

**STUDENT VOLUNTEERING
AT BUSINESS EVENTS IN CHINA:
MOTIVATIONS AND CONCEPTUALIZATION**

By

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A thesis

Submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In Tourism Management

Victoria University of Wellington

2018

Abstract

With the continuous growth of the global event industry, the importance of event volunteering has been widely acknowledged, while the understanding beyond sports events is overlooked. Moreover, the current literature on event volunteering is very Western-centric, and volunteering in different cultural contexts needs to be further explored. China is undergoing substantial economic and social changes and scholarly attention has been given to its tourism development. However, little is known about volunteering in the Chinese context. This thesis examines student volunteering at business events in China by studying students' motivations for getting involved in volunteer activities at business events and conceptualization of this phenomenon.

An adapted constructivist grounded theory approach was applied. This qualitative study started with the researcher's auto-ethnography, demonstrating the emersion of the researcher in the explored field to gain a richness of data. This was followed by in-depth interviews with data triangulation from three groups: students, business event organisers, and education institution administrators. The combination of different methods reflected the holistic and critical research approach within the research paradigm, with a relativistic ontology, a subjectivist epistemology, and a naturalistic method. In the first stage of auto-ethnography, the researcher became an 'insider' at two business events in China and used personal experience to gain a fuller understanding of volunteering in this context. In the second stage, semi-structured interviews captured the perspectives of 20 students, 10 organisers, and 9 education institution administrators. Data were then analysed by a two-stage coding process using NVivo.

Five themes and two frameworks of motivations and conceptualization emerged from the analysis. The identified motivations were complex, with students driven by instrumental and self-centred motives, demonstrating the characteristics of reflexive volunteers. Volunteering was a tool to construct distinctive personal identities and achieve self-realization. Regarding the concept of student volunteering at business events, participants had a broad understanding relating to this phenomenon. The voluntary exchange nature was prominent with symbolic, productive, and economic elements. Monetary remunerations were accepted and the behaviours were not purely students' free choice, however, the voluntary spirit formed a distinctive line between volunteering at business events and other social activities. The results

illustrated the complexity of the concept by encapsulating notions of reflexive volunteering, personal benefits, payment, exchange nature, voluntary spirit, and independent choice.

Based on the exploration of motivation and conceptualization, it was identified that the phenomenon under research was a Chinese culturally specific construction of volunteering with the concepts of *zhi yuan* (volunteering) and *zhi yuan zhe* (volunteer(s)) demonstrating the culturally-situated understanding. Students' *zhi yuan* service at business events was multi-dimensional and paradoxical, which transcended altruism/solidarity explanations for volunteer motivation and the dichotomy of paid employment/unpaid work. The findings contribute to the cultural understanding of volunteering and suggests further debate about the understanding of volunteering in different countries to capture the complexities of the embedded sociality residing in volunteering practices. The results of this research have important implications for scholars and practitioners in terms of volunteering research, volunteer management, and volunteer programme establishment.

Acknowledgements

My thanks and appreciation are far weightier than expressed here and continues beyond these written statements.

During the past three years, innumerable people have assisted me in my Ph.D. study. They have offered their time, knowledge, wisdom, and support for me.

Special thanks:

To my supervisors Professor Karen Smith and Associate Professor Ian Yeoman for their incisive critiques, timely guidance, and encouragement and especially for their support during the tenuous and vulnerable periods I experienced in the preparation of proposal and this thesis.

To all my colleagues and friends for keeping me sane during these years.

To the volunteers in this study, thank you so much for your time and support.

I would also like to thank all the staff member at VUW who provided support or offered friendly encouragement and suggestions.

I am also indebted to VUW for giving me the financial support through the Ph.D. scholarships. Without this, I would have been unable to commence and complete this project.

Finally, I want to thank my parents for supporting me in these years.

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List of Abbreviations

CCPIA	China Crop Protection Industry Association
CYL	Communist Youth League
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OVMS	Olympic Volunteer Motivation Scale
SEVM	Special Event Volunteer Motivation
VFI	Volunteer Functions Inventory
VMS-ISE	Volunteer Motivation Scale for International Sporting Events
VSOs	Voluntary Service Organizations
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

Glossary

<i>Bo shi ji zhong</i> (博施济众)	Helping the public by bestowing something
<i>Ci shan</i> (慈善)	Charity
<i>Dan chun</i> (单纯)	Pure
<i>Feng xian</i> (奉献)	Dedication
<i>Hu zhu</i> (互助)	Mutual help
<i>Jian ai</i> (兼爱)	Universal love
<i>Jin bu</i> (进步)	Progress
<i>Ren ai</i> (仁爱)	Love thought
<i>She hui shi jian</i> (社会实践)	Social practice activities
<i>Wu chang zhi yuan zhe</i> (无偿志愿者)	Volunteers without payment
<i>Xing shan ji de</i> (行善积德)	One good turn deserves another
<i>Xue yi zhi yong</i> (学以致用)	Applying the knowledge
<i>Yi wu</i> (义务)	Obligation/duty
<i>You ai</i> (友爱)	Friendship
<i>You chang zhi yuan zhe</i> (有偿志愿者)	Volunteers with payment
<i>Zhi yuan</i> (志愿)	Volunteering
<i>Zhi yuan zhe</i> (志愿者)	Volunteer(s)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Volunteering is a complex phenomenon, and it spans a wide variety of types of activities, organisations, sectors, and nations. This thesis is about the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China. Through studying the motivations of student volunteers and the conceptualisation of volunteering by students, business event organisers and education institution administrators, this research examines how student volunteering at business events in China is understood. The researcher's personal experiences and insights provide the starting point, and in-depth interviews with the three groups constitute this qualitative study. A grounded theory method is adopted. The introductory chapter presents the background to this study, outlines the directions of this research, including the background of the research design, research context, research questions of the study, and the introduction of the adopted methodology. This chapter concludes with the outline of the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the study

My interest in this field was triggered by my own experiences as a volunteer, as a student and as a researcher equipped with knowledge of volunteering both in China and Western countries. During my previous study in China, I volunteered in different fields. Being a member of the Volunteer Association at my Chinese university, I participated in volunteering activities at Nursing House, Special School, and teaching at primary schools. I signed up for many events, including the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (Qingdao sailing competition) and Qingdao Beer Festival. I also volunteered at a number of exhibitions and conferences, such as Qingdao Auto Show, Jewellery Exhibition, the 46th Public Meeting of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and The Peak Forum on Tourist Attractions Strategy of Sustainable Development of China 2011. Volunteering was an essential part of my college life, which not only enriched my extracurricular life but was also a good opportunity to broaden my horizons. Different volunteer activities have brought me different benefits. For example, business events were a good platform for developing my communication and cooperation skills. I networked with industrial practitioners and gained a lot of industrial information. Experiencing such benefits, I was attracted by volunteering.

Moreover, I was paid a stipend [small fee] for volunteering, which I saw as pocket money. As a student, I gained personal insights, met new friends, and enhanced my CV. I also worked for six months at an exhibition organiser and helped organise AgroChemEx2014, which enabled me to think about volunteers at business events from the perspective of event organisers.

Besides getting involved in the volunteer activities, I also paid attention to the news on volunteering in different media. There are some claims that there is no pure volunteering in China and most of the volunteer activities are ‘publicity stunts’. In China, volunteering activities are more like tools to achieve personal goals on social media. Such stereotypical views about volunteering keep me thinking about its rationality and the reasons for that.

After coming to New Zealand in 2014, I kept the habit of volunteering, but I realised that the volunteering here was different to the volunteering I had done in China. At this point, I began asking myself what volunteering is. It was then that I realised my personal journey in this field had begun. I searched for the related literature and noticed that research on volunteering is dominated by Western perspectives. After the preliminary reading, I realised that in many aspects, the research findings were not consistent with my own understanding. From cross-cultural studies (e.g., Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Handy et al., 2000), I found that there was considerable variation globally as to who is considered as a volunteer. Rather than simply labelling individuals as volunteers, it is essential to explore the meanings individuals assign to their experiences and behaviours to understand how these meanings are developed in different cultures and contexts. Gradually, I began to understand that as a social phenomenon, volunteering has strong ‘local characteristics’, and if volunteering is influenced by local context, how is volunteering conceptualised in China? Do the Chinese have the same understanding of volunteering as Westerners? Are there culturally specific characteristics that different from other countries? Intrigued by this, I designed this research to explore how student volunteering at business events is understood in China.

‘*Zhi yuan zhe*’ (志愿者) and ‘*zhi yuan*’ (志愿) are the Chinese terms for volunteer and volunteering. The term ‘volunteer’ was introduced to China in the late 1980s when the government implemented the policy of reform and opening. However, it was not until 2008 that the term ‘volunteer’ appeared more widely in the media in China. According to the 2011 China Volunteering Status Report, the Beijing Olympic Games and Wenchuan Earthquake stimulated a large number of *zhi yuan zhe* in 2008, making it an unparalleled *Zhi Yuan Year*

(UNDP, 2011). Although the term ‘volunteer’ was introduced from Western countries, the voluntary spirit has a long history in China’s traditional local culture. This will be further explained in the next section. Terminologically the Chinese word ‘*zhi yuan*’ is used in connection with ‘volunteering’ in English. However, very limited attention has been paid to how *zhi yuan* activity is understood in China. While scholars (e.g., Handy et al., 2000) have found that understanding about volunteering is culturally sensitive and the opinions on how to define volunteer activities are different in different countries, research on this issue in China is scarce.

Recently, attention was drawn to volunteering in March 2015, when the Ministry of Education in China issued a regulation to incorporate students’ volunteer services into the evaluation of student performances. Excellent volunteering records would promote the chances of winning scholarships and honours for students. Education institutions¹ were requested to map out their own detailed evaluation standards and to keep student-volunteering experiences on record for school enrolment and evaluation. Students that have spent 100, 300, 600, 1000, and 1500 hours doing voluntary work during their three or four years study can be confirmed and classified as one to five-star volunteers (Ministry of Education, 2015). Hence, students are increasingly pressured into volunteering or at least expect to engage if they want to succeed. Most higher education institutions have not yet come up with detailed regulations in response this policy, but it has triggered fresh discussion about the nature and the role of volunteering on social media such as the Education Forum². Moreover, there are some lively discussions on the widely existing payment of volunteers in China; *You chang zhi yuan zhe* (volunteers with payment) and *wu chang zhi yuan zhe* (volunteers without payment) are common words in the Chinese media. Nonetheless, there has been no systematic research to explore what this regulation means and how it reflects on the understanding of student volunteering. Moreover, with the deepening of market economy reforms, China has been undergoing tremendous transformation and changes in recent years. However, the research on volunteering in contemporary China is lacking although a few scholars like Fleischer (2011) and Xu (2012) have explored the phenomenon of volunteering in China. Thus the most recent understanding of this phenomenon is still unknown, making it urgent to explore this issue. More research is needed, particularly in the area of students volunteering after the regulations were issued.

¹ ‘Education institutions’ is used as a collective noun for colleges and universities.

² Education forum is an online platform for panel discussions, interactive workshops, and other activities among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers in the education field in China.

I am also aware of the lack of research on volunteering in the field of business events. A variety of research on volunteering at events from around the globe has emerged, which predominantly focuses on volunteer motivation at sports events (Smith, Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, & Baum, 2014) with a lack of research into other types of event including business events. The existing research on event volunteering is usually from the perspective of the volunteer experience such as motivation and satisfaction (e.g., Fairley, Gardiner, & Filo, 2016; Koutrou & Pappous, 2016) or focused on a certain event (e.g., Kristiansen, Skirstad, Parent, & Waddington, 2015). So far, no study has explored the conceptualisation or understanding of the volunteering phenomenon in the field of business events. Adding to this is researchers' calls for rethinking volunteering and investigation on volunteer behaviours in different contexts (e.g., Handy et al., 2000). Some attention has been paid to the social enterprise model of volunteering, which has a different face from the charity model of volunteering (Wilson, Hendricks, & Smithies, 2001). While research that addresses the understanding of volunteering has focused on public sectors and non-profit areas (e.g., Brudney, 1999; Paine & Hill, 2016; Rotolo & Wilson, 2006), very little is known about how the event context affects the understanding, and even less on the nature of volunteering in for-profit and private areas (e.g., business events). In addition, although there are a large number of studies on student volunteering (see Section 2.2.3 and Section 2.3.4), only a few of them focus on this in the Chinese context and even less on exploring the recent changes influenced by social, cultural, and policy factors. This research project addresses these gaps by not only focusing on the context of business events but also in turn giving a voice to a non-Western country (i.e., China). Therefore, it advances research on volunteering and provides an understanding of student volunteering at business events by encompassing the contextual factors and emerging trends in the volunteering field.

1.3 Volunteers at business events

This is a pertinent time for a comprehensive consideration of volunteering at business events. There are some good reasons to conduct research in the context of business events, which refers to meetings, conventions, and exhibitions (including trade and consumer shows), and these are often called the MICE industry (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions). First, researchers have extensively examined volunteering in a variety of sports events (Smith et al., 2014). Until very recently, however, few studies have explored the issue in the business event context, and this failing leaves a crucial knowledge gap, which will be further explained in Section 2.4. Second, with the expansion of these events, volunteering at

business events is increasing in popularity, making it urgent to explore this phenomenon. China, with the biggest population in the world, is experiencing rapid economic growth and sparing no effort to develop the service sector with the deepening of free-market principles. The business event industry has gained priority support from government and has experienced rapid growth in recent decades. Though there is a lack of complete and authoritative statistics, some numbers can help demonstrate this trend. Taking the exhibition industry as an example, there has been consistent growth in the number of exhibitions and indoor exhibition space with 4.755 million square metres in 2014, becoming the second largest after USA in scale globally (UFI, 2014). Nearly 9,000 exhibitions have been held in recent years in China (EIA, 2016). The meeting industry has also experienced rapid development. According to a Statistical Analysis Report on China's Exhibition Industry Development (2016) from the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, more than 800,000 meetings with over 50 attendees were held in China in 2016. For large-scale business events such as Canton Fair³, hundreds of on-site volunteers are needed; even for the local events like Qingdao Furniture Exhibition, dozens of volunteers are needed. This growth has led to an increasing need for staff, including volunteers.

There are many roles that a volunteer may perform during a business event, including customer service at the registration desk, protocol and languages, and operational support for attendees. In most cases, volunteers represent the event organiser providing service for event attendees. In China, volunteers are usually required to work for several days continuously (2–3 days during the event period plus 1–2 days preparation before the event). There are no shifts, and volunteers are required to work for the whole day. Students studying at event are the majority of volunteers at Chinese business events. Most events are held regularly, so event organisers choose to establish long-term collaboration with local education institutions. During an event, the whole class of students are organised collectively to provide on-site service. In other events that have been studied, e.g., sports events, most attendees are there to have fun and enjoy a leisure experience. However, the attendees at business events are business people, with events having a very formal atmosphere. Hence, volunteering at business events has its own specialities compared with that at other event types.

³ Canton Fair is also known as China Import and Export Fair. It was established in 1957 and co-hosted by the Ministry of Commerce of PRC and the People's Government of Guangdong Province and China Foreign Trade Centre. Canton Fair is a comprehensive international trade event with the longest history, the largest scale and the greatest business turnover in China.

Focusing on volunteering at business events in China in the present research provides an additional opportunity to further explore event volunteering in a non-sports-event context beyond its specific contribution to the understanding of volunteering in China. In this project, the context of business events brings several contextual elements to event volunteering. As a result, this research project extends the event volunteering to a different event type, and it has implications for business events, theory, policy, and practice.

1.4 Research context – China

Volunteering is a highly complex phenomenon that is temporally and locally constituted. We cannot fully comprehend the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China without taking into account other volunteering activities in the Chinese contemporary society. With historical roots, the volunteering at business events is deeply connected to China's present-day realities and shaped by multiple factors such as politics, culture, and education.

In China, Confucianism, as the mainstream culture, advocates the collective benefits and highlights individuals' duty or obligation to the community (e.g., Sun, 2016). That is, Chinese culture emphasises collectivism. Though 'volunteer' is a term that originated from Western countries, the voluntary spirit has a long tradition in Chinese culture, such as the *ren ai* (love thought) and *ci shan* (charity) in Confucianism and the recent *Lei Feng*⁴ spirit. During the Maoist period from the 1950s to 1970s, volunteering was called *yi wu* (obligation, duty). Demonstrating the shift from the notions of selfless sacrifice in forced volunteering to emphasising individual's personal choice, today it is called *zhi yuan* (aspiration, wish). *Feng xian* (dedication), *you ai* (friendship), *hu zhu* (mutual help), and *jin bu* (progress) are the four aspects of voluntary spirit in China (Huang, 2012). The voluntary spirit is a very abstract concept. It refers to individuals' value or attitude and it is also an inherent force of volunteerism. The voluntary spirit demonstrates the sense of responsibility to himself/herself, to others, and to the society (Huang, 2012).

The volunteer behaviour in China is no less prevalent than other places (Hodgkinson, 2003). Volunteering has drawn much attention from the public and government in China in the last decade, and a strong volunteer service network has been formed with the help of government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (UNDP, 2011). Volunteering is usually encouraged and framed by the government through large, politicised, and collective

⁴ Lei Feng was a soldier who died in an accident in 1962 at the age of 22. He had anonymously carried out numerous good deeds and he became the moral model for Chinese people. March 5th is the National Day for Learning from Lei Feng and in 1999 it was renamed the National Volunteers Day.

campaigns. Over the past decades, spontaneous volunteer participation has developed rapidly, but compulsory volunteer participation through top-to-bottom, government-based organisations is still prevalent among Chinese citizens (Xu, 2014). Government mandate could suggest an obligation to provide volunteer service. It appears that these factors have influenced participants' volunteer behaviours in terms of participation and motivation. Volunteer behaviour is seen as a superior type of morality and respectable social behaviour (Xu & Ngai, 2011). However, China is in a stage of rapid transition with different ideas appearing, and a shift from collectivism to individualism has been identified recently (e.g., Barber, 2001; Cao, 2009). It is important to consider how such social changes have influenced volunteer behaviour among Chinese.

Students are the main force of volunteers in China. In China, the enrolment rate of higher education reached 40% by 2016 (Dong, Zhang, & Ding, 2016). The young people are instilled with an urge to help the country, and to give back to society and the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL) has been the most important impetus for students' formal volunteering since the 1990s (Xu, 2012). It is also important to note the situation of Chinese students. The current higher education system in China makes students relatively isolated from the wider community. Most students board on campus and their social activities focus on on-campus student clubs and associations. Moreover, long classes, a heavy study burden, and rigid schedules lead to less free time. Such study experiences make students feel 'empty' and they tend to 'search for meaning' by getting involved in off-campus activities, of which volunteering is one option (Fleischer, 2011). Students may choose to participate in *zhi yuan* activities to escape their stressful student reality, to do something meaningful, or to socialise or learn new skills (Fleischer, 2011). In order to promote quality education for students among colleges and universities, the education institutions carry out study-related practices to cultivate students' innovative spirit and practical ability and to accelerate the process of socialisation of students (Zhao, 2007). According to the institutions' training requirements and objectives, students can participate in a variety of social, political, economic, cultural and educational activities during the holidays and spare time, such as teaching activities, volunteering, short-term internships, and themed investigations on such as environmental protection, cultural roots, or grassroots people's livelihood (Tan & Zheng, 2016). This is one characteristic of the Chinese higher education system.

The concept of 'volunteers' is itself in question globally. Most of the existing studies on specific topics of volunteering such as volunteer motivation and satisfaction are conducted

without explaining how they define who or what is a volunteer. Finding a definition of volunteer(ing) in China is a complex undertaking, not only for the researchers but also the practitioners. Yet the understanding of volunteer(ing) is essential to exploring other related issues in this field. In China, volunteering is most commonly defined in literature and policy as an organised helping behaviour based on social responsibility, and volunteers usually refer to those that can provide long-term service with certain professional skills (Wang & Hu, 2012). This is fairly narrow in that it is directly taken from Western countries and is based on formal and ongoing volunteering while it does not take into account the rapidly increasing informal and episodic volunteering.

Researching student volunteering at business events needs to be considered within the above context of China's wider cultural, political and educational factors. As Hustinx, Handy, and Cnaan (2012) put it, the unique characteristics of China's political and cultural constellation pose fundamental challenges to using the Western conceptual lens, and the Western notion of volunteering is not directly applicable to the Chinese context. This study takes into account that volunteering is described as a 'container notion', including different types of activities (McDonald & Warburton, 2001) and the cultural differences (Handy et al., 2000). Using grounded theory methodology enables a systematic analysis of multiple concepts in understanding student volunteering at business events in China, which has not been previously researched. This current research establishes an understanding of volunteering within the business events context that is grounded on participants' own understanding and is inclusive of culturally and contextual specific characteristics. Consequently, this research offers researchers multiple 'points of entry' for future research in this field, and has implications for volunteering theory and practice.

1.5 Research questions

As discussed in Section 1.3, volunteers play an important role at business events. For event organisers, a primary task is to recruit enough volunteers and motivate them. Therefore, it is important to identify the motivational mechanisms. Despite the importance to event organisers, volunteer motivation is multiple, ever changing, and also unavoidably influenced by the local culture (Handy et al., 2009). In addition, most existing event volunteering research is from the Western perspective and sports event focused. Much attention has been paid to volunteer motivation at sports events. With the emerging of the business events industry, more volunteers have become involved, and it is important to understand what

attracts people to get involved in volunteering activities. However, few scholars have explored volunteer motivation in the context of business events. Given the importance and complexity of volunteer motivations, this research contributes to the debate by exploring the issue of volunteer motivation at business events. As Silverman (2005) contended, only after establishing how people construct meanings and actions can the analyst pursue other issues. Asking the question of conceptualisation allows the researchers to come back to the very origin of volunteer work, which is the basis for conducting other research in this field. Volunteering is a collective noun that includes a wide range of activities. There are a large number of studies on the definition of volunteering and no agreement has been reached. The opinions on understanding the volunteer activities are different from a global perspective. In China, the term of volunteering has been transported from Western countries and it has only around twenty years' history. Very little attention has been paid to how Chinese conceptualise the phenomenon of volunteering.

This study aims to explore two questions:

1. Why do students volunteer at business events in China?

The expressed and underlying motivations of volunteers are diverse, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. By identifying the internal and external factors that motivate students to volunteer at business events, a model of student volunteers' motivations at business events in China will be developed.

2. How volunteering at business events in China is conceptualised by student volunteers, event organisers, and education institution administrators?

Conceptualisation is the process of constructing meanings and forming a concept or an abstract idea of something. 'Conceptualise' is not equal to 'define'.. In this study, 'conceptualise' refers to participants' understandings of the volunteering at business events in China.

By comparing the understandings of three groups of participants – student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators (see Section 3.5) – the meaning of students' volunteer behaviours will be conceptualised from different perspectives. The conceptualisation will then consider the core meanings of volunteering in Western literature (Section 2.5) and their application to volunteering in a different context: business events in China.

A note on terminology: In conducting this research, I used the term of ‘volunteer(ing)’ until the data collection stage. Through analysis, it was identified that there are distinctions between the volunteering in the Chinese context with that in the Western context. Hence, the second half of this thesis uses ‘*zhi yuan*’ and ‘*zhi yuan zhe*’ to represent the Chinese context volunteering and volunteer(s). More specifically, ‘volunteer(ing)’ is used in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. From Chapter 4, ‘*zhi yuan*’ and ‘*zhi yuan zhe*’ are used. This allows the reader to see the grounded theory analysis process in action through the thesis.

1.6 Methodology

The methodological framework is guided by research questions and underpinned by the research paradigm. The research questions in this thesis focus on motivation and conceptualisation, which are about people’s words, understandings, and perceptions. Considering the nature of research questions, a qualitative investigation is adopted, which emphasises ‘understanding rather than explanation’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 126), consistent with the constructivist paradigm. Due to the exploratory nature of this research and lack of study in the booming business event industry and the Chinese context, a grounded theory method is used. It is a methodology that leads to the construction of theory grounded empirically and conceptually. Grounded theory allows the researcher to explore from ‘ground zero’ and lets the data guide the development of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study centres on inductively analysing the reasons students participate in volunteering (‘why’) and constructing a conceptualisation of the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China (‘how’). A methodological triangulation with grounded theory, auto-ethnography, and in-depth interviews from three perspectives (student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators) aiming to overcome problems of bias and validity was adopted. This made possible the development of a comprehensive theory of the phenomenon under research.

As a starting point of this grounded theory, auto-ethnography was chosen due to the exploratory nature of this study, the lack of previous research in this area, and the ‘insider’ insight it could yield (Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013). Auto-ethnography recognises the researcher as a representative of the questions under investigation and believes that the researcher herself/himself is worthy of expression. It allows the researcher to gain a general idea of the research field by advocating the value of inner knowing (Bainbridge, 2007). The researcher, myself, as a student with much volunteering experience, became a volunteer at

two business events the Shandong Province Entrepreneurship Programs Exhibition and the Qingdao 25th International Fabric and Accessories Procurement Fair, TexQingdao, China, to embrace experiences, thoughts, and participant observations. Adopting auto-ethnography as the start and as the foundation of the research design, this research stands on the position that there is a mutuality and partnership between participants and the researcher during the research process. This position triggered the grounded theorists to rethink the role of researcher in designing their research and to consider how to construct a mutual meaning from the interviews and further develop it into a grounded theory. The data were recorded in the form of personal narrative in reflective daily journals. The auto-ethnography experience also provided useful insights for organising the following interviews.

Building on the auto-ethnographic field study, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the second phase of data collection. Thirty-nine participants from three respondent groups were interviewed, and they consisted of 20 student volunteers, 10 event organisers, and 9 education institution administrators from different cities and different organisations/institutions. After each interview, initial coding was conducted to gain the general themes before moving to the next interview. The auto-ethnographic data and interview data were integrated for focused coding and further analysis. Nvivo was used to assist the analysis. The coding process was not entirely linear, but a constant comparison process. The strategy of theoretical sampling was used to define the emergent categories and their properties. I also undertook memo writing throughout the research process. The methodology will be further explained in Chapter 3.

1.7 Contribution to the knowledge

This thesis will set out the contributions of the research where an understanding the Chinese context student volunteering at business events is developed by examining the motivations and conceptualization. There are three key contributions. First, the study posits that instrumental and individualised motivations are evident, demonstrating the characteristics of reflexive volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). Second, volunteering at business events in China is conceptualised as possessing multi-dimensional and paradoxical features including the highlight of voluntary spirit, low-level payment, and mutual benefit. The study develops a contextual understanding of volunteering, transcending the individualistic/collectivist explanations for volunteer motivation and the dichotomy of paid employment/unpaid volunteer work. Third, this study also contributes a different context in

the study of volunteering by focusing on students in China and business events - a move from the Western context of much volunteering research, and the dominance of sports in the event volunteering context.

1.8 Chapter outline

This thesis is presented in six chapters. It follows grounded theory approach, in which data collection and analysis are conducted simultaneously and literature review is not conducted until finishing the analysis. Chapter 1 is the introduction and Chapter 3 outlines the method. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 present the findings, with Chapter 6 being the conclusion. Chapter 2 was the last chapter to be written and reviews the literature. The grounded theory explorative approach not only influenced the process of this research but also the logic and reasoning of it. Hence, the iteration between empirical data and analysis process is reflected in the structure of this thesis.

Chapter 1 has provided a background to this study, including personal motivations, and introduces the research context in China. It then outlines the research questions to be investigated and the adopted method.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the conceptualisation of volunteering, volunteering at events, students volunteering and volunteer motivations both in China and Western countries. Research gaps are identified and a conceptual framework is presented. Although this is the second chapter in the thesis, it was not finalised until after the data analysis due to the nature of constructivist grounded theory, where the literature review is not suggested after data analysis.

Chapter 3 outlines the research paradigm and then justifies the selection of the qualitative research design. The role of the researcher is highlighted. This chapter provides details on the methodological framework, which describes the methodological approach of data collection and analysis. The chapter discusses trustworthiness, limitations, and reflections on the research process.

Chapter 4 presents the codes and categories that emerged from the data, which form five emergent themes grouped by the two questions and based on the two-stage coding analysis of the data. It interprets the data in regard to the five themes but without theoretical explanation. This chapter includes a discussion of several key reflections based on the researcher's theoretical sensitivity.

Chapter 5 provides a theoretical understanding of student volunteering at business events in China. Based on the five emergent themes in Chapter 4, it further discusses the questions of motivation and conceptualisation by combining with the literature. The contextual factors of China, business events, and students are discussed. It finishes with a further polished grounded theory.

Chapter 6 concludes the study. The research questions are revisited, and the theoretical contributions and implications for practitioners both in the event industry and government sectors are drawn out. The limitations of this study, delimitations, as well as the avenues for future directions are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: VOLUNTEERS AND EVENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Due to this research taking a grounded theory approach, it is necessary to discuss the role and position of literature review in this project. There have been disputations about the literature review in grounded theory and it becomes the question of the chicken or the egg. The issues of how and when to engage with literature are often problematic, especially for novice researchers like Ph.D. students (Dunne, 2011). One common misassumption of grounded theory is that researchers should enter one field without any knowledge of existing research when formulating their own studies (Suddaby, 2006). But this does not mean that a literature review should not be conducted. Rather, debate is about when it should be conducted and how extensive it should be. To answer this, it is necessary to reflect on the origins of grounded theory. Dating back to the classic grounded theorists, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978, 1998) advocated that undertaking the literature review should happen after the researchers have developed the analysis: ‘when the grounded theory is nearly completed during sorting and writing up, then the literature search in the substantive area can be accomplished and woven into the theory as more data for constant comparison’ (Glaser, 1998, p. 67).

In this study, the author, as an early researcher, did an early literature review with the main purpose of identifying the research gaps in this field. Heath’s (2006) principle ‘to avoid imposing predetermined understanding and existing frameworks on the investigation’ was strictly followed and the researcher kept reminding herself not to detract from the quality and originality of the research. To remain true to a grounded theory design, this research came back to the literature review section during the writing up stage after analysing the data. During this process, efforts were made to integrate the existing literature with the current research as part of the method proposed by Glaser (1992).

The literature review in this research does not aim to provide key concepts or suggest hypotheses for the coding process, but by viewing the existing studies related to the two research questions (motivation and conceptualisation), it ‘shows gaps or bias in existing

knowledge, thus providing a rationale for this type of qualitative study' (Creswell, 2007, p. 190). The literature review in this research concerns the substantive topic of volunteering, focusing on motivation and conceptualisation. It finds that most of the studies on volunteer motivation and conceptualisation are from Western countries' perspectives and there is a gap for exploring why Chinese students volunteer at business events and how individuals conceptualise this phenomenon in a Chinese context.

The literature review also serves another purpose in this study – to enhance the competence and quality of the output of this research. That is, it is an essential source and tool for facilitating the comparison process. Constant comparison is essential throughout the whole research. By comparing the findings in grounded theory design with other scholars' ideas, the researcher realises how others' ideas illuminate the coding process and how his/her own research extends or challenges the dominant ideas in the field.

This chapter reviews the volunteering studies both in Western countries and China, with a focus on two aspects: motivation and conceptualisation. The discussion in Chapter 2 is based on the premise that the motives and meanings for volunteering have substantial differences in different countries and cultures with local values and norms. The focus is on the exploration of student participants' motivations and the construction of conceptualisation of the behaviour, resulting in the understanding of the under-investigated phenomenon. Attention is paid to the comparison between Western countries and China.

The term 'volunteering' covers a wide diversity of meanings, insofar as the definition of volunteering or the perception of 'who is a volunteer' is not universal. The first research question (see Section 1.5) explores how Chinese people understand the phenomenon of student volunteering in the context of business events. In order to provide a background and context for this study, this chapter begins with volunteering field in China. Considering that the context of this study is business events and the research group is student volunteers, the volunteer motivation studies at events and among students are presented here. The literature review of conceptualisation of volunteering is discussed following that, with the emphasis on different perspectives and emerging trends. Though the phenomenon being investigated is in a specific context, the literature review presented here is sensitive to the local context but more importantly, also brings a global perspective to exploring the concepts emergent from this study.

2.2 Volunteering in China: Background and context

Volunteer activities are shaped by the context in which they happen. To better understand the phenomenon under investigation, it is necessary to look at the literature on volunteering in China in general in order to make this field clear and to improve the researcher's theoretical sensitivity, which refers to the ability of the researcher to work with the data in both theoretical and sensitive ways (Walker & Myrick, 2006).

2.2.1 Civic society and volunteering

In the 1970s, China had economic reform and the open-door policy⁵, leading to great economic and social changes. It was not until then that voluntary services were encouraged. Since then, the Voluntary Service Organisations (VSOs) and NGOs have gradually established, and from the early 1990s, the size of the Chinese non-profit sector and the number of VSOs have increased rapidly (Brandsen & Simsa, 2016). According to a report from the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2016), there are over 180,000 VSOs that have been formally registered and established in China. The VSOs are the vehicles of cultivating citizen spirit and platforms of citizen participation. They play a vital role in the construction of citizen communities in China (Yang, 2009). Xu (2017) argued that the legitimising of the grassroots voluntary service organisations serves as a policy executor to carry out the government policies due to the top-to-bottom administration mode in China. Nowadays, the non-profit sector in China is facing fundamental changes, characterised by rapid growth and new modes of mobilisation.

The most important impetus for the emergence of volunteerism in contemporary China is the government (Cui, 2009). The government promotes volunteerism by establishing national monitoring systems as a policy maker, legitimatising the grassroots voluntary organisations, and creating volunteer schemes and organising top-down movements (Xu, 2017). Indeed, most volunteering activities in China are initiated and controlled by the government. That is, volunteering initiatives are driven from the top down. Hence, volunteer activities in China can be understood as state-sponsored efforts to achieve political goals through intensive and targeted mobilisation of active personal commitment (Yeakey & Bennett, 1990), and most of them are project-based, demanding little ongoing time investment. This is quite different from volunteering in Western countries, where volunteering is usually understood as a free

⁵ The Chinese economic reform (改革开放) refers to the program of economic reforms termed "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" in China that was stated in December 1978 by reformists within the Communist Party of China, led by Deng Xiaoping.

choice motivated by a variety of factors such as helping others or love of the activities, and recruited by non-profits and voluntary associations (e.g. Cnaan et al., 1996; Stebbins & Graham, 2004).

In China, volunteering is encouraged as a tool to label participants as socially responsible individuals and a superior type of morality and respectable social behaviour (Fleischer, 2011; Xu & Ngai, 2011). The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games greatly promoted the development of volunteering and accelerated the pace of legislation of volunteer activities in China (Tang, 2007). In many provinces, there are rules that encourage government organisations, education institutions, and even companies to give preference to outstanding volunteers with many volunteer experiences. The Chinese government promotes volunteer service through a discourse that blends concepts of cultural competence and self-realisation with a concern for the common good, and volunteer activity is officially promoted as a means of self-development (Fleischer, 2011; Rolandsen, 2008).

The CYL is the most powerful organisation to promote, coordinate, and govern volunteering activities in China (Xu, 2012). Hustinx, Meijs, Handy, and Cnaan (2012) proposed the perspective of ‘post-revolutionary mobilization’ to understand volunteering in the Chinese context. They believe that China has concentrated on the student population and encouraged them to volunteer during their student careers in an attempt to build a harmonious society and reduce social tension. The government mandates volunteering. For example, the government officers are required to provide volunteer service in environmental projects and community-based events. For students, the Chinese government organises various top-down movements such as Graduates Volunteering in Western China and encourages student volunteers to relieve poverty, promote education, and alleviate unemployment (Xu, 2017).

Very few studies have explored the conceptualisation of Chinese volunteering, although there is a growing body of research on volunteering in China, including youth volunteers (e.g., Zhao, 2015), volunteers at Olympic Games and the World Expo (e.g., Xu, 2010), volunteer management (e.g., Wan, 2015), and the functions of volunteering (e.g., Shen, 2009). One of the reasons is that the national regulation on volunteer service in China has not been well established yet (Peng, 2009). Only in recent years has China worked on The Volunteer Service Act of the People’s Republic of China, and the local government organisations and associations are also working on the update of their regulations in accordance with the National Act. Among these regulations, the conceptualisation of volunteer service is usually

associated with the terms of ‘volunteer’, ‘voluntary spirit’, and ‘volunteer organization’, and the explanations of key concepts (e.g., volunteering, volunteers, and volunteer organisation) are inconsistent and obscure. For example, Chinese Young Volunteer Association (2002) proposed that volunteers are the people or group that engage in public welfare undertakings based on a certain sense of morality, belief, conscience, sympathy, and responsibility. Hangzhou Volunteer Service Regulations (2003) pointed out that volunteers are the people that provide society and others with volunteer service, and who register at non-profit organisations. Mu (2005), based on a review of the existing studies, proposed that volunteering in a Chinese context refers to any voluntary contribution of individual’s time and energy regardless of material payment for the purpose of promoting social development. After analysing the regulations on volunteer legislations at over 20 provinces in China, Xiao and Long (2011) noticed that most of the definitions and explanations are directly translated from Western countries without combining the realities in China. They identified that free choice, non-reimbursement, and public welfare are three accepted characteristics of volunteering, but there is a dispute about the organisational traits. Most legislations stipulate volunteering should be arranged through organisations or registered at volunteer service organisations, while some legislations hold a broad definitions proposing that volunteers are those who provide service voluntarily to others with intelligence, labour, and skills, whose aim is not rewards. This is contradictory to the fact that there are a large number of volunteer activities that are not conducted through organisations. In addition, these regulations are mainly expressed through the government’s perspective, while how other stakeholders understand this is still unclear. Hence, it is urgent for the government and scholars to develop a Chinese contextual conceptualisation of volunteering and further research is warranted to explore the understanding of this phenomenon from different perspectives.

2.2.2 Volunteer culture in China

The concept of volunteer has been widely accepted in China since 2000s, especially after the Beijing Olympic Games and Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008, although ‘volunteer’ is a terminology that originated from Western countries and came to China in the early stages of reform and opening up in the 1990s (Cai, 2010). After that, terms like ‘volunteerism’, ‘volunteering’, and ‘volunteers’ were literally translated into Chinese. In 1994, the first volunteer organisation, China Youth Volunteer Association, was established, demonstrating the start of volunteer service in China. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, volunteering was called *yi wu* (obligation, duty) during the Maoist period from 1950s to

1970s. The Chinese people were forced to volunteer, which was a shift from the selfless devotion and free choice. Until now, volunteering in China has had just over 20 years' development and most of the ideas of volunteering have transferred from Western countries. However, the voluntary spirit like *ren ai* (the love thought), *jian ai* (universal love), *bo shi ji zhong* (helping the public by bestowing something), and *xing shan ji de* (one good turn deserves another) has had over two thousand years' history in the traditional Chinese culture. To better understand the volunteer behaviour, it is necessary to know the wider Chinese culture and how it influences people's volunteer experience.

The Chinese culture is one of the prototypical collectivistic cultures that emphasises collectivism and highlights individuals' obligations to the community, which are heavily influenced by Confucianism (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Sun, 2016). Group harmony, behavioural regulation, and collective interest are emphasised, while highlighting that personal interest is seen as a threat to group harmony (Chen, Yu, Zhang, Li, & McGue, 2015). Therefore, compared to Western culture, the Chinese might be more likely to talk about the impacts to the group in terms of certain behaviour (e.g., volunteering) and avoid discussing personal interests or considerations in public. Furthermore, Chinese employers highly value the 'fitness' of the employees, which may increase their collective belonging sense and set barriers against individuals proposing their own requests (e.g., Peng, Wong, & Song, 2016). These social-cultural contexts embedded in Chinese culture will influence the Chinese volunteer experience.

However, transformative changes have been identified in the social ecology of Chinese society during the last several decades. Evidence has demonstrated that the Chinese culture is more individualistic nowadays. One example is Hamamura and Xu's (2015) study, which examined the usage of Chinese personal pronouns associated with individualism-collectivism. They found that there is an increasing usage of individualistic pronouns and decreasing collectivistic pronouns in China, indicating the increase of individualism. Due to the liberation of individuality and the promotion of subjectivity, values that used to be excluded, such as self-consciousness, utility concept, and self-interest motives, have become accepted by the public and have strengthened gradually since the 1980s (Shen, 2009). At the same time, some new elements such as public welfare, environmental protection, sympathy, and volunteerism emerged among the social psychology. Influenced by this macro social and cultural background, the voluntary spirit and volunteer culture has spread in China, promoting the development of *zhi yuan* activities.

2.2.3 Students and volunteer activities

In China, youth, particularly university students, are the main force of volunteers, especially for the national and international events. In the 2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympics Games, the number of applicants from Beijing was 256,000, of which 181,500 (71%) were students (Zhang, 2008). The Chinese government is trying to institutionalise and normalise college student volunteering (Sun, 2008). In order to carry out government policies on volunteer programmes from higher-level organisations (e.g., Ministry of Education) and to encourage students' participation, many education institutions include the performance of volunteer service in the scholarship and honours assessment processes (Li, 2010). For example, it is a common practice among education institutions to admit students who volunteer for a year in the undeveloped west areas of China for one year to postgraduate studies without taking the entrance exams. Participating in such government-initiated volunteer activities is a prerequisite to joining the Party, which also has a direct influence on their employment prospects after graduation (Dong & Xue, 2014).

Volunteering is one of the most important forms for students' social practice activities (i.e., *she hui shi jian*), which are designed to encourage students to connect with the local community, to enhance learning through practice, and to improve their comprehensive ability (Pu & Zhu, 2017; Yang, 2010). It is also one of the most popular ways of public participation in building a harmonious society, as well as promoting the development in western-China. Hence, the government uses college students' volunteering as a tool to achieve political goals (Huang, 2012). Students can gain certain advantages for their employment, especially in the government sector and future study. Within such a system, scholars have pointed out that it is necessary to investigate the influence on student volunteers' motivations of participating in volunteering (Meng, 2010).

Based on a systematic research on CNKI, which is a key database in China, I identified that the number of Chinese-language journal articles have been published on volunteering over the last decades. This body of literature has predominantly focused on sports events (e.g., Wu, 2006; Xiao, 2017; Yu, Sun, Hu, & Wang, 2016) and volunteer management (e.g., He, 2015; Liu & Feng, 2005; Liu & Wu, 2011). How to set up a long-term mechanism (from the perspectives of government, education institutions, and students) for college students get involved in volunteering is also a topic that has attracted researchers and practitioners (e.g., Ma, 2015; Wang, 2011). While these studies have focused on volunteer management from the perspective of government and organisations, few are conducted from the viewpoint of

volunteers. It appears, however, that this body of Chinese-language literature is still mostly descriptive in nature and that the phenomenon of student volunteering needs to be further examined in light of existing studies in Western countries. With the increasing attention being paid to student volunteers in China, this is an important time to do this research.

In order to develop the research questions, more background on volunteering in general is needed. Now the discussion will move to the literature that is related to the two research questions of volunteer motivation and conceptualisation to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under research.

2.3 Volunteer motivations

Volunteer motivation can be defined as a drive of individuals seeking out volunteer opportunities, to commit themselves to voluntary helping, and to sustain their involvement in volunteering over extended periods of time (Clary et al., 1998; Lee et al., 2014; Pearce, 1983). Knowing why people volunteer is the basis for organisers' recruitment and retention of volunteers. In order to make sense of the research on volunteer motivation, the author conducted a search on various databases in English and Chinese, such as the social science citation indices, Google Scholar, and CNKI. The search terms 'volunteer*AND event*', 'volunteer*AND motivation*', and 'volunteer*AND student*' in the titles and/or abstracts were used. This research tracked some of the professional tourism, event, and volunteer journals (e.g., *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *The International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, *Event Management*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Tourism Tribune*, and *Beijing Education*) to screen the latest research results addressing volunteer motivation.

