

Good Company

An Interpretive Inquiry into the Experiences of Employees in a Corporate Service  
Learning Program.

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 1999

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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MASTERS OF ARTS  
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## ABSTRACT

Service learning literature focusing on participants and programs in an academic setting is extensive. However, there is a lack of research looking at the experiences of employees in a corporate setting. The purpose of this inquiry was to understand how employees experience corporate service learning and to explore how well existing literatures on service learning and volunteerism serve the corporate service learning experience. Using interpretive phenomenology and the Four Frame Organizational Model (Bolman & Deal, 1997) to frame the inquiry, the experiences of employees in a retail store ( $N=9$ ) participating in service learning were examined. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with program participants. Seven themes were evident in the findings of the inquiry: skill development, health (sub-themes of self-esteem and empowerment), job satisfaction, improved workplace relationships, bridging into the community, social responsibility and challenges. The findings of this inquiry suggest that employee involvement in a service learning experience can stimulate a sense of social responsibility. Another important finding of the inquiry was that pairing service activities with health activities was a positive combination that contributed to personal and community health. Finally, there was evidence that service learning can help build social capital in the workplace. This inquiry supports research in the area of service learning in the corporate setting to more fully understand the potential of this pedagogical strategy. The development of educational

resources for companies wanting to build service learning programs is also important if these initiatives are to be effective in the workplace.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

It is in the giving that we truly receive

St. Francis of Assisi

Service learning is an educational method that combines community service and learning outcomes focused on maximizing the benefits of the service experience for participants (Burns, 1998; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, Geschwind, Goldman, Kaganoff et al. 1999; Sedlak, Doheny, Anaya, & Panthofer, 1999). The potential benefits for participants involved in service learning include increasing self-esteem, self-confidence, developing social and civic responsibility, empowering participants, improving communication skills and personal growth (Berkas, 1997; Brown & Roodin, 2001; Rhoads, 1998). These benefits echo the words of St. Francis of Assisi quoted above, whom poignantly and eloquently expressed the idea that those providing community service benefit from the experience along with the recipients of the service. Service learning, therefore can be viewed as a reciprocal process that benefits the recipient of the service, the host institution and program participants (Faris, 1999).

Over the past twenty years, service learning programs have spread widely throughout the North American academic community; however, except for a few initiatives, service learning has been slow to take hold outside of the academic environment (Lewis, 2002). As a result, much of the corporate community has yet to experience or benefit from the service learning experience. Service learning programs

could complement and build upon other workplace wellness initiatives that cultivate and promote a healthy workplace.

Health promotion, as defined by the World Health Organization, is “the process of enabling people to increase control of and improve their health (WHO, 1986, p. 1).

Health can be viewed as being “created by caring for one self and others, by being able to make decisions and have control over one's life circumstances, and by ensuring that the society one lives in creates conditions that allow the attainment of health by all its members” (WHO, 1986, p.2). Service learning programs promote health by providing learning and community service experiences that improve the health of program participants and the community. This outcome is consistent with the guiding principle for the Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion that emphasizes “the need to encourage reciprocal maintenance - to take care of each other, our communities and our natural environment” (WHO, 1986, p. 4).

Putnam (2000) has described the decline of social capital in North America and the resultant degradation of community that can occur. The corporate sector is a powerful institution that has the potential to mobilize workers, and add to the social capital of a community. There are numerous definitions available for social capital in the literature, but it can be viewed as the relationships, institutions and norms that shape both the quality and quantity of social interaction in a community (National Economic & Social Forum, 2003). Putnam (1993) adds that social capital is the “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p.35). Social capital is different than economic capital in that it “is relational rather than being owned by one person” and it is “produced by

societal investments of time and effort” (OECD, 2001, p. 39). Social capital can be characterized as an “individual attribute” or “as a property of collectives” (Kawachi, Kim, Coutts, & Subramanian, 2004, p. 1). Social capital therefore is a dynamic concept encompassing numerous social attributes at the individual and community level.

Social capital can be understood through two dimensions for the purpose of this inquiry: bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding refers to connections between persons in a network who perceive themselves as being similar such as a family, friends or a close network (Poortinga, 2006). Bridging social capital refers to individuals connecting to a wider community across heterogeneous groups and the “linking together of different organizational entities within a community around a common purpose and access to resources and assets outside the community” (Kreuter & Lenzin, 2002, p. 239).

