

## Relation between the experiences and contents of a green space conservation volunteering program for university students

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### 1. Introduction

Green spaces, which are a part of the urban landscape, have been conserved by public participation in Japan. However, the advanced age of the participants and the lack of sustained participation hinder the continued existence of these spaces. In an attempt to deal with these problems, a movement promoting the participation of young people in green space conservation has taken shape. It is hoped that a green space conservation volunteering (GsCV) program is provided for students. This study identifies the experiences of students who participated in such a program.

### 2. Methods

The object of this study was a GsCV program provided to students at Takushoku University. In the program, 14 students joined the "Rangers Project" from April to December 2015. This project conserves green spaces in Japan's metropolitan areas. The students were provided with 44 opportunities to participate in conservation activities. Each student chose and participated in four activities. The GsCV program was divided into three parts: 1) maintenance of green space (e.g. weeding and farm work), 2) PR of conservation activity at an event, and 3) fieldwork in a city. KH coder, a free quantitative content analysis software was used to analyze 14 final reports and 56 activity reports by students. Firstly, words concerning experiences were sampled from all reports by KH coder. Secondly, coding rules were set in order to count concepts with contexts which included those words identified. Finally, KH coder created co-occurrence networks that showed potential relationships between the contents of the GsCV program and experiences or on the inter-relationship between experiences.

### 3. Results

Contexts in the reports were classified into 14 concepts from the experiences viewpoint. The main concepts are "understanding conservation groups and CSR activities", "one significant point and one challenge in making an appeal for our activity" and "getting my new idea about conservation". The results of co-occurrence networks showed that 1) maintenance of green space was related to five concepts: "experiencing enjoyment and fulfillment", "the importance of maintenance in the conservation of a good environment", "interest in a conservation activity", "acquiring knowledge about the ecosystem or maintenance methods" and "getting an extraordinary experience" (Figure 1). 2) PR of conservation activity at an event was related to three concepts: "understanding conservation groups and CSR activities", "one significant point and one challenge in making an appeal for our activity" and "getting an extraordinary experience". 3) Fieldwork in a city was related to three concepts "acquiring knowledge about the ecosystem or maintenance methods", "a perception of the ecosystem or the history of each green space", and "a perception of the worth and significance of green spaces".

Additionally, there is a relation between "understanding conservation groups and CSR activities" and "one significant point and one challenge in making an appeal for our activity" when attention was focused on the inter-relationship between experiences. The results of co-occurrence networks also showed that "an interest in a conservation activity" had a relationship with "understanding conservation groups and CSR activities" and "a precious interaction with other people in an activity".

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that an interest in conservation activities is increased by having experience with PR of conservation activity at an event, and that fieldwork provides a chance to understand the worth and significance of green spaces. Therefore, a GsCV program consisting of complex components is more effective than a program consisting only of maintenance of green spaces.

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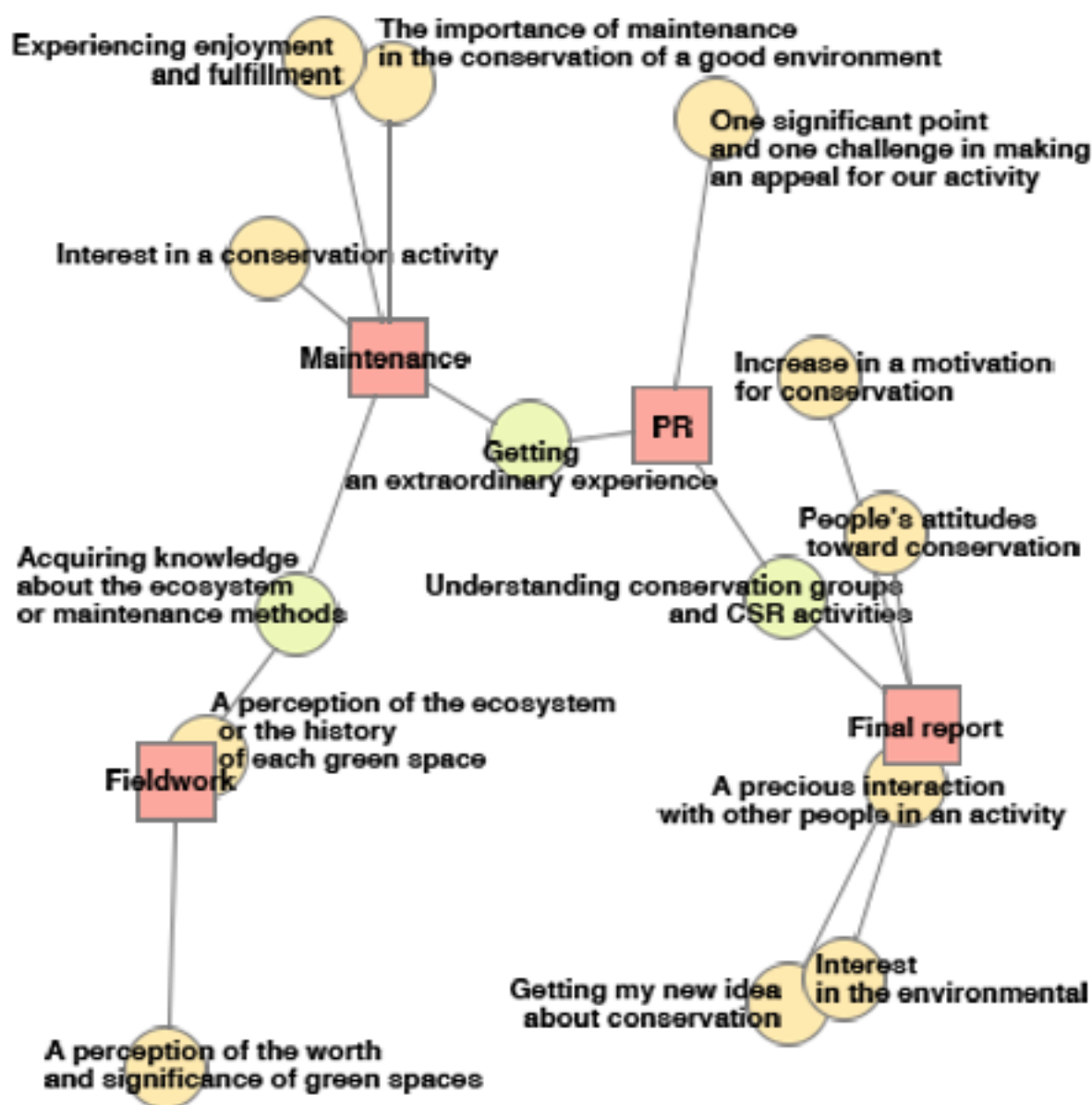


Figure1. Relationships between the contents of the GsCV program and experiences