Understanding the underlying motivational drive of volunteers is the basis for constructing conceptualisation and understanding of the phenomenon. Volunteer motivation has been a recurring theme preoccupying much of the literature of volunteering, and previous empirical studies on volunteer motivations have shed light on a number of aspects, but they are imprecise and inconsistent. The motivations are usually combinations of different aspects, and they change over time. Also, participants may not have been able to clearly articulate reasons for volunteering, which makes it harder to make sense of their motivations (Clary et al., 1998). Particular groups such as youth volunteers and senior volunteers have also drawn scholars' attention (e.g., Chen & Morrow-Howell, 2015; Nezhina, Petukhova, & Chechetkina, 2014). Volunteer motivations are influenced by the characteristics of the group, local, cultural,

social factors, and volunteer context. Thus, the literature on volunteer motivation will be reviewed from the following four aspects: volunteer motivation in Western countries, volunteer motivation in China, volunteer motivation at events, and student volunteer motivation.

2.3.1 Volunteer motivations in Western countries

Helping others, commitment to the community, meeting new people, self-challenge, and enrichment are all widely identified motivations for volunteers. There is considerable available research suggesting that volunteer motivation is a combination of different dimensions and ever changing in different organisational settings and cultures, and the variations in motivation are based on different volunteer activities, age, context, and different levels of involvement (Twynam, Farrell, & Johnston, 2002). Most often, two seeming contradictory positions obtain explicit recognition: volunteering is altruistic and volunteering serves the self-interest of the volunteers. For the first stream of research, it is believed that volunteering is a helping behaviour (e.g., Smith, 1981), while the latter stream of ideas claims that individuals volunteer to meet certain needs or personally relevant goals such as networking and career building (e.g., Clary et al., 1998). However, the mix of these two aspects of motives is the most common finding among the current literature. A number of volunteer models have been proposed, such as altruistic-egoistic motives (Horton-Smith, 1981) and Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). Among these models, Clary et al.'s (1998) VFI with six functions of values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement have laid foundation for the following investigations. It is a highly complex topic. Researchers have empirically established a variety of motivation categories, but there has been no single motivation constructs model that has received universal support. In general, existing literature shows that altruism and egoism have been considered as key motives in a diversity of fields (e.g., Batson et al., 1989; Erasmus & Morey, 2016; Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). However, a number of different concepts have been explored in the literature of volunteering.

Based on the identified motivations, Parker (1992) proposed four types of volunteering: altruistic, market, cause-serving, and leisure volunteering. This was an early identification of leisure as a motive, which was beyond the widely mentioned altruistic and egoistic aspects, was proposed as one motive for volunteering. At the same time, some academic theories such as Expectancy Motivation Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs, Herzberg's Motivation Theory, have been used to explain the phenomenon of volunteering (e.g.,

Bjerneld, Lindmark, McSpadden, & Garrett, 2006; Phillips, 1982). Scholars have deepened the research by introducing serious leisure (e.g., Pi, Lin, Chen, Chiu, & Chen, 2014), self-concept theory (e.g., Bachman, 2014), the theory of planned behaviour (e.g., Bang & Lee, 2014), and Social Exchange Theory (e.g., Evans et al., 2017; Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017) into volunteer motivation studies, aiming to explore volunteer motivation from different perspectives. With the deepening of research, volunteer motivation is also explored in association with satisfaction, attitudes, behaviour, and future behavioural intention (e.g., Bachman, 2014; Nencini, Romaioli, & Meneghini, 2015).

Studies on understanding why people volunteer are largely based on quantitative research (e.g., VFI), and there is a relative paucity of qualitative research. The limitations of adopting quantitative methods in exploring the motivations have been recognised by researchers, and they advocate for qualitative research in this field (e.g., Smith & Holmes, 2009). In response to the calls for more qualitative research and the constant improvement of qualitative software, some studies have adopted qualitative research methods such as phenomenological approach (Yeung, 2004). Qualitative investigations can generate a greater understanding and represent particularly meaningful aspects when contrasted with the existing knowledge, so they can provide richer insights and directions to further the existing body of knowledge (Kodama, Doherty, & Popovic, 2013). With the recognition of this, a qualitative method (i.e., grounded theory) is adopted in this research.

2.3.2 Volunteer motivations in China

Volunteer behaviour, including motivation, is influenced by culture (Handy et al., 2010). According to CNKI, there are fewer than 30 papers on volunteer motivation when searched for under the theme of ‘volunteer and motivation’. This demonstrates that research on volunteering in China is lacking. Of these papers, youths and college student volunteers are the most popular group under research (e.g., Deng, Xin, & Zhai, 2015; Liu & Sun, 2016). Beijing Olympic Games and several national sports events are widely used cases (e.g., Wang, Zhang, Chen, & Ma, 2015).

Some widely recognised motives in Western studies such as citizen commitment, helping others, and love for sports are also very common among the research in China (e.g., Jing, 2010; Zhang, Lu, & Wang, 2010). Moreover, scholars have also identified some Chinese-specific perspectives for Chinese volunteers’ motivations, such as the sense of group belonging, sense of responsibility and psychological reward, prioritising the needs of the

community, a stronger national identity, and enjoying the recognition (e.g., Di & Xue, 2013; Lai, Ren, Wu, & Hung, 2013; Wang, Zhao, Fang, & Zhang, 2012; Yin & Tian, 2006; Zhang & Zhang, 2011).

As discussed in Section 2.3.2, the Chinese culture is generally shown to be a collectivistic one, so Chinese volunteers are more likely to prioritise the needs of others or the community (Lai et al., 2013). Yao (2015) claimed that ‘as for the motivation, political and social meaning is far greater than personal meaning for the youth volunteers in China’ (p.53). Lo and Lee (2011) suggested that volunteers in China particularly enjoy the recognition, politically, as it is integral to such norms as collectivism and patriotism. That is, volunteering is likely to represent collective service for national interests and concerns, so the public sees it as a noble behaviour. Though such utilitarianism is a contradiction with the original spirit of volunteering, there are some participants getting involved in volunteering activities due to this reason. For example, Cai and Wang (2001) claimed that youth volunteers in China can be divided into two kinds by their motivations: passive participants under the pressure of organisation and group, and active participants because of self-actualisation needs. Based on the above analysis, it can be said that there are both similarities and differences between volunteer motivation in China and Western countries. National, social factors, volunteers’ values, family background, and education are the reasons for these differences (Di & Xue, 2013). Hence, it is necessary to explore the Chinese volunteers’ motivation when taking the Chinese-specific perspectives into consideration.

Although some Chinese-characteristic motivations were identified from the above studies, most of these studies were based on motivation scales developed in Western countries, with only two exceptions: Di and Xue (2013) and Wu (2006). By interviewing 20 college student volunteers, Di and Xue (2013) found that utilitarianism is an important motivation that can’t be overlooked, and many students have to volunteer as they need to get enough credits or make their CV for study abroad stronger. Wu (2008) demonstrated that the motivations of youth volunteers are changing from the traditional motives (centred by responsibility) to modern (centred by development) and post-modern (centred by happiness) motives.

A search of the literature that covers research on volunteer motivation in the context of Asia including studies in Korean (e.g., Ahn, 2017; Fairley, Lee, Green, & Kim, 2013), Japan (e.g., Rausch, 2002), and Singapore (e.g., Liao, Chang, & Tsai, 2012) has been conducted. Some of the motivation and satisfaction models that have been developed are based on the Western

context, which does not directly fit the Asian context (Fairley et al., 2013), which suggests the importance of considering local culture and traditions when examining volunteer behaviour. As for volunteer motives, it has been identified that in Asian culture volunteers are impacted by sense of community or ‘belongingness’ rather than by the benefits obtained for individuals. Governmental bodies and event organisers play an important role in stimulating individuals’ interest in volunteering. Nevertheless, this is in line with the findings in the Chinese context, such as Jiang, Potwarka, and Xiao (2017) who find that societal drivers are one of the main reasons for the Chinese people joining volunteer programmes. In addition, widespread acceptance of rewards is evident among the Asian context studies (e.g., Ahn, 2017; Joung et al., 2009; Jun, 2011). Financial incentives and tangible rewards such as discount coupons, accommodation, cash, and gifts are found as being important for volunteers’ satisfaction and commitment. The widely acceptable and commonplace practice of volunteers being awarded a stipend or some other benefit is contradictory to the findings that financial incentives and tangible rewards can decrease the intrinsic motives of volunteers in the Western context (e.g., Grammatikopoulos, Koustelios, & Tsigilis, 2006).

2.3.3 Volunteer motivations at events

An entire global industry of festivals and events has evolved and much scholarly attention has been paid to this field (e.g., Holmes, Hughes, Mair, & Carlsen, 2015; Yeoman, Robertson, Dvummond, & McMahon-Beattie, 2014). Volunteers are an important part of human resources at the event industry (McMahon-Beattie & Yeoman, 2004), and they make a great contribution to the success of the events. In the last decade, a variety of research on volunteering at events from around the globe has emerged that predominantly focuses on volunteer motivation at events and, to a lesser extent, focuses on a variety of issues related to volunteering at sports events (Smith et al., 2014). Many researchers have also analysed volunteers’ experience, satisfaction, and volunteering legacy (e.g., Hyde, Dunn, Wust, Bax, & Chambers, 2016; Koutrou & Pappous, 2016; Lee et al., 2014). However, these papers, which predominantly focused on sports events and other events such as the growing business events sector, have not drawn enough scholarly attention.

Volunteer motivation at events is one area in which an ample body of research evidence exists. Clary et al. (1996) argued that volunteers’ motivations and goals vary widely, even for individuals involved in the same voluntary activities. Table 2.1 summarises the major studies on volunteer motivation at events by tracking some of the key event journals (e.g., *The International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, *Event Management*, *International*

Journal of Event Management Research, and *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*) and other journal articles that focus on event volunteer motivation. The papers are selected by the relevance with event volunteer motivation. The table lists the event name, event site, method, and delineated motivations of the selected papers. The most popular event type for research is sports event (e.g., Olympic Games) and the majority of the studies are in Western countries (e.g., UK and USA). A single event is extensively researched. In addition, quantitative method with questionnaire surveys is the most popular research design.

Table 2.1 Review of major studies on volunteer motivations at events

Researchers	Event name	Event site	Method	Delineated motivations
Dickson, Darcy, & Benson, (2017)	The London 2012 Olympic And Paralympic Games	UK	Quantitative	Uniqueness of the experience, interest, support of the event, altruistic, transactional, rewards
Alexander, Kim, & Kim (2015)	The 2012 London Olympic Games	UK	Quantitative	Career, value, Olympic, enhancement, understanding, social, protective
Lee et al. (2014)	The Expo 2012 Yeosu Korea	Korea	Quantitative	Altruism, patriotism, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation
Hallmann & Harms (2012)	VELUX EHF FINAL4	Germany	Quantitative	Expression of values, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, personal growth, love of sport
Khoo, Surujlal, & Engelhorn (2011)	The USA National Special Olympics	USA	Quantitative	Commitments, external traditions, family traditions, purposive, solidarity
Bang & Chelladurai (2009)	2002 FIFA World Cup	Korea	Quantitative	Expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts, career orientation, personal growth, extrinsic rewards
Bang, Alexandris, & Ross (2008)	The Athens 2004 Olympic Games	Greece	Quantitative	Career orientation, personal growth, extrinsic rewards, Love of sport, expression of values, patriotism, interpersonal contacts
Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray (2007)	The Athens 2004 Olympics Games	Greece	Quantitative	Olympic related, egoistic, purposive
Monga (2006)	Special event organisations	Australia	Quantitative	Affiliation, fulfilling experience, solidary, opportunity for career development, personal rewards
Yin & Tian (2006)	The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games	China	Qualitative	Achievement, need of affiliation, power, self-test, ego-enhancement, relaxation, communication
Reeser, Berg, Rhea, & Willick (2005)	The Salt Lake 2002 Olympic and Paralympic Games	USA	Quantitative	To do something worthwhile, to help make the event a success, to make volunteer feel part of the event
Twynam et al. (2002)	The Star Choice World Junior Curling Tournament	USA	Quantitative	Solidary, purposive, commitment, external traditions
Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam (1998)	1996 Tournament of Hearts	Canada	Quantitative	Commitments, external traditions, purposive, solidary

Motivation studies demonstrate that event volunteers' motivations can be grouped into several factors: personal development, interpersonal contacts, love of the sport, extrinsic rewards, career orientation, and social motives. The main motivations can be different at different events. As such, volunteer motivation could be identified as different patterns and combinations of multiple motives. Many measurement scales for volunteer motivation were developed using quantitative methods, such as Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) (Farrell et al., 1998) and Volunteer Motivations Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE) (Bang & Chelladurai, 2009). Among these scales, there are both commonalities and specifics. For the specialties, they are usually the contextual motives, such as the excitement at sports events (Güntert, Neufeind, & Wehner, 2015) and the patriotism at mega events (Bang et al., 2008).

Most of these studies in Table 2.1 are conducted in the context of large-scale sports events and very few of them explore or test volunteers' motivations at other events. Many business events are for profit and commercially run, so it is worth investigating the issue of volunteer motivation outside a non-for-profit context. One of the few investigations on the business event type of Expo, Lee et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between volunteer motivation and support for the Expo 2012 Yeosu Korea. Due to the limited research on volunteering at business events, it is thus still unknown as to whether there are some contextual motives for volunteers at business events. A quantitative analysis combined with motivation scales is the most common method when there is a lack of research by qualitative methods.

2.3.4 Student volunteer motivations

Volunteering has been studied in relation to a variety of population groups (e.g., active adult volunteers, elderly volunteers), among which student volunteers have particularly drawn scholars' attention. Student volunteering is a global phenomenon. Volunteering is a way of promoting college students' community involvement and citizenship (Sullivan, Ludden, & Singleton, 2013). Higher education institutions attach great importance to students volunteering to promote their ethical and moral development (Dalton, Frick-Horbury, & Kitmann, 2006), and emphasise self-responsibility for employability and community cohesion (Holdsworth & Brewis, 2014). The activities involved are very extensive, including community service, education, health, and events. Notably, sports events provide a significant source of volunteering opportunities for young people (Auld, 2004). The event organisers often target the youth market to source volunteers (Dalton, 2008). Some volunteer activities

are much more like unpaid internship work, which seems to have become a major part of the passage from study to work in the USA (e.g., Ritter, Barnett, Denny, & Albin, 2009). However, different countries have quite different approaches. In the UK, there are many funding initiatives that encourage students to participate in community engagement programmes (Holdsworth, 2010). As discussed in Section 1.2, the Chinese government has issued a new policy in 2015 to emphasise the importance of students volunteering. The existing cross-cultural comparison studies in student volunteers provide some insights into making sense of the differences among different countries (e.g., Handy et al., 2009; Smith, Holmes, Haski-Leventhal, Cnaan, Handy, & Brudney, 2010). It would be useful to explore how government strategies influence students' volunteer participation.

There is a growing literature on identifying student volunteers' motivations, but the findings are very diverse and there has been no clear consensus of students' motives. Researchers believe that students' volunteering motivations are a mixture of different reasons, including altruistic and egoistical drivers, and social obligation (e.g., Johnson, Giannoulakis, Felver, Judge, David, & Scott, 2017; Li, Wu, & Kee, 2016; Rehberg, 2005). However, the identity of the student makes the utilitarian motives (e.g., career building and networking) a highlight. Some theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence suggests that many students engage in volunteering activities to improve their employment prospects by increasing human capital, expanding social contacts, and sending a positive signal to employers (e.g., Carlin, 2001; Ziemek, 2006). So individuals with volunteering experience tend to be hired or command a higher wage (Katz & Rosenberg, 2005). Students who volunteer are more likely than non-volunteers to have leadership ability, social self-confidence, and skills in critical thinking and conflict resolution (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Holdsworth (2010) revealed the importance of employability over other motivations and found that students motivated by employability criteria are more likely to seek out structured activities. Friedland and Morimoto (2005) have also argued that 'pad their resume' is youth volunteers' main motivation. Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, and Tryon (2006) found that youth (15 to 24-year-olds) are three times more likely to volunteer to improve their job opportunities in Canada. In an event context, Pate and Shonk (2015) revealed that learning, career empowerment, and on-site preparation were three main motivations for students volunteering at the Super Bowl. However, there are also some different voices. Using a survey in 12 countries, Handy et al. (2009) found that students motivated to volunteering for building their resumes did not volunteer more than students with other motives.

Students' motivations to volunteer have also been compared in different cultural and political contexts (e.g., Handy et al., 2009; Hustinx et al., 2010; Kang et al., 2011). These studies demonstrate that the motive constructs are rated differently in different countries, with emphasis on the cultural differences in student volunteering, which demonstrates that the effect of civil society on influencing volunteer behaviour cannot be ignored. Handy et al. (2009) found that students volunteering rates are significantly higher in countries with a positive signalling value of volunteering. McCabe, White, and Obst (2007) investigated the psychological functions that volunteering serves among young tertiary students and found that career function was rated as more important than current volunteers.

A number of Chinese journal articles on student volunteering have been published over the last decade and these include the roles and impacts of volunteering for students (e.g., Wang, 2009); the organisation of student volunteer programmes (e.g., Deng, 2010; Meng, 2011); student volunteer activities management such as training (e.g., Wang, 2011; Wang & Li, 2014; Yi & Wu, 2015); and student volunteer motivations (e.g., Zhao & Yang, 2017). Researchers have argued that the reasons why young people decide to volunteer in China are connected with the realities of today's urban environment and living experience (e.g., Fleischer, 2011). In China, many students say they feel 'empty' and look for something meaningful to do (Liu & Sun, 2016). So 'search for meaning' could account for why they volunteer. From this sense, volunteering could be understood as an individualistic project in which young people search for distraction as means to escape rigid schedules and for learning new skills to advance their chances in the competitive job market (Fleischer, 2011). Government-initiated tradition, organisation and group pressure are usually promoting factors for students getting involved in volunteer activities (e.g., Cai & Wang, 2001). Curiosity, knowledge of the society, and sense of honour are also identified as motives for student volunteers in China (e.g., Gao, Zi, Zong, & He, 2009). Also, students' decisions to get involved in volunteering are believed to be influenced by an urge to help the country and give back to society. Collective benefits have also been identified as a main driver for student volunteers in China (Fleischer, 2011). Nevertheless, great changes have taken place in Chinese society in recent years and the Chinese become more exposed to the Western ideas. It is unclear as to whether such changes have influenced the younger generation's volunteer motivations.

2.3.5 Synthesis of research on volunteer motivations

Table 2.2 categorises the research on volunteer motivation and identifies the commonalities and differences of volunteer motivation in China, at events and by student volunteers.

Table 2.2 Comparison of major studies on volunteer motivations

Research Contexts Motivations	Volunteering in China	Event volunteering	Student volunteering
Enjoy/love/interest/fulfilling	Liao (2009); Wang (2007); Wang (2017); Zhang & Li (2017)	Ahn (2017); Allen & Shaw (2009); Bang et al. (2008); Hoyer, Cuskelly, Taylor, & Darcy (2008); MacLean & Hamm (2007); Monga (2006); Reeser, Berg, Rhea, & Willick (2005); Saleh & Wood (1998); Treuren (2009); Hayton (2016); Johnson, Giannoulakis et al. (2017)	Gage & Thapa (2012); Liao (2009); Wang (2007); Li, Wu, & Kee (2016); Johnson, Giannoulakis et al. (2017); Wang (2017);
Collective benefits	Fleischer (2011); Hustinx et al., (2012); Jing (2010); Li (2007); Wu (2006); Yao (2015); He (2015); Jing (2010); Yang, Gao, Qi, Zhong, Han, & Zhou (2015)	Ahn (2017); Surujlal (2010); Twynam et al., (2002); Warner, Newland, & Green (2011); Schlesinger & Gubler (2016);	Winniford et al. (1997); Grönlund et al. (2011); Hustinx et al. (2012)
Personal development	Cai & Wang (2001); Grönlund et al. (2011); Jiang, Potwarka, & Xiao, (2017); Liao (2009); Liu (2015); Wong, Chui, & Kwok (2011); Wu (2006); Zhang & Li (2017)	Bang & Chelladural (2009); Barron & Rihova (2011); Khoo, Surujlal, & Engelhorn (2011); Schlesinger & Gubler (2016); Wang (2017)	Astin & Sax (1998); Sax, Astin, & Avalos (1999); Liao (2009); Gage & Thapa (2012); Grönlund et al. (2011); Nassar & Talaat (2008); Pate & Shonk (2015); Johnson et al. (2017)
Extrinsic rewards	Zhang & Sun (2014); Wang (2017); Jiang, Potwarka, & Xiao, (2017);	Ahn (2017); Burgham & Downward (2005); Monga (2006); Schlesinger & Gubler (2016)	Wang (2017);
Gain experience	Wang (2017); Tao (2018)	Giannoulakis et al. (2007); Wakelin (2013)	Wakelin (2013); Wang & Yu (2015); Hayton (2016); Tao (2018)
	Jiang, Potwarka, & Xiao, (2017); Yao	Bang & Chelladurai (2009);	Friedland & Morimoto

Research Contexts Motivations	Volunteering in China	Event volunteering	Student volunteering
Career orientation	(2015); Zhang (2014); Zhao (2015); Yuan & Wang (2016)	Barron & Rihova (2011); Monga (2006); Johnson et al. (2017)	(2005); Gage & Thapa (2012); Grönlund et al. (2011); Hall et al. (2006); Handy et al. (2010); Holdsworth (2010); Katz & Rosenberg (2005); Pate & Shonk (2015); Tian (2007); Ziemek (2006)
Social motives	Grönlund (2011); Wu (2006); Tao (2018)	Khoo, Surujlal, & Engelhorn (2007); Warner, Newland, & Green (2011); Wollebæk, Skirstad, & Hanstad (2014)	Carlin (2001); Gage & Thapa (2012); Grönlund et al. (2011); Wuthnow (1998); Tao (2018)
Escape from everyday life	Fleischer (2011); Li & Lin (2015); Lo & Lee (2011)	--	Li & Lin (2015);
Organisational/group pressure	Cai & Wang (2001); Jiang, Potwarka, & Xiao, (2017); Yao (2015)	--	Cai & Wang (2001); Yao (2015)
Community belonging	Jiang, Potwarka, & Xiao, (2017); Yin & Tian (2006); Wong, Chui, & Kwok (2011); Deng, Xin, & Zhai (2015)	Ahn (2017); Downward & Ralston (2005); Fairley et al. (2013); MacLean & Hamm (2007); Lai, Ren, Wu, & Hung (2013)	Deng, Xin, & Zhai (2015)

A review of this line of research suggests that there are some commonalities among the identified motives; for example, collective benefits, personal development, and career orientation are evident among all the three research contexts. However, three key differences can be drawn from the table. First, motivations differ depending on context. The discrepancies suggest that volunteer motivations vary greatly across research contexts. Showing enjoyment/interest/fulfilment as a motivation is found more at events rather than the other two contexts, this may be because of the celebratory atmosphere at events. The concepts of escape from everyday life, organisational pressure, and community belonging are widely identified among the studies in China. Second, personal development and career orientation have been increasingly identified among the more recent studies. One reason for this trend may be individuals become more open to talking about the instrumental reasons for volunteering, but it also implies that individuals' understandings of volunteer activities are changing. Third, some dimensions such as organisational pressure are found only in China, which indicates that future study should be conducted to explore other new perspectives and one should be careful when applying the research results to a different context.

Although volunteer motivation has been extensively studied, there are still substantial research gaps. First, researchers have identified a variety of reasons for students volunteering and, as with other groups, the motivations are complex and multi-dimensional. Beyond the altruism & egoistic motivations, the identity of students highlights the role of career or employment in the motivations for volunteering. Student volunteers from different countries are influenced by cultural and social factors. These studies call for more systematic research to disentangle the nature of student volunteering in different contexts and countries. One direction that may help understand students' motivations is to construct them from the ground. Hence, the use of grounded theory is more likely to yield a deeper understanding of this issue. Second, findings suggest that, due to the various economic, social, cultural, and education states, more emphasis on student volunteer motivations in a specific context is warranted. Third, most of the current studies are conducted based on the existing motivation models. When considering a Chinese context, it is necessary to dig into this phenomenon without holding hypotheses from the studies in Western countries. Last, but not least, the body of event volunteering literature has predominantly focused on sports events. To better understand the issue of volunteer motivation, it is necessary to explore it in different fields and contexts (e.g., business events). These gaps are now being addressed in this research.

2.4 Conceptualisation of volunteering

The discussion now turns to the conceptualisation of volunteering, which is partly based on volunteer motivation. The term ‘conceptualisation’ emphasises participants’ understandings and clarification when it reflects the recognition that volunteering is inextricably connected to social context and cultural background. Also, the understandings of volunteering are culturally sensitive and ever changing. Thus, the following discussion of volunteering conceptualisation will focus on the Western country perspective, and cross-cultural perspective, as well as the new trends in conceptualising this phenomenon.

Many scholars have explored the conceptualisation of volunteering, but little agreement has been reached as to the breadth and depth of volunteer activities (Cnaan et al., 1996). Many definitions used in the existing research are narrow and result in the exclusion of a range of activities and behaviours (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007), and some culturally specific behaviours are not defined as volunteering. So McDonald and Warburton (2002) use ‘soft and fuzzy notion’ and ‘container notion’ to describe definitions of volunteering (p. 49). Conceptualising volunteering in its full complexity should involve a systematic reflection from both the Western countries’ and cross-cultural perspectives, as well as take account of the emerging trends in the volunteering field.

2.4.1 The Western perspective

A variety of studies on volunteering conceptualisation have been conducted. However, much of the volunteering literature is North American or European focused (Hustinx et al., 2012). As Rochester (2006) noted, there are different perspectives on the nature of volunteering and the descriptions of this kind of activity are varied, depending on various factors such as culture, custom, the identification of participants, remuneration, beneficiaries, structure, the degree of free choice, and activity. Taken together, these factors influence individuals’ conceptualisation of volunteering.

Many researchers have tried to explore the principles of volunteering, but no clear consensus has been reached (e.g., Cordingley, 2000; Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007). In order to answer the question of what volunteering is, some existing studies have focused on what is not volunteering and reached the agreement that volunteering is not paid labour, it is not slavery or forced labour, it is not kinship care or spontaneous help (Hustinx et al., 2010). To clarify the meaning of volunteering, this study identifies some widely used definitions found in the literature (Table 2.3). The sources include international organisations, national government

and academic researchers. The geographical location is also taken into consideration. Considering constantly changing definitions, both early studies and recent work undertaken around definitions were reviewed.

Four core characteristics can be identified:

- ‘Undertaken not primarily for financial gain’ is the most important feature of volunteering, which means monetary rewards are not the main aim of volunteering.
- ‘Free choice/voluntary giving’ is the second characteristic, and it implies volunteering is one’s own free choice, rather than the choice due to the external pressure (e.g., policy) or another obligation (e.g. study credits).
- ‘Giving time/skills/talent’ means volunteering is not just about spending time but a donation (or a gift) of time and certain skills or talent.
- ‘Benefit others/third party/community’ is also a core characteristic, which requires the activity to produce public good, rather than just meet personally-related needs.

Table 2.3 Identified characteristics of volunteering in Western literature

Source	Definition	Identified Characteristics						
		No direct financial gain	Free choice/voluntary giving	Benefit others	Giving time/skills /talent	Through organisation	Planned activity	Advocacy for causes
President' s Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives (1982)	Volunteering is the voluntary giving of time and talents to deliver services or perform tasks with no direct financial compensation expected. Volunteering includes the participation of citizens in the direct delivery of service to others; citizen action groups; advocacy for causes, groups, or individuals; participation in the governance of both private and public agencies; self-help and mutual aid endeavours; and a broad range of informal helping activities.	√	√		√			√
Adam (1985)	Volunteers can be broadly defined as those who work in the same way to help others for no monetary reward.	√		√				
American Red Cross (1988)	Volunteers are individuals who reach out beyond the confines of paid employment and normal responsibilities to contribute time and service to a non-profit cause in the belief that their activity is beneficial to others as well as satisfying for themselves.	√	√	√	√			
Van Til (1988)	Volunteering may be identified as a helping action of an individual that is valued by him or her, and yet is not aimed directly at material gain or mandated or coerced by others. Thus in the broadest sense, volunteering is any uncoerced helping activity that is engaged in not primarily for financial gain and not by coercion or mandate. It is thereby different in definition from work, slavery, or conscription.	√	√	√				
Shure (1991)	Volunteering as persons offering themselves for a service	√	√		√			

	without obligation to do so, willingly, and without pay.							
National Association of Counties (1990)	Volunteer efforts and county government have in common: 1. The performance of a service deemed essential or generally desirable by the public; 2. No receipt of salary or remuneration commensurate with the effort or experience utilised; and 3. The self-satisfaction, community reputation or other non-monetary reward of the person performing the service.	√		√	√			
United Nations General Assembly (2001)	Three basic criteria can be identified to distinguish volunteering from other types of human activity: it is not undertaken primarily for financial gain; it is undertaken of one's own free will; it benefits a third party or society at large.	√	√	√				
Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001)	A volunteer is someone who, in the last 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group.	√			√	√		
International Association for Volunteer Effort (2013)	Volunteering can be categorised in four ways: 1. Mutual aid or self-help; 2. Philanthropy or service to others; 3. Civic participation; and 4. Advocacy or campaigning.	√	√	√				
Rodell (2013)	Volunteering is giving time or skills during a planned activity for a volunteer group or organisation (e.g., charitable groups, non-profit groups).		√		√	√	√	
Volunteering Australia (2015)	Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.	√	√	√				

While these definitions serve to highlight aspects of researchers' understandings about volunteering, there are still confusions and contradictions arising from the previous research that have not yet been fully addressed. Taking the issue of payment as an example, although it is widely believed that no financial payment is one characteristic of volunteering, some scholars have noticed that payment can be a motivation for volunteers in some situations (e.g., Stunkel & Grady, 2011).

Moving away from the way of describing the characteristics of volunteering as characteristics which merit inclusion or not, Smith and Cordery (2010) suggested the definitions of volunteering range from extremely 'broad' to very 'pure' and they proposed a continuum to describe the definitions, due to the ambiguity and variety of the understandings of volunteers (Figure 2.1). Three of the above characteristics (i.e., undertaken not primarily for financial gain, free choice/voluntary giving, and benefit others/third party/community) align with Smith and Cordery (2010) and Cnaan et al.'s (1996) characteristics. Table 2.3 also has features like 'through [an] organization' (which corresponds to the dimension of structure in Cnaan et al.'s work), and 'planned activity', but they are not as common as the four core characteristics. While the definitions in Table 2.2 capture more of the 'pure' end of the continuous, the breadth in Cnaan et al.'s model to is important to recognise.

Dimension	Broad Definition	Pure Definition
Free choice	Obligation to volunteer	Free will
Remuneration	Stipend/low pay	None at all
Structure	Informal	Formal
Beneficiaries	Benefit oneself (as well)	Benefit/help others/strangers

Source: Smith & Cordery (2010: 5) after Cnaan et al. (1996: 37)

Figure 2.1 The scope and variability of volunteer definitions

Although volunteering is an age-old social phenomenon, the nature of volunteering is ‘undergoing radical changes because of broader social changes’ (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 75). According to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2015), four trends are identified in volunteering: a move from benevolence to building social capital, changing demographics in youth volunteering, the ongoing strength of extended networks, and the professionalisation of volunteers. This is supported by scholars like Spencer and Christie (2017). Research on the conceptualisation of volunteering continues to emerge, representing a coherent body of literature that has evolved and changes with new and emerging understandings. A growing trend of discussion that demonstrates the understandings of volunteering from different perspectives has been identified from the current literature.

Some researchers focus on the conceptualisation of volunteering as leisure (e.g., Lockstone-Binney, Holmes, Smith, & Baum, 2010; Stebbins, 2013). Some scholars propose that volunteering is essentially a reciprocal process, which highlights the benefits for both givers and receivers (e.g., Bekkers, 2007; Boyle & Stewart, 2014; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998). Mutran and Reitzes (1984) first described the idea of exchange when explaining volunteering behaviour, and based on this several scholars explain volunteering from the perspective of exchange (e.g., Booth et al., 2009; Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). From the perspective of exchange, some researchers have noticed that volunteering has not been seen as purely altruistic activity as it can be beneficial for the individuals or reciprocity (Dekker & Halman, 2003).

One emerging trend is volunteering to improve one’s own skills and to prepare for the future employment, rather than because of an obligation or to meet the social needs. Volunteers tend to combine their self-directed interests with social orientations when they participate in the volunteer activities, and researchers call them ‘reflexive volunteers’ (e.g., Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Rehberg, 2005). Rehberg (2005) demonstrated that the motivations of reflexive volunteers usually arise from self-chosen biographical reorientation and discontinuity experiences caused by different reasons. Another example that demonstrates the changing nature of volunteering are terms like ‘involuntary volunteering’, ‘instrumental volunteering’, ‘work volunteering’, and ‘voluntold’ that emerge in the literature (e.g., Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Dean, 2014; Kelemen, Mangan, & Moffat, 2017). Moreover, some researchers believe that volunteering is losing its soul due to the wide existence of getting reimbursement in the form of out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., Dean, 2015). All these arguments

demonstrate the rationality of opinions that explain volunteering from the angle of exchange. Such studies believe that volunteer activities are exchanges between organisations and volunteers, which means that volunteers do expect something in return for their efforts (e.g., Booth et al., 2009; Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Wymer & Samu, 2002).

Rochester (2006) identified three forms that are also required to understand volunteering: unpaid work, activism, and serious leisure. All these different perspectives provide useful insights for understanding volunteering and each perspective captures a certain part of volunteering, but they do not adequately reflect the complexity and fuzzy boundaries separately. Therefore, Rochester (2006) proposed the idea of combining more than one of the forms in order to understand many volunteer activities. A review of this line of research demonstrates the complexities and ‘fundamentally paradoxical in nature’ of volunteering (La Cour & Hojlund, 2008, p. 41).

Nowadays, volunteering is often project based, the engagement is short term, and the turnover can be high, which gives organisers great challenges in finding enough of the right volunteers. There are many social and economic pressures on volunteers from neoliberal capitalism, and greater market individualism creates societies that ‘provide human beings no deep reasons to care about one another’ (Dean, 2015). The reflexive modernisation theory proposed by Beck (1986) shows how the social environment influences individuals. There are several different transitions such as from ‘collectivistic’ to ‘individualistic’, from ‘institutionalized’ to ‘self-organized’ (Eckstein, 2001). Obviously, if these trends continue, there is a potential for long-term challenge to the field of volunteering and challenge to the established understanding of volunteering. It is striking that although researchers have widely agreed that great changes have taken place in the nature of volunteering, few efforts have been made to explore this. All of the above emerging discussions provide impetuses to conducting a fundamental research on understanding the phenomenon by looking at the current condition of student volunteering at business events in China through the lens of grounded theory.

2.4.2 Other cultural perspectives

Volunteering in various nations is a ubiquitous social phenomenon that intrigues scholars and policymakers. Insofar the definition of volunteering is not universal but it is clear that it is a purposive action that can be used to accomplish different social goals, which are affected by local political cultures and development paths (Anheier & Salamon, 1999; Creaven, Healy, &

Howard, 2017). As Rochester (2006) proposed, volunteering is a multi-faceted phenomenon, the boundaries of which are unclear, so whether an activity can be acceptable as volunteering is a matter of judgment and different cultures may have different interpretations. The roots of volunteering vary across cultures, religious, time, political frameworks and social background, and it is not isolated from the broader political and economic context in which it takes place (Hodgkinson, 2003). Not surprisingly, there is considerable variation regarding the definition of what is considered to be volunteering, and the notions of volunteering and volunteers vary across countries (e.g., Handy et al., 2000). Countries also differ in regard to what people see as volunteering, which may be due to the diversity of cultures and traditions (Dekker & Halman, 2003). As a cultural and economic behaviour, volunteering is much more than simply giving time for some particular reasons and it is part of the local society. What is understood as volunteering is a matter of public perception and it is a social construct with multiple definitions (Hustinx et al., 2010). Some researchers have explored the volunteering behaviour across different countries and cultures, among which Anheier and Salmon (1999) are a good example. In their study, the concepts of volunteering and patterns of voluntary actions are explored cross-nationally in Europe. They demonstrate that while volunteering is emerging as a global phenomenon, the meaning and patterns of volunteering are changing, particularly at the local level. Another example is Fairley, Lee, Green, and Kim's (2013) study, which utilises Western literature to examine whether the Korean volunteer experience fits with the Western experience of volunteering, and the findings find that the model developed from Western countries does not fit in well with the Korean context, which suggests that when examining volunteerism, culture should be considered. In short, these studies demonstrate that volunteering is rooted in the local culture, which emphasises the need for further research on a culture's interpretation of volunteerism.

Specific to China, volunteering has been a very prevalent phenomenon. The concept of volunteering was introduced to China in the 1980s when China issued the reforming and opening policy (Tan, 2015). After that, more and more Chinese got involved in different types of volunteer activities. As discussed in Section 1.4, students or youth are the main force of volunteers in China. A variety of definitions for volunteer, volunteering and other related concepts emerged accordingly. Among the existing studies and practice policies, most of the definitions of volunteering have been translated from Western countries directly but there are many inconsistencies among the definitions (e.g., Wang, 2015). Although the voluntary spirit has a long history in China, the current understandings of volunteering do not take the local

context into consideration, leading to some misunderstandings and confusion. Several scholars have realised the issue that the Western notion of volunteering is not directly applicable to the Chinese context due to its unique political and cultural constellation (e.g., Hustinx et al., 2012; Smith, 2014). However, until recently, little attention has been paid to how Chinese people construct their understandings of volunteering, leaving as a research gap that is now being addressed. A grounded theory strategy may be particularly useful for the exploration of understanding volunteering as an intrinsically complex phenomenon.

2.5 Conceptual framework

The literature has established that there are research gaps in the field of volunteering. First, although a plethora of research has been done on volunteering, there exists a Western bias. Most of the current volunteering research is conducted from a Western perspective, with little attention paid to developing countries, including China. Second, sports events are the predominant type of event in research, while research on the widely existing business events is lacking. It is evident that most existing literature on volunteering is focused on non-profit organisations and research on volunteering at events is mainly conducted at sports events. Little attention has been paid to the for-profit and commercial event contexts. Third, very little emphasis has been focused on students in event volunteering research.

The literature reveals the inappropriateness of simply applying the Western notion of volunteering to the Chinese context (e.g., Hustinx et al., 2012). Limitations of the studies on conceptualising volunteering, as seen in the literature, include narrow definitions excluding certain forms of activities, out of date explanations, Western countries focused, and lack of consideration for the emerging trends. The literature affirms the need for developing an understanding of the Chinese context of volunteering from the ground. Taken together, this preliminary review of the literature reveals a compelling need to develop a new theory for identifying students' motivation of volunteering at business events and how individuals conceptualise this phenomenon.

A conceptual framework for the present study has been developed (Figure 2.2) to explore the reasons for students volunteering at business events in China and how student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators conceptualise this phenomenon. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that a conceptual framework presents and explains the key factors and the presumed relationships in a graphical form. The conceptual framework proposed by this study enables the readers to identify 'what is to be

studied' (Pearce, 2012): research background, derivation process, and the linkages. For grounded theory research, the conceptual framework plays the role of categorising the relevant phenomenon, explaining relationships between concepts, and providing a conceptual interpretation to readers (Jabareen, 2009). The conceptual framework in Figure 2.2 constitutes the foundation for the current project and guides the research methodology. The framework consists of two parts. First, the outer part refers to three gaps of existing literature in terms of location (i.e., China), event type (i.e., business event), and group (i.e., students). Based on these, a three-point platform/context is proposed: student volunteering at business events in China. Second, the centre of conceptual framework incorporates two levels of questions: motivation and conceptualisation: On the first level, students' motivations of volunteering at business events will be explored by interviewing students. On the second level, it will answer the question of how student volunteering at business events in China is conceptualised. Three groups – student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators – will be incorporated. By comparing their understanding, the meaning of student volunteering at business events in China will be conceptualised from different perspectives.

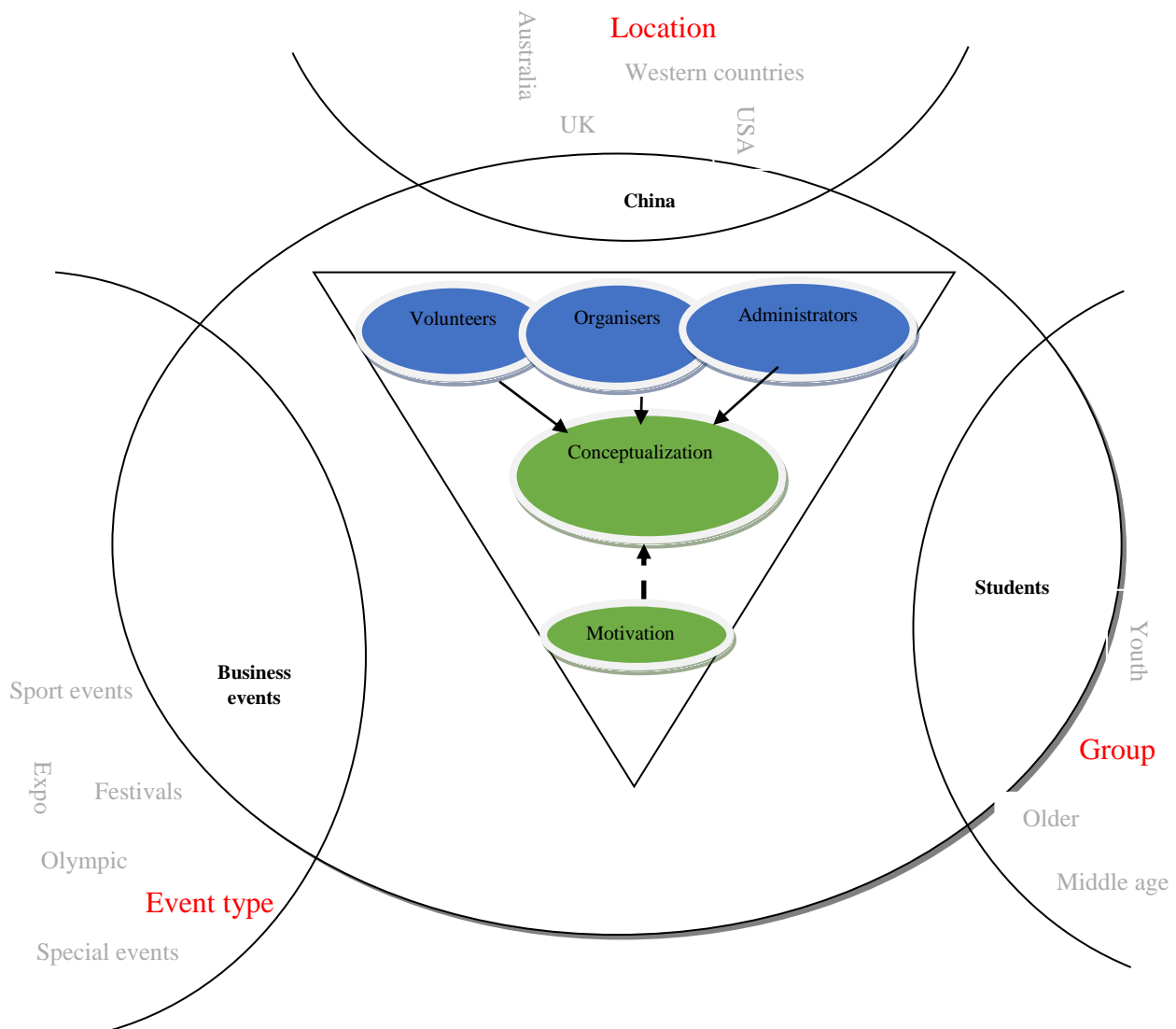


Figure 2.2 Conceptual framework

2.6 Conclusion

An examination of the literature in this field revealed a lack of studies on the phenomenon of volunteering in different contexts. The gaps identified from the literature guide the development of the research questions, as outlined in Section 1.5. The overarching aim of this study is to generate a new theory, grounded in the data, to explain the understanding of student volunteering at business events in China. There are a number of studies on volunteer motivation; however, very few of them are in the context of the business event. As an explorative study, it is not persuasive for this thesis to start with an existing motivation model. It needs to be pointed out that the conceptualisation of volunteering at business events is

influenced the characteristics of the business events industry, but in order to gain a systematic and objective understanding, it is necessary to explore a wider idea based on current literature.

