and do activities together, it is the achievement made by the group as a whole, rather than any personal endeavor, that provides volunteers with personal satisfaction.

Since Stebbins' introduction of volunteering as serious leisure, many leisure researchers have adopted the serious leisure framework to study the benefits of various volunteer activities, including volunteering for Guide and Scout organizations, museum volunteering, and community development (e.g. Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Jarvis & King, 1997; Orr, 1998; Stebbins, 1998). Researchers have found that volunteers derive several benefits including: personal satisfaction, which sometimes prompts personal growth (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Arai 2000; Jarvis & King, 1007; Oakleaf, 2006; Stebbins, 1998); having fun, which is related to a sense of enjoyment or recreation

(Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Jarvis & King, 1997; Oakleaf, 2006); social interaction with fellow volunteers, e.g. making friends, building relationships, access to the social world of like-minded people, and completing tasks as a group (Arai & Pedlar 1997; Arai, 2000; Oakleaf, 2006; Orr, 1998; Stebbins, 1998); developing knowledge and skills; applying newly acquired knowledge and skills to their paid jobs (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Graham, 2004; Jarvis & King, 1997; Oakleaf 2006; Stebbins, 1998); and the opportunity to make contributions to service recipients and volunteer organizations, which often nurture a sense of accomplishment among volunteers (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Arai, 2000; Oakleaf, 2006; Stebbins, 1998).

While leisure researchers have studied different types of volunteering activities, we found no evidence of research on volunteer campus tour guiding. Moreover, although leisure researchers have looked at benefits received by adults volunteers (e.g. Arai & Pedlar, 1997), there is an absence in the leisure literature on benefits that college students derive from volunteering.

Attending college has been classified as emerging adulthood, a life stage influential on students' later development and well-being (Arnett, 2000). According to education researchers, one of the beneficial activities for college students is volunteering (Astin et al., 1999; Lavine, 1994; Sax & Astin, 1997). Education researchers found that volunteering enabled college students to engage in self-exploration, to enhance a sense of social responsibility, to better understand social problems, to take more actions towards social problems (civic participation), and to enhance leadership and interpersonal skills (Astin, et al., 1999; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; Rhoads, 1998; Sax & Astin, 1997). Astin and colleagues (Astin, et al., 1999; Sax & Astin, 1997) also found that volunteering can have long-term direct effect that positively influenced students after college graduation. While these studies provided insights on benefits received by college student volunteers, they mainly focused on community service, leaving it unknown the benefits of volunteering as campus tour guides.

The purpose of our study is to explore the benefits that college students derive from volunteering as campus tour guides in their leisure time. Since our study aims at exploring the topic rather than testing a theory (Babbie, 2004; Neuman, 2000), we asked our research participants a general question: what do you get out of being a volunteer campus tour guide? By answering the research question, we hope to study benefits of volunteering in a leisure context, to explore the benefits received by volunteer campus tour guides, and to provide insights on the influences of volunteering on college students from the perspective of leisure.

## Chapter 3

### Context and Setting

We conducted the study with volunteer campus tour guides at a large public university in the Northeast region of the US. The volunteer tour guide organization at the university is affiliated with the Undergraduate Admissions Office (UAO). A supervisor working for the UAO, an assistant who is a current graduate student, and an executive board manage the organization. The executive board, which is elected annually, usually consists of experienced volunteer campus tour guides with a high level of involvement.

The organization has 130 members; 70% are female and 30% are male. It recruits new volunteers in the fall semester of every school year. The organization sets the number of new volunteers to recruit each year based on the turn-over rate. Undergraduate students, regardless of their class standing, gender, and major, are eligible to apply. The number of applications grows each year, making it increasingly competitive to be admitted. In year 2007, the UAO received close to 200 applications, and it intended to recruit anywhere between 30 to 50 new campus tour guides (personal communication with the supervisor). Applicants first fill out an online application form, which has a series of mini essay questions. A recruiting committee, all of whom are current tour guides, reads the applications and determines who is qualified to enter the second round. Applicants who successfully enter the second round attend an interview night, which includes a face-to-face interview (three current guides interviewing one applicant), and a mingling time (applicants interact casually with current guides). After the interview night, the recruiting committee discusses potential recruits. The committee reaches a final agreement about who to accept from the pool of applicants.