The OECD (2001) has described “an inter-relationship between well-being and human and social capital” where social capital is understood to contribute to well-being as an asset and resource for individuals (p. 12). There is broad scope of literature looking at the connection between social capital and measures of health (Kawachi et al., 2004; OECD, 2001; Putnam, 2000). Researchers have found that social capital contributes to an individual’s self-rated health (Poortinga, 2006). Social capital can influence health in different ways, and it has been proposed it does this is because it “provides social and material support, and acts as a buffer to stress in adverse times” (Wilkinson, 1996 found in Poortinga, 2006, p. 256). The presence of strong bonding capital in a community can also contribute to the health of members in a community (Poortinga, 2006). There may be a connection between bonding social capital in the workplace and the health of employees. Some researchers have claimed “the beneficial health effects of social capital

mainly apply to more trusting, socially active individuals” (Poortinga, 2006, p. 257).

Building trusting relationships in the workplace through group volunteering may help to facilitate the growth of social capital.

Employee volunteer programs have been suggested as a means of enhancing social capital in the workplace (Muthuri, Moon, & Matten, 2006). Service learning may have a role to play in facilitating trusting, cohesive and connected relationships which in turn may help improve the well-being of employees, and shape the health of an organization through the creation of more social capital. Service learning is a social process in which employees learn together in educational sessions and connect with the community through volunteer service. If building social capital in the workplace can improve the health of employees, then service learning may provide a complimentary health promotion strategy along with other wellness and social engagement initiatives in the workplace.

Service learning has also been advocated as a means of increasing social responsibility and the propensity of participants to involve themselves in their communities (Neururer & Roads, 1998). A major contribution to the health of any community is service or volunteer work. Unfortunately, between 1997 and 2000, Canada experienced declining levels of volunteerism (Hall, Mckeown, & Roberts, 2001). The latest Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, however, did reveal increased levels of volunteering in the nation (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, & Tyron, 2006). The survey highlighted that workplace demands can limit opportunities for individuals to volunteer; but also recognized that numerous companies do support volunteering in the workplace (Hall et al., 2006). Although not a key finding of this study, it was reported

that over half (56%) of companies in Canada support volunteering in the workplace through workplace flexibility in allowing employees to give back to community and paid time off to volunteer (Hall et al., 2006).

In the Canadian corporate sector there is a lack of evidence in learning initiatives being combined with community service programs. There is also a dearth of academic literature documenting the corporate service learning experience. There may be examples of corporate service learning, however companies may be using other monikers to describe these initiatives. The World Health Organization (1986) states, “the way society organizes work should help create a healthy society” (p.3). Service learning may prove to be pivotal in promoting and building healthy workplaces and healthy communities. Inquiring into the experiences of service learning participants will help uncover the value of such programs in the corporate setting and help to further the understanding of the service learning experience in non-academic populations.

#### Statement of the Problem

Research in the area of service learning does not provide insight into the experiences of employees involved in corporate service learning programs. Therefore, there is a need to understand and explore the service learning experience in the corporate setting. By exploring the experiences for participants at “Sportswear ” (the title given to the business for this thesis) the company, the employees and the researcher will better understand the value of the corporate service learning experience. The purpose of the inquiry is to understand the corporate service learning experience from the employee perspective, and explore how well existing literatures on service learning and

volunteerism serve the corporate service learning experience. In order to facilitate this understanding, the researcher chose Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame model, which includes a Structural, Human Resources, Political and Symbolic frame for understanding organizations. This model will be explained in detail at the end of the chapter. The original research focus for this inquiry was: what is the corporate service-learning experience? However, as research, coursework and professional work evolved and expanded, three more questions were added. These included,

1. What is the experience of Sportswear employees as they participate in a service learning opportunity?
2. How do employees make sense of their experience in terms of the Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame model?
3. How is the corporate service learning experience similar to and different from traditional service learning and volunteering?