The study's methodology for exploring the motivation and conceptualisation of student volunteering at business events will be explained in detail in the next chapter. Chapter 3 will describe the constructivist grounded theory and the discussion will move to the methodology adopted by this current research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, there has been limited research directly related to volunteering at business events. The existing literature does not investigate why students volunteer at business events and how individuals conceptualise this phenomenon in China. Because of this gap, I have designed this research to explore why student volunteers and how students, education institution administrators and business event organisers conceptualise the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events and as presented in Chapter 1.

To avoid the bias from the dominant literature developed in Western countries and build the data-based understanding of student volunteering at business events in China, grounded theory was used through this research, which aimed to add any new and emerging elements. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory is a methodology that researchers use to develop theory inductively from data. It is not aimed to prove or deduce testable hypotheses from existing theories but to begin an area of study and generate a theory that is grounded in the data. Generally, it is used when little is known about a topic (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that it is best to explore from 'ground zero' and let the data themselves guide the development of the theory. Qualitative data were collected by auto-ethnography and in-depth interviews. The research was rooted in the data and in the reality of the experience deriving from the participant volunteer activities. It captured participants' words, understanding, and perceptions, which were very subjective and needed to be constructed from the raw data. Grounded theory required the immersion of the researcher in the explored field to gain a richness of data. So the whole research began with my involvement at two business events, in other words, auto-ethnography, which allows researchers to use an individual's personal experience to gain a fuller and balanced understanding of a particular phenomenon from the 'insider' perspective (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Interviews then captured students' motivation for volunteering, and the perspectives of student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators on the conceptualisation of student volunteering at business events.

This chapter first outlines the research paradigm before explaining the qualitative research practices, and the qualitative research strategies of auto-ethnography, interviews and grounded theory. Then it presents the methodological framework, including the two-phase approach and linking the auto-ethnography with the following interviews before detailing these methods.

Constructivist inquiry involves rigorous research techniques in order to minimise researchers' bias. Triangulation of multiple data-gathering methods, such as participant observations, field notes, memos, interviews, document analysis, is of great importance for the researchers in interpreting the field of study. All these techniques raised the ethical issues for this research. How to balance the relationship between maintaining the principles of confidentiality and providing the individuals' voice was the main consideration for the researcher.

3.2 Research paradigm

This section addresses the research paradigm that informs this study and its related ontology, epistemology and methods. A paradigm is the 'basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only of choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). 'It is 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action' (Guba, 1990, p. 17). Four major competing paradigms exist in the research: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. For each research paradigm, the ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (how knowledge is made), and methodology (the way we go finding) are different, and this is illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Basic beliefs of research paradigms

	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical Theory	Constructivism
Ontology (the nature of reality)	Belief in a single identifiable reality.	Recognise that there is single reality, but we may not be able to fully understand it.	Human nature operates in a world that is based on a struggle for power. This leads to interactions of privilege and oppression that can be based on ethnicity, socioeconomic class, or gender.	Realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them.
Epistemology (the relationship between the research and that being researched)	Belief in total objectivity. There is no reason to interact with who or what researchers study.	Assume we can only approximate nature. Research and the statistics it produces provide a way to make a decision using incomplete data. The validity of research comes from peers (the research community), not from the subjects being studied.	Researchers believe that the knowledge that is produced can change exiting oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment.	Transactional/subjectivist; created finding. The philosophical belief that people construct their own understanding of reality; we construct meaning based on our interactions with our surroundings. Assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. The investigator and the object of investigation are linked such that who we are and how we understand others, and the world, and ourselves.
Methodology (the process of research)	Belief in the falsification principle (results and findings are true until disproved).	Use of statistics is important to interpreting our findings. Distance the researcher to gain objectivity. Use hypothetical deductive method – hypothesize, deduce, and generalize.	Dialogical/dialectical Search for participatory research.	Interpretive approaches rely on heavily on naturalistic methods. Generally, meanings are emergent from the research process. Typically, qualitative methods are used.

Source: adapted from Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Sage. 102–113.

Choosing a research paradigm, methodology, and then research methods to address the research questions is a common challenge for researchers. According to Goodson and Phillimore (2004), researcher's actions are underpinned by a set of beliefs that define his/her worldview. I believe that 'research is not a neutral scientific practice but an interpretative, social and ideological process' (Street, as cited in Barton, 1995, p. 461), and no single truth exists but there are multiple realities, so the researcher and participants co-create understandings of a certain phenomenon to reach the aim of trustworthiness. The overall paradigm guiding this current research is constructivism. According to Charmaz (2007), 'constructivists study how- and sometimes why- participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations' (p. 130). This current research centres on constructing a description of the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China ('how'), and inductively analysing why student participate ('why'). It is the research questions that govern the selection of methodology (Fehring, 2002). To explore what a given population understands about a certain phenomenon is what constructivists need to address. As Hollinshead (2006) suggested, constructivism is serving as 'a powerful conceptual draw-card to pull in all sorts of likeminded adherents with their various theoretical, methodological, and political hopes'.

The constructivist grounded theory was employed as the tool in this research, and assumed a relativistic ontology, a subjectivist epistemology and a naturalistic method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) (see Figure 3.1). In Figure 3.1, the width of scope and diversity of strategies and methods adopted in this research are shown. The left column demonstrates the broad qualitative paradigm; the middle column shows grounded theory methodology in this research; and the left column lists the methods used. In a constructivist paradigm, researchers constructed meaning in relation to the research field. Hollinshead (2006) argued that a constructivism approach should be applied for the relative 'local' interpretations of things and in-group understandings over so-called 'scientific' standards of objective truth, and particularly where 'accepted definitions of reality cannot be taken for granted'. Student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events was a reality of the social phenomenon. Specific to China, the conceptualisation and motivation would be not the same as that in Western countries and had the Chinese local characteristics. This suggested relativist ontology. Conceptualisation and motivation were about people's words, understandings and perceptions, and these formed the subjectivist epistemology. In order to explore the meaning of motivation and volunteer service, this study was conducted in a natural setting, rather than experimental settings, so a naturalistic method has been used.

Paradigms and Perspectives	Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry	Methods
<p><i>Largest</i></p> <p>Progressive qualitative paradigm: Constructivism</p> <p>(a) Reality is socially constructed. (b) Researcher is part of research settings. (c) Investigation must be in reflexive, self-critical, creative dialogue. (d) Aim to problematise, reveal hidden realities, initiate discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relativistic ontology: A belief/reality about the social phenomenon, which is multiple, socially constructed, uncertain and tentative. • Subjectivist epistemology: The relationship between the researcher and respondents is interconnected/interactive. • Naturalistic method: The motivation and meaning of volunteering and is not grasped in experimental settings, but it takes place in natural ones. 	<p>Grounded theory methodology: ‘Theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed’; ‘Continuous interplay between analysis and data collection’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).</p> <p>Auto-ethnography: Explores ‘the nature of a specific social phenomenon’, unstructured data, ‘interpretation of the meanings and functions’, participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994).</p>	<p><i>Smallest</i></p> <p>Observations: Overt participant Observation</p> <p>Self-reflective journaling: Daily journal; Personal narratives;</p> <p>Interviews: Individual interviews; Semi-structured interviews;</p>

Source: adapted from Hollinshead (2004, p. 70)

Figure 3.1 Paradigm, qualitative strategies, and methods

In this research, the context was business events in China, which had its local characteristics; students, higher education institution administrators, and business event organisers had their own understanding of the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events while there has been a large body of research on the understandings of volunteering from Western countries' perspectives. This research was based on the belief that people construct their own understanding of reality. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the methodology used was a dialectical interpretive approach relying on naturalistic methods, including observation, interview, and analysis of the interview texts, as discussed in detail later. The meanings were emergent from the research process and the participants' voices were dominant. It was quite different from the deductive approach underlying positivist research that began with hypotheses that were confirmed by the data collected (Green & Caulley, 1996). So the trustworthiness of research cannot be overlooked. This issue will be discussed in Section 3.7.

3.3 Role of the researcher

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher is seen as a 'human instrument' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The researcher has a substantial role in the whole research process and he/she is involved in every step taken. The researcher needs to describe his/her relevant aspects of self, including personal biases, assumptions, expectations, experiences and the ability to conduct qualitative research (Greenbank, 2003). In this section, I will explain my role in this research from these aspects.

As discussed in section 1.2, I have volunteered at many events in China during my study, including sports events, festivals and numerous business events. Through this, I gained personal insights and heard other student volunteers' perceptions towards volunteering. I also worked for six months at CCPIA, which is a business event organiser. This experience enabled me to think about volunteering from the perspective of organisers. As a Chinese citizen, I have developed a general idea of why individuals volunteer and how this phenomenon has been conceptualised. Since arriving in Wellington in 2014, I have participated in some volunteering activities here, and I noticed the differences in volunteering culture between New Zealand and China. As a doctoral researcher, I began to see student volunteering at business events in China through a more cross-cultural lens as an outsider. I am interested in why the students get involved in the volunteer activities and how the individuals understand this phenomenon. This encourages me to rethink student volunteering at business events in China.

My personal experience has become an essential part of this doctoral work as a way to gain a full understanding of this phenomenon from the ‘insider’ perspective. During this process, I had dual roles – participant and analyst. As a participant, I took on roles like other volunteers and did the work assigned by the organisers. Some personal experience and stories were gained. This laid the foundation for further analysis. As an analyst, on the one hand, I reflected on my own experiences; on the other hand, I observed other volunteers’ activities and organisers from the perspective of an analyst and attempted to explain them theoretically. I started as an insider or a member of the student volunteer group, and then I became an observer. Overall, I tried to build a picture of students’ volunteer service at business event in China using personal ideas and qualitative data from a wide variety of sources. I had explored the related literature on event volunteering in Western countries and China, which provided me with the essential knowledge for this project. In conducting this grounded theory research, I believed Charmaz’s assertion that ‘We are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We constructed our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices’ (2007, p. 10).

3.4 Qualitative research strategies

Research questions affect the choice of method. Section 3.4.1 explains why a qualitative approach is adopted in this thesis. There are a variety of qualitative research strategies used in this thesis: grounded theory, auto-ethnography, and in-depth interviews (Figure 3.1). This methodological triangulation aims to overcome problems of bias and validity (Oppermann, 2000). Grounded theory design guided the whole project, when auto-ethnography and in-depth three-group interviews were qualitative data collection methods. The discussion will move from the introduction of grounded theory design to these two data collection methods. The data collection and analysis process will be then explained in Sections 3.5 and 3.6.

3.4.1 Rational for a qualitative research design

On the question of when to use qualitative research, Creswell (2007, p. 39-40) proposed five situations: when a problem needs to be *explored*, when we need a *complex* explanation, when we want to *empower individuals*, when we want to write in a *literary flexible style*, and when we want to *explain the mechanisms*. Specific to this research, conceptualisation of student volunteering at business events was one research question, which was ‘a complex detailed understanding of the issue’. As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the existing literature on

student volunteering at events is from the Western countries' perspective, so this research met Creswell's situation 'to develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist for certain populations and samples or existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are examining' (2007, p. 42).

Since the purpose of this research was to gain a general understanding of participants' opinions and perceptions related to student volunteering at business events, and I seek to 'discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspective, and world views of the people' (Merriam, 2002, p. 6), so a quantitative design and the statistical analysis do not fit this problem. A qualitative approach is deemed an appropriate way to conduct this research. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices to turn the world into a series of representations, such as interviews, field notes and memos (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Through qualitative research, researchers adopt an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world, that is, 'study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). There were mainly three qualitative research strategies that were adopted in this thesis: grounded theory, auto-ethnography and in-depth interview.

3.4.2 Grounded theory design

As Charmaz (2007) stated, 'the fundamental contribution of grounded theory methods resides in offering a guide to interpretive theoretical practice not in providing a blueprint for theoretical products' (p. 128–129). A grounded theory approach is defined as a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of processes to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Pandit, 1996). It usually analyses qualitative data, such as interview transcripts and observational notes, although it can also employ quantitative methods. Whatever the method employed, the main challenge in grounded theory studies is to 'learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them' (Charmaz, 2007, p. 10).

With the development of grounded theory, two different schools of thoughts, methodologies, and foundations were formed: Glaser, and Strauss & Corbin (Kelle, 2007). Glaser and Strauss attempted to bridge the gap between 'emergence' and 'theoretical sensitivity', which led to two different lines. Each line was subtly distinguished by its own ideographic procedures with Strauss describing a more straightforward and less complicated coding way. Strauss and Corbin emphasised systematic coding techniques and techniques of comparison that could be

used to advance analysis by the manipulation of data in a variety of ways. They drew on one general model of action rooted in pragmatist and interactionist social theory to build a skeleton or ‘axis’ for developing grounded theories. Moreover, they also took a more liberal position for the role of literature in the research process and proposed that ‘all kinds of literature can be used before a research study is begun’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 56). Glaser stressed the interpretive, contextual, and emergent nature of theory development, and he tried to clarify the concept of ‘theoretical sensitivity’ with the help of ‘theoretical coding’. Both strategies have their strengths and limitations. It is worth noting that though there are disagreements over the aims, principles and procedures associated with the implementation of grounded theory, there are a number of constants such as the comparative analysis and the ‘emergence’ of categories from the data, which are used regardless of the version adopted.

Besides these two schools of opinions, many scholars have moved grounded theory away from the positivism in both Glaser’s and Strauss and Corbin’s versions (e.g., Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2000, 2002a, 2006; Clarke, 2005). Researchers have used basic grounded theory guidelines in different ways in terms of coding, memo writing, comparative methods, and sampling for theory development. This thesis followed Strauss and Corbin’s ideas after evaluating the merits and weaknesses of the two schools, and the ‘fit’ with this study. In terms of the steps of the research process, this thesis adopted and adapted Charmaz’s guidelines due to its flexibility. As Charmaz (2006) said, grounded theory methods should be viewed ‘as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages’, and researchers ‘use them on their own and give them a sound appraisal’ (p. 9).

According to Suddaby (2006), many studies only follow the steps of grounded theory or ‘claim to be using grounded theory’. To avoid the contention that the research was simple qualitative research using in-depth interviews, the nature of grounded theory, focusing on the interpretive process by analysing the meanings and concepts, guided the whole process.

The grounded theory approach was adopted in this thesis for the following reasons:

- Lack of prior research in this field. Though there are a large number of papers on volunteers, very few of them have explored volunteering in China and business events. To avoid the bias from the dominant literature developed in different contexts, grounded theory was used to explore the conceptualisation and students’ motivations at business events in China, with the aim of constructing a contextual-based understanding of volunteering.

- The nature or characteristics of research questions. Conceptualisation and motivation are two key elements of the research questions. They are about people's words, understandings, and perceptions, so they are very subjective and need to be constructed from the bottom, from the raw data. Grounded theory is rooted in the data and in the reality of the experience (Charmaz, 2000), so it is appropriate for this thesis. Through a grounded constructivist approach the researcher was able to focus on the conceptualisation and motivation of student volunteers at business events, by placing herself as both a participant (auto-ethnography stage) and a researcher (interview stage), rather than as a neutral observer.
- The advantages of grounded theory. Grounded theory requires immersion of the researcher in the explored field to gain a richness of data. It is open to any new/emerging elements. Griffiths and Armour (2012) also claimed that grounded theory analytical process is mutually negotiated between participant and researcher.

There were three main phases of data collection and analysis that were interconnected and interactive (Figure 3.2). In accordance with the requirement of grounded theory, data collection and analysis were conducted at the same time. However, the data collected in the first phase guided the second phase. Several strategies, such as memo writing theoretical sampling and sorting, were adopted during the analysis process. A brief discussion of two methods of data collected follows: 1) auto-ethnography, and 2) in-depth interviews.

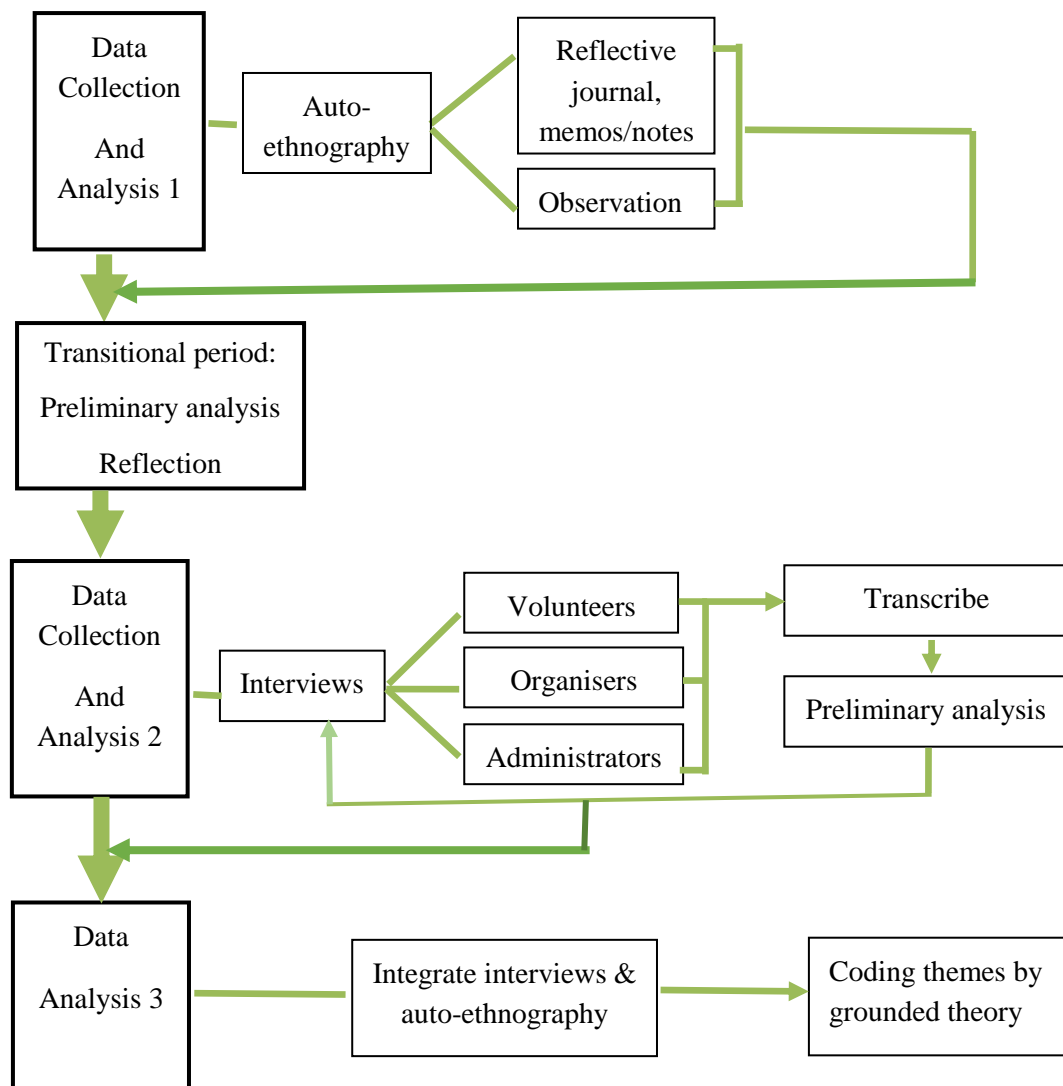


Figure 3.2 Phases of methodology

3.4.3 Methods

The purpose of this section is to introduce the two methods of data collection and why they are adopted in this research. Section 3.5 will detail their use in this study.

Auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is a method of qualitative research in which the researcher uses his/her personal experience to address an issue; Holbrook (2005) called this a subjective personal introspection. Auto-ethnography was chosen due to the exploratory nature of this study and the unique ‘insider’ insight it could yield (Houge Mackenzie, & Kerr, 2013). Auto-ethnography allowed the researcher to use an individual’s personal experience to gain a fuller

and balanced understanding of a particular phenomenon from the ‘insider’ perspective (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It put the researcher back into the study, rather than keeping him/her quietly on the sidelines (Parry & Johnson, 2007). Also, ‘a constructivist approach places priority on the phenomenon of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data’ (Charmaz, 2007, p. 130). So auto-ethnography was chosen as the first step in data collection for this project.

Auto-ethnography was identified as the fifth moment in the history of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As for the five moments of qualitative research history, Denzin and Lincoln summarised them as: the first moment of traditional period (from early 1902 to World War II); the second moment of modernist phase (post-war years to the 1970s); the third moment of interpretive genre dispersion (from the 1970s to about 1986) and grounded theory was developed in this period; the fourth moment of a crisis of representation concerning the issue of how to represent and not misrepresent the voice of the ‘other’ (middle 1980s); and the fifth moment of the interwoven crises of representation and legitimation (Annells, 1997). Rather than excluding personal insights, auto-ethnography allowed the researcher to be the insider who provides unique insights, thoughts, stories and observations into personal and emotional life worlds, so researcher biases and reflexivity were openly discussed (Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2007). Auto-ethnography explored the nature of a specific social phenomenon by unstructured data collected by participant observation, memos, field notes and interpretation of the meanings. Participant observation was the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities (Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation was an essential method of data collection in auto-ethnography. Besides that, auto-ethnography also included other data collection methods, such as field notes, and the final aim was self-reflection. Moreover, the emphasis of auto-ethnographic approach was ‘inner knowing’, and sought to describe and systematically analyse personal experience to understand a social phenomenon. Auto-ethnography recognised the researcher as a representative of a multi-layered lifeworld and claimed that the researcher himself/herself worthy of expression.

There has been a call for personal narrative and storytelling in research as it may lead to new insights and different research questions (Rinechart, 2005). A few scholars have been successfully employed auto-ethnography in exploring adventure tourism experience (e.g., Allen & Shaw, 2009; Buckley, 2012; Kristiansen et al., 2014), and sports and leisure (e.g.,

Jones, 2009; McCarville, 2007), which has extended our understanding of the personal and social forces that shape one's experience. In the context of event volunteering, Kodama et al.'s (2013) study of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games identified six meaningful experiences based on auto-ethnography data collected by personal narrative.

An analytical auto-ethnographical approach, which aligned with traditional social science epistemologies and theoretical analyses, guided this research (Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003). According to Anderson (2006), analytic auto-ethnography 'refers to ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understanding of broader social phenomena'. However, the presentation of data also adopted evocative auto-ethnography to 'evoke an empathetic emotional response in the reader, offering readers license to take part in an experience that reveal to them not only how it was for me, but how it could be or once was for them' (Ellis, 2009, p. 140). Hence, this thesis integrated an analytical auto-ethnographical and evocative auto-ethnography approach.

Auto-ethnographic data were collected in the form of a reflective daily journal during my volunteer activities at two business events in China (see Section 3.3.1). Personal narrative was recorded to better understand my attitude, context and values within the given settings. The use of narrative – both oral and written – should not only tell readers what happened but also 'engage its audience with work to such an extent they feel the author's or subject's emotional response to given situations' (Rinehart, 2005, p. 503). Three fundamentals of personal narratives were abided by: 1) delve into the self; 2) locate the researchers themselves in a world in which values are both implicit and explicit; 3) reject the idea of 'value free' research (Rinehart, 2005, p. 499–500). Memos and field notes were also used as data sources. This hybrid approach in including data beyond the ethnographer's own experiences could enhance the reliability and authenticity of the results (Kwek, Wang, & Weaver, 2014).

Although limited data were produced from the short period of auto-ethnographic field study, it was a good platform from where the discussion could begin. The researcher myself engaged in the volunteer field through my own experience as both a participant and an observer (Brettell, 1997). As a researcher with thorough study of auto-ethnography and constructivist grounded theory, I recognised my preconceived notions and the potential influences on the research, so I made every effort to be open to the reality and to other people

in order to gain better understanding of student volunteering at business events. In other words, as a researcher and a student volunteer, every effort was made to ensure the openness and fairness of auto-ethnography by recognising the subjectivity of auto-ethnography.

Auto-ethnography was conducted as the starting point before moving to the interview stage in this constructivist grounded theory. The personal narratives that reflect my experiences, perceptions, and feelings were recorded. Another role of auto-ethnography was building trust with the participants, rapport with them for the subsequent interviews, and set up certain criteria for later in-depth respondents selection. As Yang, Ryan, and Zhang (2012) argued, 'in a relationship-oriented society such as China, there is a need to develop a relationship prior to revealing what may be truthful opinions' (p. 1692). Thus, the researcher made great efforts to form positive relationships with volunteers and event organisers in order to obtain trust from potential interview participants; and to encourage them to provide responses based on their own experiences of participating or organising volunteer behaviour in the field of business events in China.

Interviews

Interview has been widely used in many research areas. There are a variety of interview designs that can obtain rich data (Creswell, 2007). In-depth interview is one of these techniques, and it 'involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation' (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3). In-depth interview is an effective qualitative data collection technique and most appropriate when asking open-ended questions to elicit depth of information from relatively few participants (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2001). It is a discovery-oriented method, which enables the investigator to deeply explore the interviewees' perspectives on a certain phenomenon. The questions usually start with 'why' or 'how', and the further questions can be framed from the answers to probe the deeper meanings.

Considering the exploratory and probing nature of grounded theory design, a semi-structured interview approach was used. It included several prepared questions guided by the identified themes and probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In this research, the focus of interviews was to cover a broad range of themes on students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China in the interview guide when conceptualisation and motivation are two main directions. The strength of this approach was to 'ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee...but still allows a

degree of freedom and adaptability' (McNamara, 2009, p. 239). The semi-structured interview is very flexible and allows the researcher to change the questions proposed in order to evoke the fullest response from the participants. At the same time, the interviewees can respond in their own language and terms. So it has proved to be especially valuable when the investigators want to 'understand the way the interviewees perceive the social world under study' (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). Section 3.5.2 will detail the interview process and interview data.

3.5 Data collection

To understand how student volunteering at business events is conceptualised and volunteers' motivations, it is necessary to gather data from different groups. Taking account of multiple groups' perspectives is not amenable to quantification and statistical analysis (Handel, 1996). However, the immersion of myself in the volunteer activities and three groups of interviewees can improve the holistic of research design. Based on these reasons, this project included auto-ethnography and interviews with three groups of participants in two phases: Firstly, I immersed myself in two business events to embrace personal volunteer experiences (auto-ethnography). After that, there was a short transitional period to reflect and prepare for the following interviews. Then, three groups of participants – student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators – were interviewed (Figure 3.3).

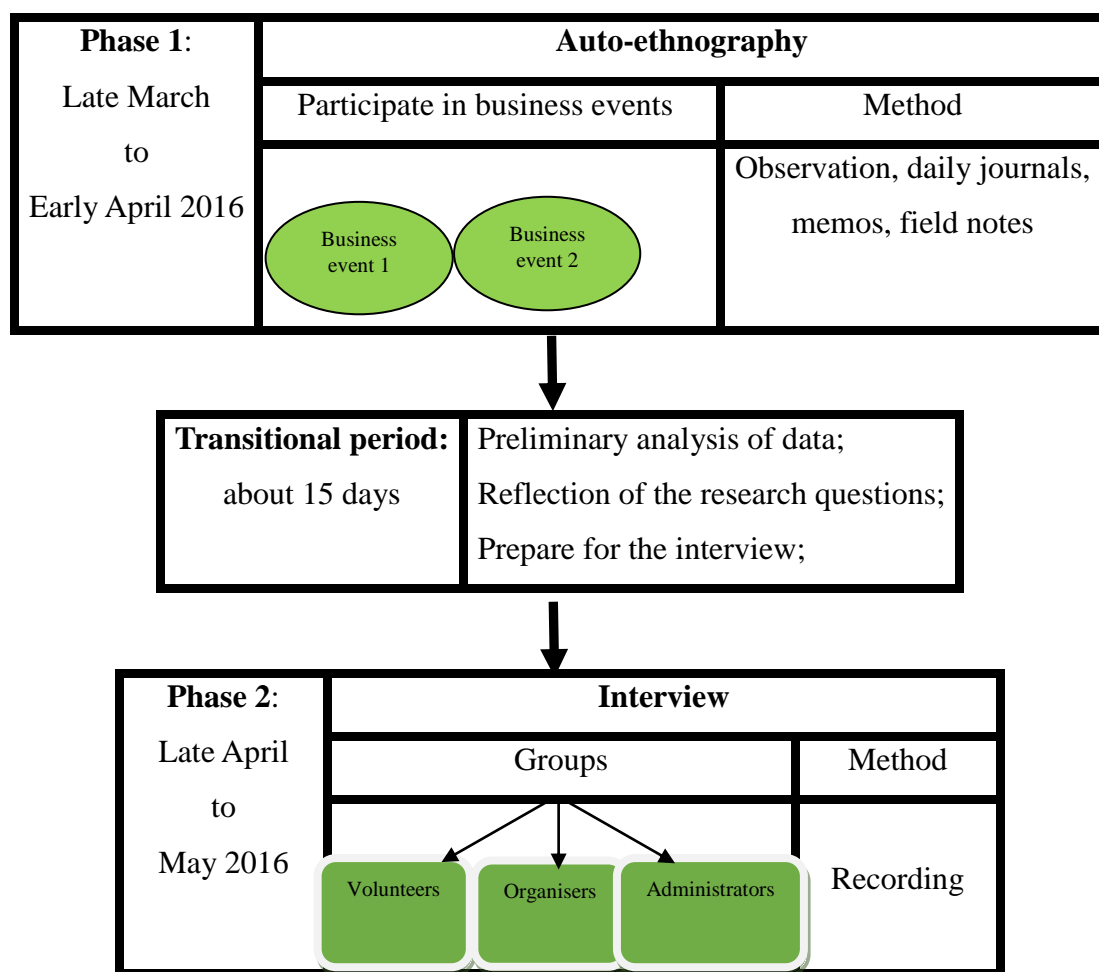


Figure 3.3 Data collection process

3.5.1 Phase 1: Auto-ethnography

The purpose of the auto-ethnography in the first phase was primarily to embrace personal volunteer experiences, thoughts, stories and participant observations. Acquiring an understanding of how things work in practice enabled me to make sense of the phenomenon I was exploring. I got involved as a volunteer at two business events: 2016 Shandong Province Entrepreneurship Programs Exhibition (25th to 27th March 2016, organised by Small and Medium Business Administration of Shandong Province) and 2016 Qingdao 25th International Fabric and Accessories Procurement Fair (14th to 16th April 2016, organised by Qingdao International Procurement Exchange Centre). Both were regional business events held in Shandong Province in China. During the first exhibition, I was in charge of exhibitor

registration on the first day and dealing with visitor questionnaires on the last two days. For the second event, my role was an organiser assistant at the exhibitor registration desk.

March and April are the spring peak times for business events in China, and I planned to be a volunteer for at least four business events in different fields, but some unexpected challenges arose. As I am not linked to a Chinese organisation, I had to contact organisers as an individual. Some business event organisers preferred to outsource the volunteer recruitment and management to another organisation, and some had cooperation arrangement with the local universities, so they usually did not accept individual volunteer. Though I applied to 10 business events, I only gained placements at two events. This triggered me to reflect on the reasons for involving volunteers in different ways and prepare the interview questions on this aspect for business event organisers.

During the volunteering, I focused on my own experiences and self-reflection and adhered to the five key features of analytical auto-ethnography proposed by Anderson (2006) (Table 3.2). Located in the participant-as-observer realm, I was highly engaged with the volunteer activities and other people. As my goal and presence as a researcher were integral to the way this study was conducted, it was necessary for me to develop relationships with the fellow volunteers, organisers, and other related groups. Dialogue with informants entailed unstructured conversations during the events. The performance of auto-ethnography allowed me to be an ‘insider’, which made me conduct the research from an ‘epistemology of insiderness’, to become part of the story, and to construct knowledge relative to the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events. This is based on cherishing the value of inner knowing, which recognises the researcher as a representative of the group being explored, herself/himself worthy of expression. It is of great importance to conduct research endeavour with subjectivity and give voice to personal interpretation. The auto-ethnographic method allowed me to use personal schema, and past experience provides the sensibilities to make investigation possible.

Table 3.2 Key features of analytical auto-ethnography

Key features (Anderson, 2006)	Application in this research
Complete member research status	Being a volunteer in a variety of business events in one month
Analytic reflexivity	Self-conscious about my role, context and others
Narrative visibility of the researcher	Capturing my feeling and experience
Dialogue with informants beyond the self	Other volunteers, exhibitors and visitors' voices
Commitment to the theoretical analysis	Empirical data

Overt participant observation was adopted, and all the members were aware of what I was doing. A standard checklist guided the observations and conversations (Appendix D). I specially paid attention to other volunteers and organisers from three aspects: subjective personal experience (insights, thoughts, personal stories, personal introspection); student volunteers' roles (e.g., the main positions or roles of student volunteers, the similarities/differences with other staff, rights and duties, treatment); and interactions among the group (e.g., conversations and evocative stories that related to student volunteers' conceptualisation and motivations, the interaction between student volunteers and volunteer organisers).

The data were presented in the form of a personal narrative in reflective daily journals, where I focused on my personal understandings of student volunteering and motivational aspects of my experiences, and other fellow volunteers' states, rather than merely logging daily activities. Furthermore, reflective memos and detailed field notes of my experiences, observations and reflections for the methodological, theoretical and personal insights were jotted.

In order to improve the quality of data collected by auto-ethnography, three key strategies were adopted. Firstly, I formed the study boundaries before conducting the research; all data collected in the phase of auto-ethnography were concerned with the two research questions, so conceptualisation and motivation were the focus of the data collected. Secondly, I took some operational measures. For example, reflective memos and field notes were used to jot down my reflections and help develop my journals. Two supervisors' suggestions from the regular meeting were used to make sure that the field study was 'on the track'. Due to the fact

that overt participant observation was adopted, some measures were taken to reduce the influence of the Hawthorne effect such as confirming with them and observing in a different situation. Thirdly, improve the reliability of data. Besides the reflective daily journals, other sources were collected, categorised, and kept systematically. The accounts of other people's evocative stories were reviewed by them after I finished writing research journals. I gave myself extra time (one year after the field study) to reflect the data collected and personal experience and narrative.

Auto-ethnography offers a way of giving voice to personal experience, but it can be a challenging qualitative approach to use. Some difficulties were experienced during the data collection that related to objectivity, data quality and ethical issues. One of the major disputations for auto-ethnography is its lack of objectivity. How to balance the subjectivity and objectivity is a question I never stopped thinking about. In order to avoid 'guessing' or 'judging' others, I tried to find a variety of evidence in addition to the reflective daily journals, such as proposing the questions to confirm with the participants in the following interviews. Moreover, there were some difficulties of recording data while volunteering. On the one hand, I had to do my roles as a volunteer. On the other hand, I need to observe and reflect. In addition, I was exhausted after a whole day's work at events and it was hard to sort out the data in the evening. Sometimes I did not record the data until the end of the event and some details were unavoidably missed out or interpreted in a different way.

Some ethical concerns were caused by the auto-ethnography. I gained permission from the organisers in advance to undertake the research, and asked organisers to help send an email to other volunteers to introduce me and make them aware of my role as both volunteer and researcher. All the volunteers had access to the information sheet (Appendix A). They could choose not to participate. To maintain the confidentiality of their identities, the names of volunteers were replaced by numbers and they could not be identified in my reflective daily journals. How to avoid making use of other volunteers' life to tell my story was another major consideration. If participants provided some useful stories, an oral permission to portray others was received before using the stories. I tried to give them a chance to contribute their perspectives to the story. If they were not comfortable to disclose their opinions, their stories would not be included. The 'No Harm' principle was carried out. According to *The Declaration of Helsinki* (WMA, 1964), this research did not use participants against their will, either by force or deception. Even if those participants

provided informed consent, this research would not expose them to undue risk or harm (Hugman, Pittaway, & Bartolomei, 2011).

3.5.2 Phase 2: Interviews

One-to-one, semi-structured interviews were adopted in the second phase of data collection in this research. I conducted interviews with a purposive sample of 39 participants from three respondent groups: student volunteers (20), business event organisers (10), and education institution administrators (9). Three groups of interview participants were involved, and triangulation was used to examine the questions of motivation and conceptualisation, which can reduce bias and enhance the reliability of the data. It is the student volunteers that put the volunteer behaviour into practice, so how they see themselves and their motivations are of great importance for this research. It is difficult to disentangle personal and collective rationales despite claims by volunteers. In this research, student volunteers were college and university students in China, who had recently volunteered at business events. Business event organisers are those that recruit, interview and manage the volunteers, as they have direct relation with them, so organisers are qualified to speak on their perceptions towards the phenomenon of volunteer service. The higher education institution administrators carry a dual role: policy maker and first-line manager. Following the national policy, they formulate school level regulations for student affairs, including students' volunteer activities. They are also responsible for the training, development, and employment of students. Most of the administrators from colleges have the experience of collectively organising students to volunteer at events. Due to the different training modes in colleges and universities, administrators from universities do not have such experiences, but dealing with individual students' volunteer activities is also an essential part of their work. It can be said that they are the bridges between students and social practice.

The interviews were linked to the auto-ethnography at the first phase. A purpose sampling method was used to identify six student volunteer interviewees and 3 organiser interviewees I met during the first stage (auto-ethnography) of field study in this research. Then, a snowball technique was used, that is, I asked the people (student volunteers and organisers) I met during phase 1 to introduce me more candidates (e.g., their friends who have also volunteered, education institution administrators they knew, and business events organisers) who may be willing to participate in my research. Snowball technique has the advantages of shortening

the time and diminishing the cost to gain sufficient size participant group efficiently (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010).

As suggested by Charmaz (2007), the broad open-ended questions are encouraged for grounded theory studies: this encourages the ‘unanticipated statements and stories to emerge’ (p. 26). However, due to the emergent and explorative nature of grounded theory, I did not follow the same step for each interviewee. I changed, added, or re-worded the questions to clarify details and obtain more information for certain aspect. Probing questions were used to elicit more detailed responses from the interviewees, e.g., How do you understand that? Can you give me some examples? How do you feel about that?. All interviews were conducted in Chinese (the native language of both myself and interviewees) and digitally recorded. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to over an hour. After obtaining contact information, I emailed them the information sheet to explain the research purpose and ask if they wanted take part.

The ethical considerations were crucial to this stage of data collection. All the participants took part in interviews of their own free will. To protect participants’ privacy and identities, the names of interviewees were replaced by codes (e.g., S# for students, O# for organisers, and A# for administrators). All the interviews were digitally recorded with their permission. A consent form (see Appendix C) was signed before starting the interview to make sure that they had understood the purpose of this study. For the participants, I sent them the interview transcript after transcribing, which they could renew and return.

I knew that I needed to enter this field with an open mind and minimise my preconceptions. But I continually developed my theoretical sensitivity, which was a characteristic that evolves from ‘a long term biographical and conceptual build up that makes [the analyst] quite ‘wise’ about the data-how to detail its main problem and processes and how to interpret and explain them theoretically’ (Glaser, 1978, p. 2). In this process, my attitude towards data and the theory, my knowledge, understandings and skills in data collection and analysis were developed over time. Though it was a challenge for me, I increased it by reading a variety of literature.

Participants

Overall, I approached 48 participants (27 students, 11 organisers, and 10 education institution administrators), and 39 (20 students, 10 organisers, and 9 education institution administrators) took part the research at the end. No new themes emerged from the last few interviews, but

the number of interviewees was increased to make sure that theoretical saturation was achieved. The first group of participants were students that had volunteer experience at business events, including exhibitions, trade fairs, and conferences (Table 3.3). A total of 20 students from eight different universities/colleges were interviewed, although over half of them were from Beijing International Studies University and Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management. Twelve were Certificate students, five were Bachelor's students, and three were Master's students. Most of them were studying tourism and events management.

Table 3.3 Profile of student volunteers

Organisation	
Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management	8
Beijing International Studies University	4
Shandong College of Tourism & Hospitality	3
Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College	1
Guangzhou University	1
Yunnan University	1
Ocean University of China	1
Linyi University	1
Gender	
Female	17
Male	3
Education level	
Certificate	12
Bachelor	5
Master	3
Subject	
Convention and Business event Planning and Management	10
Tourism Management	7
Hotel Management	1
Business Administration	1
Graphic Design	1

The second group of interviewees consisted of business event organisers in different roles, such as Project Manager and staff in charge of recruiting, interviewing, and managing the volunteers in their work (Table 3.4). They were selected by snowball sampling, with taking the organiser types and industry into consideration. These organisers were from a variety of organisations types, including industrial associations, government departments, commercial business event companies and state-owned business event centres (Appendix E). The business events they organised ranged from consumer goods to pesticides, and some of them were local business events and others were international ones.

Table 3.4 Profile of business event organisers

Organisation	
Jinan Shungeng Business Event Centre	3
China Toy Association	2
China Crop Protection Industry Association	1
Jinan Tianyi International Convention & Business Event Company	1
China National Arts & Crafts Business Event Corp	1
Qingdao Trade Promotion Committee	1
Gender	
Female	6
Male	4
Title	
Staff	7
Project Manager	3

The third group of participants were administrative staff from different levels of universities and colleges (Table 3.5). They formulate school level regulations for student affairs, including student volunteer activities, and they are responsible for the training, development, and employment of students. When the external organisers need student volunteers, it is usually the administrative staff that deliver the information to the students. So they carry a dual role and act as the ‘bridges’ between students and social practice. Detailed information of the participants for each group is shown in Appendix E.

Table 3.5 Profile of education institution administrators

Organisation	
Yancheng Institute of Technology	4
Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management	3
Ocean University of China	1
Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College	1
Gender	
Female	5
Male	4
Title	
Administrator	7
Head of Student Affairs	2

Though in-depth interviews have the advantage of providing much detailed information, there were challenges to do it well. For example, the interviewer should use some effective interview techniques, such as appropriate body language and avoiding proposing leading questions. In order to enhance the quality of the interviews, the researcher conducted a pilot study with six Chinese students in New Zealand before doing the main study to improve her interview skills. During the pilot study, the investigator interviewed the participants' motivations and conceptualisation for their recent volunteer activities. The interviewer practised the skills for doing interviews, such as body language, the art of proposing questions, and skills in teasing out interviewees' ideas. From the pilot study, the interview schedule and questions were adjusted. In addition, the strategies of how to establish rapport with participants were also gained.

Despite the pilot study, the interviews presented some challenges. Firstly, finding time to schedule interviews was not easy. For example, I arrived to one organiser's office on time, but he told me that he needed to attend a meeting and postponed the interview to the afternoon. But in the afternoon, he had to meet a customer coming from another city. I spent the whole day waiting for him, but I could not do the interview in the end. With such experience, I realised that taking advantage of the modern technology would be a strategy for making the research flexible and feasible, so I chose to interview those 'very busy people' by

video call (e.g., Skype, QQ, Wechat⁶). Four participants (two event organisers, one student, and one administrator) were interviewed online.