Once admitted into the organization, new tour guides go through an intensive orientation. The UAO sets up dates and time for the orientation, and it usually takes place in the UAO office. The orientation includes an introduction to the organization, extensive instruction on how to give tours (with a tour script provided), and “mock tours” during which new guides follow old guides on tours to learn how to guide a tour. Before offering a tour, new guides first offer a fake tour to old guides, who decide if new guides are ready to guide a real tour.

Normally, two guides give a tour to a group of visitors. The size of a tour group ranges from six to more than twenty visitors (participant observation). A typical tour lasts about an hour and a half. Tour guides walk backwards in front of a group of visitors and show them around the campus. Throughout the tour, guides offer information about different aspects of the university and answer any questions visitors have. Tour guides keep themselves updated about the university by reading the campus newspaper and by receiving information updates during tour guide meetings (personal communication with the supervisor).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **Sampling**

The sampling procedure involved two steps. First, the first author went to a general membership meeting of the campus tour guide organization. During the meeting, she introduced herself and the study to the tour guides, including the study purpose, data collection procedures, and the issue of confidentiality. She also informed the tour guides that they would receive an email via the supervisor in the UAO if they were selected as research participants.

After the meeting, and for the second step, we obtained the names of all the campus tour guides from the UAO. Initially, we purposefully selected 16 names from the list in an effort to generate a wide variety of respondents and get as many different opinions as possible (Babbie, 2004). Conducting 16 interviews is typical for qualitative interview research (Bernard, 2002; Creswell, 2007), as many studies have found that saturation of data (i.e., no new information emerges from the interview) is achieved with 12 to 15 interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We then sent an email invitation to the 16 tour guides via the supervisor in the UAO. The email briefly introduced the study, provided information on data collection procedures, and clarified the issue of confidentiality. Seven tour guides from the original sample replied and offered to participate in the study. Three more rounds of emails were required to obtain an additional nine participants.

### **Data collection**

Data were collected through participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview “enable[d] us to learn about perceptions and reactions known only to those to whom things occurred” (Weiss, 1994, p. 10). Participant observation, on the other hand, let us “observe subtle communications and other events that might not be anticipated or measured otherwise” (Babbie, 2004, p. 285). Therefore, a combination of participant observation and in-depth interview made it possible to generate richer data compared with using either method alone. However, given time and fiscal constraints, prolonged immersion in the field (Creswell, 2007) was impossible. Therefore, the authors did not collect data at different times of a year; nor did they collect data from different universities in various parts of the US.

Initially, the first author conducted an interview with the supervisor in the UAO to obtain necessary background information about the organization. She then conducted a focus group with all the executive board members to pilot test the interview protocol (Morgan, 1998), and made necessary adjustments to the interview protocol after the focus group. Once formal data collection started, she conducted participant observation with 12 tours guided by the 16 tour guides (in four tours, two participants guided the same tour). She mingled in each tour group and observed tour guides’ actions and the tour group dynamics. Immediately after each observation she documented her thoughts since “unimportant things [in participant observation] can become important later on” (Babbie, 2004, p. 306). After each observation, she scheduled an interview with the tour guide. Interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour and a half, with most lasting around one hour. All the interviews were digitally recorded upon the consent of the interviewees. Data saturation was reached after 15 campus tour guides were observed and interviewed, as no new information emerged from the interviews.

### **Data analysis**

Data collected from in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVIVO (i.e., computer software that facilitates qualitative data analysis). Notes from the observations were also coded using NVIVO. We first coded the two sets of data separately to develop categories that were informative to the research question (Creswell, 2007). We then combined the two sets of categories by (a) merging categories from different sets that represented the same theme and (b) listing categories that represented different themes separately. In order to saturate categories (i.e., to keep looking for new information that represents the category until additional information does not provide further insight into the category, Creswell, 2007), we used the constant comparative method, an inductive research approach that specifies the nature and dimensions of each category by comparing incidents applicable to each category (Babbie, 2004). We also developed subcategories to represent multiple perspectives of each category and to integrate the property of each category (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). We wrote analytic memos on a regular basis in order to keep a record of our thoughts about the coding process and to link concrete data with abstract concepts (Neuman, 2000). After the coding process, the two authors discussed patterns that emerged from the coded data based on theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories and sub-categories generated from the coding process were thus reorganized to present the theoretical pattern and to serve for further conceptual development. In order to validate the results, the two authors consulted throughout the analysis process with two researchers who are also experienced in qualitative research.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Results**

The research question for this study was: what are the benefits that college students derive from volunteering as campus tour guides in their leisure time? Twelve benefits emerged from the data, and they are classified into four types: psychological; social; instrumental; and, communal.