#### Significance of the Inquiry

Between 1997 and the year 2000, volunteer levels in Canada declined. In the year 2000, 6.5 million people volunteered, over a million less than the number of people volunteering in 1997 (Hall et al., 2001). The Canadian national survey on volunteering revealed that individuals were more likely in year 2000, as compared to 1997 survey, to indicate they did not volunteer because they were not personally asked, did not know how to become involved and did not have extra time (Hall et al. 2001). The numbers of volunteers in British Columbia were equally low, and in the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating only one in four residents reported that they

volunteered (Hall et al., 2001). In the year 2004, a renewed sense of community stewardship was found with volunteer levels increasing to 11.8 million (45% of the population over 15) individuals, serving their community.

Corporate social responsibility is becoming more of a focus in the business setting and one way this is being reflected in the workplace is through increased support of volunteering. In the year 2004, more than one third (33%) of employed volunteers received approval to modify their work schedule to allow for volunteering, up from 27 % in the year 2000 (Hall et al., 2006; Hall et al., 2001). A number of socially responsible companies in Canada also require volunteer service as a part of work (Hall et al., 2006). If this trend continues, it will be important to study and understand the corporate service learning experience.

The motives behind corporate social responsibility have been challenged and critics argue it is more rhetoric than action, and that companies lack the “personal capabilities” to properly serve the community, and the corporate structure even “precludes social responsibility” (Mitzberg, 1983, p. 5). It will be important to ensure that corporate social responsibility initiatives are not rhetoric in the form of public relations or marketing initiatives, but are orientated towards serving the true needs of the community, with the support of capable and equipped employees. Serving learning may provide the bridge that helps connect these important goals.

Literature in the area of service learning has focused almost exclusively on the academic community (Lewis, 2002). Of the few attempts that have been made to study service learning outside of the academic environment, none have explored service learning in the corporate setting. The contribution of this proposed study would be to

both strengthen the service learning literature and bolster corporate service practice in volunteerism.

Sportswear would like to build stronger bridges between their philanthropic efforts in the community and employee volunteer initiatives (personal correspondence, February, 15, 2006). The organization has decided to use a current charity partner to foster new volunteer experiences for their employees through service learning initiatives. There is also interest in involving employees more in the community to help educate employees about the value of social responsibility.

This inquiry may also serve as a tool of analysis for the company that will aid in the businesses internal evaluation of the success of the service learning program (personal correspondence, May, 20 2006). The store is a franchised component of a growing retail chain across North America. There has also been expressed interest from other stores to involve themselves with service learning initiatives across Canada (personal correspondence, February 15, 2006).

The instrumentation used for the inquiry was open-ended interviews conducted at the end of the service learning program. The methodology used will also be an important addition to the literature considering that the majority of studies looking at service learning have followed a quantitative approach to design, data collection and analysis (Astin & Sax, 1998; Neurer & Rhoads, 1998).

### *Background*

Sportswear is a small retail business located in Victoria, the largest city on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. The metropolitan Victoria census area has

a population has a population of 311, 902. The retail store began operation in 2002 and employees 35 individuals in a variety of positions including, management, inventory coordinator, community educator, culture representative, merchandiser, key holder and educator.

### *Researcher Affiliation*

In February of 2006 the researcher cultivated a relationship with Sportswear through his consulting firm. The purpose of this relationship was to pilot a service learning program at one of the national chain's regional stores. This was done with the intent of pitching the program to head office and potentially rolling the program out to all of the outlets.

The researcher had a personal connection to the social responsibility coordinator at Sportswear. During a conversation the researcher had with the coordinator, they discussed volunteer initiatives the company was considering implementing in the community. During this initial conversation, the concept of service learning was discussed as a means of enriching the volunteer experience for employees. The researcher offered to help facilitate the learning component of the program that would compliment the service aspect the coordinator would develop. The social responsibility coordinator consulted management and it was decided that service learning would be explored and implemented as a method for serving the companies' charitable partner, a local Children's Hospital. This concept was then brought to employees, and the company moved ahead with the program.

An introductory service learning program consisting of two learning sessions and two volunteer out-trips to a local Children's Hospital was developed prior to the service learning program of this inquiry. During the learning sessions, participants were introduced to the concepts of service learning and briefed on the community partner they would be working with. The service outings consisted of instructing and assisting in yoga athletic routines for youth aged 4 – 7. The learning sessions involved reflecting on their service experiences and building on these experiences through dialogue.