Research interviews using VoIP technology (Voice over Internet Protocol) has been recognised as a new data collection method that has the advantages of saving time, reducing cost, and making it possible to exploit the information contained in the video (Bertrand, & Bourdeau, 2010). Until now, there has been no evidence on the impact of data quality. During this process, I noticed that building rapport and trust with the participants rapidly at the beginning was important. I used to contact the interviewees by message and send them the related information before starting the video talk. Secondly, the definition of some terms was not very clear to the interviewees. For example, using the term of ‘business event’, ‘conference’ and ‘business event’ caused some ambiguity. At the beginning, I did not clearly explain which type of volunteer activities I was referring to in questions, and some interviewees, especially the student participants, gave very short answers and provided very little information. I therefore needed to use many probing questions. After several interviews, I gradually felt more relaxed with the process, and the richness and flexibility of the interviews increased. Thirdly, there were some challenges of getting student volunteers to articulate why they volunteer, and this issue has been recognised by other researchers (e.g., Hudson & Inkson, 2006). The interview usually started with a broader discussion of volunteering at events, rather than limited to their motivations. I need to acknowledge that my own identity as a student, past volunteer experience and work experience as a business event organiser made me an ‘insider’ in this field. I started the interview process by introducing my own research and past experience. This aimed to establish mutual understanding and trust with the participants. Most interviews finished with informal conversations about my life in New Zealand and other aspects, such as tourism.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Analytical framework

A constructivist grounded theory approach guided the analysis process. The shared experience and relationships with participants was of great importance for data collection and analysis. One characteristic of grounded theory was being involved in participants’ values, views, and beliefs (Charmaz, 2000). According to Charmaz (1990), the researcher in such

⁶ QQ and Wechat are popular social media in China.

studies should come with general questions and a ‘store of sociological concepts’ (p. 1165). In the research, I had two broad questions (i.e., motivation and conceptualization) and the initial literature review provided me a general idea of the concepts in the event volunteering field. The literature review in this research ‘shows gaps or bias in existing knowledge, thus providing a rationale for this type of qualitative study’ (Creswell, 2007, p. 190). I took a two-step coding process in data analysis: initial coding and focused coding. At the end of each auto-ethnography field study, I conducted an initial coding before moving to the next one. This preliminary analysis laid the foundation for the following interviews. After finishing all the interviews, the auto-ethnographic data and interview data were merged for open coding and axial coding. A certain number of codes and categories emerged from the coding process.

Figure 3.4 demonstrates the data analysis process, starting with the data collection of auto-ethnography and interviews. Initial coding was conducted as the first stage of data analysis with a large number of initial codes. After that, focused coding produced several categories. This process could repeat for several times with the deepening of constant comparison. It will be explained in Section 3.6.2. In order to define these categories and their properties, the strategy of theoretical sampling was adopted. Theoretical sampling was seeking pertinent data to develop the emerging theory. The main purpose of theoretical sampling was to elaborate and refine the categories. Of course, the coding process was not entirely linear. It was a concentrated and active involvement, and this was one of the strengths of grounded theory. To keep myself involved in the analysis and increase the level of abstraction, I wrote memos (code notes, theoretical notes, and operational notes) throughout the research process. During the constant comparison process, memos helped to catch my fleeting ideas and thoughts about this analytic process. Memo writing also encouraged me to dig into the implicit, unstated and condensed meanings of the interviewees. I used memos to begin defining the relationships among categories. Theoretical sampling and sorting was also used. In short, sorting was a process of creating and refining the theoretical links among categories. There will be further details about memo writing and theoretical sampling and sorting in Section 3.6.3 and Section 3.6.4.

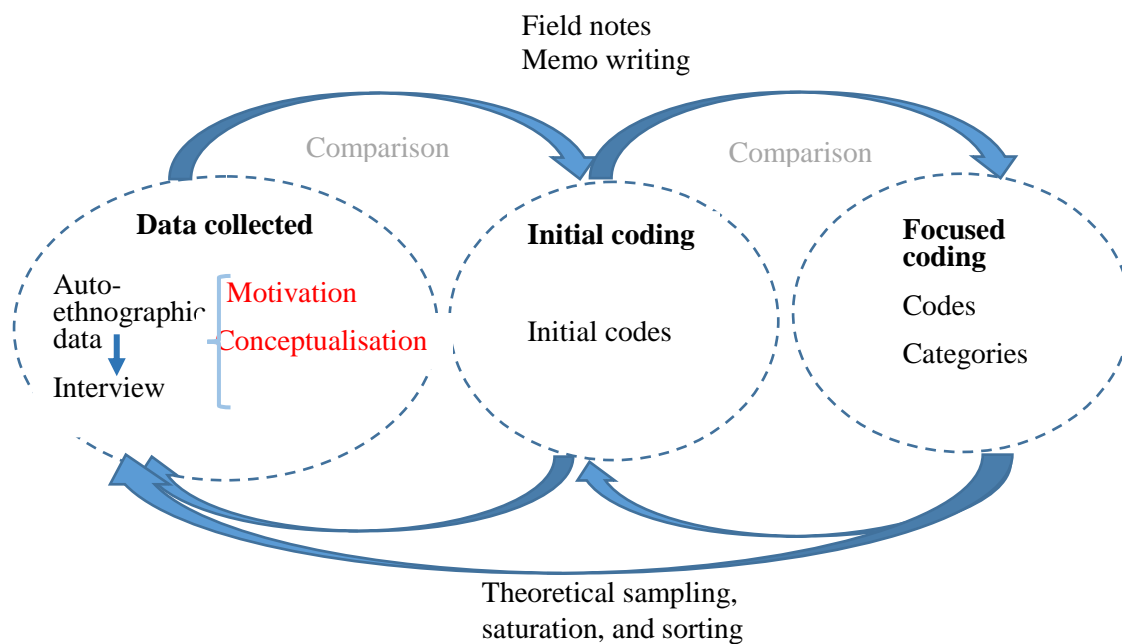


Figure 3.4 Analytical framework

During this process, I tried to maintain a balance between objectivity and sensitivity. This was especially important in dealing with the challenges of integrating the interviewees' words with my subjective observations and reflection at the auto-ethnographic stage. Objectivity means 'openness, a willingness to listen and to 'give voice' to respondents, be they individuals or organizations' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 43). This means I should be honest about what participants have said and what they have done, and represent them as accurately as possible with a non-judgemental attitude, rather than putting my own prejudice and judgement into this process. I realised that my own understandings were influenced by the experience and values, which might be different from those of the participants. I need to face up to this in the data analysis. Sensitivity is to 'perceive the subtle nuances and meanings in data and to recognize the connections between concepts' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 42-43). The researcher's degree of sensitivity affected the depth and quality of the data analysis. Throughout the whole process, I considered the participants as collaborators and integrated them into the research, rather than 'objectified subjects' (Tripp-Reimer, Sorofman, Peters, & Waterman, 1994). Reading the stories and replies that participants gave carefully in the interviews allowed me to learn about their opinions in their own words. Engaging in all the participants' stories throughout data analysis made it possible for me to become sensitive to their experiences and opinions and deepen my understanding.

3.6.2 Coding

The coding process shaped an analytic frame to build further analysis and generate theories. ‘Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data’ (Charmaz, 2007, p. 48). In the first step, I conducted initial coding. According to Charmaz (2007), data collection and data analysis should be conducted simultaneously, so I started initial coding at the early stage of the field study. That means I conducted the initial coding for the research journals before moving to the next stage of interviews.

Initial coding

The reflective daily journals that I collected of my everyday activities and self-reflection during my volunteering at two business events produced narrative accounts of the experience. This part describes how I analysed the auto-ethnographical data. As the starting point, I read the journal entries several times and made sure that my experience, feelings and reflections had been recorded. I focused on my personal experience of what I saw and what I did during the event volunteer activities, along with the reflections about my own conceptualisation and motivation. This allowed the researcher to ‘delve deeply into the researcher’s experiences’ (Chang, 2013, p. 111) and maximise the benefit of individual auto-ethnography. The data I collected during the two business events were stored in two separate journals, and some field notes and memos were also included. Initial coding was the first process of analysis for these auto-ethnographical daily journals. I developed 186 codes and 23 categories for my two research questions. The analysis of the journal entries helped to re-frame the interview questions at the second stage. After finishing all the interviews, I came back to these journals and codes again, and conducted a re-analysis. New codes, categories, field notes, and memos were developed. Attention also paid to comparing and contrasting my personal experience to that of other participants.

After each interview, I transcribed them verbatim and made preliminary analysis by initial coding to gain the general themes that emerged in the interview before moving to the next interview. However, when I had multiple interviewees in one day, I could not transcribe and code before doing the next one. For these cases, I tried to listen to the recording and jotted down the general themes and new directions immediately after the interview. I identified the themes from the participants and reflected them in the following interviews to make sure that I had followed the technique of constant comparison. I kept comparing initial codes that

emerged from different interviewees and compared initial codes from auto-ethnographic journals with those from interviews.

In this process, the only guide for me was my research questions, that is, while there were many themes that emerged from the literature, I tried to avoid the influence of literature on the coding process. Moreover, I did not code items that were unrelated to my research.

After finishing all the interviews, two types of data were integrated together for initial coding and focused coding. Considering the large amount of data, NVivo was used to facilitate the coding process. The advantages of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software has been widely recognised among contemporary qualitative researchers (Banner & Albarran, 2009). NVivo offered an efficient means to manage and organise the data to support a rigorous data analysis process.

The initial codes were provisional and they remain open to other analytic possibilities. I progressively followed up on gathering data to explore whether they fitted the data rather than force the data to fit the codes. The process was detected gradually. For example, after interviewing four students, I was able to understand some aspects of their conceptualisation and motivations for students' volunteering at business events in China. A primary collective narrative about the motivation of 'to practise' emerged, applying knowledge into practice, gaining the practical skills for future employment and so on. I then asked questions about this in the follow-up interviews. This was a constant comparative process among data, and it also developed the relationship between codes. Table 3.6 illustrates the coding process in which, first, the surface text (i.e., interview transcript) was open-coded and then reanalysed into categories to convey structural meaning. The suggested coding process applied to auto-ethnographic data too.

Table 3.6 Example of coding process

Text	Open codes	Categories
For this ¥ 60, it is obvious that it is lower than the local average wage, and it is a kind of allowance for lunch and transportation. So personally, I think it can be said a kind of ‘volunteer’.	payment level, allowance	payment
The jobs are different and the ‘feelings’ that they bring to you are different. As for the job, for the most part of volunteer service at Nursing House is chatting with the elders, but for being a volunteer at event, they would arrange some work to you, usually are some organizing and Intellectual work... As for the ‘feelings’, providing volunteer service at Nursing House are more for love, that is, you feel you should do this and after the service you would feel very good, while being a volunteer at events would have some utilitarian purposes like broaden your horizons and gain the certificates....If you are a volunteer at big conference or sports events, they will give you certificates, and they would be useful when you look for a job. They could prove that you have done these.	feelings, broaden horizons, gain certificates, prepare for employment	volunteering at business event & volunteering at other fields

The initial coding made it possible for me to think about the material in a new way that may differ from the participants’ interpretations (Charmaz, 2007, p. 55). But that did not mean that I put the ‘alien professional language to describe the phenomenon’ (Charmaz, 2007, p. 49). When exploring the data, an analytical eye based on my disciplinary background was used to look at their statements. However, throughout this process I tried not to leap beyond participants’ meanings to make sure that the research was from an insider’s view. Initial coding was a ‘break down data’ analysis, and the next stage of focused coding was a synthesising process of larger segments of data.

Focused coding

After establishing some analytic directions through the first-step coding, I then conducted the focused coding. It means using the most significant codes ‘to sift through large amounts of data’ (Charmaz, 2007, p. 57). One goal of focused coding was to determine the adequacy of the most significant codes in initial coding. Take the emergent codes around payment for example: a large number of codes emerged from the initial analysis of interview data. I further grouped these codes into groups: the level of the payment (e.g., ‘very low’, ‘lower than market value’), the role of the payment (e.g., ‘to attract volunteers’, ‘an effective

management tool'), and understandings about the payment (e.g., 'allowance', 'daily wage'). Based on this, I used 'payment is not a main aim' as a category. I developed focused codes by comparing data to data and refined them by comparing data to codes. Some preliminary categories emerged. For example, codes such as 'dedication', 'willing to do', and 'sense of responsibility' emerged; after constant comparison, 'voluntary spirit' was chosen as the category covering these codes.

The coding of grounded theory was an emergent process. Some new threads for analysis that I had not expected became apparent. For example, some participants believed that in the business event industry there was no volunteer behaviour and they saw it as part-time work. It triggered me to explore this more, which led to my analysis of different types of business events. From this sense, focused coding checked my preconceptions towards student volunteering at business events in China.

3.6.3 Memo writing

'Memo-writing is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers' (Charmaz, 2007, p. 72). Memo writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts the researcher to analyse the data and codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2007, p. 72). It is a 'distillation process', through which the research transforms the data into theory (Lempert, 2007, p. 245). The memos are usually written in informal, unofficial language for personal use (Charmaz, 2007, p. 80). I jotted down whatever came to me. This methodological practice and exploration process pushed me to immerse myself in the data analysis and abstract my analytical ideas at the same time.

During the comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and categories, category and concept, I used memos to jot down the fleeting thoughts about their relationships and explore the emergent patterns. For example, 'to learn' was one category for student volunteers' motivations. But it condensed a variety of meanings, such as learn how a business event was organised, learn team-work, or learn spoken English. I realised that dividing the students into several groups made it easier to describe their motivations. The analytic memos played an important role in the theoretical integration process. In short, the memos served the analytic process and directed the subsequent coding.

3.6.4 Theoretical sampling and sorting

After the initial coding of the qualitative data, some tentative codes and categories were established. But these categories were still thin. According to Charmaz (2007), theoretical sampling was the strategy for advancing the analysis at this stage. Theoretical sampling means seeking pertinent data to develop your emerging theory (Charmaz, 2007). Glaser and Strauss (1967) created this strategy. The main purpose of theoretical sampling was to collect more data to refine the categories and develop their properties until no new properties emerge. For example, among the data, ‘improve myself’ emerged many times and I chose it as a category after the first stage of coding. To refine this category, I needed to gather more data in many aspects, such as comparing Diploma, Bachelor and Master’s students’ emphasis and explored what they mean, such as learn new knowledge, or improve communication skills, or gain work experience. The other role of theoretical sampling was to examine the ideas gained from both auto-ethnography and interviews through asking further questions. Overall, theoretical sampling kept the researcher moving back and forth between data collection and analysis, and also keep writing and analysing (Hood, 1983). During this process, memo writing played an important role. Memos recorded the incomplete categories, analytical gaps, the prediction for where to collect data and the comparisons of data.

For this research, I asked earlier participants further questions that I had not covered before. Here the data was collected in a relatively informal way. I conducted further empirical inquiry by social media, such as Wechat or Skype, when I had the opportunities to chat with them. I clearly told them that it was a follow-up inquiry about my research before asking them questions. After the interviews, I tried to add each participant as a friend on Wechat and chat with them from time to time to maintain the relationship. After several months, we had built the trust. I realised that some students were uneasy about the recorded interviews. Maybe this was because I was a senior student from overseas and they were worried about the answers. For the organisers and education institution administrators, the recording of their words and the consent form also brought them pressure. Gaining data by social media could dispel their anxiety and allow them express themselves more freely. Interacting with the participants in an informal and relaxed environment made it possible to gain more about their experience. This social media based communication allowed me to develop rapport with them and ask more follow-up questions based on their previous responses. The participants could also provide the response in their own words in a more personal approach. I realised that this was quite useful. Moreover, this avoided the difficulty of making appointment on

their busy calendar. These data were also added into NVivo and facilitated the following data analysis.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthy is the generic term used in constructivist research to cover the attributes of research design, such as ‘credibility’, ‘validity’, and ‘dependability’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 95). Credibility refers to the real world, or the authenticity of the participant view (Holloway & Todres, 2003). In this study, it was obtained by interviewing volunteers and others through which they offered their opinions to the researcher. At the same time, I took several strategies to double check participants’ views, such as returning the interview transcript to the interviewees for checking. Validity in qualitative research is ‘rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects’ (Winter, 2000, p. 1). Validity relies on multiple perceptions about a single reality (Healy & Perry, 2000). In this project, I took out the key parts of the interviews and sent them to other researchers that were fluent in both English and Mandarin to check the accuracy and improve the validity of the translation. Dependability refers to whether the results are consistent with the neutrality of the findings. According to Creswell (2007), ‘making use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence’ is one validation strategies for qualitative research. The application of auto-ethnography, grounded theory, and in-depth interviews increased both credibility and dependability. It was not enough to gain these terms without translating them into techniques. Creswell and Miller (2000) identified eight strategies, and within this framework this thesis adopted several techniques during the research process (see Table 3.7). This table also facilitated reflections on my role as the researcher and how that influenced data collection and analysis. For example, as an overseas Ph.D. student, I am senior than the participants and my overseas experience could possibly makes it harder to gain rapport with them. Hence, being a volunteer in the first stage could help build relationship with participants, which was an important trustworthy strategy. As a qualitative study, involving stays in the field and multiple perspectives were particularly useful in achieving the goal of in-depth research. Some other strategies, such as peer review, member checking, and external audits, were also used.

Table 3.7 Trustworthy strategies in this research

Creswell & Miller's strategies	Strategies in this research
Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field	Being a volunteer in the first stage of data collection, building trust with volunteers, observing, learning the culture, and even keeping contact with participants after field study
Making use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories	The application of auto-ethnography, in-depth interviews, and grounded theory to corroborate evidence from different perspectives
Peer review or debriefing	Two supervisors act as peer debriefs, providing an external check of the research process by having meetings regularly Several other Ph.D. researchers translate the key parts of the interviews separately and provide the author many insights for the translation
Refines working hypotheses as the inquiry advances	Entering this field without any presumptions as a grounded theorist, and the categories or hypotheses are refined with the advance of interviews
Clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study	The researcher's experiences, biases and assumptions are included in the reflective journals to let the readers understand how they shaped the interpretation
Member checking	Taking the interview data and interpretations back to the participants to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account
Rich thought description	Describe in detail the participants, settings, and research process to enable readers to make decisions for transferability
External audits	Two supervisors act as external consultant to examine both the process and the conclusions

3.8 Limitations

There were many challenges when doing multi-method qualitative research. There are limitations for any study, and this project was no different. Four limitations that are common among qualitative research were identified. The first was the proficiency of using grounded theory design. Acquiring theoretical sensitivity was of great importance in grounded theory research. The more experience researchers have, the richer insights they could have available

throughout the research. But the unavoidable fact was that, as a Ph.D. student without much research experience, it was a challenge for the researcher to do good grounded theory research rather than simply follow the grounded theory application techniques. The interplay between the data and the researcher herself was directly related to the quality of this research. Considering this, the researcher's two supervisors played an important role in improving the validity of this grounded theory project as discussed in Section 3.7. A second limitation was the limited number of business events I was involved in at the auto-ethnography stage. Even though, as discussed above, my primary plan as a qualitative researcher was to be an 'insider' in this phenomenon by being a volunteer at four business events and I applied for the roles at nine exhibitions in different industries and scales, only two accepted me. Getting permission to be a volunteer at business events proved a challenging part of the first stage field study (auto-ethnography) as discussed in Section 3.5.1. At these two business events, I was seen as different from other volunteers by the organisers and fellow volunteers, at least to some extent. Maybe this was because of my background as an international student. The influence on the quality of auto-ethnographical data was not clear. However, I made the most of these limited opportunities by observing, experiencing, and interacting with others. In order to offset this limitation, I tried to recall my past volunteer experience at business events to gain personal insights. A third limitation of this research was the diversity of interviewees. The student participants were from eight universities and colleges, and the majority of them were studying tourism and event management. For the education institution administrators, they were mainly based at four organisations. The diversity of the interviewees, however, has been taken into consideration. Some strategies were adopted in this research, such as including participants with diverse background from different regions and covering more of their experiences. A fourth limitation was that this research was specifically located. Caution should be exercised in attempting to adopt the current findings beyond the specific context: business events in China. Even within the context of China, data collected from different interviewees and different types of business events might show divergent patterns of findings. 'Business events' was a wide definition and the participants in this study were involved in a variety of business events such as exhibitions, trade fairs, conferences and conventions. This made for a more inclusive study.

3.9 Conclusion

The methodology in this study developed from the conceptual framework and the consideration of the characteristics of the research questions. As the conceptual framework shows, there was a research gap when considering different perspectives: volunteering from different locations, volunteering in different fields, and different groups of volunteers. This research aimed to address this gap by analysis grounded in the data, rather than starting from the existing literature in Western countries. Placing this research within the constructivism paradigm and grounded theory design with two stages of qualitative data collection made it possible to construct the meaning of the phenomenon under research with the participants' own words, based on the interaction with the surroundings. At the first stage of auto-ethnography, the researcher, myself, was allowed to acknowledge my personal experience and understanding as a student volunteer at two events. At the second stage of the interviews, 39 participants from three groups (student volunteers, business event organisers, and education institution administrators) were involved. This data triangulation increased the validity of the data.

With the methodology now explained above, I will turn to the coding process to provide the empirical evidence. The remaining three chapters discuss the findings and conclusions from this research. Chapter 4 presents the emergent analysis and the overview of the five main themes from grounded theory analysis, while Chapter 5 further discusses the findings from the study, including motivation and conceptualisation these two main aspects, linking back to the literature. Finally, in Chapter 6, all the empirical evidence and grounded theory results are brought together, and the implications for practice are also proposed.

CHAPTER 4: EMERGENT THEMES

4.1 Introduction

At the first stage of field study, the investigator (i.e., myself) got involved in two business events in China to gain insights into the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China. The auto-ethnographic field study provided me some very useful insights for understanding the phenomenon under research. For example, I realised that participants' (i.e., fellow volunteers and organisers) conceptualisation of this phenomenon is quite different from what I learned from the literature, and this triggered me to further explain what the differences are; from the organisers, I learned how organisers distinguish between *you chang zhi yuan zhe* (volunteers with payment) and *wu chang zhi yuan zhe* (volunteers without payment). This led to my further exploration and discussion about the issue of 'payment' in the following interviews. From the casual conversations with fellow volunteers, I noticed that they had quite a broad understanding of this phenomenon and the voluntary spirit was of great importance for their conceptualisation.

This chapter reports the results of this constructivist grounded theory analysis through the research questions. For each research question, the codes and categories that emerged from the data will be presented. As explained in Chapter 3, the first step of data analysis followed Charmaz's (2007) recommendations of initial coding and focused coding. The line-by-line initial coding produced a list of codes and focused coding allows themes to emerge. This was an effective technique that ensures that all aspects of the data were identified. I immersed myself in the data and read the data carefully multiple times before beginning the coding process. These were some standard practices in qualitative research. After that, I proceeded to code in NVivo. During this process, codes to any patterns were added to follow the grounded theory approach's requirement of openness, rather than just restricted to the two research questions. I tried to keep an open mind for any codes that contributed to students' volunteer service at business events in China. Nevertheless, the two main research questions were kept in the back of my mind all the time.

At the end of initial coding, the coding spectrum had 23 categories and 226 codes. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the coding process of this grounded theory study was not linear. In this cycle process, the codes, categories and even themes changed constantly, which

constituted the constant comparison process. However, due to the word limitation, the thesis cannot show the whole developing process. Appendix F summarises the final coding spectrum gained from the data analysis. The first column lists all the emergent 197 codes related to the two questions in this study; the second column is the 16 categories formed from the codes, while the third column shows the five interpretive themes to explain the two research questions on the far right side. It does not aim to provide answers to the research questions, but to demonstrate the key concepts.

Five main themes emerged through the analysis process and constitute the findings of this grounded theory research. Three were related to the first research question of motivation: volunteer to learn, volunteer to practise, and utilitarian; two were related to the second research question of conceptualisation: broad understanding and blurred boundaries. Each theme was supported by rich statements from the data, which had been generated by the interviews, auto-ethnographical daily journals and field notes. The themes are presented in the order in which they relate to the two main research questions, rather than the order of importance. In order to reflect the emergent and explorative nature of grounded theory design, in this chapter the emergent themes are presented based on the initial analysis without the researcher's interpretations or relating back to the literature for theoretical interpretations. In the next chapter, the theoretical interpretations of these themes will be discussed.

From the analysis, it was identified that there are nuanced differences between the English term 'volunteer' and the Chinese term '*zhi yuan*'. Hence, to demonstrate the subtle differences, '*zhi yuan*' (volunteering) or '*zhi yuan zhe*' (volunteers) will be used from this point in the thesis onward.

4.2 Motivations of student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events

From my auto-ethnographic field study and the interviews, it has been identified that students get involved in the *zhi yuan* service at business events for a range of reasons. But it is difficult to disentangle what motivates students to provide *zhi yuan* service without participants' claims. So the following analysis in the section is mainly based on the data collected from the group of student *zhi yuan zhe*. A diverse range of instrumental and individual motivations was identified. From the initial coding, a variety of responses emerged, such as 'to escape from the boring class' (S18), 'to help organise the event successfully' (S6), 'to visit the exhibition without buying ticket' (S5), 'to gain the credit' (S11), 'to enrich college life' (S1), and 'improve spoken English' (S12). They were formed into five

subthemes and 14 categories. But this does not mean these are the only five motivations. The interviewees also mentioned some other reasons, such as altruistic motives of helping organise the event and serving others. However, there were disagreements among interviewees and such motives were not significant enough to form a subtheme. Based on the analytic directions gained from the initial coding, the focus coding process refined the categories and codes by constant comparison. Thus, the subthemes and categories emerged in initial coding were reduced to three subthemes and 10 categories as shown in Appendix F. Figure 4.1 shows the themes with related categories and key codes, forming a conceptual framework for students' motivation of providing *zhi yuan* service at business events in China.

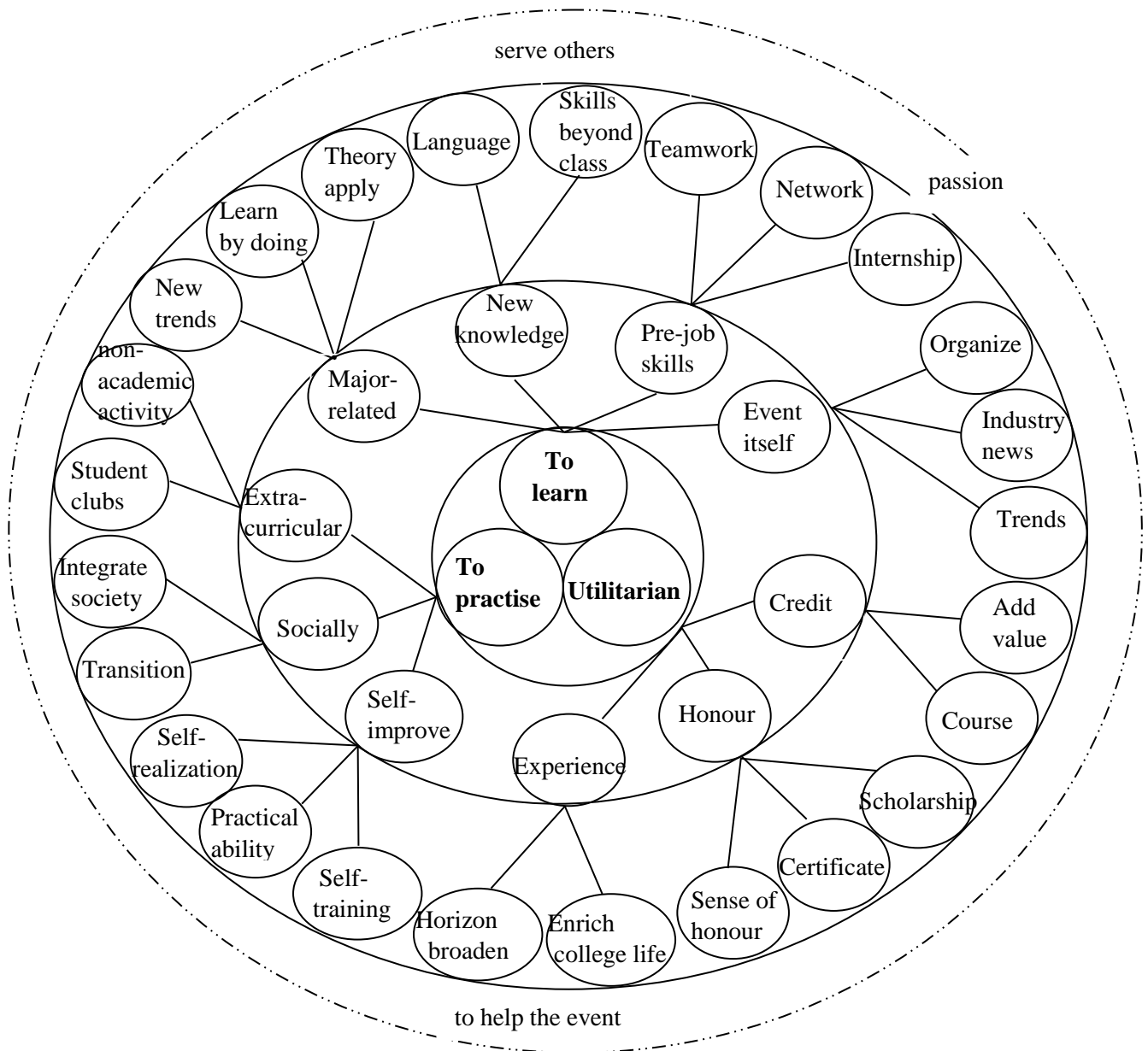


Figure 4.1 Motivations of student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events in China

4.2.1 Emergent Theme 1 To learn

To learn was identified as a key component of the motives of student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events in China, which indicated that to learn was the most pervasive motive for students' *zhi yuan* service at different business events. Many students saw *zhi yuan* service at business events as instrumental for learning that is related to their academic major, such as to gain knowledge of the new trends in the industry, to apply what they have learned from books, to gain pre-job opportunities, and to learn about the event industry. As I reflected at the 2016 Shandong Province Entrepreneurship Programs Exhibition:

Having provided zhi yuan service at so many business events such as Auto Show, Furniture Fair, and Consumer Goods Fair, I know that most of the zhi yuan zhe are students, especially the college students majoring in event and MICE. It is a good opportunity for them to practise the knowledge they learn from books, and also they can learn a lot from the involvement of whole process of a certain exhibition. Even for some colleges, student volunteering at a certain number of exhibitions is an essential part for them to graduate. (research journal, 19 March, 2016)

The *zhi yuan* opportunities made it possible for the students to learn new knowledge and skills. In the auto-ethnographic field study at the 2016 Qingdao 25th International Fabric and Accessories Procurement Fair (TexQingdao), I had the field note that:

The student zhi yuan zhe I met were very enthusiastic and they were very happy to chat with exhibitors, organisers and visitors during the process of providing service. From their conversation, I realized that they could not only use the related terminologies, but also had a very good willing to learn attitude. They were keen to gain information from others. (field note, 25 March, 2016)

The findings related to this theme suggested that gaining skills, including the spirit of teamwork for their future employment, were big attractions for students. Data analysis also revealed that the desire to gain knowledge that was related to the event itself was an important pull factor for students. The following section will illustrate the related categories within this theme.

A subject-related learning process

The first category, a subject-related learning process, came from 12 participants who were involved in several different business events. Each of them, on multiple occasions, mentioned their learning motives that were related to their majors as student *zhi yuan zhe*. For some, *zhi yuan* service offers an opportunity to update with the trends in their area. Student 17, for example, said:

As a student studying tourism, it is a good opportunity for me to be a zhi yuan zhe at the Beijing International Tourism Expo, as it relates to my own major. I can not only gain information about the new trends in tourism field, but also know the new policies.

Likewise, student 7 emphasised the motives of learning through providing *zhi yuan* service at exhibitions and industry conferences, especially those related to her study field of event management. She was motivated by being able to get access to the new information, trends, and policies that could not be learned from books, as well as meet the experts in the industry.

Learning by doing is another common motive. Students explained that *zhi yuan* service was an efficient way of learning knowledge and skills beyond the classroom. They could learn easily from the practice of *zhi yuan* service. For example:

You know, my study field is Convention and Business Event Planning and Management. The zhi yuan experience at the Qingdao Furniture Exhibition makes it possible for me to understand what booth construction is, how to arrange the logistics, and what the exhibitors should do before the exhibition. (S1)

Some other students (e.g., S8, S11, S15, S19) also explained how *zhi yuan* service benefits their learning from different perspectives. Moreover, several administrators admitted that the original intention of encouraging students to participate in *zhi yuan* service was to maximise the opportunities of learning from practice, as explained by administrator 8, who was a group leader of student affairs in a college in Qingdao:

Actually, the main reason [for having the students provide zhi yuan service at the exhibitions] is to give them an opportunity to gain subjective feeling and learn from the practice...Though I am clear that the students cannot learn professional skills within only several days and in most cases, they can only be exposed to the on-site service. But this participation process makes them gain subjective perceptions. They could distinguish consumer exhibitions and professional exhibitions, and perceive the different operation models among different organisers. After they experience the whole stages of an exhibition, they have a clear idea of what is an exhibition. Personally, I think this is the most valuable aspect...Many lecturers feel that it is easier to teach if the students have already been involved in an exhibition before the class.

Applying theory to practice was another common aspect of the subject-related learning process identified by the interviewees. Indeed, applying the knowledge learned from the books to practice emerged so often that it seemed like a mantra. Most student *zhi yuan zhe* studying event management claimed that '*xue yi zhi yong*' (applying the knowledge) was a common belief among them. As the chairman of *Zhi Yuan Zhe* Association in one university

in Beijing, student 1 shared the fact that many students at the First World Conference on Tourism for Development see the *zhi yuan* activity as a chance of applying what they have learned from the class to practice and provided some examples of how the *zhi yuan* experiences influence students' study. Many administrators (e.g., administrator 8) also believed that *xue yi zhi yong* was one important original intention for sending the students to provide *zhi yuan* service at different events.

To learn new knowledge beyond their subject study

The participants frequently mentioned the motive of learning new knowledge in their *zhi yuan* activities. Students providing *zhi yuan* service at international conferences and exhibitions participants emphasised the language ability they gained through participation. 'Spoken English skills' is one of the most common concepts mentioned by the student interviewees when they depicted the reasons for involvement in the *zhi yuan* activity. Many interviewees also included the art of speaking, that is, how to communicate with others and how to express themselves properly. Moreover, some students (e.g., S7 and S9) believed that they realised that their opinions have changed by participating the *zhi yuan* activities and they gained some new insights as for how to prepare themselves for future jobs. This led to the recognition of learning skills beyond class, highlighted by comments such as:

I can learn a lot that cannot be learned from the books or classes. I realize that many theories with a long history cannot solve the problems in reality... there are many limitations for them. Moreover, many plans that you have already designed for a long time probably do not have the effect you imagined. Hence, you have to learn how to solve these problems from practice. (S15)

Another point that related to learning new knowledge was gained from the administrator participants (A3 and A8), who believed that *zhi yuan* service at business events was an enlightening process. Through providing the service in a real work environment, the students could see their own strengths and weaknesses, and identify the skills that were needed in the work so they would have directions of learning new knowledge that was necessary for future development.

To gain skills to prepare for future employment

Participants believed that *zhi yuan* service at business events is an effective job placement and a good opportunity to make preparations for future career. Some students (e.g., S3, S5,

S6, and S12) claimed that ‘this is real work’, as they did the similar things with the event organiser staff and in an actual work environment. Several students expressed that to find the work they like, they must do the *zhi yuan* service in an area to learn more about it, and they would not be there, except for this reason (e.g., S2, S7, and S10). Firstly, opportunities to develop the awareness of teamwork were seen as a factor in attracting students who were participating in the *zhi yuan* service. Student 16, for example, explained the value of *zhi yuan* activity on teamwork awareness development by sharing her experience at an exhibition in Jinan. She said that she realised it was important to work well with colleagues in the workplace. The *zhi yuan* activity provided a good ‘scenario simulation’ as there were usually several groups of *zhi yuan zhe* and they need to get along with different people. She met a *zhi yuan zhe* group with many conflicts and learned the importance of teamwork and toleration to others from that experience, which was extremely useful for her future.

Secondly, networking was a word that has been mentioned over ten times during the interviews. Student participants believed that networking and building relationships were necessary when they look for jobs in China, and *zhi yuan* activity was a good opportunity to meet the potential employers in the related industry:

You know, when you provide zhi yuan service, you could meet some managers or bosses of the exhibitors. I have some contacts of people I met during my volunteering. They would ask me if there is any opportunity for zhi yuan service or part-time jobs, so we contact from time to time. Gradually, we become friends. As long as they have vacancies, I can gain the information. (S3)

Lastly, providing *zhi yuan* service at business events as a type of internship was shown to be prevalent in all of the students who participated in this research. From this type of short-term internship, students could add this experience to their CVs. Above all, the intention of preparing for future employment through the *zhi yuan* service was evident, with comments such as ‘to experience what my possible future job look like from the *zhi yuan* activity is the main reason for me’ (S4).

To learn knowledge related to the event itself

Student interviewees varied in their responses to the motive of learning knowledge related to the event’s topic for providing *zhi yuan* service at business events. This was different from the motive of learning event knowledge discussed above. Some interviewees expressed that their interest in a certain event attracted them to get involved in the *zhi yuan* service. For

example, student 7 shared her story of loving fishing and this interest drives her to provide *zhi yuan* service at the China Fisheries & Seafood Expo. For some students, to gain the recent trends of the industry, new policies, and new directions were also a driver to be *zhi yuan zhe*. For example, student 12 studying Business Administration in Ocean University of China said that ‘the motive of gaining news and trends that are useful for future career’ attracted him to be a *zhi yuan zhe* at Qingdao Marine Science and Technology. The following statement indicated how students viewed the role of learning knowledge related to events, which helped prepare for the future career in attracting them to be *zhi yuan zhe*:

There are so many exhibitors and each of them has their own marketing documents, including the background of the booth, the brochures, and leaflets for visitors. All of these include a lot of knowledge in graphic design. As a student studying Graphic Design, it is very useful for me to know the recent trends in this industry and pay attention to the cooperation among companies. That would be useful for me as I plan to have my own business after I finish my study... The zhi yuan zhe is a good identity. It can not only give me the opportunity to get assess to many companies but also reduce their precautions and make them willing to share with me. (S20)

4.2.2 Emergent Theme 2 To practise

Providing *zhi yuan* service at business events in China was seen as opportunities to practise. There were there distinct categories within this emergent theme: to enrich extracurricular activities, to gain social practice opportunities, and self-training.

To enrich extracurricular activities

Most students during the interview or informal conversation expressed that they sometimes felt bored in school due to the isolation from the community. They would prefer to participate in some extracurricular activities to spend the spare time and at the same time improve their comprehensive quality. The *zhi yuan* activity was a good choice: though it was a non-academic activity, students believed that it could help improve their practice skills (S15) and add value to CVs beyond their academic performance (S8). Student 12 shared his personal stories of how the large number of extracurricular activities, including *zhi yuan* service in different fields, has changed his own way of thinking, learning and perspectives during his four years of study. Furthermore, some claimed that *zhi yuan* service, as an extracurricular activity, was an essential part of college life (e.g., S3 and S11). Besides attending classes,

students choose certain extracurricular activities to enrich life and train themselves. I noticed that students do not make the decision randomly, but in a conscious way of planning the future study and employment. In other words, the students' motivation of participating *zhi yuan* activities at business events arise from the self-directed plan for future, which demonstrates a certain degree of reflexive consciousness among the student *zhi yuan zhe*.

Some on-campus student clubs such as *Zhi Yuan Zhe* Association existed in almost every education institution in this study, and mainly focused on organising students participating in different kinds of *zhi yuan* activity. *Zhi yuan* activities were recognised as extracurricular activities in this regard. Some universities, such as Ocean University of China, included the innovation and entrepreneurship credits⁷ as prerequisites of graduation to encourage students to provide *zhi yuan* service to the community (A3). From this sense, students' *zhi yuan* choices are purposefully oriented.

To gain social practice opportunities

As explained in Chapter 1, social practice is a Chinese-characteristic higher education practice. Students are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities to get involved in the community, serve the public and improve their practice abilities. Providing *zhi yuan* service at business events was widely accepted as an opportunity for social practice among students. Several student interviewees admitted that the benefit of integrating into the community and transition from study to work was one attraction for them to be *zhi yuan zhe* at business events. 13 students, five administrators, and four organisers agreed that students should have some social practice opportunities and *zhi yuan* service was a good form of social practice. Student 7 indicated that the *zhi yuan* activities at exhibitions were usually organised by their academic department, so they were encouraged to seize these opportunities. Supported by students 11 and 13, student 15 (a Masters student studying Tourism Management in Beijing) specified that providing *zhi yuan* service at different events was a good platform and made it possible for the students to integrate into the community. Being isolating from the community and lack of practice opportunities appeared to be strong push factors for the students. *Zhi yuan* service offered a good occasion to transit from the on-campus study to society. Student 8 indicated that the *zhi yuan* activity at business events could be a short-term practice of work,

⁷Innovation and entrepreneurship credits are equally important as the course credits. It aims to encourage students participate in the extracurricular activities like skill contests and start their own business. Providing *zhi yuan* service is also included as an important form of activity. This credit is calculated by hours with the maximum of two credits.

which could give her some indications, guidance, or orientation for her future career after her study. Student 10 also commented:

Most students have limited social practice during their study around me. The public see the graduates as 'bookish'. The reason is we cannot keep up with the society during our study and just learn some theories without practice. We have limited time for the internship or part-time work, so zhi yuan service is a good choice to enhance our comprehensive abilities. It is a 'bridge' between campus and community and provides the students a smooth transition from campus to the society.

Self-improvement

Self-improvement was an important motive for getting involved. According to the respondents, the relatively formal *zhi yuan* service at business events made them gain the sense of self-realisation and improve their practical abilities. Students 3, 4, and 7 explained that providing *zhi yuan* service at exhibitions and conferences brought them confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Many participants believed that they could not gain practical ability from the classroom and activities like *zhi yuan* activity were an effective way to develop their ability to solve practical problems. Student 6 described *zhi yuan* experience as 'a process of discovering my strengths and weaknesses and self-improvement', and their own way of thinking and perspectives for future could be influenced by meeting different people in such *zhi yuan* activities.

Moreover, some student interviewees from universities believed that such *zhi yuan* practices were good ways of demonstrating their interests and personal characteristics of willing-to-do, giving, and contributing to the community (e.g., S2, S3, S4, and S8). When they put such experiences on their CVs, they could provide representations of personal characteristics and attributes that are attractive to the potential employers, especially in the event industry and government sectors.

4.2.3 Emergent Theme 3 Utilitarian

This third emergent theme showed student *zhi yuan zhe*'s utilitarian purposes for getting involved in the *zhi yuan* activity. It was named as utilitarian due to the student *zhi yuan zhe* cherishing the 'springboard effect' of the *zhi yuan* activity. To gain the honours, credit and experiences were common motives for students choosing to provide *zhi yuan* service at business events. From my auto-ethnography field study, I also noticed that building CVs was

a big attraction for students. Several student *zhi yuan zhe* expressed that, in comparison with sports events and social events, business events have a more influential ‘pull’ attraction that arouses individuals’ desires and their need to do something professional (e.g., S7, S9, and S13). Due to this strong reason of utilitarianism among student *zhi yuan zhe*, some interviewees worried that ‘*zhi yuan* service is losing its soul’ (e.g., A2, A3, and A6).