#### **Psychological benefits**

In order to become qualified as campus tour guides, individuals need to learn tour scripts and guiding skills when they join the organization. Gradually, they become more experienced and better able to deal with situations on tours. In addition, tour guides often have fun in the learning process, though learning can be challenging from time to time.

#### **Personal satisfaction**

Eleven respondents said that they derived personal satisfaction from being campus tour guides. Some of them also described such personal satisfaction as a rewarding feeling. The satisfaction and/or rewarding feeling primarily came from visitors' feedback and appreciation. One respondent commented, "it is very rewarding, esp. when you get positive feedback from [visitors]", while another respondent said, "I get satisfaction from the people who are in my groups...when they complement us [about the tour], it feels like mission accomplishment." At the

end of several observed tours, there were visitors who thanked the tour guides or complemented them about the tour; such feedback always put a big smile on tour guides' faces.

### **A better self-image**

Many respondents (n=10) mentioned that a better self-image was an important benefit of volunteering as a campus tour guide. A better self-image has two dimensions: pride and prestige, and better confidence. Five tour guides reported pride and prestige as manifestation of a better self-image. One of them said, "I am proud of what I'm doing...I have the sense of pride of being the face of the university," while another mentioned, "I like being able to represent the school...to be privileged to do that is an honor." There is a consensus among the respondents that representing the school was a privilege that prompts sense of pride among them.

Being a campus tour guide also made respondents more confident (n=6). Improved confidence mainly came from giving tours independently and being respected by visitors. One respondent reported, "Giving these tours definitely boosts my confidence! I'm able to meet the group with confidence and deal with situations on tours." In other words, successful handling of the tours is a source of confidence for the tour guides. There is another respondent who said, "I feel a lot more confident...because the more tours I give, the more I realize that people respect me, and they look up to me for answer." The comments reflect that respondents felt better about themselves when they realized that the tours they give are useful to the visitors and that the information they provide is valuable.

### **A closer bond with the university**

Six respondents felt that they developed a closer bond with the university by being volunteer campus tour guides. One of them stated, “It’s really great that I feel I have a closer bond with the university now, cuz [sic] I wouldn’t have an organization to be involved in like that if I haven’t been a tour guide.” Such comment reveals that the tour guide organization provides an avenue for respondents to develop a stronger tie to the school. For some tour guides (n=3), a closer bond was developed via knowing more about the university, since they keep themselves updated with latest information about the school. One respondent commented, “[being a tour guide] informs me so much more of my university...it’s a huge thing for me, and I really feel closer to the school now.”

### **Pride and love for the university**

Respondents (n=4) also gained more love and pride for the university by guiding tours. Though able to distinguish between pride and love, respondents often talked about the two feelings at the same time. One tour guide mentioned that she likes to “show off” the university on tours, which makes her “feel really proud of the school” and “love it even more.” Another respondent commented, “you gain sort of pride for the campus and for the university that I think other people may not have, even though there is a lot of pride in general by the students, you sort of get added sense of that by being a [tour guide].” In other words, talking about the school on tours nurtures deep love for and strong pride of the university among the tour guides.

### **Social benefits**

Four types of social benefit emerged from the data. They are having fun, making friends, being more involved on campus, and a sense of community within the tour guide organization.

#### **Having fun**

Nine respondents reported having fun as a benefit of being campus tour guides, and there are different ways of having fun. Respondents mentioned that they have fun while giving tours, especially when the partner guide is their friend. A typical comment is, “The guy I gave the tour with is my friend, and it feels like friends hanging out together and talking about things we love. It’s a lot of fun!” Respondents also had fun when the tour group was active and responsive. One of them said, “it doesn’t always happen, but it’s really fun when they [the tour group] get our jokes and chat with us.” Outside the organization, tour guides do social activities together, which is also fun for them. A respondent said, “I now have more friends, and I hang out with them over the weekend, which for me is fun.”