Sportswear focuses on working with charity partners that are proactive in building community health and fitness (personal correspondence, May, 20, 2006). To this end, the company has worked with and supported the local Children's Hospital extensively. In participating in the service learning program, Sportswear wanted to continue the service relationship it had developed with this Children's Hospital and therefore strengthen its ties to the organization. Sportswear has supported this charity through financial contributions, participation in fundraising events and on-site volunteering with the children.

A major goal of Sportswear is to continue to bridge into the community through outreach initiatives. The service learning program was another way the company could contribute and connect with the community as a group. The service learning program was perceived to be an activity that would reinforce many of the company's existing values. These values are:

1. Making a positive contribution to the community
2. Connecting employees to the community
3. Promoting health and fitness in the community.

The retail chain promotes a culture of community involvement and expresses this through support of individuals who make a healthy contribution to their community. There is a strong commitment to fostering grass roots relationships that will improve the community. Sportswear currently fosters a culture of health promotion and fitness both in the workplace and the community.

### Assumptions

The assumptions for the inquiry are three-fold:

1. Participants will be honest in their descriptions of experience in the service learning program.
2. Participants will be actively involved in the service component of the service learning program.
3. Interviews are a valid measure of employees' perspectives on the service learning program.

### Limitations

1. The inquiry will not aid in predicting the experiences of other participants in service learning programs.

### Delimitations

Study participants were:

1. Nine ( $N=9$ ) employees currently employed at Sportswear.
2. Male and females over the age of 18.

### 3. Employed in different positions and roles in Sportswear.

#### Framework for the Inquiry

Two frameworks were used to explore the experiences of employees in the service learning program. First, phenomenology was used as a means of exploring the perceptions of employees in the program. Phenomenology asks: what is the structure and essence of experience of the phenomenon for a group of people (Patton, 1990). There were different phenomenological perspectives considered for the inquiry and each perspective could uniquely shape the questions used and interpretations garnered from participants. Heuristic inquiry endeavors to include the experiences of the researcher who has also experienced a particular phenomenon intensely; whereas, phenomenology searches for the essence and meaning of an experience from the perspective of those who experience it (Morse, 1994; Patton, 1990). The researcher chose a phenomenological inquiry because of his interest in understanding the essence and meaning of the service learning experience for participants.

Phenomenology states that there is no objective or separate reality for people; there is only what they know their experience is and means to the person experiencing a particular phenomenon (Patton, 1990). The utility of this framework is particularly evident in this inquiry as volunteering is inherently a qualitative experience in which people will perceive and value the experience very differently depending on their background, volunteer history, position within Sportswear, and also depending on what work they performed in the service learning program.

There are different phenomenological approaches that can be used in an inquiry. These include a Husserlian or eidetic (descriptive) phenomenological approach and a Heideggerian or hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach (Morse, 1994). An overview of these traditions is given in the methods section of this document. Different methods are utilized for each of these philosophic traditions. In a Husserlian approach the researcher would attempt to bracket out their biases; whereas a Heideggerian approach assumes it is not possible to bracket out the history of the researcher (Morse, 1994). In doing this researcher assumes that in the process of understanding of the interpretations of others, he is always 'in' the world and there is no separation between him and the world (Crotty, 1996). The researcher embraced a Heideggerian phenomenological approach for the purpose of the inquiry. By choosing this approach, the researcher does not attempt to bracket out his history and instead, the researcher and his history are an important part of making sense of the findings from this inquiry (Koch, 1995). The researcher has developed an understanding of service learning and worked with different organizations to facilitate service learning initiatives and therefore has a history which shapes his understanding of service learning. However, each individual and organization is unique and therefore it is important for the researcher to be open and attentive to what participants offer in the interviews.

Using a hermeneutical approach also allowed the researcher is to use questions involving a conceptual basis as a framework for the interview process (Morse, 1994). This allowed the researcher to interpret and understand the findings in a meaningful way considering the business setting for the service learning program.

The second theoretical framework used to explore the service learning experience is Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame Model presented in their book, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. The Four-Frame Model includes a political, symbolic, human resource and a structural frame. Other models have also been used to explain organizational structures and processes (Mintzberg, 1979). However, the multiple perspectives of Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame Model, was deemed to be a practical lens for inquiring into the diverse and sometimes divergent themes in the corporate service experience. The Four Frame Model has been used to explore organizational development and using the four frames will help connect the service learning experience for individuals to the organizational processes in the business. There may be limitations to using Bolman and Deals's (1997) four frames to guide an inquiry, in that it may prevent a holistic perspective developing or that certain themes will not fit within the four frames. However, the researcher believed the diversity of experiences for employees in the service learning program, would best be understood through the different frames of reference.