To gain honours

In contrast with students in colleges, many university participants admitted that to gain the honours constituted their motives for getting involved *zhi yuan* service at business events, especially some big events. For them, the experience was useful for applying for scholarships. According to the administrators (e.g., A1, A3, A5, and A6) involved in this research, many universities have Social Practice Scholarships and *zhi yuan* activity is one of the most important evaluation standards. Nine student participants described their scholarship application aims as part of discussing motivations.

The motive for gaining honours was further interpreted by seven students that were keen to gain the honour titles such as Excellent Student and Excellent Graduate. According to administrator 2, such honours were awarded to the students that have not only high scores, but also extensive extracurricular activities. The students explained that if they wanted to gain the honour titles, they needed to have some volunteer experiences.

Even the students that did not mention any specific scholarships or honours (e.g., S14, S16, and S20) revealed the aim of gaining the sense of honour. The comments associated with this reflect that ‘*zhi yuan zhe*’ was seen as a noble term for students. It shows that they felt proud to be a *zhi yuan zhe*. Both the administrators and organisers admitted that students were very *dan chun* (i.e., pure) and they enjoyed the glorious sense that *zhi yuan* service brought to them.

To gain experience

It is interesting to note that many students described providing *zhi yuan* service at different types of business events as a way to gain experience. ‘Experience’ is a term that was mentioned quite often by the interviewees. However, it is a very vague subjective concept. It can be grouped into two aspects by summarising the emerging ideas. The first aspect refers to life experience and it is more about enrichment. Recalling their *zhi yuan* experience, many students (e.g., S1, S8, and S12) acknowledged that it was an essential part of college life and

they chose to do *zhi yuan* service beyond study in order to enrich their college life. Student interviewees' comments indicated that they tried to gain something useful from the experience, combining their own interests with their skills. One master's student, who was studying in Beijing, said:

There were two classmates doing zhi yuan service with me. I know the main motive of them is to enrich their life and gain more experience. Actually, I also have this aim. The more you experience now, the more wonderful you recall in the future. Another example is the Chairman of the Graduate Association in my school. She has participated so many activities and liked self-help travel having been to many countries. I think she has already equipped with the basic practical ability. Providing zhi yuan service at this conference could not improve her ability anymore, but she wants to gain more life experience and see more... (S8)

The second aspect is work experience brought by the work place of business events. More specifically, the short period of business events, unusual kinds of places, and lively on-site atmosphere differentiate this *zhi yuan* service from that in other fields. Student *zhi yuan zhe* value the experience itself of being a part of the events, such as the opening ceremony, strong business atmosphere and large people flow (e.g., S1, S5, S17, and S19). Students talked about eye-opening experiences (S2), unforgettable experiences (S17), or unusual experiences in life (S8). Eight respondents indicated this factor. Further insight into gaining experience can be developed in the light of students' comments regarding the utilitarian motives related to the business events' *zhi yuan* service.

For the reason why I choose to a zhi yuan zhe at the First World Conference on Tourism for Development, one reason is to broaden my horizon... I chose to study my Master in Beijing is also for the same reason. My hometown is Henan and I studied my Bachelor there... I want to go to the big city to broaden my horizon... (S2)

As the Chairman of *Zhi Yuan Zhe* Association, student 14 claimed that many students have formed the habit of participating in such activities, so they would get involved in them to gain such experience once they have such information. From this point, it can be said that besides the functional needs (e.g., to gain the honours and certificate), students also seek the experience itself when they participate in the *zhi yuan* service at business events. Gaining such experience can give them good transitions from study to work. As for the role gaining

experience, the administrator interviewees (e.g., A3 and A6) believed that many students see the *zhi yuan* activities as opportunities to add value to their CVs. Some student interviewees indicated that they had jumped on the bandwagon, getting involved in volunteer activities, in order to demonstrate their willing-to-do attitude, dedication, and devotion. This was echoed by the higher education administrators, who believed that volunteering at students' study-related fields was a good transition from study to employment. Volunteering could equip graduates with the abilities that employers required and escape the preconception that they are incapable.

To gain credit

During my auto-ethnography study, I knew from the student *zhi yuan zhe* that they need to gain a certain number of on-site service credits in order to graduate. The event organisers also shared with me that they met such situations quite often. In the interviews, I paid attention to this point; the motive of gaining credit was identified as an important sub-theme. For students studying event in colleges (e.g., S7 and S11), providing on-site service at events was one way to meet the course requirements. For students from universities (e.g., S1, S2, S3, and S4), although they did not have the course requirement to do *zhi yuan* service, they chose to add value to themselves by gaining practice credits, among which providing *zhi yuan* service at business events was seen as a good choice.

4.2.4 Summary of the emergent motivation themes

From the above analysis of the interview data and the research journals, the initiative of student *zhi yuan zhe* getting involved in the *zhi yuan* activities is not to help others or fulfil social needs; the main purpose is to gain self-need benefits (e.g., to learn, to gain practice opportunity, and to win the honours) and personal betterment (e.g., to add value to CVs and to meet potential employers). The above analysis shows that developing one's CV, gaining experiences, and preparing for future employment are common reasons for attracting students to provide *zhi yuan* service at business events. Such concepts are typical instrumental motivations that combine students' own interest and preparation for their future career. Hence, it demonstrates a trend of self-interested and self-planning involvement. From the data collection and analysis, I run across many points that student interviewees talk about the attraction of gaining the opportunities of involving in the well-known exhibitions or conferences in the industry and putting such experiences on CV; some students also highlight that gaining a certain number of *zhi yuan* experiences is a sign to show their outgoing

personality, teamwork spirit and willing-to-do attitude to their future employers. Essentially, they are trying to achieve their personal goals through the *zhi yuan* activities according to their plans for the future. Overall, the identified three aims of learning knowledge, improving their own skills, and gaining utilitarian benefits reflect participants' functional needs of the *zhi yuan* activities and arise from a conscious way of self-orientation for *zhi yuan zhe*'s future.

Besides the above three emergent themes, there are a variety of other reasons that motivate students to get involved in the *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. For example, as mentioned at the starting part of this chapter, the concept of helping organise the event successfully, the enjoyable atmosphere of the on-site event, and involving sharing the event community are also emerged. However, these are not dominant reasons because participants admitted that these are not the main considerations.

4.3 Conceptualisation of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events

Turning to the second research question of conceptualisation, three group of interviewers (i.e., students, business event organisers, and higher education institution administrators) were involved. It was identified that conceptualisation was a very abstract concept for the participants in this research. When I proposed the question of 'how do you conceptualise this phenomenon?', participants did not know where to begin the answer. So I asked types of questions to elicit discussion, such as: What are the similarities and differences of volunteering at business events and other fields? How do you understand the rewards for the volunteers at business events, and have you ever known volunteers in Western countries? If yes, compared with that, what do you think of the similarities and differences?

Two themes emerged from the data pertaining to the conceptualisation of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. The first theme focused on participants' broad understanding of this phenomenon and the second theme described the fuzziness and blurred boundaries of their conceptualisation.

4.3.1 Emergent Theme 4 Broad understanding

Participants held a broad understanding of the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China. As demonstrated in Appendix F, interview data revealed that the understanding of this phenomenon had different dimensions, including payment, giving time and knowledge to dedication, spontaneous participation and serving others. Throughout this

research, interviewees used such descriptions to describe the characteristics of how they perceived students' *zhi yuan* service at business events. After analysing all these data, four characteristics or subthemes were identified: voluntary spirit, monetary reward is not the main aim, voluntary giving skills/time/talent, and mutual help.

Voluntary spirit

Among the broad range of data collected in this research, many indicators of 'voluntary spirit' as one key characteristic of being a student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events were identified. This included public spirit, serving others, dedication, willing to do, inner satisfaction, meaningful, love, spiritual sublimation, spirit of sacrifice, and responsibility consciousness. Most students interviewed believed that their behaviour had certain aspects of the noble characteristic of being a *zhi yuan zhe*. The voluntary spirit at *zhi yuan* service is an aspect that emerges vividly in students' conversations and my own observations. For example, student 8 characterised student *zhi yuan zhe* as 'someone who must have the spirit of sacrifice...they are people with dreams and goals'. Student 20 referred to student *zhi yuan zhe* as 'having a strong sense of responsibility... we are happy for others' happiness'. Many event organisers claimed that most students are very pure and they have the spirit of helping others inside. Organiser 9 gave an example related to this:

In 2011, we organised an exhibition with a company from Hong Kong, and there were a large number of zhi yuan zhe on site, both inside and outside the exhibition hall, including the areas of Shungeng Road and Hualian supermarket. An old lady fell down on the road at the exit of Hualian supermarket. It is reasonable to say that this is none of our business, as she was coming out from the supermarket. But it happened that we had a first aid zhi yuan zhe team there. After the student zhi yuan zhe knowing this, they brought her into the exhibition hall and gave her some check. For this, I had many thoughts. First of all, the students really see them as zhi yuan zhe...

As for the scope of voluntary spirit, student participants' responses indicated that the spirit of students was usually confined to the events that they were involved in. They wanted to contribute something to help the event success. As an example of this, student 8 recalled:

To be honest, I did not think much about giving back to the community or dedication to our country. Just wanted to get involved in this event.

The voluntary spirit, as participants' subjective perceptions, was important. Some students and organisers explained from different perspectives. They should see themselves as *zhi yuan zhe*. Only if they have this feeling, they would do what a *zhi yuan zhe* should do and deliver good service. For example, taking her *zhi yuan* experience at the First World Conference on Tourism for Development as an example, student 6 indicated that the sense of treating herself as a small screw of the whole conference to ensure its success was important in doing her job well, and only with this voluntary spirit could she feel this activity deserved all her devotion. She further compared this with her part-time work experience and proposed that she was forced to do something for part-time work and there was no voluntary spirit, while volunteering was initiative, willing to devote, meaningful and noble.

Payment is not a main aim

It is a common practice for student *zhi yuan zhe* to gain a certain amount of payment at business events in China. For the events I participated in, all of the *zhi yuan zhe* could gain a payment and the interviews supported this. As I recorded in my research journal:

Whatever the recruitment way, the student zhi yuan zhe usually gain a certain amount of payment as returns for their effort (range from ¥60 to ¥200⁸per day). The payment level is diverse in different cities and among different organisations. Zhi yuan zhe in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai can get over ¥200 per day, while zhi yuan zhe in cities like Jinan and Qingdao can only get ¥60. Non-profit event organisers or government departments such Qingdao Council For The Promotion of International Trade, who have strong attractions for zhi yuan zhe, have a relative low level of payment, but they usually provide some other benefits like lunch and certificate. The exhibition companies, especially those that do not have great influence, tend to pay relatively more to attract enough zhi yuan zhe. (research journal, 18 March 2016)

Three groups of interviewees agreed that the payment level was low. To clarify this, they tended to compare it with the local wage level. As administrator 7 said,

During the process of communicating with organisers, we reach the agreement that the payment obviously has not reached the local salary level. The money students received is not proportional to their hard work.

⁸ Around 15 to 40 NZ dollars.

Although *zhi yuan zhe* with payment has been normalised at business events, it was identified that gaining monetary rewards was not the primary consideration for students. After providing *zhi yuan* service at the second exhibition, I made the following field note:

Having met so many student zhi yuan zhe during these two exhibitions, I noticed that the payment was not a main aim for zhi yuan activity from the causal chats with them. (research journal, 16 April 2016)

Most students indicated that their parents gave them enough living expenses, and they did not need to rely on part-time jobs to make money. All the students participating in this research made it clear that monetary reward was not the main aim of getting involved in these *zhi yuan* activities at different business events, though they appreciated the payment and were happy for that. For example: ‘Personally, I do not think much of the money, because my parents give me enough living expenses’ (S11); ‘Of course, it is always good to have some payment!’ (S4); ‘I think it (the payment) is a recognition of our work...In fact, I do not care about this and it is optional’ (S5). The university administrators described that most of the students were the generation born in the 1990s and most of their parents gave them very good support in all aspects, especially the living expenses. So money was not the primary aim for them. As administrator 2 stated, ‘money is not the determinant for students’ participation, that is, it is not the money that influences their involvement or not’. The organisers (e.g., O2, O7, and O9) also agreed that as living standards have improved, students did not need to rely on such activities to make money.

As a result, the relatively low payment was not a big issue for student *zhi yuan zhe*. The student interviewees understood the payment as recognition for their effort rather than a wage. While half of them (S1, S3, S4, S7, S8, S11, S13, S16, S17, and S20) believed that it was just a kind of allowance for the cost of transportation and lunch, some students (e.g., S2, S5, S6, S9, and S12) argued that it was daily wage. Other students held a neutral attitude and indicated that it depended on the amount of payment. Student 4, with a variety of *zhi yuan* experiences in different activities, including providing *zhi yuan* service at Nursing Home, sports events, conferences, and exhibitions, made the following comments:

I do not see it as a wage or salary. It is a type of allowance. I think the allowance is just a way to show their [the organiser’s] appreciation for our work during these days. I have already very satisfied and would not judge it as a wage. For example, I have done some part-time jobs at exhibitions, and gained over 100

everyday. But for the conference, they gave me 50 RMB per day. But I don't think it is low, as it's not a wage, not the payment from your part-time job. You will not feel too low.

Student 19 expressed a similar opinion:

Personally, I think the payment is a just welfare for the zhi yuan zhe, as everyone needs some incentives. You know, the work is really hard. The payment, as a recognition for zhi yuan zhe's contribution, is necessary, no matter how much.

However, a few students such as student 6 and 12 used the term of 'exploitative' to describe the question of payment. The event organisers have a different understanding of the payment from student *zhi yuan zhe*. They, especially those from the commercial event industry, tended to embrace an economic conception on the financial payment, and saw it as a tool to attract, manage, and stimulate the students. With this payment, the organisers gain a highly efficient *zhi yuan zhe* team as an exchange. As I recorded in my field notes:

After experience several zhi yuan activities in NZ, I could feel the differences between these two countries. In China, the organisers have very good on-site management for the zhi yuan zhe and all the student zhi yuan zhe obey the management. Zhi yuan zhe are treated the same as organiser staff... However, in New Zealand [where there is no payment] the zhi yuan zhe have much more freedom and seems very informal. Personally, I think one reason is that as the organiser has given the zhi yuan zhe some payment, so they are treated as their staff and should perform accordingly. (research journal, 18 March 2016)

Considering the low level payment, event organisers admitted that the payment was not a way to 'buy' students' time and labour. However, organisers 1 and 4 agreed that despite the '*zhi yuan zhe*' title, the payment attracted a sometimes sizeable stipend, particularly when compared with the average local wages in big cities like Shanghai and Beijing. Organisers from the government organisations, such as organiser 9, expressed that the payment was used as a tool to find enough student *zhi yuan zhe* temporarily. As he explained:

Few students prefer to serve at our exhibitions. For example, we organised a machinery exhibition but few students were interested in this, so we have to provide payment now, 50, 60 or 80 RMB. Give them payment to attract students.

Many organisers addressed that it was absolutely reasonable to give students some payment, as it is hard work. As organiser 6 explained:

It is impossible to find people that willing to do this tough job without any payment. No one would do this and no one would do it well... So we give them [student zhi yuan zhe] some gifts from our sponsors to motivate them.

There were 22 separate statements that expressed the same meaning of 'it is a hard work'. Many students reflected that it is exhausting to stay for a whole day in the exhibition centre. They needed to depart from home around 6am and do not go back home until 6pm. Organiser 2 explained that the on-site work was hard and gave an example:

We have a lot of leaflets and handouts during the exhibition. We need to find someone to carry them to different places of the hall and distribute to visitors. You know, we are not allowed to use the trolley as it is a marbled floor! So we need several boys... We are not exploitative maliciously.

Despite the fact that the payment for student *zhi yuan zhe* is low, and gaining the payment is not students' main purpose, it is undeniable that payment is one of the aspects that differentiates *zhi yuan* service at business events from other *zhi yuan* activities. As I reflected during my auto-ethnographic field study, the normalisation of payment problematized this phenomenon:

This is quite different from the zhi yuan activity in other fields like Red Cross and it is also contradictory to the understanding of volunteering in Western countries that undertaken not primarily for financial gain being one of the core characteristics. (research journal, 18 March 2016)

From these comments, it can be said that *zhi yuan zhe* receive a low level of payment for their effort and the event organisers provide the reimbursement to exchange highly efficient teams. Though it is hard to claim that the low payment demonstrates organisers' instrumental use of *zhi yuan zhe* for economic benefits, the payment does play an important role in recruiting, managing and retaining *zhi yuan zhe*.

Voluntarily giving skills/time/talent

Students identified voluntarily giving time, skills and talent as one key characteristic of being a *zhi yuan zhe* at a business event. The following excerpt from student 8 illustrated this:

Let me take the First World Conference Tourism for Development for an example. I cannot do anything else except for preparing for it (this conference) during the last half month. I need to go to class, have homework, and I also need to do my supervisor's project. I need to prepare for it [the conference] during my breaks. As a team leader, I have more work than others. Moreover, I do these without any payment. That means I need to do some extra work every day. But I feel this activity is worthy and if it is not a willing from my inner heart I can't sacrifice so much time. So I think it is important to have the voluntary spirit.

Though some organisers expressed their worries about students' lack of experience, many of them still appreciated student *zhi yuan zhe*'s involvement:

Although they (student zhi yuan zhe) lack of work experience, they join us and provide service. Whatever they gain, they devote a large amount of time. (O6)

But students have their own talent, so they can provide more professional service than us. For example, some of them are experienced ritual personnel and they play an important role at the opening ceremony. (O7)

Organiser 10 had a high evaluation for students' performance with strong sense of responsibility, willingness to do, and taking the initiative. This willing-to-do attitude and initiative spirit makes them good assistants, so the event organisers are happy to include some students in their events. Organiser 1 admitted that numerous students' contribution of time, skills and talent has become an indispensable part of business events in China.

Mutual help

Many interviewees agreed that *zhi yuan* service at business events was a mutual help process, rather than purely altruism behaviour. It could not only help the event organisers and participants (e.g., visitors and delegates) of the events but also help the student *zhi yuan zhe* achieve their own goals. Hence, it is a reciprocal exchange. Taking a further step, the interviewees admitted that the aim of self-help was the starting point for choosing this mutual-benefit behaviour. Student 1, who was a *zhi yuan zhe* at the First World Conference Tourism for Development in Beijing, said:

We provided accompanied services to delegates from all over the world during the conference and help the conference held successfully. On the other hand, this

is a good opportunity to broaden our horizons, practise our spoken languages and gain social practice experiences.

Likewise, student 6 emphasised the win-win situation of *zhi yuan* programmes at the China Fisheries & Seafood Expo. Many organisers (e.g., O3, O4, and O6) believed that *zhi yuan zhe* are essential for any event. The organisers in this research agreed that they need those student *zhi yuan zhe* to overcome the limitation of limited workforce temporarily and provide service to the related participants. As organiser 9 said:

Once there is an exhibition, there would be a lot of tedious work on-site. The zhi yuan zhe could share some work...Many students majoring in Event Management see this [providing zhi yuan service at event] as a good opportunity for social practice and gathering the latest industrial information.

In brief, participants have a broad understanding towards students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China. Voluntary spirit, payment not the main aim, voluntarily giving, and mutual help emerge as the most evident four characteristics for conceptualising the phenomenon.

4.3.2 Emergent Theme 5 Blurred boundaries

While the four categories described the key characteristics of the phenomenon, there were also fuzziness and blurred boundaries in regard to the conceptions of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events, particularly with other forms of activities in China. Participants mentioned other forms of activities, such as social practice, internship, service learning and even part-time jobs, when they were asked to conceptualise the phenomenon of *zhi yuan* service at business events. Many of the student interviewees (e.g., S1, S3, S4, S10, S12, S14, and S17) mentioned that their roles were ambiguous when they provided service at events, mixing with organiser's staff and part-time workers. They indicated that it was hard to distinguish between *zhi yuan* service at business events and other forms of social activities. Hence, this theme emerged in this regard. The fuzziness and blurred boundaries enable *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events to make conceptual relationships and advancements with other forms of social and cultural activities. In this part, the intersections between *zhi yuan* service and three examples of those social activities – service learning, internship and part-time job – are explored.

***Zhi yuan* activity at business events & service learning**

A majority of the student participants mentioned service learning when they conceptualised their *zhi yuan* behaviour. Over 10 of them claimed that there were overlaps and ambiguities between *zhi yuan* activity and service learning, and they also believed that such experience was essential for their education and future careers. As student 19, who was a second year student studying event management in a college, said:

I have provided zhi yuan service at many events, including exhibitions, trade fairs, conferences, Red Cross and teaching in the primary school during my study in Qingdao. I feel zhi yuan activity at business events is different from that in non-profit fields, at least in some aspects. Briefly, it [zhi yuan activity at business events] is no longer the pure or traditional zhi yuan behaviour. That means during this process, I not only provide service to others, but also learn a lot. Actually, the aim of learning is overweight helping.

Student1, 5, 8, 10, and 12 had similar opinions to student 19, and indicated that *zhi yuan* service at business is based upon reciprocity, which referred to providing their labour and service to other people, and in return gaining skills and knowledge. Moreover, many of them expressed that there was also a reflection process during and after the *zhi yuan* activity, although some students were required by their schools to do the *zhi yuan* service. They summarised what they had learnt from the service. Through this, the students felt the effects of the experience in improving themselves in different aspects.

For the higher education institution administrators, many of them agreed that students' *zhi yuan* behaviour was an effective way for service learning and was deliberately aimed to blend the study undertaken by students in the classroom with the experience of practices in the workplace. As the group leader in a college, administrator 5, shared:

The value of zhi yuan service as a way for students' service learning was well recognised in higher education institutions especially the colleges and was increasingly seen as an essential component of undergraduate education. Our department has realised this trend and encouraged the students to go out to do zhi yuan service... We cooperate with many organisations and provide students the platform to learn practical skills.

Administrator 7 also felt that students' *zhi yuan* service at business events had a similar nature and role to service learning. She believed that the advent of specialised areas of study such as event management has meant that a growing number of students are expected to seek

out first-hand experiences that would provide a practical foundation to their studies and future employment. So it was a common practice for the departments in colleges to provide students the opportunities to learn from practice. Providing on-site *zhi yuan* service became a good choice, which did not have many requirements for participants' abilities and experiences. Likewise, the expansion of service learning recently reflected the practice-focus of higher education. There is also a trend among universities to recognise extra-curricular *zhi yuan* activities on an academic or similar transcript, and this is often measured by the number of hours (A3).

Providing *zhi yuan* service at business events & internships

Most of the student interviewees were studying event and tourism. For many participants, *zhi yuan* service at business events was seen as a short-term internship that was related to their study. As I observed:

It [zhi yuan activity at business events] exhibits high levels of authenticity and engagement as in the workplace. The zhi yuan zhe were required to wear suits here. From their expressions, I can feel their excitement and joy. One of the organisers commented that this is a good simulation for their future employment and the colleges attached much attention to such internship opportunities.
(research journal, 16 April, 2016)

Almost all the college student participants believed that their *zhi yuan* behaviour included the element of internship. Student 10, a second year student studying event management at a college in Qingdao, suggested that the *zhi yuan* behaviour at exhibitions was a combination of *zhi yuan* service and internship. On the one hand, they were called '*zhi yuan zhe*' by the public and they did what *zhi yuan zhe* usually do. On the other hand, they were collectively organised, and their *zhi yuan* experiences at the events would be recorded and counted as credits by their institutions, and were thus an internship.

Some university administrators that do not have the experience of collectively organising students to provide *zhi yuan* service at events preferred to conceptualise the phenomenon as a *zhi yuan* activity. Compared with administrators from universities, college administrators (e.g., A4 and A6) were inclined to treat students providing on-site service at business events as a kind of internship, which aimed at enhancing the capacity of graduates to be innovative, productive, and collaborative employees. As administrator 4 said:

Event management is these students' study field and they will work in this field after graduation. This (providing on-site service at event) is a very good opportunity for them to know their future jobs. The college organises them to do zhi yuan service at several exhibitions, acting as short-term internship. 'Zhi yuan zhe' is a good name, as they are students. Actually, it is a kind of internship.

Providing zhi yuan service at business events & part-time job

As discussed in Section 4.3.1, students can gain certain amounts of payment when they provide zhi yuan service at business events, so this put zhi yuan behaviour in a controversial position. The blurred margins of zhi yuan service and part-time jobs became one of the key discussions for the participants. Firstly, three groups of interview participants had quite different opinions on the understanding about the payment. The diverse understandings about the payment led to controversial opinions on the perceptions of zhi yuan service at business events, as discussed above.

Secondly, most of the organisers suggested that the payment was low, but only two interviewees (O2 and O9), both of whom were from government organisations, clearly stated that they believed it was a type of zhi yuan activity. Five of the organiser participants from commercial event organisations (O1, O4, O5, O6, and O10) argued that because the students had received payment, it did not belong to the scope of zhi yuan activity anymore, and 'zhi yuan zhe' was just a nice name for them when taking the students' identities into consideration. The other three organisers expressed the complexity of defining this phenomenon, as organiser 3, a state-owned exhibition manager, said:

It is very hard to say clearly they are the traditional 'zhi yuan zhe' in our opinions or part-time workers. For our organisation, we call them on-site service staff. You know, even though we pay them, it is very low. It can be said a management or incentive tool, rather than the typical wage. If I have to say how to define them, I think those [students] organised by the college are similar with internship or volunteering; those recruited by ourselves are more like part-time workers.

Thirdly, the administrator group did not reach consensus with students and organiser participants. Administrator participants from universities (A1, A2, and A3) that did not organise students who were providing zhi yuan service at different events collectively tended to believe that college students' zhi yuan service at business events was more like part-time

work, except for the non-profit events organised by the government. However, administrators from colleges (A5, A7, and A10) that had students' *zhi yuan* programmes were more inclined to understand the payment student received as an allowance for their hard work and see this phenomenon as a type of *zhi yuan* activity.

In short, the existence of payment is the key point leading to the discussion of the blurred boundaries between *zhi yuan* service with part-time work. The interviewees have different opinions on how to understand the payment, so they have different understandings of the phenomenon under investigation.

4.3.3 Summary of the emergent conceptualisation themes

Emergent themes four and five illustrate the multiple faces and complex nature of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events. Several contradictory points are identified for the conceptualisation, including the wide existence of payment and the name of *zhi yuan zhe*, helping others and self-benefit, as well as voluntarily participation and collectively organise. Participants agreed that it is acceptable to have low-level remuneration for *zhi yuan zhe*'s effort. Within this context, students do contribute to others, but clearly they are not the traditional *zhi yuan zhe* image – self-sacrifice contributor. When helping others they also do it for their own benefit, such as gaining credits, preparing for future employment, and learning. Hence, they exhibit both the characteristics of altruistic and individualism, and the behaviour is a mutual help choice and win-win situation. As for students' participation, there can be a compulsory element due to course requirements or organising collectively, which conflicts with the principle of free will when defining *zhi yuan* behaviour. But the students still have a certain degree of freedom of choice. That means they can independently decide to get involved in a certain event or not, based on their rational analysis of what they want (i.e., self-directed motives), what they can get (i.e., self-benefits), and what others need (i.e., social needs), demonstrating their independence and reflexivity.

4.4 Reflections on emerging insights

Several key points were identified from my observations and reflections in the auto-ethnographic field study, and the interviews with the three groups of participants. These points acted as 'hunches' and 'insights' in grounded theory construction and they were vital to the grounded theory development (Glaser, 2017). Hence, the reflections on the payment, collective *zhi yuan* phenomenon, voluntary spirit, and the comparison of opinions from

different groups of participants are put here to demonstrate the theory development process. The reflections here also lead to the discussion in the next chapter.

4.4.1 Reflections on the payment

Most student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events can gain a certain amount of payment and it is a common practice for the business event industry in China. Much discussion focused on the issue of payment. Due to the payment, many participants appeared to struggle with the question of whether the students are *zhi yuan zhe* or some form of paid staff. This section will reflect on the issues of payment in terms of its normalisation, the level of the payment, its functions and why organisers pay, and how the participants perceive the payment.

During the interviews, almost all the student participants claimed that they had received some type of payment, such as lunch, transportation subsidy, or a certain amount of money when they provide *zhi yuan* service at the business events. As discussed in Section 4.3.2, the event organisers claim that without any payment it is very hard to find enough *zhi yuan zhe* that can provide service during the events, and they say that giving students payment is their ‘consistent style’. This normalisation of giving payment to student *zhi yuan zhe* as well as several event organisers understanding them as part-time workers (see Section 4.3.2) triggered me to think further about the overlaps between students’ *zhi yuan* service at business events and part-time work.

In Section 4.3, there has been some discussion about the payment, which makes *zhi yuan* activity at business events different from *zhi yuan* behaviour in non-profit fields such as Red Cross and museums. This has led to some university administrators believing that students’ *zhi yuan* activity at business events is no longer the traditional *zhi yuan*, especially as the university students are not organised collectively to provide service at the events.

The payment level appeared to vary among different locations: it is over ¥200 per day in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, while only ¥50-100 in medium-sized cities such as Qingdao and Jinan. Compared with the local wage, this payment is usually below the market value of the labour. Twenty-five out of all the 39 participants stated that ‘the payment is low’. This aspect distinguishes students’ service behaviour from part-time jobs. It also reminds me of two popular words in the area of *zhi yuan* activity in China: ‘*you chang zhi yuan zhe*’ and ‘*wu chang zhi yuan zhe*’, which indicates that *zhi yuan zhe* with payment is widespread in China.

This leads to reflection on why the organisers choose to pay those being called *zhi yuan zhe*. From my past experience, both in China and New Zealand, and the observation and reflection in the auto-ethnographic field study, I realised that most event organisers have very limited staff to hold the event and the *zhi yuan zhe* are indispensable for the success of the event. During the event (usually two or three days), the organisers depend heavily on the *zhi yuan zhe*, so they try to manage the *zhi yuan zhe* well and make them perform professionally. During the interviews, several organisers (see Section 4.3.2) believe that recruiting on-site student *zhi yuan zhe* with some payment is not only a way to cut down the cost for them compared to employing staff, but also a tool to attract the proper candidates. The money becomes a tool to attract and manage *zhi yuan zhe* effectively.

The last reflection about the payment is how participants perceive it. Sixteen participants, including eight students, four organisers, and four administrators, believe that the payment is an allowance for lunch, transportation and hard work, while 11 participants, including six students, three organisers, and two administrators, claim that it belongs to the scope of wage or salary. Many participants insisted that it is ‘reasonable’ to give the student *zhi yuan zhe* a certain amount of payment as the organiser makes profit from the event and it is hard work to provide on-site service. Payment will be discussed further in Section 5.3 and Section 5.4.

4.4.2 Reflections on the ‘collective *zhi yuan*’ phenomenon

The second reflection is about the organisation of students participating in the *zhi yuan* activities. From my field study, I got to know that the colleges usually organise the whole class students to do *zhi yuan* service at certain events. This ‘collective *zhi yuan*’ phenomenon makes me reflect about to what extent the students have the free choice and the motivations of doing this.

For the *zhi yuan* service at business events in China, students are organised by the staff to do the on-site service as a whole class. During my auto-ethnographic field study and interviews, I paid attention to the issue of how much free choice the students have. On the one hand, there were a few students who feel they have to participate in the *zhi yuan* activities in order to gain their diplomas. That means they are reluctant to be *zhi yuan zhe* at the events. Such reluctant roles can be related to mandatory volunteerism (Ellis, 1997). On the other hand, I find that colleges require students provide *zhi yuan* service at four events during their three years’ study, and the colleges usually provide more than five opportunities. In this sense, the students have choices as to which events they do the *zhi yuan* service at, though they still

have to complete a set number of activities. They can take their personal interests, and plan for future and career orientation into consideration when they decide which events to participate in. They make such decisions independently, but within certain required boundaries (or expectations).

Another reflection is why the colleges organise the whole class students to volunteer together. From what I have learned from the administrator participants, the main purpose of this collective *zhi yuan* plan is to make sure that each student has the opportunity to get involved in the on-site work during events and gain some experience for their future employment. In this sense, it has the same nature as a ‘short-term internship’. For the event organisers, they say it is easy to manage if the students are organised together by the school staff. Moreover, there is cooperation between organisers and colleges. The colleges send students to the event on a regular basis, and the event organisers see this as the internship that colleges offer to the students. The organisers welcome this type of ‘collective *zhi yuan*’ very much as they can find enough manpower with a very low cost. Moreover, they can adopt some strategies such as grouping students based on their strengths and skills, using the payment as a tool to control *zhi yuan zhe*’s performances, and including punishment to decrease their misbehaviours such as arriving late and leaving early.

4.4.3 Reflections on the voluntary spirit

Voluntary spirit was widely mentioned by the interviewees, although they use different terms to depict it (as discussed in Section 4.3.1). From the terms they use, I made two reflections. First, the students’ *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events exhibits many common characteristics with other *zhi yuan* activities. Providing *zhi yuan* service at business events is mainly a behaviour of serving others and it is still seen as very ‘noble’ in Chinese culture. Moreover, several participants believed that the voluntary spirit is the most important antecedents or prerequisite of being a *zhi yuan zhe* at business events. Only with the voluntary spirit in mind can the students do what a *zhi yuan zhe* should do, and do it well. As most students get a certain amount of payment for their on-site service at events, it contradicts the traditional opinions of *zhi yuan* and, to some extent, blurs the boundaries of *zhi yuan* service and part-time job. Many interviewees claimed that it depends on how individuals understand the payment. Without the voluntary spirit, it would become a casual part-time job. This will be discussed further in Section 5.3.2.

4.4.4 Reflections on the different group characteristics of participants

During the data analysis, I identified that participants groups and those from different types of organisations have different opinions while there are also some commonalities. For the student participants, those from universities and those from colleges have quite different perspectives on the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* activity at business events. While student participants from universities believed that students providing on-site service with payment at events is no longer a type of *zhi yuan* activity and is more like part-time job, student participants from colleges, especially those taking event management courses, tend to accept their behaviours belong within the scope of *zhi yuan* service. During the interviews, I also noticed that participants from universities tend to accept it as a type of wide *zhi yuan* activity after they know how colleges cooperate with event organisers and the reasons for this.

Student *zhi yuan zhe* and event organisers hold different expectations and notions of motivations and conceptualisation. Based on the accounts of the *zhi yuan zhe* interviewed, learning is often a priority for their participation and apparently planned in advance, while organisers focus on recruitment, expenses, and performance. The event organiser participants, participants from government organisations and exhibition companies have different understandings of the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events though both of these two groups say that to learn and to practise were two main motives for students. Participants from government organisations are more likely to describe the students as *zhi yuan* activity or social practice. They claim that students' participation and help are of great importance for the successful holding of the events. The payment is the reimbursement or allowance for students' lunch, transportation and several days' hard work. But exhibition company participants from the commercial sector mainly believe that it is essentially a part-time job as the students gain some payment as the exchange for their work. The students are seen as equating with part-time workers. The organiser participants from exhibition companies think that making money is one of the students' motivations to provide on-site service at events.

For the educational administrators, I also identify two groups of opinions: college administrators and university administrators. For the first group, most have the experience of organising the students that are providing on-site service at events, and they contend that the original intention of sending the students to events is to let them learn from practice. Though the students can have some payment, it is quite low and they say it cannot be seen as a wage. So the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events is still a traditional *zhi*

yuan activity, or with the element of learning and internship. For the university group, they do not have the experience of organising students serving at events. I notice that their opinions for the conceptualisation of this phenomenon are dual. Some insist that it is not *zhi yuan* activity but a part-time job, while some believe that it is a typical internship. But they are in agreement that nowadays willingness or motivation to participate in *zhi yuan* service is no longer dependent on social needs but on participants' personal interests and experiences. Among their *zhi yuan* behaviour, individuals display individualised traits and have new morals and consciousness that connect what has traditionally been considered mutually exclusive.

4.5 Understanding students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China

4.5.1 Overview of the emergent themes

A systematic coding process was conducted with the auto-ethnographic and interview data. Three themes related to motivation and two themes related to conceptualisation were produced. For student *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations, there were diverse reasons for participation, which were mainly focused on three themes: to learn, to practise, and utilitarian motivations. The motivation of altruism is not an important point among student *zhi yuan zhe* in this research. The theme of providing *zhi yuan* service to learn reflects that to learn (e.g., subject-related knowledge, pre-employment skills) is the students' main aim of providing *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. The theme of providing *zhi yuan* service to practise highlights the importance of practice and experience for students. It identifies that students' preparations and orientation for their future employment are two evident reasons for them to participate in *zhi yuan* activities. The last theme of utilitarian demonstrates participants' instrumental aims (e.g., to gain credit and honours). As part of these three main aspects, this research demonstrates some context-situated motives. For example, to learn knowledge related to the event industry and to experience the real-work environment. At the same time, some of the motivations reflect the Chinese characteristic, such as to gain the honours. This will be further explored in Section 5.4.1. Overall, the emergent motivational concepts shown in exhibit the characteristics of self-directed instrumental reasons, showing that student *zhi yuan zhe* are motivated by the attraction of constructing personal identities (e.g., developing CVs and gaining pre-job industry experience) rather than helping others.

As for the conceptualisation, the analysis in Chapter 4 demonstrates that the practice of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is inherently hybrid. The context for this analysis is Chinese business events. Two special aspects of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events are identified: *zhi yuan zhe* gain a certain amount of payment, and students are collectively organised to do *zhi yuan* service at the event. First, as I reflected in Section 4.4.1, though this research demonstrates that payment is not the main motivation for *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events, the emergence and normalisation of payment highlight the commoditisation of this field and the transactional nature of the relationship among event organisers, students, and the education institutions in China. The payment is seen as a way of attracting enough students and controlling their on-site service behaviours. This transaction is not necessarily improper or immoral, but it does embrace an economic conception expressed by the absence of financial or in kind payment in volunteering activities. Besides the payment, *zhi yuan zhe* can sometimes get the *zhi yuan* service certificate, which is good evidence for applying scholarship and honours. In this sense, student *zhi yuan zhe* are offered specific 'exchange deals' for providing their work efforts, which will be discussed in Section 5.3.3. The exchange nature of *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events reflects a shift in understanding what *zhi yuan* service is in China.

Second, the highly organised participation (e.g., students are organised to volunteer as a whole class) puts the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events to the edge of challenging the dimension of voluntary choice in the conceptualisation of traditional volunteering. However, as shown in Section 4.4.2, students have the freedom of doing a particular *zhi yuan* service or not. That is, students' choices are no longer free will or obligated, but they make the choice independently based on their rational judgement and analysis. Besides these two aspects, it has also been identified that the spirit of voluntary spirit is essential in conceptualising the phenomenon. The participants expressed that the voluntary spirit defines them as *zhi yuan zhe* and differentiates them from part-time workers. Though this phenomenon under research exhibits several of its own features, it also shares many common characteristics with other volunteer activities, such as benefiting others and the community (benefit themselves at the same time); this will be discussed in Section 5.3.

4.5.2 Conclusion: Emergence of the grounded theory

Constructivist grounded theory emphasises the 'phenomenon of the study' (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, this grounded theory study reflected the opinions of the participants in this research. By implementing a constructivist grounded theory methodology, an initial theory that reflected

the understanding of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China emerged, which is based on the initial data analysis and the above reflections. Though it seems still exploratory and not finalised, the author chose to put it here as an essential grounded theory analysis process. This will be expanded upon in Chapter 5.

The emergent theory is that the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China is a type of volunteering with several Chinese characteristics. The theory is anchored by the two core research questions of this study: motivation and conceptualisation. The above data analysis accommodates multiple motivations simultaneously. To learn, to practise, and utilitarian are the students' three main motivations of providing *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. Participants are overwhelmed with instrumental motives, personal betterment and career enhancement, rather than helping others or meeting social needs. The investment value of *zhi yuan* activity is evident, as individuals get involved in the *zhi yuan* service as an 'investment' motive to build up their skills and experiences. Student *zhi yuan zhe*'s participation and commitment are entangled with several self-centred motives and egoistic considerations, which demonstrates a new path of *zhi yuan* involvement that highlights the self-directed motives and preparation for future orientation.

As for the conceptualisation, the participants had a very broad understanding of the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events in China, which included four main aspects: voluntary spirit, payment not the main aim, voluntary giving time/skills, and mutual/reciprocal help. Students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China shared several similarities with other social activities (e.g., service learning, internship and part-time job). Echoing this, the conceptualisation of this phenomenon had blurred boundaries.

Based on the exploration of conceptualisation and motivation, this research identified the complexity of understanding students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China. The multi-dimensional nature of the *zhi yuan* service was demonstrated with the highlights of Chinese cultural and socially embedded characteristics (e.g., collective organisation) and voluntary spirit. The existence of monetary return and the name of *zhi yuan zhe*, 'have to do' element and the voluntary spirit, as well as collective organisation and independent choice blurred the boundaries between *zhi yuan* service and other social activities, leading to the paradoxical nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, the interview participants understood the *zhi yuan* behaviour as an exchange process: students offered their time, skills, and energy to assist with the events, and experience various benefits, as well as

costs, in return. Event organisers provided money remunerations to get highly efficient labour. These findings stimulate the thinking about the concept of volunteering and new ways of perceiving volunteering.

CHAPTER 5: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with an analysis of the grounded theory based on the presentation of the related existing literature. This chapter, thus, links the findings in Chapter 4 to the broader literature and highlights the similarities and differences between students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China and volunteering in Western countries.

The outcome of this research is a grounded theory that identifies and integrates the five emergent themes, which, in their totality, constitute an understanding of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. In this chapter, each of the five emergent themes is interpreted in relation to the two questions of motivation and conceptualisation. Each theme is then integrated to form the grounded theory. Many of the categories in the themes 1 to 3 that emerged in related to motivation (such as to learn, build CV, and prepare for future employment) have already been discussed in the broader volunteering literature, although not all in the context of event volunteering. The novel contribution of this research is the exploration of the Chinese conceptualisation of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour in the context of business events (emergent theme 4 and theme 5).

As discussed in Section 2.1, the place of literature review in grounded theory research is debated. Scholars are inconsistent on whether a literature review should be conducted or not, when it should be conducted, and how extensive it should be. There are rationales informing all sides of the debate. Keeping the importance of 'reflexivity' in mind, as an early career researcher, I must recognise my own stance: to enhance the quality of the output, literature review is necessary in this research. Hence, a preliminary literature review was conducted before designing the research to make the existing studies clear and to identify the research gaps in the relevant field. A further review of the literature was also conducted after the themes emerged from data analysis, in order to assist further discussion and ascertain the relationship between the findings and the literature. This was in accordance with Dunne's (2011) argument that early Ph.D. researchers should conduct a literature review as it brings several benefits. As the themes emerged during data analysis, I explored literature on volunteer motivation and conceptualisation to explain the findings. The following sections will relate the emergent themes from the data with the existing literature, first on motivation.

5.2 Motivations

In this grounded theory research, the emergent motivational concepts have many overlaps with the existing volunteer motivation literature, and at the same time they exhibit several particularities. The following discussion will focus on how the emergent motivational themes relate to the previous studies, and also what the Chinese context and business events background bring. Scholars working in different traditions have identified volunteer motivations in diverse ways. Research on the motivation of volunteers has assumed that individuals are driven by diverse reasons from instrumental-based actions, which are motivated by the desire for personal development, personal interest, altruism, and social factors (e.g., Carpenter & Myers, 2010; Dwyer, Bono, Snyder, Nov, & Berson, 2013; Farrell et al., 1998; Harrison, 1995; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Unger, 1991). As Bachman, Backman, and Norman (2014) showed in their study, the existence of conflicting motives among volunteers has been key for segmenting volunteers into groups. Volunteer motivations are complex and multi-dimensional, although some of the studies see the phenomenon as an ‘either/or’ and exploring volunteering as one-dimensional. Challenging the idea of volunteering as a purely beneficial activity gradually there is a trend that portrays volunteer motivations as a combination of several different aspects of reasons, such as purposive, solidarity, friendship, commitments, and enjoyment (Allen & Bartle, 2014; Allen & Shaw, 2009; Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007). Some studies have also indicated that volunteers have context-situated motives, (e.g., Toraldo, Contu, & Mangia, 2016; Turner, 1969).