Respondents (n=3) also mentioned that the fun they had by being a tour guide was different from the fun of partying. One respondent reported, “[being a tour guide] is a setting where you can have fun and enjoyment that is beyond the party scene, cuz [sic] I have friends who [are not involved] in any organizations, and they kind of go to parties and those sorts of things, but...I like to have experiences beyond going to parties, cuz college is more than that.” In other words, respondents chose being a campus tour guide to enrich their college experience, while having fun at the same time.

### **Making friends**

All the respondents identified making friends as a benefit. A typical comment is, “I definitely made a lot of great friends! I’ve met a lot of cool people.” At the same time, it is worth noting that the closeness of friendship is different among the tour guides. Three respondents mentioned that they made their closest friends within the organization, e.g., “it’s wonderful I made my best friend here [in the organization]; we actually will be roommates next year, and I’m really excited about it!” But for most respondents, the friends they made in the organization were “good friends” who expanded their “friend base” on campus, but not necessarily “close friends”, e.g. “I made pretty good friends...I get to see them, and I get to give tours with them, and that’s really nice, but then it’s still different from close friends I’ve known for years.” Though there does exist different levels of friendship, respondents were all very positive about making friends in the organization.

### **More involved on campus**

Being a volunteer campus tour guide enabled some respondents (n=6) to be more involved on campus. Respondents felt that the volunteer activity kept them active and busy on campus. A tour guide said, “It’s nice to feel that I’m a part of what’s going on in the school,” while another reported, “I definitely like giving tours. I’m one of those people who always do things, and I like to have my schedule full, and I’m glad that [being a tour guide] fills most of it.” Some (n=4) of the respondents also mentioned that being campus tour guides gave them “real activities to do”, whereas all they did in some other student organizations was attending one meeting after another. Therefore, respondents cherished the fact that they were able to do various activities and to be more involved on campus via volunteering as campus tour guides.

### **A sense of community**

Developing a sense of community is another social reward some respondents (n=4) derived. They thought that the sense of community within the organization “pulls people together”. At the same time, they felt that the organization is flexible and open-minded compared with some other student organizations that are too secretive or strict. One of the respondents said, “[The organization] is a little more open, and...it just seems like people are much more open about everything.” Hence, respondents were able to have a sense of belonging without feeling lack of freedom. A respondent mentioned that some other student organizations “are strict with rules or hard core if you will...I just like the more flexibility that this organization offers me, and yet I feel like it’s a community that I belong to.” Essentially, it is important to have a balance between a sense of community and being open and flexible. When the balance is available, it contributes to the social benefits volunteers receive.

### **Instrumental benefits**

Respondents identified two types of instrumental benefit, improving social and speaking skills and helping one’s future.

#### **Improving my speaking and social skills**

Twelve tour guides reported that they were able to improve speaking and social skills by offering information to visitors and handling situations on tours. One respondent said, “I know my public speaking has become so much better...I don’t say ‘umm’ and ‘err’ as much...definitely I hold myself better.” Another respondent commented, “I think that’s a good quality—just to be able to stand up in front of 20 people that you don’t know and talk for 2 hours straight about a

whole bunch of stuff.” Additionally, most tour guides appreciate the fact that they were able to improve speaking and social skills by participating in activities that they enjoy doing, e.g., “Isn’t it great that I can improve my skills when I have fun?”

### **Help my future**

Thirteen respondents reported that being a campus tour guide helps their future. A typical illustration is, “when I interview for jobs, I can use my stories of being a [tour guide].” Respondents felt that the volunteering experience is evidence to show that they are competitive when they try to find a job. Brightening one’s resume is another way in which the volunteering experience helps the future of tour guides. One respondent said, “it’s definitely on my resume right now; I know what’s good for a resume.” Respondents also mentioned that improved social and speaking skills are valuable assets that can benefit respondents’ job finding process in the future. “I’m glad my social skill is improved, and it’s definitely good for my future when I try to get a job. I’ve learned to deal with and react to different people, and I think a lot of students don’t get that experience.”

However, helping one’s future does not only refer to finding a job; sometimes, respondents talk about “the future” in a more general sense, e.g. better personal qualities that are beneficial to future development. An illustrative comment is, “being a [tour guide] benefits my future...it helped me open up my personality, cuz [sic] when I came here, I was really shy, but being a [tour guide] and talking in front strangers helps me branch out.” While respondents may refer to “helping one’s future” with different meanings, they all felt grateful for the benefit they got.