I expected that volunteering would be a very altruistic behaviour and therefore more likely to put more effort into help others; however, in some ways, the opposite appeared to be the case. Despite the diverse motivations identified from participants in this research, the participants in this study showed a great deal of consistency in the reasons that brought students into *zhi yuan* service at business events: to learn, to practise, and some utilitarian reasons. The analysis for motivation demonstrated that self-directed motives were the main reasons for participants rather than the consideration of helping and benefiting others, which reflected Hankinson and Rochester’s (2005) argument a modern rationale for volunteering had replaced an old-style philanthropy based on morality, with a more contemporary concern to build a society that worked for everyone.

5.2.1 To learn

The concept of volunteering to learn emerged from the analysis of auto-ethnography and interview data as one of the overarching themes of why students do *zhi yuan* service at business events in China (see Section 4.2). Volunteering to learn is used here to represent the motivations related to students' learning experience, including learning knowledge related to the event industry and preparation for a future career (see Section 4.2.1).

Seeking to learn has been identified as a motive for volunteering among some of the existing literature (e.g., Clary & Snyder, 1999; Sin, 2009; Tiessen, 2012), but there are several different emphases of 'learning'. In this research, the most common learning aspect for students is to learn the knowledge related to the event industry. Most of the volunteers are college students studying event management (Section 3.5.2). Learning the event-related knowledge, applying theories to practice, and becoming familiar with the operation of different event types are common motives for these event students. While existing studies have identified the element of learning in volunteer activities, they primarily focus on future career preparation; this study adds some dimensions of knowledge-level learning. All the administrator participants emphasised the original intention of providing students the opportunities of learning when they talked about the reasons for setting up the volunteer programmes in the event industry. This emphasises the growing importance of the concept of learning from practising the teaching model reform among colleges in China (Gu, 2005). *Zhi yuan* behaviour at business events therefore offers the opportunities for practical teaching among colleges and is a necessity of learning for students in the field of events.

Student participants in this research have demonstrated the attractions of future employment as a reason to be *zhi yuan zhe* by being motivated by gaining pre-job skills and seeing *zhi yuan* service at business events as opportunities for networking or internships. This is congruent with previous literature, which connected volunteer motivations to the beliefs that career-related benefits can be obtained from participating in the volunteer activities (Clary et al., 1998), and students using volunteer activities for positional advantage in competitive job markets (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). This can be linked to the increased pressure of employment and Katz and Rosenberg's (2005) findings that individuals with volunteering experience tend to be hired or command a higher wage, or students who have volunteered are more likely to have leadership ability, social self-confidence and skills in critical thinking and conflict resolution than non-volunteers (Astin & Sax, 1998). However, it is noteworthy that

students in this research do not have such long-sighted visions, and they are inclined towards short-term benefits, such as meeting new people and showing their teamwork spirit.

The motivation of gaining pre-job skills makes students' *zhi yuan* service exhibit some common characteristics with service learning, but these two activities are not completely aligned with each other. According to Delve, Mintz, and Steawart (1990), service learning describes the activities being done on campuses and it includes a wide array of experiential endeavours, such as volunteering, community service, field study, and internship programmes (Furco, 1996). However, service learning is not equal to volunteering. As Kay and Knaack (2007) proposed, for the service-learning experiences students are actively participating in the process of understanding, integrating, and applying knowledge from their areas. The use of service learning as a teaching method has the potential to bring students multi-facets benefits. Recently, it has become widely used as an educational method that combines the community service with academic learning objectives to prepare the future work (e.g., Long, 2015), as students benefit from such activities. Service learning is a common practice in many fields.

While much of the current research in service learning is on higher education in Western countries (Jacoby, 1996), it must be acknowledged that within the China context there are many forms of service learning initiatives, though with different names, among which volunteering is one important component. Moreover, the Chinese government has issued a regulation to promote students' volunteer service and many high education organisations have planned to include volunteer activities in students' training systems (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2015).

5.2.2 To practise

The motivation of being *zhi yuan zhe* in practice represents the strong desire for students to gain extra-curricular activities, transition from campus to society during their study, and improve their own practical abilities (see Section 4.2.2). To understand this, it is necessary to come back to the Chinese context where students spend most of the time on campus without many opportunities for social activities in China. So, as indicated by the interview participants, it is a common issue for the students to feel 'empty'. 'Search for meaning' by participating some activities beyond their studies has become a motive for the Chinese students to get involved in *zhi yuan* activities (Fleischer, 2011). The *zhi yuan* activity, which is categorised as an important extra-curricular activity, has become a good opportunity for students to balance the heavy study burden and participation in extra-curricular activities (e.g.,

Long, 2015). In the Chinese literature it is also referred to as an important type of ‘social practice’ (Liu & Feng, 2005; Yang, 2010), but volunteering is not the only type of social practice. Such benefits of participating *zhi yuan* activities for students’ practice are widely recognised among the Chinese scholars (e.g., Deng, 2010; Fu, Liu, & Huang, 2016; Peng & Liu, 2016). Significantly, business events give *zhi yuan zhe* a professional context for the students to experience their future work environment.

5.2.3 Utilitarian

The motive for developing personal skills and improving themselves by providing *zhi yuan* service at business events reflects an important desire for students to increase their own welfare through such activities. Thus, such kinds of motives are defined as utilitarian, by using Clary et al.’s (1998) terminology. As discussed in Section 4.2.3, gaining credits, honours, and/or experiences are instrumental motivations for the students participating the *zhi yuan* activities in this research.

The issuing of Student Zhi Yuan Service Management Rules from the National Ministry of Education further promotes education institutions’ initiative of promoting *zhi yuan* service among students. The regional education ministries and higher education institutions also issue the related rules based on this. These policies are designed to encourage students’ participation. The new policy and its impact on students’ motivation of participating *zhi yuan* activities has attracted public attention widely all over China, leading to different opinions of support and criticism (e.g., Hu, 2011; Liu, 2017; Wang, 2009). Many student interviewees admitted that gaining credits is one of the reasons to get involved in the *zhi yuan* activity at business events. For college students, the credits are a necessary precondition to complete their study. Providing students with the opportunities of getting involved in the events organised by the cooperated companies and doing some basic work such as selling booths and providing on-site service is a model for the practical teaching reform among colleges in China (Li, 2017). In this process, students can learn by practising and doing. ‘Service learning’ is an emerging teaching model in China, in which students learn and apply knowledge in the real service activities (Zhang, 2009). So it is a ‘Chinese-characteristic practice’. In turn, the students need to do such work to gain the credit in order to get their diplomas.

Besides the credits, gaining the honours is identified as another important motive for student *zhi yuan zhe* (Section 4.2.3). Many administrator interviewees shared that in order to

encourage the students' participation, education institutions take a series of incentive measures, such as including *zhi yuan* service in students' comprehensive practice credit and students with *zhi yuan* experience receiving extra points in scholarship applications. The student interviewees admitted that some of them participate *zhi yuan* activities mainly for the *Excellent Zhi Yuan Zhe* certificate. This adds another utilitarian element to the *zhi yuan* service.

Gaining experience is found to be an essential motive for students in choosing to be *zhi yuan zhe* at business events. They demonstrate that the experience of being *zhi yuan zhe* itself is a big attraction for students, as the participants believe it is part of life enrichment and an effective way of gaining work experience. This is in accordance with the role of 'experience' in volunteer tourism (e.g., Wearing, 2001). It is widely recognised that gaining the experience of meaningful participation, and self-esteem are motivations for volunteers (Shye, 2010; Turner et al., 2016; Van Dongen, 1996). To a larger extent, the identified motive for gaining experience in this study shares some common alignments with the 'solidary factor' proposed by Farrell et al. in an event context (1998). However, most scholars have ignored the experience itself in volunteer motivation model development while much attention has been paid to the purposive, social, and rewards reasons (e.g., Bang et al., 2008; Giannoulakis et al., 2007).

Two factors strengthen the significance of experience for the student interviewees in this research: the life situation of Chinese students and the context of business events. College students have a large amount of study pressure. They stay on campus almost every day for the whole semester (half year), and some colleges even do not allow students to go off the campus except for weekends. So students have limited opportunities to get to know the outside society and feel empty and bored (Liu & Zhao, 2015). Hence, *zhi yuan* activity, acting as the bridge connecting the campus study with the society, becomes one of several limited ways to get access to the local community and broaden one's horizons. This can help explain why colleges incorporate this model in their teaching schedule and why students emphasise the significance of 'experience' for their college life when talking about motivations. The context of business events, especially as some events are not accessible to the public, adds the attraction for the students to get involved, from which students enjoy the not-for everyone involvement. This can be explained as a contextual factor following Güntert et al.'s (2015) argument, which found that the excitement was a contextual motive for sports event volunteers.

5.2.4 Grounded theory development: Motivational aspect

The above analysis demonstrates that student *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations are multi-dimensional. A variety of motivation concepts combining self-directed and instrumental motives emerged. Though some of them can be categorised into the existing volunteer motivation models, such as career orientation, solidarity, and purposive (e.g., VanSickle, Pierce, & Diacin, 2015; Wang & Wu, 2014), this volunteer activity does not fully coincide with the existing theoretical structures. The emergent *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations at business events exhibit some similarities and commonalities with other volunteering behaviours. For example, the student participants in this research get involved in the *zhi yuan* activity to seek instrumental or extrinsic advantages, and some expressed that they would refuse to provide *zhi yuan* service if the instrumental advantages are unavailable. The normalisation of payment to *zhi yuan zhe* makes them become economically or psychologically dependent on that, resulting in the increasing escape from the non-payment *zhi yuan* activities. These two characteristics share some similarities with Stebbins' (2013) marginal volunteering (i.e., participants either seek instrumental or extrinsic advantages) and stipended volunteering (i.e., people make money or be paid in kind). However, the identified motivations are also distinct from other forms of event volunteering. Compared with Giannoulakis et al.'s (2007) OVMS, and Bang et al.'s (2008) VMS-ISE, the contextual motives in the Olympic Games and sports events (e.g., meeting athletes and patriotism) are substituted by business events contextual factors such as preparing for the event-related career. The motive items of external traditions and commitments in Farrell et al.'s (1998) SEVM scale are not identified among *zhi yuan zhe* at business events, while several purposive and solidary items (e.g., to broaden horizons and gain practical/educational experience) are more common aspects.

Coming back to student *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations at business events, three characteristics are found. Firstly, personal benefits such as work experience, self-improvement, learning, and personal interests influence the decision to participate in *zhi yuan* activities at business events. Personal betterment is the main consideration for *zhi yuan zhe*. Secondly, a combination of motives is relevant for their interest in event industry. As Toraldo et al. (2016) argued, 'the temporary setting of festivals, which are unusual kinds of (work-) places that last for only a few days, has particular consequences for the symbolic meanings associated with the experience' (p. 1144). In the same vein, this research finds that the spatial and temporal aspects of events differentiate *zhi yuan* activities at business events from those in non-profit fields like museums or libraries, which occur in the everyday life routines. The celebration of

opening ceremony, strong business atmosphere, and large crowd flow enhance *zhi yuan zhe*'s experience and reinforce their sense of serving others. Moreover, they also value the opportunities to get involved in the events as part of organising team. For the students that do not have any work experience, wearing the business attire and standing among the exhibitors in Western dress and leather shoes makes them enjoy participating in the events. Thirdly, while participating in several *zhi yuan* activities at different events, *zhi yuan zhe* very often realise that their own ways of thinking, learning and perspectives for future have changed. The desire for the outcome of these changes is also a main attraction for students. Through the *zhi yuan* activities, students can try out their future jobs before putting them into practise in 'real life', so they are going towards a more conscious way of planning their own future study and employment. This demonstrates that the *zhi yuan* activity at business events stimulates a certain degree of 'reflexive consciousness' among students.

All the identified instrumental and individualised motivations in Chapter 4 fit neoliberal attitudes. Motivations of student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events in China show the characteristics of 'reflexive volunteering', which refers to an individual who combines self-directed motives with a communal or social orientation when engaging in the volunteer activities, and it has been considered as another path of volunteer involvement (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Qvist, Henriksen, & Fridberg, 2016). In this research, participants' self-directed motives emerged as much stronger than the social orientation or social needs, and the social needs are also based on expecting future rewards, which is reciprocal altruism (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017). For the reflexive volunteers, the motivations usually arise from experiences of 'biographical discontinuity caused by life crises or self-chosen biographical reorientation' (Rehberg, 2005, p. 110). This research mainly focused on the latter. Students get involved in *zhi yuan* activities to seek business event work experiences and to enhance their transition from education to employment. More specifically, the *zhi yuan* experience is not only an important opportunity to add practical experience, but also a way to explore pathways for future employment. As the student interviewees proposed, the benefit of adding value to their identities and CVs is one important motivation for providing *zhi yuan* service at well-known large-scale events. As discussed in Section 4.2, *zhi yuan* service becomes an activity enabling the construction of distinctive personal identities and biographies. When choosing the *zhi yuan* activities, students tend to look for a balance between the functional needs of the activity on the one hand and their personal desires and passions of view on the other hand. One typical example for this was the statements from

students from Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, who demonstrated the desire for the balance between what they can get from the experience and what they are interested in (see Section 4.2.3). The *zhi yuan* activities have to be in accordance with students' personal interests and capacities and they must enable their personal progress. That means self-development is valued as more important than solidarity motives. This is a consequence of the supposed post-materialistic attitude of volunteers (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2000). The finding is congruent with Grönlund (2011), who found that volunteering could be intertwined with deeply personal processes of personal identity and values.

From the student interviewees' statements in Section 4.2, the emergent altruistic motives (e.g., serving others) though not emphasised by the participants, occurred together with more self-centred motives (e.g., learning new skills and gaining experience). This characteristic demonstrates that the respondents are 'altruistic individualists', using Rehberg's (2005) terminology. This is in line with findings from other studies that described volunteer motives as an altruism-egoism mixture (e.g., Yeung, 2004; Phillips & Phillips, 2011). However, in a reflexive volunteering paradigm, the self-reflexive biographical quest becomes the driving force for volunteers (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). The main motivation of reflexive volunteers is to build their biography, so students' *zhi yuan* behaviour is used as a tool to cope with the future study and employment uncertainties. In this sense, it can be understood as 'a "market of possibilities" for self-realization' (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003, p. 173).

5.3 Conceptualisation

From the auto-ethnographic data and interview data, it emerged that participants held a broad understanding of the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China. There are four dimensions for this broad understanding: voluntary spirit, voluntary giving, mutual help, and monetary reward is not the main aim.

5.3.1 Broad understanding

Voluntary spirit

As discussed in Chapter 4, the meanings that student *zhi yuan zhe* themselves attach to what they do at events are widely recognised. 'Voluntary spirit' was identified as a category to reflect the viewpoint on identity, values, and also the ways in which individuals express them and reflect on themselves. There were many indicators of the spirit of sacrifice, responsibility

consciousness, public spirit, and serving others among the data. Voluntary spirit is one characteristic that defines the students as '*zhi yuan zhe*' despite some conflicts with the understandings of *zhi yuan zhe* such as having a certain amount of payment attached, which will be discussed more in Section 5.4.2. The voluntary spirit helps to explain students' great commitment to their roles. The university administrators claim that voluntary spirit is common among students, which is the possible reason why the event visitors prefer to call students *zhi yuan zhe*. The event organisers claim that the voluntary spirit among students makes them more dedicated to their work. Overall, voluntary spirit constitutes one of the most important dimensions for conceptualising the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China.

Voluntary spirit has been a popular topic in academic social and cultural research as well during the last few decades in China. *Zhi yuan* (dedication), *fu wu* (fraternity), *hu zhu* (mutuality), and *jin bu* (progress) are the four aspects of voluntary spirit (Mu, 2005). Voluntary spirit represents a moral superiority, which improves social cohesion (Xu & Ngai, 2011). The understanding of voluntary spirit not only influences individuals' behaviour meanings and expectations but also influences the whole community's conceptualisation and management for volunteer service (Mu, 2005). As Ma (2011) put it, 'in the Chinese context, voluntary spirit is regarded as a kind of social responsibility, a kind of culture and value orientation, and its social significance is far beyond that in the Western context' (p. 87). In line with this, voluntary spirit is identified as one important dimension for conceptualising this phenomenon in this current study.

Voluntary spirit does not simply equate to altruism, but to a civic service awareness based on social responsibility (Cao & Ren, 2009). The value of benefiting others is the nature of voluntary spirit. The student *zhi yuan zhe* in this research felt that committing their time and skills to help organise the events shows their civic responsibility and the consciousness of serving others. This plays an important motivation for the participants to get involved. Although voluntary spirit is often portrayed as selflessness and benefiting others by scholars (e.g., Ge & Cui, 2009; Tao & Liu, 2008), research indicates that self-benefit and benefiting others simultaneously exist in the nature of voluntary spirit in China. This current project supports the conceptualisation that voluntary spirit is dichotomy. For the students, providing *zhi yuan* service at business events does not mean just benefitting others; there are also some self-benefit reasons, as shown in Section 4.2. But this is not contrary to the essence of

voluntary spirit; rather it facilitates a fuller understanding of voluntary spirit in the conceptualisation of this phenomenon.

The voluntary spirit has set up a unique identity for students in China. As discussed in Chapter 4, several event organisers and university administrator interview participants proposed that one of the reasons for calling them '*zhi yuan zhe*' is that they are students and '*zhi yuan zhe*' is a good name for students. These comments suggested that students' identities are congruent with the concept of '*zhi yuan zhe*', among which voluntary spirit is a core factor, by attributing *zhi yuan zhe* participants and demonstrating students' willingness to help and willingness to contribute.

Although there is very limited attention that has been paid to the dimension of voluntary spirit in the Western literature when defining the phenomenon of volunteering, some scholars have explored the antecedents of voluntary spirit (e.g., Wilson, 2012), such as personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness, and resilience (e.g., Atkins, Hart, & Donnelly, 2005; Bekkers, 2005; Omoto, Snyder, & Hackett, 2010). Frinkelstein, Penner, and Brannick (2005), and Grube and Piliavin (2000) have noted that volunteering could be intertwined in personal processes, though studies on the associations between self-identity and volunteering have been scarce. In one of the exceptions, Grönlund (2011) discerned five different role identities for volunteers: the influencer, the helper, faith-based, community and success, and the results showed a range of values or value identities, which reflected the flexible nature of volunteering. Related theories were applied to explore this issue (e.g., Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Erez, Mikulincer, Van Ljzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 2008). Therefore, in Western countries, voluntary spirit embodies a set of values like altruism and philanthropy, with the emphasis on taking action without expectation of payment by free will (Xu, 2017). Overall, voluntary spirit, referring to the contributing significance and the benefit meaning that student volunteers themselves attach to what they do, is a key dimension for conceptualising the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China.

Voluntary giving

From the field study, voluntarily giving time, skills, and talent emerged as another dimension of the conceptualisation of this phenomenon. First, the student *zhi yuan zhe* choose to participate in the *zhi yuan* service at events from their own will, although there are some external factors that push them to do so. For the university student interviewees, their participation is purely their free will; for the college interviewees studying event management,

they described the need for such experiences (2–4 times during three years' study) as necessary to gain their diplomas, but they still have the choice over which events to attend. Second, the students give time, skills, and talent. In the interviews, students discussed the significant amount of time they provided, and during the auto-ethnography study I noticed that all the *zhi yuan zhe* started to help the organiser two days before the event, so they devoted around five days for each event. Providing *zhi yuan* service at business events is not just to spend time but also a donation (or a gift) of time and certain skills. Students are well educated with skills like language, etiquette, and event management knowledge. They contribute to helping the event organisers and attendees. If the voluntary spirit refers to the significance and meaning that students attach to what they do, voluntary giving is the external manifestation of the voluntary spirit.

In the literature, giving time, skills, and talent is widely identified as one characteristic of volunteering in Western countries (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000; National Association of Counties, 1990; Rodell, 2013). In China, the voluntary contribution of time, energy, skills, and experience also constitutes one facet of understanding about what volunteering is (e.g., Hu, 2005), though most of the studies focus on volunteering at non-profit fields.

Mutual help

Most of the participants in this research believe that benefiting others is a characteristic of volunteering. For the *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events, helping the organisers host the event successfully, providing service to event attendees and helping the organisers are the recognised benefits for others. These are in accordance with the widely recognised understanding of helping in volunteering (e.g., Bussell & Forbes, 2002). However, in this current research, some interviewees did not believe that *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is altruism and expressed doubt about the extent to which helping others is demonstrated. Rather, it is based on reciprocity and attentiveness to the specific needs of different groups. In their opinion, the *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events lacked the element of altruism found in what they saw as the 'true' volunteering in non-profit fields like Red Cross. Rather, this business event *zhi yuan* behaviour is argued as involving more self-benefit elements such as learning, practising and gaining experience. Moreover, since the benefits of this type *zhi yuan* behaviour are directed solely at the related stakeholders of an event such as event attendees and organisers, this type of volunteering is believed to be 'exclusive' rather than 'inclusive' if

one uses Hankinson and Rochester's (2005) terminology. This leads to the argument of the extent to which self-help could be recognised as volunteering. From the auto-ethnography field study and interviews, it is recognised that *zhi yuan* behaviour at the business events is not purely benefit for others or self-help; rather, it is a mutual help that benefits both the giver (the student *zhi yuan zhe*) and the receiver (e.g., the event organisers and attendees).

Looking back at the existing literature, some evidence is found to support the above proposal. As Hankinson and Rochester (2005) argued, the oldest form of voluntary action is described as 'by us, for us' (p.102), which means people work together to address shared problems. Also, volunteering means participating activities freely to benefit other people, organisations, and groups. This understanding does not preclude volunteers themselves from also benefiting from their behaviours. Wilson (2000) also described volunteering as being beneficial for both the helper and the helped. Other studies have looked at the impact of volunteering on volunteers themselves, such as career benefits and subjective well-being (e.g., Benenson & Stagg, 2016; Van Willigen, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1999). Compared with these studies, students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events also demonstrates the coexistence of benefits for others and benefits for oneself. However, the business events context has extended the literature to the context of business events. To summarise, students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is a mutual benefit choice. It can be conceptualised through an exclusive approach where altruism and self-interest coexist for the benefit of both the givers and receivers.

Payment is not a main aim

From the field study, it was identified that compared with other volunteering at sports/music events and non-profit fields, one element that distinguishes the *zhi yuan* behaviour in this project is the existence of monetary rewards, which introduces a contradiction. As discussed in Chapter 4, the interview participants have diverse opinions on the issue of payment for *zhi yuan zhe*. Many believed that, at least to some extent, the monetary reward challenges the traditional concept of volunteering, and the payment classifies the student *zhi yuan zhe* as more like staff. However, the majority of participants did agree that payment is not the main consideration for the student *zhi yuan zhe*, though it may have encouraged the initiative of participation. In line with the argument of voluntary spirit, for the *zhi yuan zhe* that do not attach much significance to this payment, it is still volunteering; for the fewer students that see the payment as the main aim of participation, this phenomenon no longer belongs to the

scope of volunteering, and is more like part-time work, which leads to blurred boundaries. This will be further discussed in the next section.

The context, business events, is mostly for-profit. As the event organiser participants argue, the for-profit context makes it more reasonable to have some payment for participants as reimbursement for the transportation and lunch. From the investigation of this study, there are no volunteer appreciation parties or gift cards after events. With a small amount of payment, the event organisers can find enough *zhi yuan zhe* and use the payment as a tool to manage *zhi yuan zhe*'s performance like arriving on time and following the organisers' arrangement. In China, it is not only at business events that *zhi yuan zhe* can gain a certain amount of payment. One example is the national volunteer teaching programme in western China, at which participants get monthly subsidy. The trend of *zhi yuan zhe* providing service with payment has led to the widespread discussion of morality in volunteering in the media (He, 2009). There are different opinions on this issue. While some claim that the emergence of payment is a moral bankruptcy, others have a relatively tolerant attitude towards the payment. Zhangzhou Volunteer Network (2016) propose the principle of 'free service, cost paid' (they are not paid for their time as volunteers, but they may get money to get cover expenses) as a more neutral position. Low-level payment for *zhi yuan zhe* at business events in China does not just cover the travel expenses and it is a little higher than the expenses. The payment is similar to the cost and vouchers/gift cards given to volunteers in Western countries. Hence, how to understand the payment influences the understanding of this phenomenon.

Volunteer work and its rewards have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention (e.g., Gidron, 1978; Govekar & Govekar, 2002; Kumar, Kallen, & Mathew, 2002) and there is widespread acceptance of the idea that volunteer work is not just volunteers giving (see last section). It is widely understood that volunteer activity is an activity that includes rewards for volunteers and it is a reciprocal process or mutual help (e.g., Armstrong, Korba, & Emard, 1995; Munn-Giddings, Oka, Borkman, Chikoto, Matzat, & Montaña-Fraire, 2016). Gidron (1978) found that volunteers always expect some extrinsic (e.g., social interaction) or intrinsic rewards (e.g., self-development, social recognition). Volunteers that expect rewards have been recognised by some researchers in Western societies (Kumar et al., 2002). On the whole, scholars like Steen (2006) believe that the volunteering is not as pure as has been often thought and they tend to seek new ways to perceive this phenomenon such as La Cour and Højlund (2008), who see voluntary social work as a paradox. The existence of monetary rewards in *zhi yuan* activities at business events adds another point to such discussion.

5.3.2 The blurred boundaries

From the above analysis, it is identified that there are a variety of reasons for students to be *zhi yuan zhe* at business events and the understanding of this phenomenon is multi-dimensional. Section 5.2 found many motivations that are related to service learning, work experience, and practice. The interview participants demonstrate a wide understanding of this phenomenon with the elements of voluntary spirit, payment, and voluntary giving. All of these indicate the blurred boundaries of *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events with other related activities like service learning and work integrated learning. In this section, I delve into the fuzziness to examine the overlapping boundaries of *zhi yuan* behaviour, and consider how each relates to or challenges the traditional conceptualisations of volunteering. This section analyses *zhi yuan zhe*'s role ambiguities and the overlaps between students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events with compulsory educational service learning, work integrated learning, and part-time employment. As Cohen (1974) argued in relation to tourism, it is the fuzziness of tourism categories and the blurred margins that enable the advancements to be made with other forms of social and cultural activities. In the same vein, understanding the blurred boundaries of the *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is the basis for understanding this phenomenon.

Zhi yuan zhe & role ambiguity

From my auto-ethnography and interviews, it has been identified that student *zhi yuan zhe* undertake multiple positions, and mainly at the information desk, registration, and providing guidance in the event hall as well as food and beverage. Though the interviewees did not speak of role ambiguity, I found that this was an important factor in leading to the blurred boundaries between *zhi yuan* service and other social activities.

There are a number of competing, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory roles that *zhi yuan zhe* must negotiate. At business events, *zhi yuan zhe* have ambiguous positions in relation to event organiser staff and part-time workers. Some student *zhi yuan zhe* see themselves as organising staff and recognise that they have the responsibility for the event participants. Though student *zhi yuan zhe* are regarded as 'peripheral' by some event organisers, they coordinate with other on-site workers and should not be viewed as substitutes or replacements for event organisers. After all, without the dozens of *zhi yuan zhe*, the paid staff could not organise the events.

According to the event organisers, usually there are no job descriptions or written guidelines to describe the roles of *zhi yuan zhe*. The roles played by *zhi yuan zhe* are diverse and are often determined by the needs of the event organiser. *Zhi yuan zhe* roles are not always distinctive from organiser staff and part-time worker roles. Rather, most of them are shared roles. The roles and expectations for these three different groups are not clearly differentiated. Despite the lack of written guidelines and clarity of *zhi yuan zhe*'s roles, event organisers and students have a general understanding in regard to the core components of the role of *zhi yuan zhe* and event organiser staff. This reflects that *zhi yuan* service at business events is becoming more formalised. This trend is the same as that which has been identified from the volunteering in volunteer tourism and other fields (Lyons, 2003; Merrell, 2000; Netting, O'Connor, Thomas, & Yancey, 2005). The complexity and ambiguity of roles leads to the blurred boundaries of student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events.

***Zhi yuan* service & compulsory educational service learning**

The student and administrator participants from colleges agreed that students studying event management are required to do *zhi yuan* service at a certain number of events as part of their qualifications. The administrator participants claimed that providing on-site *zhi yuan* service at events is an important way for students to learn from practice and apply theoretical knowledge (see Section 4.2.1). Moreover, as Section 4.4 discussed, the students are usually called *zhi yuan zhe* in China, but essentially learning through the service providing process is one of the main motivations for participants. In this sense, it shares some commonalities with compulsory educational service learning. For the student participants from universities, they chose to be *zhi yuan zhe* and no one required them to do that, hence it is not compulsory. However, from the perspective of event organisers, the main motive for all the students is service learning. In most cases, both college and university students are called *zhi yuan zhe* due to their identities as students. Those event organisers who did not use *zhi yuan zhe* called them on-site staff and temporary assistance staff. So the boundaries between *zhi yuan* activities and compulsory educational service learning overlapped.

Volunteering Australia (2015b) proposed that compulsory educational service learning is not considered to be volunteering but a pathway to volunteering. Service learning has a wider scope, which is 'defined as a process where the learner needs to reflect upon the experience and derives new learning' (Osland, Kolb, Rubin, & Turner, 1971, p. 67), and it is part of a broader set of educational tools termed 'experiential learning'. Another goal of service

learning is to encourage students' active involvement in solving social issues (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). The focus of *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is on learning and personal development. The *zhi yuan* behaviour is a reciprocal process in which the students provide their labour and they gain skills, knowledge, and work experience. Moreover, the *zhi yuan* behaviour is an enlightening process that enables students to reflect on how an experience relates to their knowledge, how they see themselves, and how to prepare for future employment. These three aspects are in accordance with the characteristics of learning, reciprocity and reflection of service learning. However, service learning is an experiential education activity and the goal is to enhance learning by service (Huda, Jasmi, Alas, Qodriah, Dacholfany, & Jamsari, 2017). There are a variety of methods in service learning, such as class discussion and academic material guidance (Astin et al., 2010). The goal of *zhi yuan* service at business events is to practise, and is relatively smaller in scope than service learning. Overall, while there are some overlaps between *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events and compulsory educational service learning, they are still different concepts with different goals.

***Zhi yuan* service & work-integrated learning (WIL)**

The analysis in Sections 4.2.1 and 5.2.1, students participate in *zhi yuan* activities at business events in order to learn professional, personal, and employability skills. So learning is the main goal for them. For the conceptualisation of the phenomenon, interview participants mentioned terms like internships, practice, and work experience when describing how they understand the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour. All these terms can constitute WIL, which is an umbrella term that describes the learning approaches and teaching models that provide students with opportunities to engage in learning connected to the world of work (Peach & Gamble, 2011). That means *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China includes some elements of WIL.

According to the administrator participants from colleges, *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events are deliberate approaches that aim to blend students' event study within the classroom with the experience of practices in the workplace of event industry. Students' *zhi yuan* behaviour has a high level of authenticity and engagement, and it could enhance students' employability skills and the capacity of being innovative, productive and collaborative employees. All these aspects fit with WIL's characteristics of integrating discipline-specific knowledge learnt in a classroom setting with that learnt in the practice of work through a

purposefully designed curriculum (Smith & Worsfold, 2015). In Western countries, volunteering has been integrated into WIL (Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014). These suggest that college students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events can be include in WIL. However, for *zhi yuan zhe* from universities that are not designed to provide *zhi yuan* service at business events and those that do study event management, their *zhi yuan* behaviours do not belong to WIL.

***Zhi yuan* service & part-time job**

As discussed in Section 4.3.2, the existence of payment for *zhi yuan zhe* is the main reason leading to the blurred boundaries between *zhi yuan* service and part-time jobs. Moreover, student *zhi yuan zhe* are given roles similar to event organiser staff and part-time workers. As it is a common practice for *zhi yuan zhe* to be paid in China, it has drawn some scholars' attention (e.g., Tian, 2004), and the discussions are very explorative. Further consideration will be made in the discussion of payment and voluntary spirit (Section 5.4). This will note that while there is payment and the level is low, as long as the participants are not mainly motivated to gain the payment and they have the voluntary spirit, it can be classified as *zhi yuan* service; otherwise, it is a part-time job.

5.3.3 The voluntary exchange nature

Student *zhi yuan zhe* are offered some specific exchange deals (e.g., learning opportunities, study credit, and payment) from the organisers and education institutions for providing their on-site work efforts at business events. From the analysis in Chapter 4 and Section 5.2, it is clear that students get involved in the *zhi yuan* activities not just for the reasons of giving or helping others; they have their own purposes and motives. At the same time, the participants have a very broad understanding of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China and there are overlaps with service learning, internships and part-time work.

In the auto-ethnographic filed study, I noticed that the traditional understanding of volunteering alone is no longer an adequate explanation for students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events. From the conversations with them, I realised that they are fastidious and always expect something in return for their efforts: some students see the *zhi yuan* service as an instrument for learning or practising; some treat it as a way to gain honours; some understand it as commercial transaction, and only a few students have the spirit of contribution regardless of the return. I understand the nature of the role of student *zhi yuan*

zhe as exchange, which is more about mutual benefit and co-production, resulting in positive results for *zhi yuan zhe*, event organisers and other stakeholders.

In the interviews, participants usually describe the centrality of *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events as an exchange in which students' labour and devoted time are seen as an exchange for the learning/practising opportunities and a certain amount of monetary compensation. The idea of 'giving' in traditional volunteering is not applied in this context anymore. This means that the practice of *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is not simply an activity in which participants donate their time and effort to a charitable cause. As the analysis shows in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, student participants see their on-site *zhi yuan* service as a type of work, practice, or experience. They devote five to seven days' time, do the labour work for organisers, and serve the event attendees. As an exchange, they gain opportunities for practising the knowledge learned from class, gain practical experience related to future employment, learn new knowledge related to their study field and new skills, and get some money remuneration. At the same time, there are some symbolic components such as the sense of contribution, altruism, and the enjoyable atmosphere as parts of the exchange involved in the *zhi yuan* service at business event. The opportunities to learn are pivotal for many student *zhi yuan zhe*.

Though the student participants conceptualise their *zhi yuan* behaviours as Janus-like with economic and symbolic components, most of the event organiser participants acknowledge more economic and productive aspects in the students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events. From the perspective of business events organisers, the symbolic components of this volunteer behaviour has largely weakened though they admit that students participate in the *zhi yuan* activity due to some symbolic reasons like students having a sense of dedication and contribution. The commercial organisers believe that the exchange nature of this *zhi yuan* behaviour is an equivalent economic exchange: the students provide on-site service to help organise the events successfully; in return, they gain some rewards to compensate for their work. Though the level of the rewards is lower than the market value, the organisers believe it is an equivalent exchange as the students just provide some basic service and, more importantly, they are not skilled workers. Organisers provide training to the student *zhi yuan zhe*, and allocate students to different groups with their own staff as team leaders to make them part of the organising and enable the work efficient. This is further manifested in no shifts, uniforms, hierarchy levels, monetary rewards as incentive and management tool, punishment for misconduct, and unravelling the productive component of exchange where

the principle is making the *zhi yuan* behaviour more efficient. As the above analysis suggests, the monetary rewards as an incentive and management tool is actually a way of controlling student *zhi yuan zhe*'s on-site behaviour (e.g., being on time and service quality) and making sure that the students perform the service work until the end of the events.

For the not-for-profit organisers, the economic component is not as strong as for commercial organisers. They use monetary rewards as an incentive and management tool, but they also emphasise the symbolic components to attract enough students. The significances of the events and the meanings for providing *zhi yuan* service at these events are proposed as attractions for potential student *zhi yuan zhe*. Even some of these organisers promise to give *zhi yuan zhe* certificates to demonstrate their involvement and experience, which is an instrumental part of the symbolic component. But they adopt the related strategies to make sure that the students work efficiently and provide good service to the event attendees. In this sense, the not-for-profit event organisers emphasise the productive components of this phenomenon.

For the university administrators, the productive component is the biggest feature of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events. They propose that *zhi yuan* service at business events is an efficient learning way for students, during which they learn the practical skills in event industry and put the theoretical knowledge into practice. At the same time, as qualified labour with related knowledge and good qualifications, students are essential to make sure that the events can be held successfully. The interviews demonstrate that administrators also perceive the economic calculation underpinning the behaviour of *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China, which emerges when the administrators point out that most college students are short-sighted and they cannot realise the long-term benefits of participating the *zhi yuan* activities or the main purposes of colleges to include such activities in their three-year study. So the colleges have turn to the compulsory requirements to make sure that students get involved in such activities. The administrator participants describe the students' dissatisfaction about the compulsory requirement for them to participate in a certain number of *zhi yuan* activities. Students, on the one hand, show disappointment about the low payment with statements like 'we are cheap labour', and the different treatment between student *zhi yuan zhe* and paid organiser staff. They believe that they are managed to work productively, almost the same as event organiser staff and part-time workers. Comparing the benefits they gain and the devotion they make, some of them feel that it is not a fair deal, reflecting the economic element of this behaviour. On the other hand, students also admit that they have

little experience and it is a productive learning opportunity, as they can learn some useful insights from the short-term (two to three days) practice.

Based on the above analysis, students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is a multidimensional phenomenon with the nature of voluntary exchange having three distinct components, that is, symbolic exchange, productive exchange, and economic exchange. Mutran and Reitzes (1984) proposed the idea of exchange and symbolic interaction and others began to explain volunteer behaviour from the perspective of 'exchange' (e.g., Booth et al., 2009; Jones, 2010; Wymer & Samu, 2002). In one of these studies, Wymer and Samu (2002) propose that volunteer work represents an exchange between the non-profit organisation and the volunteer. As Bussell and Forbes (2002) observed, many studies have identified the element of exchange in volunteering. These studies on examining volunteering behaviour share some common characteristics and they add something new to enriching our understanding of this concept. The recognition of the exchange nature reflects that volunteer work is no longer conceptualised from the angle of benefiting others; it also benefits the volunteers themselves. Explaining volunteering as an exchange provides new insights for Rochester's (2006) three perspectives model that explains volunteering as service, activism and leisure. In this research, the term of 'mutual help' identified from the interviewees is a good example of the exchange nature of this volunteer phenomenon. The recognition of the exchange nature also reflects the appreciation of the complex reality of volunteering, rather than constrain volunteering to a unidimensional concept (Toraldo et al., 2016).

Symbolic exchange

The students' engagement at the business events in China is driven by diverse reasons, which not only include altruism and instrumental motives but also some context-specific motives such as the prospect of being part of the event, and voluntarily joining and sharing in the event community (see Chapter 4). Students describe their volunteer experiences as enjoyable and see it as a contribution behaviour. The voluntary spirit plays an important role in event organisers defining them as '*zhi yuan zhe*'. Using Wymer and Samu's (2002) terminology, the voluntary spirit can be called 'psychosocial benefits' (p. 974). As Toraldo et al. (2016) argue, such aspects pertain to non-material dimensions and configure the exchange as symbolic. *Zhi yuan* behaviour at business events represents participants' pro-social behaviour, which implies that the students voluntarily provide their time, labour, knowledge, and service. For event organisers, students constitute an important manpower resource and, more

importantly, they are the must-have symbols (i.e., *zhi yuan zhe*) for each event, because the organisers believe that *zhi yuan zhe* is an essential part of organising an event and they are the images or representatives of a good event. The event organisers receive the student *zhi yuan zhe*'s labour and get the symbol of including *zhi yuan zhe* in their events, when the student *zhi yuan zhe* receive the above symbolic benefits. Hence, the *zhi yuan* service at business events represents a symbolic exchange between the event organisers and the students.

Previous studies from marketing and organisation disciplines have shown that volunteering behaviour has been treated as a type of symbolic consumption with four functions: emblematic, role acquisition, connectedness, and expressiveness (Hoyer & MacInnis, 1997; Starns & Wymer, 2000; Snyder & DeBono, 1987; Wymer & Samu, 2002), and the results of this study show that the *zhi yuan* behaviour also fits this framework. When students choose to provide *zhi yuan* service at business events, their participation communicates something about their beliefs that doing this could add value to themselves and provide a piece of evidence (e.g., CV) for others that demonstrates the emblematic function. Being *zhi yuan zhe* also allows students to fulfil real-work environmental roles, which cannot be achieved during their studies. Many students express the motive of meeting people in the event industry and maintain relationships with them, which shows the function of connectedness of *zhi yuan* service. This *zhi yuan* behaviour allows participants to accumulate life experience and express their voluntary spirit, and this relates to the expressiveness function. However, this research has something new to add to the knowledge. On the one hand, the *zhi yuan zhe*'s emotional meanings (e.g., enjoyable experience, contribution behaviour, and voluntary spirit) are identified as an important aspect of this symbolic exchange process. On the other hand, *zhi yuan* behaviour is believed to have the role of resource attraction, not only for non-profit marketing but also for profit marketing. Business event organisers tend to make the most of these symbolic and emotional meanings of *zhi yuan* behaviour to achieve their own goals.

Productive exchange

One of the main features for the *zhi yuan* activity is that it is a productive exchange between *zhi yuan zhe* and event organisers. The student *zhi yuan zhe* are managed to achieve the organisers' goals. Also, students can go through different stages of an event in only a few days, which is a very productive way to learn. Handling working tasks under pressure is a critical activity for the student *zhi yuan zhe*. The students, like the organiser staff, need to provide on-site service to event attendees under the command of a team leader. Many control

strategies (e.g., grouping, the division of work, payment, and punishment) are adopted by the organisers. These managerial controls seem directed to ensure that *zhi yuan zhe* engage in productive labour and avoid any opportunistic behaviours such as arriving late or leaving early. This emphasises the commercial nature of the organisers. These productivity measures for the volunteer programme are to ensure the quality of *zhi yuan* service. Highlighting the services students provided to business events as professional implies that working practices and procedures are efficiently organised to make work productive. From the perspective of students, *zhi yuan* service at business events is also a productive choice. Taking students studying event management as an example: they can get involved in different roles of the event and work with the organisers, which makes it possible for them to know how an event is produced. Many students expressed that this is a very efficient way of learning.

Volunteers are viewed as important human resources for organisations and societies because they contribute to their productivity. As Stebbins (2013) argued, volunteers intend to generate something of value for volunteers themselves and other individuals, so ‘intentionally-productive’ is used to describe the volunteer work. The idea of volunteering as intended productivity for producing results shows the utility of volunteering. Nonetheless, there has not been as much attempt to explore volunteer programme productivity, with the exceptions of Gamm and Kassab (1983), and Wilson and Musick (1997). With proper volunteer management strategies, there can be more outputs from the volunteer programme. Such a productive component is particularly important in today’s volunteer climate because of decreasing numbers in the volunteer pool. Some kinds of volunteer work nearly resemble paid work, since essentially they are productive, so defining volunteering as a work-leisure axis has emerged (Stebbins, 2013), which demonstrates the productive element in volunteering.

Economic exchange

From the interviews, it has been identified that event organisers are aware that services provided by student *zhi yuan zhe* can cut costs and generate value. For most event organisers, using student volunteers as a productive workforce is based on an economic evaluation and a commercial transaction. Students provide on-site service to gain experience as a career development strategy and achieve the goal of gaining credits or certification. Also, they can get certain amounts of payment. The organisers provide the students such *zhi yuan* opportunities, which is a win-win situation. Though it is a common practice for the event

organisers to pay the students for their services, the payment is lower than the market value. The organisers believe that it is a fair exchange because the students do not have much work experience and they can only do the basic work. Using students as *zhi yuan zhe* is a more economic way compared with recruiting other labour personnel. The students also recognised the commercial aspects of the *zhi yuan* activities at business events. For example, some students pointed out that all work was organised productively and remarked ‘this is real work’ (see Section 4.2.1). *Zhi yuan zhe* sometimes frame it as exploitative due to the low payment they receive while they are well educated and are equipped with the event-related knowledge (see Section 4.3.1). From this sense, the exchange relations are primarily determined by an instrumental type of return, which is based on economic considerations. The economic exchange relationships are usually explored between managers and employees (Buch, Thompson, & Kuvaas, 2016). However, it is not a rare phenomenon for the volunteers to get monetary incentives all over the world (Frey & Goette, 1999).

Empirical evidence shows that as voluntary work is rewarded financially, an increase in the rate raises the number of voluntary work hours offered by volunteers (Frey & Götte, 1999). Frey and Goette (1999) have discussed the impacts of taxes deductions and direct payments on volunteer activities. However, there has been no tax explanation for the volunteer payment yet in China and the payment is usually directly given to volunteers in cash. For the event organiser participants in this research, the payment for *zhi yuan zhe* is treated the same as that for the contract part-time worker. Sauer (2015) highlights the investment motive of volunteering, which is associated with an indirect increase in future utility, and demonstrates that the economic returns to volunteering are more important than the non-economic returns. So volunteering is seen as an investment or asset accumulation (Day & Devlin, 1998; Prouteau & Wolff, 2006; Sauer, 2015). The emergence of the economic exchange is a very important sign for the changing conceptualisation of *zhi yuan* behaviour. This economic exchange problematises the underlying notion of ‘voluntary spirit’ and inhibits the development of trust and appreciation between volunteers and organisers. It essentially challenges the common perception of the do-good or giving behaviour of volunteers, but a balance of possible benefit and cost highlights the rationality of Handy et al.’s (2000) proposal, which defines volunteers by the net-cost approach. Christenson (1981) also claims that the human services volunteer definition is a less pure volunteer than a gratuitous employee. In the same vein with such studies, the findings of this research have helped to shift the discussion of volunteering from ‘giving’ to the emerging benefit-cost perspective

(Handy & Mook, 2011; Haski-Leventhal & Meijs, 2011). The idea of gift exchange among stakeholders in employer-supported volunteering proposed by Booth et al. (2009) explained the relationships among volunteer hours, employees' skill acquisition, and employer recognition. It concurs with the discussion in this research, although in a different context. This study provides strong support for the economic exchange nature of volunteering.

5.3.4 Grounded theory development: Conceptualisation aspect

Grounded in the data, three aspects of conceptualisation have been analysed: broad understanding, blurred boundaries, and voluntary exchange nature. The combination of the arguments from data with the existing literature on volunteering conceptualisation in both Western countries and China is essential as it has helped promote the 'clarity in thinking about concepts and possible theory development' and enabled the researcher to gain theoretical sensitivity (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006, p. 350).

As discussed in Section 2.5, definitions of volunteering range from extremely broad to very 'pure', due to the variety of understandings of volunteering. Usually, this term is a collective noun for a wide range of activities in the contemporary civil society and a broad range of criteria is associated with it. As Handy et al. (2000) argued, the term 'volunteer' is used in a too general sense, and different types of volunteer activities should be delineated. From a global perspective, there is a diversity of opinions on whether an activity can be included in volunteering and such understandings are culturally sensitive. In recognition of this diversity, this research comes back to the very origin of volunteer work and makes reflections on the nature of the volunteer activity in the Chinese context. The conceptualisation of Chinese context volunteering (i.e., *zhi yuan*) is proposed in order to delineate this culturally specific behaviour. The understanding of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is broad, although the idea of a voluntary exchange is central and the boundaries with several other activities (e.g., compulsory educational service learning and work-integrated learning) are blurred. Overall, the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour in this research has several characteristics that have both commonalities and differences with volunteering in Western countries. The following section will demonstrate how this culturally specific volunteering has been conceptualised.

Using Cnaan et al.'s (1996) model to understand students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China, the phenomenon would sit on the left side of this model, that is, a broad understanding (see Figure 2.1). The first dimension is free choice. Most student and

administrator interviewees from colleges agreed that providing *zhi yuan* service is not purely free will, as many colleges set a certain number of such activities as part of course requirements. This is not a unique issue specific to the field under research but a common phenomenon in China, and it also reflects trends in Western society. Section 5.4.1 will discuss this further in relation to China's education system. For the second dimension of remuneration, students gain low payment for their *zhi yuan* service; this is explored in the following section. The third dimension is structure. According to Cnaan et al. (1996), formal volunteering refers to giving help through organisations. In this research, students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is a type of formal participation through event organisers' actions. In China, the state and collectivism make the difference between formal and informal volunteering unclear. Based on the emerging trend of informal volunteering identified in the literature (e.g., Reed & Selbee, 2000) and the researcher's theoretical sensitivity, the researcher believes that 'structure' is not a key aspect when conceptualising the phenomenon of volunteering. And the last dimension is the beneficiary. For the student participants in this research, at least to some extent, the motive of searching benefits for themselves is more important than the aim of benefiting others. This 'beneficiaries' characteristic constitutes one of the key points for conceptualisation, and will be further explained in the following. The four dimensions of Cnaan et al.'s model will briefly be applied to *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China before expanding in this conceptualisation in a new developed model.

Although Cnaan et al.'s (1996) model has provided a useful framework for conceptualising the phenomenon of volunteering, this research identifies that different dimensions are needed for taking account of the changing volunteer behaviours and emerging trends. Early definitions of volunteering are criticised as too narrow, and dimensions of the definitions (i.e., helping, no financial gain, free choice) have been questioned by a large number of researchers (e.g., Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Haski-Leventhal & Meijs, 2011; Wardell, Lishman, & Whalley, 2000). Many researchers appeal to 'redefine volunteers' (e.g., Lyons, 2003). Hence, the grounded theory development should take a step further. To do this, it is necessary to make critiques clear for the existing definition of volunteering. Firstly, the implied altruism associated with 'helping' is widely recognised as not always being the main motive of volunteers. In contrast, opportunities to develop skills for future career, travel, and developing social connections become more attractive for contemporary volunteers (e.g., Knollenberg, McGehee, Boley, & Clemmons, 2014). Secondly, volunteers getting

reimbursement in the form of out-of-pocket expenses, cash, and in-kind incentives has blurred the line between low paying jobs and volunteering (Lyons, 2003). It becomes more acceptable that volunteers receive cost reimbursement and low-level incentives. Thirdly, the recent proliferation of what some have coined as ‘mandated’ and ‘coerced’ volunteering, such as the UK’s Community Work Placement programme, indicates that not all volunteer behaviours are out of purely free will (Costello, Homberg, & Secchi, 2017; Tönurist & Surva, 2017).

Rather than trying to clarify all these challenges of definitions or designating students providing *zhi yuan* service at business events in China the label of ‘volunteers’, this research focuses on how participants conceptualise this phenomenon by taking all these potential discussions into consideration, and proposes a model that reflects these changes and is more inclusive of broader activities (Figure 5.1). The focus of this research is to understand how students and other related groups perceive their behaviours and how they assign meanings to the context-specific *zhi yuan* behaviour that has multiple ambiguities and overlaps with conceptualisations of volunteering in Western countries.

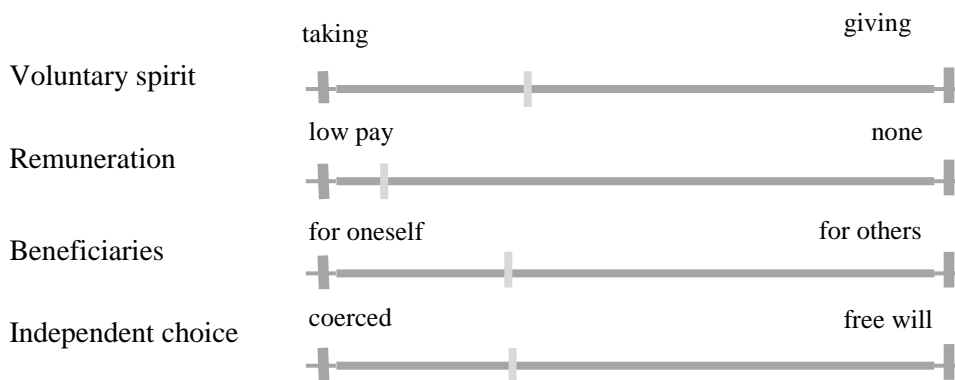


Figure 5.1 Proposed model of the conceptualisation of *zhi yuan* at business events in China

Figure 5.1 builds on Cnaan et al.’s (1996) model of volunteer definitions as presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.1). It shows a matrix of conceptualisation of volunteering, and a volunteer behaviour may sit at varying ends of this matrix. This research identifies that remuneration and beneficiaries remain two key aspects to conceptualising the phenomenon. The dimension of ‘free choice’ in Cnaan et al. (1996) has been changed to ‘independent choice’, a term with wider scope to recognise some unwilling choices due to internal (personal consideration) and external factors (pressure or requirements), so it emphasises

individuals' rational judgement. As discussed above, the dimension of 'structure' in Cnaan et al.'s (1996) model is not evident in the context of China due to the state and collectivism culture, so it is not included here. Moreover, this grounded theory research identifies that 'voluntary spirit' is seen as an important role among interview participants and it should also be an essential aspect in conceptualising this phenomenon. Hence, the four dimensions above are identified in the model of conceptualising students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China. A model of conceptualising this phenomenon has been developed, which demonstrates its complexity and dynamism as well as transcending existing binaries. In this matrix, the phenomenon sits on the left side. The following paragraphs will discuss this from the four dimensions above.

Voluntary spirit

From my auto-ethnography field study, I notice that at some *zhi yuan zhe* and part-time workers play similar roles at events. Moreover, the blurred boundaries between *zhi yuan* service and other activities (e.g., service learning) have also been discussed in Section 4.3.2. What distinguishes students' *zhi yuan* behaviour from other social activities is how participants assign meaning to the activity. In other words, how individuals perceive themselves, their behaviours and the payment. In the interviews, many participants, especially those from universities, claimed that the voluntary spirit is the most important dimension that defines them as *zhi yuan zhe*.

The voluntary spirit is therefore identified as important to defining what *zhi yuan* behaviour is in the context of business events in China. It refers to the original and basic essence of helping, dedication and fraternity. Some Chinese researchers propose that the voluntary spirit in contemporary society has developed into a dual manifestation of serving others and self-achievement, or a dialectical unity of altruism and benefiting oneself (Cao & Ren, 2009). In China, it is widely accepted as an important aspect in understanding *zhi yuan* behaviour. Based on the researcher's theoretical sensitivity, the voluntary spirit becomes the bottom line and also a valuable characteristic of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in the contemporary commercialised society, because this voluntary spirit defines what *zhi yuan zhe* should do and guides them in performing that way. In other words, participants with voluntary spirit internalise the self-description of a 'volunteer' and form a role identity. Student *zhi yuan zhe* themselves believe that the spirit distinguishes them from part-time workers and interns although they undertake similar tasks. Although it is usually a person's

individualised version of the definition, the general *zhi yuan zhe* role identity could encourage participants to perform in an active way. Theoretically, this voluntary spirit distinguishes *zhi yuan* service and other social practice activities that have blurred boundaries. The voluntary spirit places more emphasis on *zhi yuan zhe*'s experiences than meeting the functional needs. Hence, this research identifies the voluntary spirit as one dimension of the conceptualisation. Although scholars have highlighted the importance of voluntary spirit in performing *zhi yuan* service and it is believed that the spirit can improve the service by inspiring participants and get them together (e.g., Chen & Gao, 2006), this has not yet been evaluated as a core dimension of volunteering.

Remuneration

In the same vein of Cnaan et al.'s model, remuneration is identified as one essential dimension for conceptualising the phenomenon under research. Students at business events in China do receive low-level cash payments for their service at events, and they can gain other material rewards such as the T-shirt with the event logo. Most student participants take the remuneration for granted, demonstrating that they expect something in return for their effort. The existence of monetary remuneration does not influence them in being called *zhi yuan zhe*, which shows the acceptance of 'paid *zhi yuan zhe*'. The remuneration reflects that the *zhi yuan* service at business events is no longer a unilateral giving behaviour. The participants get something back for their devotions and organisers find enough *zhi yuan zhe* with a low cost. Theoretically, the remuneration demonstrates the voluntary exchange nature of their behaviour, and especially highlights the economic exchange element.

The above conceptualisation model includes remuneration as one of the key dimensions. This is in accordance with the existing studies, which claim the issue of remuneration in defining volunteering (e.g., Cnaan et al., 1996; Rochester, 2006). In this research, the remuneration is monetary return, which blurs the behaviour, at least to some extent, with part-time work. However, participants' voluntary spirit defines the low-level remuneration not as 'salary' or a 'wage', but as an exchange for their effort, leading to the differentiation between the two activities. From this sense, the conceptualisation of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is essentially an exchange behaviour. Though a large number of criticisms have been made about the explanation of volunteering from the perspective of exchange (e.g., Dekker, 2004; Wilson, 2000; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Carpini, 2006), the existence of

remuneration does make the *zhi yuan* behaviour under research a typical example of volunteering with exchange element.

Beneficiaries

The motivation discussion (Section 4.2 and Section 5.2) has demonstrated that self-benefit has become an overwhelming reason among participants, and it is a more dominant motive than to help or to give. In other words, willingness to participate in *zhi yuan* service is no longer dependent on social needs but on personal interests and experiences. So, oneself is the main beneficiary for this activity, although the behaviour can benefit others as well. In this sense, students' *zhi yuan* service at business events is a mutual helping behaviour, combining a personal search for identity with being there for others.

As a mutual help behaviour, students' *zhi yuan* service at business events is no longer a self-sacrifice contribution, which is widely accepted as an essential prerequisite for classical volunteering, both in China and Western countries (e.g., Schwartz, 1970; Zeng, 2011). This phenomenon has changed to a self-reflexive biographic quest for the participants, which exhibits the characteristics of reflexive volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). As discussed in Section 5.2.4, such *zhi yuan zhe* are 'altruistic individualists'. The emerging of the new generation of *zhi yuan zhe* reflects some changes in China society, which will be discussed in Section 5.4.1.

Independent choice

The last dimension of conceptualisation is independent choice. From the interviews, different opinions emerged about participant's choice of free will: most of them believed that they have the freedom to do so or not, while some students from colleges insisted that they are forced to participate. When synthesising these different voices, it can be concluded that individuals make the decision to participate in the activity based on their personal rational judgement. Though it is not their pure free choice, they are encouraged to do this in the end. In this case, it is not contrary to participants' free will. The researcher noticed that such activities with coerced element widely exist in China and the issue of compulsory top-to-bottom participation in China has drawn researchers' attention (e.g., Liu, 2012; Zhang, Zhang, & Wang, 2011). Due to only approximately two decades since the concept of 'volunteering' came to China, the public still does not have the strong sense of doing volunteering. The government tends to take intervention strategies by introducing policies to push participation (Wang & Song, 2014), such as even for the volunteering at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games;

a paper from the General Administration of Sport of China claims that this mega-event volunteer programme ‘is conducted with the direct intervention of the government’ (Kan, 2006). So it cannot take the metrics of ‘free will’ from Western countries when discussing volunteering in China. For the Chinese, they understand the dimension of ‘free will’ from a very broad scope, and as long as the participants can make the independent choice, they would accept it as voluntary.

The above conceptualisation model asserts that students’ *zhi yuan* behaviour is an outcome of independent choice based on rational judgement. It changes the wording of ‘free choice’ in Cnaan et al.’s (1996) study. Compared with free choice, independent choice highlights the aspect of rationality, which reduces the emphasis on participants’ subjective feeling. In this research, the participants’ rationality triumphs over tradition and they no longer take the action of following others blindly. The rationality of this argument can date back to 2000s when Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994) proposed reflexive modernisation theory, which profoundly influences the social environment of individuals. In this context, it is believed that people have enough freedom to write their life story independently and construct themselves (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1996; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2000). The process of reflexive modernisation does not stop at the economic, affective, and cultural bonds; it influences individual’s participation of volunteering, including the contemporary mode of choice.

Coming back to the model of the conceptualisation of student *zhi yuan* behaviour in Figure 5.1, it is evident that each dimension is a continuum. The *zhi yuan* service at business events in China sits on the left side of the model with evident voluntary spirit and low-level remuneration for oneself and beneficiaries, and being encouraged by external factors. It is similar to the broad definition of volunteering in Cnaan et al.’s (1996) description (Figure 2.1).

5.4 Contextual factors for students’ *zhi yuan* service at business events in China

The implementation of a constructivist grounded theory research paradigm makes it necessary to explore what the contextual factors bring to this phenomenon. In this research, I identify three important contextual factors: China, business events, and education institutions. Firstly, the ‘volunteer’ is a term that originated from Western countries, so it is important to explore what new elements China can add. Secondly, volunteering at sports events and festivals has been studied widely. Business events are different contexts and how this

background affects the volunteer activity is a basis for understanding this phenomenon well. Lastly, it is looking at a student volunteering context and students are the major volunteering community in China, so I am keen to know how this identity influences the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Individual's internalised self-definition as a *zhi yuan zhe*, that is, bearing the voluntary spirit in mind and performing accordingly, is the basis of being a *zhi yuan zhe*. Receiving certain amounts of payment is acceptable as long as the level is low, which is an exchange for participants' effort. During this activity, the participant self is one of the biggest beneficiaries, and the *zhi yuan* service is a reciprocal process with the aim of achieving mutual help and win-win situation. It is not a unilateral helping behaviour; it is an exchange deal. Participants make the self-chosen decision of participation based on their independent judgement, despite the external factors. The above model demonstrates the constructive and comprehensive understanding of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. It includes several new features that Western country perspectives have considered as exclusive. The model, which comes from the combination of different motivational drivers, social-cultural contexts, and changing values, uses a balance with scale to show where the phenomenon under research sits. This is culturally specific volunteering or a new volunteerism that remains an open question.

5.4.1 China

It is important to link the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China to the social-political, economic and ideological contexts in China. Its current form and historical roots are deeply related to China's present-day realities (Fleischer, 2011). As Hustinx et al. (2012) state, the unique characteristics of China's political and cultural constellation pose fundamental challenges to using a Western conceptual lens and the Western notion of volunteering is not directly applicable to the Chinese context. It was not until the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games that the term '*zhi yuan zhe*' appeared widely, with its promotion by government and through the media, so it is a relatively new word for the Chinese. Volunteering is usually seen as a superior type of morality social behaviour (Xu & Ngai, 2011). However, the Chinese government combines the volunteer concept from Western countries with their own culture and has some policies for promoting the development of volunteer service in China. For example, Opinions on Implementing Volunteer Service of Lei Feng in Public Cultural Facilities was proposed in 2016 (Xinhuashe,

2016). These background factors are the basis for understanding the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events.

In contemporary China, *zhi yuan* is widely portrayed as part of integrated socialism construction, and students are the main force and they provide their *zhi yuan* service for all society's benefit, which is the same as other socialist countries (e.g., Read, 2010; Yan, 2014). A diversity of *zhi yuan* activities aimed at fostering socialist values in students are organised by state sanctioned organisations. It is notable that students tend to use the plural pronouns like 'we', 'our' and 'they' when they talk about this issue, which reflects their collective consciousness. However, the *zhi yuan* behaviour in this research does not ideologically link to the concept of civil society, and student *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations reflect individuals' own choices and biographical circumstances. The *zhi yuan* service is seen as a self-realisation and personal fulfilment opportunity. This is quite different from the mainstream concepts on *zhi yuan* behaviour. It indicates the changing social ideology in China and that reflecting the ideological construction of volunteering has undergone considerable change.

In this research, some students describe their choice for being *zhi yuan zhe* as not being their own free will or having to do it due to course requirements or other reasons. To understand this compulsory element, it is essential to understand the macro background of *zhi yuan* service in China. Most of the volunteering activities are initiated by the government, and volunteering is compulsory for some groups (Hustinx et al., 2012). The compulsory volunteer participation through top-to-bottom is a prevalent practice in China (Xu, 2012). Following this tradition, it is not surprising that students are organised to participate in *zhi yuan* service and this may be compulsory or at least expected. Though the student participants claim that their involvement in the *zhi yuan* activity is not absolutely their free will, they still have the choice of not doing it. Moreover, their final choices of participation are their independent choices based on rational analysis and self-planning.

5.4.2 Business events

Event volunteering is not a new phenomenon and there has been a large amount of research in this field (see Smith et al., 2014 for a review). However, most of the current studies focus on sports events and very little attention has been paid to volunteering behaviour at business events. Hence, for this grounded theory investigation, it is important to reflect what the business events contexts bring to the *zhi yuan* behaviour.

Most studies focus on volunteer activities that are performed within the not-for-profit field and the conceptualisations for volunteering are based on such hypothesis. As discussed in Section 2.6, the existing definitions explicitly exclude the volunteer behaviour in for-profit areas (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007). This leads to the emphasis on the context of the activity rather than the characteristics of the activity itself. The emphasis needs to transfer to the intent (or aim) of the behaviour, rather than the organisational context. This research is an exploration, shifting the discussion from not-for-profit fields to for-profit area.

Volunteering at major sports events is usually depicted as a one-off-experience (Downward & Ralston, 2005), while business events are usually held periodically (i.e., exhibitions and conferences might be held regularly), resulting in many more opportunities for participants to get involved. Business events call for many *zhi yuan zhe* for a very short time (usually 2–5 days). In order to recruit enough *zhi yuan zhe*, it is a common practice among event organisers to work with local education institutions for the provision of students as *zhi yuan zhe*. They have the freedom to participate and usually get paid a daily amount. As discussed, this is incompatible with the characteristic of non-monetary reward in the Western value system. Even the interview participants have different opinions on this issue in this research. Some scholars (e.g., Cnaan et al., 1996) in Western countries have argued the scope and variability of remuneration in the field of volunteering, and no agreement has been reached.

For event volunteering, some studies have indicated that volunteers have context-situated motives. Take festivals as an example: research identifies that volunteers are motivated by the prospect to be part of the collective celebration in the festival community (e.g., Toraldo et al., 2016; Turner, 1969). In one of these studies, Bachman et al. (2014) propose that the enjoyable environment, friendship, and feelings of community are distinctive motives that drive volunteers at festivals. Another example is the volunteering at Olympic Games, where volunteers are motivated by several Olympic-related reasons, such as passion for the Games, feeling it is prestigious, and being associated with the Olympics (e.g., Alexander et al., 2015; Giannoulakis et al., 2007). In the same vein, this research has also identified some context-situated motives for student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events. Business events are a commercial context where the service objects are businesspeople, so gaining an eye-opening opportunity and not-everyday-routine experience, as well as the knowledge of event itself (see Section 4.2) are the special attractions for students who do not have the workplace experience and want to work in events. It is these reasons that make students feel providing *zhi yuan* service at business events is a different activity compared with, for example, helping

disabled people or seniors. So gaining the event-related knowledge and preparing for future employment are important motivations for students to volunteer at business events. The business context brings some 'learning' elements to the *zhi yuan* behaviour.

The business events context not only influences participants' motivations but also their conceptualisation of this phenomenon. The Section 5.4.2 identified that the background of business events have put the phenomenon of volunteers to a position of a combination of commerce and philanthropy. On one hand, as discussed in Chapter 4, the students can gain a certain amount of payment when doing *zhi yuan* service at business events, while there is no monetary reward at other non-profit fields. Unavoidably, the for-profit context raises some ethical issues, such as where to place students for the higher education institutions, and the low-level payment leads to the debate of exploitation. All these points contribute to the blurred boundaries between *zhi yuan* service and part-time work. On the other hand, the event organisers take several strategies that are widely exist in work environments (e.g., division of labour, grouping, rewards, and punishments) to organise students' work productively, which leads to the benefits for students themselves as well as for event organisers, attendees or the community as a whole. To achieve this, there are some selection processes in becoming a *zhi yuan zhe* and the roles have relatively high requirements for *zhi yuan zhe*, so they need to have certain skills. From this sense, *zhi yuan zhe* at business events are conceptualised as professional volunteers. The scholars, who believe that professional has gradually become an important trend of volunteer service in contemporary society have recognised this concept (Mu, 2005). Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) also propose that in the reflexive volunteering context, the boundaries between volunteers and professionals have become ambiguous. Volunteers gradually perform in professional organisational contexts, and they face increasing demand for expertise and skills. The rapid expansion of corporate volunteering is an example of the increasing blurred boundaries of paid work and volunteering. Considering these two aspects, it draws the conclusion that students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is not purely a giving or donation behaviour, but an exchange deal with the transactional or economic nature as discussed in Section 5.3.3. It demonstrates a new example of reflexive volunteers (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Read, 2010).

5.4.3 Students

Students are the main force of *zhi yuan zhe* in contemporary China. Moreover, the on-campus student organisations are supervised by the CYL, so the volunteer programmes are highly organised and CYL is the main impetus for legitimising the formal volunteering (Xu, 2012).

This tradition could be a good explanation as to why the colleges organise the whole class to be *zhi yuan zhe* at business events.

What does the student identity mean to the phenomenon of *zhi yuan* service? A number of articles on student volunteering have been published over the last few decades and these include motivations, impacts, and cross-cultural comparison (e.g., Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001; Handy et al., 2010; Paull et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2010). However, little attention has been paid to the impact of students' identity on volunteering. From the above explorative analysis, this research identifies that the student identity brings several insights into understanding the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China.

Firstly, the social status of students is an important factor. From my own personal experience and observations of other participants while in the field, event organisers and visitors tend to call them '*zhi yuan zhe*' because they are students. As shown in Chapter 4, the interview participants argue that '*zhi yuan zhe*' is a good name for students. In terms of which kinds of characteristics bring to the name of '*zhi yuan zhe*' for the students, the organisers and administrators believed that no work experience, no income, pure mind, and willing-to-help are four main aspects. All of these four points constitute the social status of this group. That means the name of '*zhi yuan zhe*' is used as a code for students when taking their social status into consideration. This is congruent with Cnaan et al. (1996) who argue that the lower the social standing of the volunteer, the more likely that the person will be ranked highly as a volunteer, but it depends on social and cultural norms.

Secondly, the teaching model among colleges in China is also a factor that influences the students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events. It is a common practice for the colleges to cooperate with enterprises with the aim of combining work and study in vocational colleges in China (Liu, 2010). For the administrators from colleges participating in this research, all of them claimed that students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is a way to facilitate their study through practice. Hence, for the college administrators, *zhi yuan* activity is more like a practice teaching method, rather than the traditional volunteer concept. In China, volunteering is seen as an important way of service learning to improve college students' employment ability (Liu, Xiong, & Zhou, 2016). Many higher education institutions have included *zhi yuan* activities, especially those that relate to students' study, into their education system (Ren, 2016). The students are usually organised to participate in volunteer activities as a

whole class and the ‘collective organisation’ brings disputations to one of the dimensions of volunteer definition: free choice. The student participants have different opinions on whether they have the free choice for *zhi yuan* service; though students have the choice of not *zhi yuan* at certain events, they have to *zhi yuan* at other events instead.

Overall, the following two main features are added to this study by college students. ‘*Zhi yuan zhe*’ is a commonly accepted name for the group of students in China when taking their social status into consideration. For colleges, students’ *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is a practical teaching method with the aim of improving students’ employment ability, while for universities this consideration is much weaker.

5.5 Result review

To understand students’ *zhi yuan* service at business events in China, this research has avoided taking theories from the existing literature developed in the context of Western countries. Instead, it has highlighted the complexity of this issue and focused on exploring its cultural and socially embedded characteristics. In building on the grounded theory analysis of students’ *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China, this chapter has examined what *zhi yuan zhe*’s motivations are and how it has been conceptualised. It identifies that it can be understood as a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon.

As Fassinger (2005, p. 157) argued, the ultimate aim of a grounded theory study is ‘to produce innovative theory that is ‘grounded’ in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences’. This grounded theoretical research has served as a qualitative, exploratory inquiry to the understanding of the phenomenon of student *zhi yuan* service for discovering a new theory. The grounded theory methodology enabled me to identify the underlying motivational concepts among student *zhi yuan zhe* and how individuals conceptualise this phenomenon. The grounded theory developed from this research is substantive as it was inductively developed from a systematic data collection and analysis process, based on the researcher’s observations and experiences as well as participants’ descriptions and perceptions of providing *zhi yuan* service at business events. This is consistent with Glaser’s (1992, p. 5) claim that ‘grounded theory allows the relevant social organization and social psychological organization of the people studied to be discovered, to emerge-in their perspective’.

The result of this research is a grounded theory that identifies and integrates the five emergent themes, which reflects the complexities of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China and establishes an understanding of this phenomenon. In this chapter, each of the emergent themes has been interpreted in relation to the research questions posed. Following that, all the themes were then incorporated together to form the grounded theory.

Based on the above systematic analysis of *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivation, three groups (i.e., students, event organisers and education institution administrators), and conceptualisations for students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China, understanding of this phenomenon can be summarised as: students' *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is Chinese culturally specific volunteering that exhibits both traditional and contemporary features. *Zhi yuan zhe* are typical reflexive volunteers with clear self-directed motives. It is an independent self-chosen way of participation. The *zhi yuan* behaviour no longer plays a pure helping role; it has become an intermediary for the stakeholders to exchange what they need, leading to a mutual help situation. The wide understanding of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour leads to blurred boundaries with other related social practice activities, so the voluntary spirit among participants becomes the bottom line of distinguishing it and the required characteristic for participants to be *zhi yuan zhe*.

At the individual level, student *zhi yuan zhe* are driven by what is referred as 'altruistic individualism' in Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) study. The altruism motives and voluntary spirit are closely intertwined with personal motives in the exchange process. The voluntary spirit is particularly manifested when student *zhi yuan zhe* get involved in government organised large-scale events, where public welfare is evident and public participation is needed. At the same time, student *zhi yuan zhe*'s involvement and commitment to supporting events is entangled with several self-centred motives and egoistic considerations. Solidarity and self-fulfilment are not mutually exclusive among the pattern of *zhi yuan* service in this research. However, this research on students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China reveals the occurrence of the altruism, self-development motives, the normalised payment, the unpaid feature of volunteering, and the performed productive activity. At the first sight, it seems that it is an odd occurrence that combines contradictory features, but it supports La Cour and Højlund's (2008) claim, which defines volunteer work as fundamentally paradoxical. The findings in this research have extended this point by looking at the motivations of students' *zhi yuan* service in the context of business events in China.

Given the multiple-sided nature of the *zhi yuan* behaviour in the context of business events in China, this grounded research has identified that the type of *zhi yuan* service is characterised by several features. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with the paradoxical nature. Several dimensions of understanding are identified, such as students' diverse motivations, different opinions among event organisers and education institution administrators. All these dimensions constitute the understanding of the phenomenon under research. The paradoxical nature is demonstrated by the coexistence of monetary payment, compulsory element, voluntary spirit, the *zhi yuan zhe* name, the mixed roles with part-time workers or organiser staff, and event organisers' onsite control strategies.

Based on the accounts of the participants interviewed, the *zhi yuan* service is conceptualised as an exchange behaviour. The student *zhi yuan zhe* and event organisers both expect something to return from the activity. Individual *zhi yuan zhe* have the notion of investment as one motive to build up their skills and experiences through participating the *zhi yuan* service, so that they can list their activities on the resume to signal their attractiveness to employers. They seek to satisfy self-fulfilment and development needs and enhance their chances of success in finding post-education employment. *Zhi yuan* service at business events is not a gift for others, but a tool to achieve their objective. Event organisers use a certain amount of cost to exchange for enough suitable *zhi yuan zhe* and good performance. Some commercial event organisers even conceptualise the *zhi yuan* activities as commercial transactions, among which several strategies such as peer-control mechanism and supervisors control are adopted to make sure that *zhi yuan zhe* deliver good service and avoid misbehaving.

There are subtle ways in which the understanding of students' *zhi yuan* behaviour is being redefined through the adoption of collective organisation and low-level payment. For example, school-enterprise cooperation that requires students to engage in 'voluntary' service is turning them into 'voluntolds' (Kelemen et al., 2017). However, the findings in this research have transcended this by providing a much-needed conceptual building block for a theory of *zhi yuan* service as a virtuous transaction. This grounded theory research has identified a dramatic rise of individualisation and materialism in understanding students' *zhi yuan* service at business events, which has resulted in a moral vacuum and a lack of solidarity. Current trends toward more transitory, detached, mutual-benefit and self-reflexive participation seem to contradict the traditional understanding of who is a volunteer. However, if we continue to confront this normalised trend, we will see 'the demise of the last volunteer

crusader' (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003, p. 184). This provides a lens to rethinking the emerging of understanding volunteering as an exchange, and what counts as volunteering in contemporary society with different cultures and traditions.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical analysis of the grounded theory findings that examined students' motivation of providing *zhi yuan* service at business events in China and how this phenomenon is conceptualised. The emergent themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions posed by this research and the related existing literature in this field.

The three motivation themes have both similarities and differences in existing studies. A pluralisation of motives occurs among the student *zhi yuan zhe* who combine instrumental and individualised motivations, which demonstrates the characteristics of reflexive volunteers. The participants have a very broad understanding of this type of *zhi yuan* behaviour. There are many manifestations of the overlaps between this behaviour with other social activities such as service learning, part-time jobs and work-integrated learning. The emphasis of voluntary spirit that is embedded in the Chinese culture becomes one of the most important criteria in defining *zhi yuan zhe*. This grounded analysis has also identified that *zhi yuan* is a multidimensional concept with the nature of exchange. Many aspects challenge the traditional volunteer definition in Western literature. Instead of benefiting others, mutual help becomes the operation model for *zhi yuan* service. Participants' independent choice has replaced the previous free choice. Considering the constructivist nature of this research, three contextual factors (i.e., China, business events, and students) were explored. Overall, in light of empirical findings in this research regarding students' *zhi yuan* service in the contemporary Chinese society, the aforementioned traditional approach toward volunteering limits our understanding of the investigated phenomenon as a normalised social phenomenon. Students' *zhi yuan* service at business events is Chinese culturally specific volunteering with distinct features.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The current volunteering literature is very Western-centric. There are major gaps regarding knowledge of volunteering in different cultures, and there are also definitional inconsistencies (Holmes et al., 2007). This research has developed a conceptual understanding of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China, based on exploring what *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations are and what constitutes *zhi yuan zhe* in terms of conceptual characteristics.

The researcher has played an important role of the 'insider' throughout the research. It is not only people's motivation that interested me; more importantly, I am keen to understand the type of activity Chinese people perceived as *zhi yuan* service, and what differences and similarities it has with volunteering in Western countries. A qualitative grounded theory was adopted to do this.

Students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with a paradoxical nature. It is identified as inherently an exchange relationship. The findings presented in this thesis demonstrate that student *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations are diverse and show the characteristics of Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) reflexive volunteers. The identified motivation concepts come from the combination of different motivational drivers, combining participants' personal search for identity with 'being there for others'. The conceptualisation of this phenomenon is quite broad, with blurred boundaries and a voluntary exchange nature. The findings demonstrate a different perspective in the understanding of volunteering in a Chinese context, which is more about mutual help and exchange, resulting in positive impacts for the student volunteers, the host event organisers, and higher education institutions. This is a shift from the service recipients being the focus of the volunteering behaviour.

Researchers have called for rethinking volunteering and investigation into volunteer behaviours in different cultural contexts (e.g., Handy et al., 2000; Schech, Mundkur, Skelton, & Kothari, 2015). Understanding the phenomenon from a different perspective is the first step in expanding the literature in this field, and it is also essential to provide insights for volunteers, volunteer organisations, and the whole society.

In this final chapter, I first revisit the two research questions, and then look at the implications for theory development in the event volunteering field and recommendations of these findings for practice, both in China and Western countries. I also reflect on the contributions and limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future research.

6.2. Research questions revisited

This thesis has explored two research questions:

- **Why do students volunteer at business events in China?**
- **How is volunteering at business events in China conceptualised by student volunteers, event organisers, and education institution administrators?**

Coming back to these questions after the analysis, I found that the terms ‘volunteering’ and ‘volunteers’ used here do not adequately represent the Chinese context. The findings demonstrated that understandings of volunteering are culturally sensitive. There are several differences between volunteering in China and that in Western countries, so from Chapter 4 onwards I have used although the Chinese phrase ‘*zhi yuan*’ to emphasise the distinction with the English word and the concept ‘volunteering’ in English terminology. Hence, the research questions can be rephrased as:

- **Why do students provide *zhi yuan* service at business events in China?**
- **How is the *zhi yuan* service at business events in China conceptualised by student *zhi yuan zhe*, event organisers, and education institution administrators?**

The understanding of students’ *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events in China is multidimensional (e.g., instrumental and individualised motivations, mutual beneficiaries, and independent choice) and paradoxical (e.g., the simultaneously existence of voluntary spirit and monetary remuneration and the different opinions of participants), reflecting its complex nature. The findings indicate that the volunteer behaviour under research exhibits its own characteristics due to the influence of broader social and institutional contexts, and demonstrates different volunteerism compared with that in Western countries. Existing research on understanding volunteering is largely conducted from functionalist and egocentric viewpoints, focusing on identifying the personality traits (e.g., extroversion), demographic characteristics (e.g., race, age, education), and social resources to predict which groups of people volunteer (e.g., Hustinx et al., 2010; Toraldo et al., 2016). Scholars have

realised the importance of exploring the broader social and institutional contexts in which voluntary work is situated, and called for a multi-dimensional approach in research into for volunteering (e.g., Hustinx, Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Pessi, & Yamauchi, 2010). This thesis is a response to this call.

1. Why do students provide *zhi yuan* service at business events in China?

Student *zhi yuan zhe* accommodate multiple self-directed and instrumental motivations simultaneously, which is one aspect of the paradoxical nature. Personal benefits or personal betterment, such as learning, employability skills, personal betterment, and transition to paid employment, are identified as the most evident motives (Figure 4.1). Several contextual motives related to business events are presented in this study (e.g., to prepare for the event-related career).

The identified instrumental and individualised motivations among student participants demonstrate their conscious way of planning their future, indicating their reflexive consciousness. Hence, the student *zhi yuan zhe* at business events are typical reflexive volunteers (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). For students, the *zhi yuan* service is a tool for coping with the uncertainties of their future and individual careers, which means that the opportunities *zhi yuan* service offers in terms of enhancing their transition from education to employment become a self-realisation process. *Zhi yuan* service enables the construction of distinctive personal identities and biographies with the balance of the functional needs and *zhi yuan zhe*'s personal desires. It stimulates a certain degree of reflexive consciousness among student participants and the student *zhi yuan zhe* are 'altruistic individualists'.

2. How is the *zhi yuan* service at business events in China conceptualised by student *zhi yuan zhe*, event organisers, and education institution administrators?

It emerged that the conceptualisation of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events is broad. It can be conceptualised as a culturally specific Chinese volunteering with several features that have traditionally been considered mutually exclusive from the Western perspective. A more nuanced or more culturally situated understanding is required. The students proposed diverse motivation concepts and the three groups of interviewees hold different opinions, even paradoxical ideas, on the conceptualisation of the phenomenon under investigation. Taking the contextual factors of China, business events, and the group of students into consideration, many adapted features (e.g., acceptance of low payment, independent choice, and emphasis on the voluntary spirit) are identified.

Zhi yuan service at business events in China is inherently an exchange relationship, where individuals offer their time, skills and energy to assist with an event, and experience various benefits, as well as costs, in return. In this grounded theory analysis, it is depicted as being a symbolic, productive, and economic exchange simultaneously. The *zhi yuan* behaviour at business events is a typical reciprocal process with the aim of achieving mutual help and a win-win situation for students and event organisers.

A framework with four dimensions (i.e., voluntary spirit, remuneration, beneficiaries, and independent choice) demonstrates the inclusivity of this phenomenon and the specialities of conceptualisation within the specific social-cultural contexts (Figure 5.1). The voluntary spirit is the individuals' internalised self-description of the volunteer role and it forms a self-definition of the role identity for being a volunteer. Low-level monetary return, as remuneration for *zhi yuan zhe*'s effort, is deemed acceptable by the three interview groups, which reflects the exchange nature of this behaviour, especially the economic exchange aspect. Self-benefit is a more dominant motive than altruism, and social needs are met in passing, resulting in the widely accepted notion of mutual-help. As reflexive *zhi yuan zhe*, participants make the independent choice of being involving *zhi yuan* service despite the school's pressures, demonstrating the process of reflexive modernisation.

This research identifies that a dramatic rise of individualisation and materialism in the field of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events has resulted in a moral vacuum and a lack of solidarity. This provides strong evidence for understanding volunteering as an exchange behaviour. However, the dichotomic voluntary spirit with self-benefit and benefitting others has been one of the most important characteristics that defines participants as *zhi yuan zhe*. The widely mentioned voluntary spirit distinguishes *zhi yuan* from other social activities and explains students' great commitment to their roles. Thus, the coexistence of exchange nature and emphasis on the voluntary spirit has transcended to understanding the *zhi yuan* activity as a virtuous transaction.

Overall, students' *zhi yuan* service is a Chinese cultural specific volunteering with many Western excluded features (e.g., low payment). Students' *zhi yuan* service at business events demonstrates the changing ideologies underpinning *zhi yuan* service in Chinese society and shows how they may be linked to broader socio-economic and political transformations that have taken place in China following the market economy in the 1980s. The analysis provides

useful insights from the three points (business event type, the context of China, and student group) identified in the conceptual framework (Figure 2.2).

6.3 Contributions

Tribe (2005) advocated a move beyond positivistic research and embraced a more reflexive and interpretive inquiry. I have responded to this call. The researcher myself has a substantial role in each step of this research. The adoption of constructivist grounded theory has enabled the themes emerge from the data as well as the interaction with literature in the research phases. The grounded theory methodology succeeded in providing comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under research.

This thesis represents a systematic discussion about understanding students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. In doing so, the paper complements the work of researchers such as Bussell and Forbes (2002), who looked at the phenomenon of volunteering from different perspectives. This thesis adopts a grounded theory approach to exploring students' volunteering in the context of business events in China. This research has a number of theoretical and conceptual contributions to the understanding of volunteering: first, the exploration of the motivation concepts (Figure 4.1), and second, the conceptualisation model (Figure 5.1). In this research, students' *zhi yuan* service emerges as a complex and multi-dimensional Chinese cultural specific volunteering with several traditionally excluded features. Several scholars, such as Cnaan et al. (1996), have recognised that different dimensions could co-exist in defining volunteering, and volunteer motivation is multidimensional and not just altruism or to fulfil self-interest. The findings in this thesis follow these ideas, illuminating and enriching each of them. This research develops a context-bound understanding of volunteering, which transcends altruism/solidarity explanations for why individuals volunteer, as well the dichotomy of paid employment/unpaid work that is prevalent within the sociology of work.