### **Communal benefits**

Respondents also regarded as a type of benefit the contributions they made to both the university and to visitors on tours.

#### **Contribution to the university**

Four tour guides said that it was meaningful for them to be able to “do something for” the university, e.g., “the biggest thing is being able to volunteer for the university...it’s great I’m able to give back.” Respondents felt they benefited from the university, and it is important for them to contribute to the school as well.

There are also four tour guides who thought that it was rewarding to present the university in a positive light and to build a good impression of the university. A respondent illustrated, “I like to talk about different aspects of the university, especially if you can really talk people into the school, just like their whole facial expressions when you talk.” Another respondent said, “I really like being able to represent the school and make people feel really good about it. I like talking about why I like this place, and I hope people will like here too.” Respondents have love for the school, and volunteering as campus tour guides gave them an outlet to express the love, and to shape a positive image for the school as well.

#### **Contribution to campus visitors**

Ten tour guides also regarded helping visitors as a benefit. They felt accomplished when they were able to offer visitors information about the school and to show visitors more of the school on the tours. One respondent said, “it makes us happy to know that we helped [these



visitors] know a little bit more of [the school].” The other nine respondents agreed on the point that being helpful to the visitors made them feel great.

Helping visitors also ties to a sense of responsibility. Three respondents strongly felt that it is their responsibility to provide visitors with a positive experience of the university and to make sure that visitors’ needs are fulfilled. A typical illustration is, “it is important that you have a sense of responsibility to make sure that people...are getting a great feel of [the university] and going away with what they think they should.”

In summary, there are different types of benefits that college students derived from volunteering as campus tour guides in their leisure time. Respondents enjoyed being campus tour guides, and developed positive feelings about themselves and the university. The volunteering activity kept tour guides active and provided them with chance to make friends; it also improved students’ skills and benefited their future. At the same time, students made contributions to the university and to campus visitors.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

Our study found six among the nine benefits of volunteering promoted by Stebbins (1996) and tested by previous studies (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Arai, 2000; Graham, 2004; Jarvis & King, 1997; Oakleaf, 2006; Stebbins, 1998); they were personal satisfaction, self-image, having fun (self-gratification), social interaction, developing skills, and making contributions. However, our findings extend the knowledge of these six benefits by refining or broadening their meanings. We also found four benefits of volunteering that were not identified by previous research. Taken together, our study provides theoretical implications for the serious leisure framework, and insights into the benefits that college students derive from volunteering in leisure time.

First, Stebbins (1996) defined “self-enrichment” as cherished experience that includes both personal satisfaction and being altruistic. However, we found that campus tour guides talked about personal satisfaction and being altruistic as two separate benefits, rather than two dimensions of one benefit as Stebbins (1996) did. For campus tour guides, personal satisfaction means rewarding feelings when campus visitors acknowledge their efforts. Being altruistic, on the other hand, refers to giving back to the school and being helpful to campus visitors. Clearly, personal satisfaction is directed towards one’s self, while being altruistic is directed towards the university and visitors. Therefore, these two aspects may not always have the symbiotic relation that Stebbins (1996) indicated. Furthermore, Stebbins (1996) argued that it is group achievement, rather than personal endeavor, that provides volunteers with personal satisfaction. However, our finding disagrees with Stebbins’ (1996) argument. We found that campus tour guides derive personal satisfaction when visitors complement them about the tours. In this case, it is personal endeavor, rather than group action, that creates personal satisfaction. Plus, the respondents mostly

used “I” rather than “we” when they talked about the efforts they put into and personal satisfaction they received from guiding tours.

Second, our study found that the psychological benefit of a better self-image has two dimensions, including pride and prestige, and stronger confidence. What Stebbins (1996) meant by self-image is “known to others as a particular kind of volunteer” (p. 217). Such definition only hints on the dimension of pride and prestige in our findings, because being able to represent the university prompted the respondents to feel proud and privileged. Stebbins’ (1996) definition, however, did not capture the dimension of stronger confidence in our finding. Therefore, self-image may have different meanings for different volunteers, and researchers need to be sensitive to the possibility that self-image is a multidimensional concept.