The research's contribution is threefold. First, participants interviewed in this research see the *zhi yuan* service as instrumental for learning, practising and gaining utilitarian benefits. Motivation to volunteer is a complex interplay of different factors and varies in different contexts. The findings in this research highlight the instrumental and individualised motivations for volunteers at events and demonstrate that this volunteering exhibits the characteristics of reflexive volunteering. As the concept of reflexive volunteering would suggest, for most of the student volunteers, self-directed motives are most important. This

finding substantially affirms previous studies on the emergence of reflexive styles of volunteering (e.g., Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Qvist et al., 2016). However, this research finds that the aim of adding value to personal identities and construction of distinctive personal biographies is more attractive than solidarity reasons. The results help explain the reasons for the wide existence stereotypes for volunteering in China, which encourage the belief that there is no pure volunteering and it is usually a self-planning and self-benefit activity.

Second, this project advances research on volunteering, by illustrating the complexity of the concept and its multifaceted nature. I conceptualise and discuss students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China as possessing multi-dimensional and paradoxical features. It offers a new perspective that addresses the Chinese-context volunteering that has some understandings incompatible with those in Western countries, recognising participants' different experiences and conceptualisations of the nature of the *zhi yuan* service. The views expressed by the participants appear to parallel previous researchers' (e.g., Booth et al., 2009; Jones, 2010; Paraskevidis & Andriotis, 2017; Wymer & Samu, 2002) proposals of understanding volunteering as an exchange. This adds new elements to Rochester's (2006) three perspectives model, which explains volunteering as service, as activism and as leisure by proposing a new conceptual framework for understanding volunteering as an exchange or virtuous transaction. Understanding volunteering as an exchange helps to identify the benefits gained from volunteering as well as the resources needed to volunteer, which makes it more transparent for the stakeholders and ultimately achieves sustainable and voluntary participation. This finding parallels several existing scholars' opinions that explore volunteering from the exchange perspective (e.g., Booth et al., 2009; Jones, 2010; Wymer & Samu, 2002). However, this research extends the work of such researchers by identifying three distinct components of exchanges: symbolic, productive, and economic. The volunteering behaviour is a symbolic consumption with the functions of emblematic, role acquisition, connectedness, and expressiveness (Wymer & Samu, 2002). The widely mentioned voluntary spirit demonstrates its psychosocial benefits, which configure as symbolic exchange. The event organisers adopt several control strategies (e.g., grouping, the division of work, payment, and punishment) to ensure participants' productive behaviour. The students have a very efficient way of learning through the *zhi yuan* service at different roles of the events, which demonstrates the intentionally productive nature of the phenomenon. It is an economic evaluation and a commercial transaction for the event

organisers to use student *zhi yuan zhe* to cut costs down and generate value. The students can get a certain amount of payment, and some of them frame the *zhi yuan* service as exploitative due to the low-level payment. These constitute the economic exchange elements.

Finally, this thesis adds to the previous literature on the shift in the nature of volunteering by developing a specific context understanding of volunteering, which transcends individualistic/collectivist explanations for why individuals volunteer, as well as the dichotomy of paid employment/non-payment volunteer work (Kelemen et al., 2017). The emergent motivational concepts demonstrate the coexistence of egoism, utilitarianism, altruism and solidarity. The mixture of motivational categories makes it hard to explain volunteer motivation from a certain single dimension (see Figure 5.1). Moreover, monetary reward is accepted and expected in this research, and this is in line with other studies on volunteer in Asia context (e.g., South Korean and Japan), which identify that financial incentives and tangible rewards are widely acceptable and commonplace among volunteers (e.g., Goldenberg et al., 2006). This provides new insights, not only for understanding the role of remuneration in conceptualising volunteering but also for the discussions of volunteer rewards and incentives (e.g., Kumar et al., 2002; Stunkel & Grady, 2011). With the normalised payment, the boundaries between volunteer work and paid employment are blurred.

This study has also made several contextual discoveries about the phenomenon of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events in China. The first is that participants believe that the voluntary spirit is one of the dimensions for conceptualising their behaviour as *zhi yuan* service. The voluntary spirit enables an individual student to view himself or herself as the social role of *zhi yuan zhe*, and to internalise the roles and incorporate them into the self-concept, which impels the students to perform as *zhi yuan zhe* and guides their behaviours, despite the external factors like payment, participation method, or others' comments. In other words, this subjective concept defines participants' identity and shapes their behaviours, so the voluntary spirit and *zhi yuan zhe* role are internalised and adopted as a component of the self. For the dimensions of remuneration and beneficiaries, this research takes the same stand with that in Western countries, while the widely accepted idea of free will is adapted to independent choice in the Chinese context.

Another insight is that student *zhi yuan zhe* in China exhibit the characteristics of reflexive volunteers, which cause them to become the altruism individualists. This suggests that the

emerging trends in volunteering field in China are in line with that in Western countries. The new volunteerism that has been identified reflects the progress of Chinese society, especially the socio-cultural individualisation process. Based on this, it indicates that China is in the wake of the individualisation process, which is in line with existing literature in the wider field of sociology (e.g., Gu & Liu, 2006). Hustinx and Lammertyn (2000) believed that individualisation is considered as the most dangerous threat to volunteering. More generally, and especially when seen from a comparative cross-national perspective, the phenomenon under investigation illustrates the conceptual weaknesses that conventional social and academic fields have with the concept of volunteering, and suggest that it is necessary to consider different perspectives on volunteer activities.

In addition to the theoretical contributions outlined above, this research adds nuance to past theoretical and practical discussions in the literature regarding why individuals volunteer. It extends the research of event volunteering to a new type of event: business events, rather than the predominant sports events and festival contexts. Compared with sports events, some of the business events are for-profit and commercially operated. The attendees are business people and the on-site atmosphere is very formal. These characteristics mean volunteers at business events have different experiences with those at other types of events. The thesis has also shifted discussion from Western countries to China. A non-Euro-American position is proposed and the voice of the communist context is raised. Several contextual motives related to business events have been identified, with the emphasis on learning and employment enhancement. They demonstrate the emerging reflexive volunteerism motives. The context of business events highlights the voluntary exchange nature of the *zhi yuan* service with three components (e.g., symbolic, economic, and productive). As for the context of China, it identifies the Chinese-characteristics of low-level payment and collective organisation and extends the Western focus understanding of volunteering. It also brings two new insights to the volunteering field in China. From the aspect of individual experience, volunteering is a ‘technology of self’ by means of which they refashion their identity to meet the changing expectations in contemporary society (Fleischer, 2011).

A constructivist grounded theory was employed as the tool in this research, assuming a relativistic ontology, a subjectivist epistemology, and a naturalistic method (see Figure 3.1). This grounded theory analysis generated theory from the first-hand data and allowed the emergence of main themes. It moved away from conducting the research with established hypotheses and succeeded in exploring more of the dynamics and diverse perspectives on

understanding the phenomenon. The use of auto-ethnography extended the use of this method in the field of event volunteering. For constructivist grounded theory, this was the basis for constructing interviewees' stories into grounded theory models based on a mutual construction of their meaning (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The use of triangulation narratives from students, event organisers, and higher education institution administrators helped in the identification of comprehensive emergent themes. Overall, the approach of grounded theory made it possible to develop a comprehensive theory of the phenomenon under research.

6.4 Limitations and delimitations of the study

In concluding the thesis, it is important to revisit this research and acknowledge its limitations. The first limitation was associated with the sample chosen in this grounded theory research. This research investigated a fairly narrow sample of interviewees although three different groups of participants were involved. The scope was limited to the experiences and descriptions of 39 student *zhi yuan zhe*, event organisers and education institution administrators who were located in several eastern coastal cities. It is recognised that the findings in this research possibly represent the opinions of certain groups who have had similar experiences. The student participants are young (around 18-25 years old). In the student sample, the majority of participants were female with only three males from 20 students interviewed (Appendix E); the gender profile of the event organiser and university administrator samples was more balanced. There are several possible reasons to for the gender disparity in the student sample, such as the population (largely tourism and event management students) is predominantly female, the snowball sampling approach may have influenced female students recommending other females, and potentially females were more willing to participate. Gender can influence volunteering (Downward, Lumsdon, & Ralston, 2005), however, a gender comparison was not the focus of this research. The gender imbalance is noted as a limitation and an area for further study. Moreover, the interviews were conducted at the beginning of the second semester in 2016. Conducting the interviews at a different time in the academic year may have changed the emphasis on certain points (e.g., the importance of gaining credit). All of them are full-time students. Student *zhi yuan zhe* with different social-demographic characteristics, event organisers from a great range of organisations, administrators from different institutions, and even other business event stakeholders such as attendees and visitors could provide additional perspectives.

Second, this research is culturally bound, and this is both a strength and a limitation. Caution should be exercised in attempting to adopt the current findings beyond the specific context: business events in China. Even within the context of China, data collected from other regions might reveal different findings. Future volunteer motivation studies should involve a plethora of venues in the business event field in order to hear different voices from the business event volunteer population. In this way, scholars will be able to enhance the representativeness of business event volunteer samples and strengthen the validity and transferability of the study. Trochim (2006) claimed that transferability in qualitative research is the extent of practitioners generalising the conclusions in other contexts and environments, and Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the researcher can only provide adequate information, rather state the transferability of the research results. Experienced researchers could use this information to determine the transferability of the findings in this research to other contexts on a selective basis. The motivation concepts identified from this research can be cross-validated by quantitative methods within various business events. Research that is globally relevant or involves more diverse volunteer activities should pay attention to the specific-context meaning of volunteering, rather than just adopt a single or dominant conceptualisation.

Third, the researcher's theoretical sensitivity played an important role in influencing the quality of research findings. Although a standardised grounded theory research methodology adheres, my limited research experiences, practices and skills with grounded theory could impact the depth and clarity of the findings. The adoption of auto-ethnography as the first stage of data collection enabled me to become an 'insider' of the phenomenon under investigation. Unique insights and thoughts were gained from the shared experiences and relationships with participants at business events. The auto-ethnography field study was an effort to lay the basis for gaining participants' trust and their truthful opinions in China's relationship-oriented society. In this grounded theory context, truth can be interpreted as 'fit' or 'as it really is' (e.g., Lomborg & Kirkevold, 2003). However, the auto-ethnographic field study lasted for only two events. The insights were limited due to the short period. So the long-term immersion in the field under investigation, with longitudinal data, would be helpful in overcoming this limitation. While I made a great effort to follow the grounded theory procedures and keep theoretical sensitivity throughout the whole process, my own potential bias and personal experiences would have influenced the auto-ethnographic field study and the interpretations of interview participants' descriptions and perceptions. Auto-ethnography

is often criticised for its objectivity and reliability. The use of triangulation narratives in the second stage of interviews helped minimise these impacts and achieve objectivity and reliability. My identity as a student might have amplified the students' voice while weakening event organisers and university administrators' opinions. However, my work experience as an event organiser enabled me to have a different position with being a student and *zhi yuan zhe*. Moreover, my volunteer experience in New Zealand provides me a broader horizon from which to understand the *zhi yuan* behaviour in China (Qi, Smith, & Yeoman, 2017). Students use *zhi yuan* activities to actively shape their identities as they are in a changing Chinese society. This means they use *zhi yuan* activities to bridge campus and communities in order to demonstrate their competition in an increasingly competitive society.

6.5 Implications for practice

This research reveals that both scholars and practitioners should pay close attention to the changing contexts in which volunteer behaviour occurs. Different involvement patterns and understandings can be identified that are based on different types of social-cultural backgrounds. A different perspective has been identified in the relationship between volunteers and organisations from this research. Participant involvement is not a pure altruistic giving behaviour, and there is a shift toward more reflexive, self-directed, and mutual benefit. The findings of this research have important implications for practitioners in the field of volunteering and government, as well as students (in China).

6.5.1 Implications for students

Volunteers' reflexive consciousness of their own personal development not only helps establish their identities but also normalises participants' perceptions of self-benefit through volunteering. Participating in the *zhi yuan* activities means enhancing their transitions from education to employment alongside developing their practical ability. For the contemporary reflexive *zhi yuan* practices in China, no judgement should be attached to being 'clever *zhi yuan zhe*' following the reflexive volunteerism trend, who are able to match their individual biographical conditions with appropriate *zhi yuan* opportunities based on pursuing personal interests. This is especially important for students with substantial educational and professional qualifications that can meet the required skills, knowledge, and professional standards of the *zhi yuan* activities. However, the original voluntary spirit should not be forgotten and it needs to be captured in the reflexive practices in the contemporary voluntary sector. Volunteering can be both a helping behaviour as well as a tool to achieve personal

objectives. While most students explicitly seek the state-connected volunteer organisations and accept government slogans and campaigns for volunteering, volunteer effort should not be just conceptualised in a distinctly patriotic tone; effort should also be given to volunteers in different fields.

6.5.2 Implications for event organisers

Many students consider volunteering a source of valuable experience and an opportunity to put their knowledge into practice; thus, students can be a target group for event organisers to find volunteers. However, organisers should keep the influences of students' motivations in mind when recruiting, training, managing and retaining *zhi yuan zhe*. The findings in this study enable organisers to foster a strategic use of recruitment funding and form a cohesive match between volunteers' expectations and event roles. First, the importance of emergent theme 1 – volunteer to learn – suggests organisers provide volunteer programmes that give participants learning opportunities e.g., a systematic training for volunteers. Second, emergent theme 2 – volunteer to practise – requires the organisers to realise that the volunteer programme should be organised and promoted as a practice opportunity for the students, which complements the highly rigid knowledge-focused educational systems. The advent of specialised areas of study, such as event, has meant that a growing number of students are being expected to seek out first-hand experiences that will provide a practical foundation to their studies. Likewise, there is growing demand for service learning experiences in China among the college students studying event. Organisers can make the most of such demands and promote their volunteering programmes as opportunities for practice and self-realisation. Third, if a utilitarian aim (emergent theme 3) is to be achieved, organisers should highlight the benefits of biographical re-orientation that volunteer opportunity can bring to participants, and adopt appropriate recruitment and management practices to attract people. For example, organisers could provide reference letters and certificates for participants that are keen to have personal growth to demonstrate their training and performance. Overall, the motivation concepts identified in this research could be a useful tool for business event organisers to understand *zhi yuan zhe*'s psychological characteristics. Matching the volunteer programmes with participants' motivations is the basis for achieving satisfaction and bounce-back of *zhi yuan zhe* in the future, which is especially important for business events that are organised on a regular basis.

The identified trend in moving towards more reflexive volunteering and nuanced characteristics of conceptualisation have some useful insights for organisations in terms of *zhi*

yuan zhe management strategies. On the one hand, the contemporary *zhi yuan zhe* will look for a balance between their own personal desires and interests with the needs of the organisation. Volunteers calculate the cost and benefit before choosing a specific *zhi yuan* activity. The shift toward a more reflexive and self-directed form of *zhi yuan* service may result in a widening gap between the expectations of the *zhi yuan zhe* and organisers. Organisers could provide activities that enable participants to construct personal identities and expand self-development. To do this, organisations need to be attentive to both internal (e.g., the pursuit of a professional job) and external (e.g., policy) pressures influencing *zhi yuan zhe*'s motivations and reshaping their behaviours, and segmenting *zhi yuan zhe* into different groups. Based on this, organisations could attempt to create new institutional structures to encourage *zhi yuan* service, making it more appealing to the more self-interested members in modern societies. Linking *zhi yuan* service with related skill trainings and professional qualifications would be also useful. Inspired by Lockstone, Smith, and Baum's (2010) research findings, event organisers could provide opportunities that enable volunteers a degree of flexibility in choosing how often and in what way they contribute to organisations. On the other hand, *zhi yuan zhe*'s voluntary spirit and internalised identity role emerge as an important predictor of participation. The voluntary spirit also pushes them into behaving in a manner consistent with that role. It is significantly related to *zhi yuan* activity (both time spent and quality of service). This clearly gives *zhi yuan zhe* their name and recognises that their efforts can be useful in this regard. Similar items (e.g., t-shirts and souvenirs with logo) that allow *zhi yuan zhe* to be recognised publicly for their contributions could help strengthen their sense of accomplishment and the role of their identity.

6.5.3 Implications for the government

The government could focus on promoting the voluntary spirit and fostering greater recognition and support for volunteers as well as cultivating the *zhi yuan zhe* role identity, by diverting *zhi yuan* programmes into establishing the glorious image of *zhi yuan zhe* and ensure the nation's intention of future involvement. This will help participants effectively internalise the rationale behind their volunteering drives. Besides the large-scale campaigns and state-connected organisations, the government could also encourage people to participate in the volunteer activities in other fields. Also, the term of 'volunteer' is a Western concept and in many cases, we cannot just take its literal meaning without taking China's own cultural contexts into consideration. As discussed, *zhi yuan* spirit has a long history in China's local culture, such as *Lei Feng* spirit and morality. So it is necessary to take China's

culture characteristics into consideration when establishing volunteer programmes and promoting volunteer spirit, which would form the Chinese-characteristic volunteering. More importantly, with the blurred boundaries between *zhi yuan* activity and paid work, it is urgent to enact related laws and regulations to clearly define the nature this special form of labour and conduct legal protection for them. The normalisation of *zhi yuan zhe* with payment in contemporary China society indicates a social transformation in regard to the understanding of *zhi yuan* service. This supports Pearce's (1993) argument that being called '*zhi yuan zhe*' falsely represents their assumed unpaid status. The term '*zhi yuan zhe*', as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, has been appropriated by some business event organisers, who market symbolic and emotional meanings ahead of the ostensible meaning of volunteering as unpaid labour.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

Asking what volunteers are seeking to gain from the time they dedicate to the volunteering activities is the essence of the motivation study, and exploring how participants conceptualise the volunteering phenomenon is the first step for conducting any other research in volunteering in China. It must be acknowledged that the understanding of students' *zhi yuan* service at business events is ever-changing due to the broader changing social and institutional contexts. Factors such as age, volunteer roles, organisations, and the meanings of volunteering today compared with in the future could have an influence on the understanding of volunteering. Therefore, a number of areas where further research on conceptualisation, motivation, and China-related context could be of value are:

Conceptualisation

Research on volunteering is very new in the Chinese literature; it was not until after the Beijing Olympic Games and Wenchuan Earthquake both in 2008 that the term '*zhi yuan zhe*' became popular, and this field received considerable scholarly attention. Research in understanding the phenomenon of *zhi yuan zhe* is still scarce. It is apparent that the Chinese context of volunteering still needs much exploration, such as the conceptualisation of volunteering beyond the context of business events and young generation volunteers' motivations. In general, more research is needed, also outside the Western countries, into the changing understandings of volunteering, the new trends in the volunteer field, and the future of event volunteering (Yeoman et al., 2014).

The discussion need not stop at the student group; it could be extended to other volunteer groups. Although other *zhi yuan zhe*, such as corporate volunteers, are not as numerous, they would contribute to the limited body of knowledge on understanding the phenomenon of volunteering in different contexts within China.

This study has demonstrated that *zhi yuan* behaviour in China has blurred boundaries and individuals participate in such activities that may not fully fit a particular categorisation. As Lyons (2003) argued, it is this fuzziness and blurred margins that enable conceptual relationships and advancements to be made with other forms of social activities. It is necessary to recognise that many volunteer behaviours do not fit the traditional definition of volunteering. The dynamic uses of different value orientations in different cultures could be taken into consideration for the future research when investigating how volunteering is conceptualised. Future research is needed to explore this, not as a way to classify, but to reflect the existing social theories.

Motivation

Both utilitarian reasons and voluntary spirit were shown to be important reasons for participating *zhi yuan* service, suggesting that investigations that integrate functional analysis and role identity theory are needed for understanding volunteers' future intention and long-term participation. As volunteers, they embody a transformed subject identity with the qualities desired by the state and organiser. Attachment, involvement, and role identity in an event may influence the motivations to volunteer. It may be fruitful to classify volunteers based on their motivations within the involvement construct (e.g., Farrell et al., 1998; Josiam, Kinley, & Kim, 2005; Havitz & Dimanche, 1990). A thorough review of the volunteering literature and a focus on the trends in volunteering policy and practice to test whether volunteering is moving towards a more marketed approach is necessary. Exploring the underlying theoretical basis and ideas to explain the trends in the transformed labour regime could be another good direction for future research (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2005).

China-related context

With the increasing of individualism of new volunteer generation and the deepening of modernisation-driven social-structural transformation, researchers should be attentive to the social-cultural forces that reshape volunteers' behaviours and recognise how these factors are changing volunteering in certain directions. Increasingly, event organisers have recognised that volunteering could produce considerable economic value. Do the event organisers view

student volunteers as a valuable substitute for low technical employees and exploit them, or have student volunteers become complementary to the labour market? Both hypotheses are plausible. The current market economic landscape and the changing attitude and value to volunteers in China make it easier for organisations to take advantage of ‘free’ labour under the label of *zhi yuan zhe*. It would create moral and ethical questions, affecting social life and social policy. The emerging global economy trends such as gig economy would change the workforce and even influence the volunteer work. Scholars especially sociologists should tap into transformative possibilities for rethinking work configuration as they are being shaped by contemporary capitalism.

Finally, further researchers could conduct quantitative methods research via surveys to analyse against the qualitative findings from this grounded theory and export them to a larger group of participants. Testing of the motivation items in a variety of other business events would assist in evaluating the effectiveness of those items in measuring volunteer motivations. Wider theoretical discussions about the consequences of the individualisation and marketization of community life are necessary for understanding why individuals volunteer. This would enhance our understanding of the three aspects in explaining the motivations and the hinted theoretical trends. This is an important step forward in understanding the trend of reflexive volunteerism.

6.7 Concluding comments

This research has responded to Hustinx and Lammertyn’s (2003) call for refining the understanding of the complicated nature of volunteering, and problematised the normative understandings of volunteering. The *zhi yuan* service undertaken by the participants in this study offers a new angle to understanding the complexity of volunteering in the 21st century and highlights the value of extending the conceptual boundary of what counts as ‘volunteering’ to include this Chinese-characteristic volunteering. Given its small scale, this research cannot provide wide-ranging evidence on understanding the phenomenon of student volunteering in all fields and confirming broader theoretical claims. Nevertheless, it does, within a Chinese context, provide informative evidence about the ways in which individuals get involved in volunteer activity and how they conceptualise this phenomenon.

The resulting theory is a reflection of the inclusive approach taken, in that it recognises different stakeholders’ perspectives of understanding the particular phenomenon. It theorises a contemporary understanding of student volunteering at events that encompasses nuanced

volunteerism trends alongside Chinese-contextual characteristics. More appreciation is needed for critical and cross-cultural comparative approaches to volunteering research that challenges the dominant discourses and reveals the complexities of this social activity.

From the whole research, I gained many insights as the ‘insider’ and some of the questions, in my mind, have been solved, but this research has opened up even more ideas. I confirm that the understandings of volunteering in the Chinese context are not always the same as that in Western countries; there are some Chinese characteristics. This makes me see the diverse opinions on who are considered as volunteers in different contexts. I realise that volunteering at business events in China demonstrates an example that shifts from ‘unselfish’ to ‘instrumental’ volunteering, which is more personally oriented, and the participants have specific purposeful motives for their involvement. For individuals, the inside voluntary spirit is the most important criterion to be a ‘*zhi yuan zhe*’. It reveals the paradox of voluntary work. Many exciting discoveries are made in this research. However, this is not the end of the journey. More ideas, more interests, and more questions emerge from this research. I will continue as a volunteer, as a student and as a researcher to further explore the volunteering field both in China and Western countries. The voices of insiders and insights from practitioners are essential to taking this research forward.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Project information (Phase 1)

Appendix B: Project information (Phase 2)

Appendix C: Consent form

Appendix D: Interview schedule

Appendix E: Interviewee information

Appendix F: The coding spectrum

Appendix A:

Project information (Phase 1)



Project Information Sheet for Organisers (Phase 1)

Research Project Title: Student Volunteering at Business Events in China: Motivations and Conceptualization

Researcher: Hongxia Qi, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear Organisers,

My name is Hongxia Qi. I graduated with Bachelor in Accounting and Master in Tourism Management from Ocean University of China. I am now pursuing a Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. My Ph.D. is about student volunteering at business events in China. This project aims to explore the reasons why students volunteer at business events in China and how volunteering is understood in the context of business events. In order to answer these questions, I will be a volunteer at several business events to gain some personal experience before moving the second phase of interview.

In the two/three days, I will perform my allocated role as well as observe and chat with other volunteers and organisers. During this process, I will focus on my own experience and self-reflection. In order to gain a full understanding, I will pay attention to other people from two aspects: student volunteers' roles and interactions among the group. Participants can be only identified by roles and organisations.

All material collected will be kept confidential and is only accessible to the researcher and two supervisors. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within three years after the completion of the project.

All the data collected is for my Ph.D. thesis without any commercial use. The final thesis will be available through the Victoria University library. The results of this project may also be published at conferences or academic journals, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of the data gathered: your name, your organization and exhibition will be not be identified.

This project has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000022497). If you have any ethics queries, you can contact the HEC Convener Susan Corbet (Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz), who will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at hongxia.qi@vuw.ac.nz or you may contact my supervisors Professor Karen Smith and Associate Professor Ian Yeoman at karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz, ian.yeoman@vuw.ac.nz.

Thanks for reading and I look forward to volunteering with you!

Hongxia Q



Project Information Sheet for Student volunteers (Phase 1)

Research Project Title: Student Volunteering at Business Events in China: Motivations and Conceptualization

Researcher: Hongxia Qi, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear volunteer,

My name is Hongxia Qi. I graduated with Bachelor in Accounting and Master in Tourism Management from Ocean University of China. I am now pursuing a Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. My Ph.D. is about student volunteering at business events in China. This project aims to explore the reasons why students provide volunteer service at business events in China and how volunteering is understood in the context of business events. In order to answer these questions, I will be a volunteer at several business events to gain some personal experience before moving the second phase of interview. For the interview, three groups: student volunteer, event organisers and education institution administrators will be involved.

During this exhibition, I will perform my role, and recording my own experience and self-reflection. However, in order to gain a full understanding, participant observation will be used, so I will be focusing on two aspects: student volunteers' roles and interactions among the group. If you have some personal stories in your volunteer activity that would like to share with me, I would be very glad to be your audience. Participants can be only identified by roles and organisations. All the personal identifying information will not be used, so you will not be identified. If you feel uncomfortable, please let me know; I will stop observing you and remove any information related to you.

All material collected will be kept confidential and is only accessible to the researcher and two supervisors. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within three years after the completion of the project.

All the data collected is for finishing my Ph.D. paper without any commercial use. The final thesis will be available through the Victoria University library. The results of this project may also be published at conferences or academic journals, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of the data gathered: your name, your organization and exhibition will be not be identified.

This project has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000022497). If you have any ethics queries, you can contact the HEC Convener Susan Corbet (Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz), who will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at hongxia.qi@vuw.ac.nz or you may contact my supervisor Professor Karen Smith, Associate Professor Ian Yeoman at karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz, ian.yeoman@vuw.ac.nz .

Thanks for reading!

Hongxia Qi

Appendix B:

Project information (Phase 2)



Project Information Sheet for Event Organisers (Phase 2)

Research Project Title: Student Volunteering at Business Events in China: Motivations and Conceptualization

Researcher: Hongxia Qi, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear Organisers,

My name is Hongxia Qi. I graduated with Bachelor in Accounting and Master in Tourism Management from Ocean University of China. I am now pursuing a Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. My Ph.D. is about student volunteering at business events in China. This project aims to explore the reasons why students volunteer at business events in China and how volunteering is understood in the context of business events. In order to answer these questions, I will be a volunteer at several business events to gain some personal experience before moving the second phase of interview. For the interview, three groups: student volunteer, event organisers and education institution administrators will be involved.

I am inviting you to participate in the interview. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to you for checking. You can be only identified by roles and organisations. The interview questions are around how you understand the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events, like how you describe student volunteering at business events, the characteristics of students' volunteer activities at business events, and the differences between student volunteers with other workers.

The information we get from the study will help you to increase the understanding of student volunteer behaviour in China and differences from that in Western countries, which is very important if your company is planning to organize events overseas. And also, making clearly of why student volunteers get involved is the premise for you to attract, recruit and retain them in the future.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage no later than 2 weeks after you receive the interview transcript. If you withdraw, I will destroy information relating to you.

All material collected will be kept confidential and is only accessible to the researcher and two supervisors. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within three years after the completion of the project.

All the data collected is for finishing my Ph.D. paper without any commercial use. The final thesis will be available through the Victoria University library. The results of this project may also be published at conferences or academic journals, but you may be assured of the

complete confidentiality of the data gathered in this interview: your name, your organization and exhibition will be not be identified.

This project has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000022497). If you have any ethics queries, you can contact the HEC Convener Susan Corbet (Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz), who will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at hongxia.qi@vuw.ac.nz or you may contact my supervisor Professor Karen Smith, Associate Professor Ian Yeoman at karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz, ian.yeoman@vuw.ac.nz .

Thanks for reading and agreeing to take part.

Hongxia Qi



Project Information Sheet for Volunteers (Phase 2)

Research Project Title: Student Volunteering at Business Events in China: Motivations and Conceptualization

Researcher: Hongxia Qi, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear volunteer,

My name is Hongxia Qi. I graduated with Bachelor in Accounting and Master in Tourism Management from Ocean University of China. I am now pursuing a Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. My Ph.D. is about students volunteering at business events in China. This project aims to explore how volunteering is understood in the context of business events and the reasons why students volunteer at business events in China. In order to answer these questions, I will be a volunteer at several business events to gain some personal experience before moving the second phase of interview. For the interview, three groups: student volunteers, event organisers and education institution administrators will be involved.

I am inviting you to participate in the interview. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to you for checking. You can be only identified by roles and organisations. The interview questions will involve two aspects: your motivations of being a volunteer at business events, and how you understand this phenomenon. For the first set of questions, I will focus on the reasons for students getting involved in such activities. For the second set of questions, I will focus on how you describe students' volunteer service at business events, the characteristics of students' volunteering at business events, and the differences with volunteering at other fields (like libraries, museums, and Red Cross).

Participating in this project only takes you some time, but could be helpful for you in many aspects. Firstly, you will have a better understanding of yourself and gain some general ideas of how organisers and university staff see your behaviour. Secondly, you will have the opportunity to know volunteering in other countries and broaden your horizon. Thirdly, it could be help for you to experience field study, which is necessary for your future study. I am also very glad to share some insights with you if you want to know more.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage no later than 2 weeks after you receive the interview transcript. If you withdraw, I will destroy information relating to you.

All material collected will be kept confidential and is only accessible to the researcher and two supervisors. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within three years after the completion of the project.

All the data collected is for finishing my Ph.D. paper without any commercial use. The final thesis will be available through the Victoria University library. The results of this project may also be published at conferences or academic journals, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of the data gathered in this interview: your name, your university or company name will not be identified.

This project has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000022497). If you have any ethics queries, you can contact the HEC Convener Susan Corbet (Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz), who will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at hongxia.qi@vuw.ac.nz or you may contact my supervisor Professor Karen Smith, Associate Professor Ian Yeoman at karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz, ian.yeoman@vuw.ac.nz.

Thanks for reading and agreeing to take part.

Hongxia Qi



Project Information Sheet for Administrators (Phase 2)

Research Project Title: Student Volunteering at Business Events in China: Motivations and Conceptualization

Researcher: Hongxia Qi, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear Administrators,

My name is Hongxia Qi. I graduated with Bachelor in Accounting and Master in Tourism Management from Ocean University of China. I am now pursuing a Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. My Ph.D. is about student volunteering at business events in China. This project aims to explore how volunteering is understood in the context of business events and the reasons why students volunteer at business events in China. In order to answer these questions, I will be a volunteer at several exhibitions to gain some personal experience before moving the second phase of interview. For the interview, three groups: student volunteer, event organisers and education institution administrators will be involved.

I am inviting you to participate in the interview. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to you for checking. You can be only identified by roles and organisations. The interview questions will around how you understand the phenomenon of student volunteering at business events, such as the characteristics, differences between student volunteers at business events and those in other fields (like Red-Cross, museums, etc.), and the influence of university policy on volunteering. If you want to have a broader discussion of volunteer activities at event and even more wide volunteer activities, that would be also welcome.

Participating in this project could be helpful for your work or the whole university. The information gained from this study will help you increase the understanding of why students get involved in the volunteer activities at business events and the influence of university policy on students, which can provide you evidence for policy reform in the future.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage no later than 2 weeks after you receive the interview transcript. If you withdraw, I will destroy information relating to you.

All material collected will be kept confidential and is only accessible to the researcher and two supervisors. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within three years after the completion of the project.

All the data collected is for finishing my Ph.D. paper without any commercial use. The final thesis will be available through the Victoria University library. The results of this project may also be published at conferences or academic journals, but you may be assured of the

complete confidentiality of the data gathered in this interview: your name, your university or company name will be not be identified.

This project has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000022497). If you have any ethics queries, you can contact the HEC Convener Susan Corbet (Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz), who will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in this project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at hongxia.qi@vuw.ac.nz, or you may contact my supervisor Professor Karen Smith, Associate Professor Ian Yeoman at karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz, ian.yeoman@vuw.ac.nz .

Thanks for reading and agreeing to take part.

Hongxia Qi

Appendix C:
Consent form



Informed Consent Form (for interviews)

Research Project Title: Student Volunteering at Business Events in China: Motivations and Conceptualization

I have read the research project information sheet and have understood the purpose of this study. The details of the study have been explained to me. I understand that the information that I will provide will be kept securely and is only accessible to the researcher and two supervisors. I will be only identified by roles and organizations. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

Furthermore, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the participation no later than 2 weeks after the researcher send me the interview transcript, or decline to answer particular questions anytime during interview.

Based on this, I agree to participate and to provide the information to the researcher under the conditions that no remarks made in the interview will be attributed to me.

I ☐ agree ☐ do not agree to have the interview recorded. I also understand that is at some point I am not comfortable with recording, I can request the researcher to put off the tape recorder.

☐ I know that this research has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee. If I have any ethics queries, I can contact the HEC Convener.

Hongxia Qi, Doctoral Candidate, Victoria Management School, Email: hongxia.qi@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisors: Professor Karen Smith, Associate Professor Ian Yeoman

Email: karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz, ian.yeoman@vuw.ac.nz

HEC Convener: Susan Corbett, Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz

Participant:

Signed: _____

Institution: _____

Date: _____

☐ I wish to receive written summary of the findings of this study. My email address is:_____.

Appendix D:
Interview schedule

Interview Schedule

I will be asking probing questions throughout the interview in order to elicit more detailed responses from the interviewees like:

How do you understand that?

Can you give me some examples?

How do you feel about that?

Why do you do this?

Interviews with student volunteers:

The first set of questions is intended to explore the first research question:

- Why do you choose to be a volunteer at this event?/ What's your expectation for this volunteer experience?/ What do you want to gain from this experience?
- Which aspects are the most satisfactory for you in this experience?
- Do you have any unforgettable stories in your volunteer experience at business events?
- What kinds of factors attract you to be a volunteer at this event?
- Which do you prefer, volunteering at business events or other fields? Why?

The second set of questions is intended to explore the second research question:

- As a student, how would you describe the phenomenon of volunteering at business events? What do you think is volunteering at business events? Could you please give me some terms that can depict the characteristics of volunteering at business events?
- To what extent do you think your volunteer activity is free choice?
- What other areas you could volunteer at?
- What are the similarities and differences of those areas to volunteering at business events?
- How do you understand monetary rewards for volunteering at this event?
- How do you see the time you spend in the volunteering at this event?
- Who do you think are beneficiaries of your volunteering?
- Have you ever known volunteer in Western countries? If yes, compared with that, how do you think the similarities and differences?

Interviews with event organisers:

- As an event organiser, how would you describe the phenomenon of volunteering at business event? What do you think is volunteering at business events? Could you please give me some terms that can depict the characteristics of volunteering at business events?
- How do you see the students named volunteers at your event?
- What are student volunteers' roles at your event?
- In your opinion, what are the differences between the student volunteers and other workers?
- If you pay them, why do you call them '*zhi yuan zhe*'?
- Have you ever known volunteering in Western countries? If yes, compared with that, how do you think the similarities and differences with that in China?

Interviews with education institution administrators:

- As an administrator, how would you describe the phenomenon of volunteering at business events? What do you think is volunteering at business events? Could you please give me some terms that can depict the characteristics of volunteering at business events?
- How do you see students' volunteering at business events and that in other fields?
- How do you see the new policy about Interim Regulations on Student Volunteer Service Management from the Ministry of Education? Do your university have any new regulations in response to this policy?
- In your eyes, do the university policy influence students' volunteer choice?
- Have you ever known volunteer in Western countries? If yes, compared with that, how do you think the similarities and differences?

Appendix E:
Interviewee information

Profile of students

	Gender	Degree	Major	University	Past volunteer experience
S1	F	Bachelor	Tourism Management	Beijing International Studies University, Beijing	Member of Volunteer Association, organizing and participating many volunteer activities in events, conferences and festivals;
S2	F	Master	Tourism Management	Beijing International Studies University, Beijing	Volunteer at an exhibition and conference
S3	F	Bachelor	Tourism Management	Guangzhou University, Guangzhou	Many volunteer experiences in festivals, exhibitions, sports events and exhibitions in Macao; And also volunteered at non-profit fields
S4	F	Bachelor	Tourism Management	Yunnan University, Kunming	Volunteer at an industry forum, art exhibition and show, 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, member of Volunteering Association and volunteered in Nursing House
S5	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at three exhibitions
S6	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Shandong College of Tourism & Hospitality, Jinan	Volunteer at one exhibition and teaching in one primary school
S7	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at three exhibitions
S8	F	Master	Tourism Management	Beijing International Studies University, Beijing	Volunteer at one exhibition and one conference

	Gender	Degree	Major	University	Past volunteer experience
S9	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at one exhibition
S10	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at three exhibitions and Nursing House
S11	M	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at one Expo and three exhibitions
S12	M	Bachelor	Business Administration	Ocean University of China, Qingdao	Volunteer Association Member, experienced in organizing different volunteer activities
S13	F	Certificate	Tourism Management	Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College, Jinan	Volunteer at one exhibition Volunteer at one exhibition
S14	F	Certificate	Hotel Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at three exhibitions
S15	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at two exhibitions, welfare house, and special school
S16	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Shandong College of Tourism & Hospitality, Jinan	Volunteer at two exhibitions

	Gender	Degree	Major	University	Past volunteer experience
S17	F	Master	Tourism Management	Beijing International Studies University, Beijing	Volunteer at one conference
S18	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Shandong College of Tourism & Hospitality	Volunteer at one exhibition
S19	F	Certificate	Convention and Exhibition Planning and Management	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management, Qingdao	Volunteer at one exhibition Volunteer at one Expo
S20	M	Bachelor	Graphic Design	Linyi University, Linyi	Volunteer at two exhibitions and many volunteer experiences in other fields

Profile of business event organisers

	Gender	Organization	City	Title
O1	M	Industry Association	Beijing	Project Manager
O2	F	Industry Association	Beijing	Staff
O3	M	Exhibition Company	Jinan	Staff
O4	F	Exhibition Company	Beijing	Staff
O5	F	Industry Association	Qingdao	Staff
O6	F	Exhibition Center	Jinan	Staff
O7	M	Exhibition Center	Jinan	Project Manager
O8	F	Exhibition Center	Jinan	Staff
O9	M	Exhibition Center	Jinan	Project Manager
O10	F	Industry Association	Beijing	Staff

Profile of education institution administrators

	Gender	Organization	City
A1	F	Yancheng Institute of Technology	Yancheng
A2	M	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management	Qingdao
A3	F	Ocean University of China	Qingdao
A4	M	Yancheng Institute of Technology	Yancheng
A5	M	Yancheng Institute of Technology	Yancheng
A6	M	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management	Qingdao
A7	F	Yancheng Institute of Technology	Yancheng
A8	F	Qingdao Vocational and Technical College of Hotel Management	Qingdao
A9	F	Shandong Foreign Trade Vocational College	Qingdao

Appendix F:
The coding spectrum

Codes	Categories	Interpretive themes	Research questions
study related to my own major, practice spoken language, gain credit, be helpful for the major study, related to the study, expand knowledge, to learn	A subject-related learning process	To learn	Motivation
prepare for future work, prepare for internship, internship, prepare for career development, to know what the future job look like, teamwork, communication skills, prepare for career development, networking, know people to gain employment information, develop relationship with the organisers, career enhancement	Gain skills for future employment		
know more about exhibition, know more about this industry, gain more knowledge on MICE, interested in the event itself, to know how exhibition is organized, gain information from the conference, know the new industry trends, new policy	Learn knowledge in event industry		
to gain new knowledge, to improve my English, to learn knowledge that can't learned during class	Learn new knowledge		
extracurricular activities, out-of-class, student clubs, organizations, time commitment, non-academic attributes, non-academic life experience, further study application, benefit the school	Extracurricular activity	To practice	
understand the society, an opportunity to contact the society, social practice, school-to-work transition, to get in touch with the society, to integrate with the society	Social practice		
to train myself, practice what I have learned, to improve my interpersonal communication skills, self-realization, improve practical ability, to have a try, to train themselves, to cultivate their comprehensive quality, sense of satisfaction, to improve themselves, to show their independence	Self-improvement practice		
to broad horizon, to gain experience, enrich college life, unusual experience, to experience, enrich life, unforgettable experience	Experience	Utilitarian	
bring me the sense of honour, be contented, the sense of participation, to gain the honorary title, to compete for related honours, to gain the certificate, useful for the award-winning evaluation, the certificate of excellent volunteer, scholarship application, social practice scholarship, add points	To gain honour		

Codes	Categories	Interpretive themes	Research questions
course credit, to meet course requirement, practice credits, add value, soft skills, enhance CV	Credit		
to meet the industry experts, an opportunity to visit the exhibition, feel boring, to kill time, my classmates/friends do the service, enjoy the happiness of being a <i>zhi yuan zhe</i> , to escape classes, have interest, interesting, curious, herd mentality, inner sense of social responsibility, to earn pocket money, lively atmosphere, to meet new friends	Others		
public spirited, serving others, dedication, willing to do, inner satisfaction, meaningful, love, spiritual sublimation, unusual experience, spirit of sacrifice, responsibility consciousness. dedication, noble, contribution, strong sense of responsibility, purity, pure thinking, spiritual enhancement, high enthusiasm, social responsibility, social service, help visitors, help exhibitors, help delegates, inner wealth, happy for other's happiness,	Voluntary spirit	Broad understanding	Conceptualization
very low, allowance plus lunch, allowance for transportation, lower than market value, not a major issue, not the main motivation, a way to show organisers' recognition, a good attraction, to find enough proper <i>zhi yuan zhe</i> , payment is a tool, to perform well, no payment no <i>zhi yuan zhe</i> , an effective management tool, a binding force, small event, allowance, daily wage, another form of T-shirt or gift card, welfare, reasonable, individual's understanding, cost and benefit comparison	Payment is not the main aim		
win-win situation, cut costs for organisers, gain learning opportunities, gaining practice opportunities for students, each take what is needed	Mutual help		

Codes	Categories	Interpretive themes	Research questions
school-enterprise cooperation, personnel training base, organize collectively, school information, recommend recommendation, the second class, training programme, teaching plan, teachers suggest us to go, teachers accompany, extracurricular activities, extracurricular training, course requirement, collectively organized, collective activity	<i>Zhi yuan</i> service & service learning	Blurred boundaries	
distinction standard, depends on the amount of payment, individual's understanding, job responsibilities, similar work contents, be in charge of a certain role, just be an assistant, organiser's expectation, do the work independently, an assistant, punitive measure, no punishment, <i>zhi yuan zhe</i> 's expectation, not for money, types of business events, non-for-profit events, commercial events, government-organized events, scale of the event	<i>Zhi yuan</i> service & part-time job		
internship opportunity, workplace environment, length of the time, organization form, organized by the school, graduates,	<i>Zhi yuan</i> service & internship		
cheap labours, part-time workers, interns, structured/unstructured, formal/informal, serious/relax, time demanding, exploit	Others		