Third, developing a stronger bond to the university and feeling pride and love for the school were two benefits of volunteering that previous research did not find using the serious leisure framework. The respondents indicated a sense of intimacy when they talked about a stronger bond with the university. While the respondents were able to distinguish between pride and love, they often talked about the two feelings together, indicating that the two feelings may be symbiotic rather than independent. Such findings also reveal that psychological benefits are not always self-focused; in this case, they are positive feelings directed towards the university. Another implication is that volunteering on campus contributes to the value of attending college, considering the respondents identify strongly with and attach themselves closely to the university.

Fourth, having fun, while downplayed by Stebbins (1996), is important to volunteer campus tour guides. Comments by the respondents conveyed a sense of enjoyment, which confirmed findings by previous research (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Jarvis & King, 1997; Oakleaf, 2006). Meanwhile, our findings show that there are different ways for campus tour guides to have fun—interacting with visitors on tours, giving tours with a partner guide who is a friend, and doing social activities with fellow tour guides outside the organization. Although Stebbins (1996)

classified having fun as a personal benefit, our findings indicate that having fun can be more social-oriented than self-oriented, i.e., it is social interactions that enable campus tour guides to have fun. Another important implication is that having fun means more than “hedonistic pleasure” (Stebbins, 1996, p. 217) for campus tour guides. Comments from the respondents imply that the fun they have, which is “beyond the party scene”, contributes to the meaningful experience of attending college. Additionally, the fact that some respondents appreciate the opportunity to improve skills while having fun helps specify why the fun is “beyond the party scene”.

Fifth, campus tour guides enjoyed social interactions with fellow volunteers and with volunteer service recipients, which confirmed past studies (Arai & Pedlar 1997; Arai, 2000; Oakleaf, 2006; Orr, 1998; Stebbins, 1998). However, the social benefit of campus tour guiding does not limit to the above two types of interactions—the respondents also mentioned being able to keep involved with the campus, which was not identified by previous research using the serious leisure framework. The finding reveals that volunteering can be a means to integrate people into a broader social context by engaging them in various activities. Moreover, the respondents emphasized having “real activities” to do on campus. It means that campus tour guiding helps keep students active and busy on campus, which contributes to higher quality college experience.

Sixth, volunteering as campus tour guides improved students’ skills and helped their future. Although these two benefits are not unique to college students, they are clearly important to this age group, since attending college is a time for students to get ready for the future (Arnett, 2000). Summarizing respondents’ comments, there were three ways in which campus tour guiding can help their future—the volunteer experience as a bright spot that makes one’s resume more impressive, becoming more competitive with improved skills, and using the volunteer experience to illustrate their competence during job interviews. While helping future is often related to finding a job, it can also take on a broader meaning of nurturing personal qualities (e.g. more

outgoing personality) that are beneficial to future development. Therefore, the findings uncovered the rich meaning of helping one's future, and showed that volunteering can benefit people's future in different ways.

Additionally, making contributions takes on rich meanings for the respondents. On one hand, respondents were happy about being able to give back to the university they love; on the other hand, they were keenly aware of the responsibility to provide campus visitors with detailed information. Our findings show that making contributions is directed towards both volunteer organization and service recipients, and these two aspects tie closely to each other. Making contributions to others also benefits tour guides themselves, considering they developed a sense of responsibility, a quality beneficial to future development of college students (Astin et al., 1999; Sax & Astin, 1997).

Overall, our study revealed various types of benefits of volunteering, and each type of benefit was strongly acknowledged by many respondents. Such finding implies that different campus tour guides derived different types of benefits from the same volunteering activity. The finding also indicates that each volunteer received more than one type of benefits from the volunteering activity.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

Our qualitative study looked at volunteering from the perspective of leisure. The results showed that the serious leisure framework, while is valuable, does not fully capture various types of benefits received by different age groups who participate in different volunteering activities. Therefore, our study extended knowledge on benefits of volunteering beyond the serious leisure framework. Our study also showed that college students derived various types of benefits from volunteering as campus tour guides in their leisure time. Considering ours is the first study in the leisure field that focuses on benefits received by *college student* volunteers, it serves as a starting point for leisure researchers to understand the influence of volunteering on college students.

Several future directions emerged from the study. First, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of volunteer campus tour guiding, further studies are needed to study campus tour guides from different universities in both fall and spring semesters. Second, future studies should look at benefits that college students receive from other volunteering activities in order to develop a deeper understanding of this age group. Most importantly, future studies need to venture beyond the serious leisure framework in order to extend our knowledge of volunteering as a leisure activity.

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