Bolman and Deal (1997) suggest that using frames to understand the complexity of an organization will allow for a clearer picture of organizational development. This theoretical framework will serve as a lens through which the researcher will focus and filter the questions and responses of the inquiry and it will help in analyzing the data collected. A major goal of service learning is that the program benefits participants, the organization and the community. Using the Four Frame Model will help to organize the experiences of employees and understand how the program impacts upon the

organization and how participants from all strata in the business value the program. These frames will be discussed in length in the literature review.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Service learning literature is extensive and approached from multiple disciplines. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken for this study to provide a theoretical background to focus the inquiry into the experience of employees involved in the corporate service learning program. This literature review begins with a comprehensive definition of service learning, followed by an overview of the major objectives of service learning programs. Next, a brief overview of the state of service learning in the United States and Canada is provided. Current service learning programs at universities in British Columbia are also described to show the development of service learning in Western Canada. The following section highlights some of the research on service learning in alternative settings, outside of the academic community. An overview of the some of the major benefits of service learning reported in the literature is also given and the chapter ends with an outline of the theoretical framework used for the inquiry.

#### What is Service Learning?

Service learning is an educational strategy that has been defined and interpreted numerous ways in the literature (Sedlack et al., 1999). Service learning has also been called experiential learning, community service and volunteering (Faris, 1999). Exploring the different interpretations of service learning will help to solidify a definition of service learning for this inquiry. Service learning, as the name implies has two central

tenants: a learning component, combined with some type of hands on volunteer experience (Jacoby, 1996). The major components of most service learning programs include, preparing for the service experience via study, discussion about the experience, serving in a community volunteer project, and reflection on the experience both during and after the program (Lewis, 2002). These central pillars of the service learning program help to maximize the experience for participants and also reinforce the learning goals and values of the program.

Most service learning programs to date have been developed and applied in an academic setting, and therefore definitions found in the literature usually include language referring to the academic context. The definition put forward by Brown and Roodin (2001) highlights this:

Service learning is a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identifies community needs and actively engages students in action to increase understanding of course content, provide broader appreciation of the discipline and enhance students sense of civic responsibility (p. 89).

However, as will be discussed in the literature review, the possibility and potential to expand service learning outside of the academic is limitless and therefore a definition that embraces service learning as an experience for diverse populations is important.

The definition of service learning that will be embraced for this inquiry will be a layered one, combining several perspectives on service learning to allow for an appropriate definition in the corporate setting. The definition put forward by the American Corporation for National Service (2004) describes service learning as a method

whereby participants learn and develop through participation in thoughtful, organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of the community. This definition will form the foundation for a definition of service learning for this inquiry. For the purpose of this inquiry, the definition of service learning will be broadened by adding that service learning, at its best, is a reciprocal relationship that benefits both the learner, the community partner and the host institution (Faris, 1999). Service learning therefore is a process that allows all partners involved to benefit from the experience.

### *Separating Service Learning From Volunteering*

Volunteering can easily be confused with service learning, however there are major distinctions between the two that will help to illuminate the service learning experience. Furco (1996) developed a model that helps to clarify the differences between service learning and volunteering. This model focuses on the necessity of balancing the service outcomes and learning objectives for the experience or program to be called service learning (Furco, 1996). In contrast to service learning, volunteering generally does not have a curriculum or learning goals that are attached to the experience (Faris, 1999). Volunteering also rarely has a formal process of evaluating the experience for the participant.

There are different benefits associated with volunteering and service learning. The associated benefits of volunteering are usually recognized as some type of psychological benefit such as feeling esteemed or empowered from the experience, compared with the diverse learning goals developed for service learning such as understanding the root causes of the problems being addressed and producing participants who are committed to

sustained service (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Lewis, 2002). In service learning, the idea of service being performed for purely altruistic reason is abandoned, and the goal of all parties (the participant, the host organization, and the receiver) benefiting from the experience in multiple ways is embraced (Faris, 1999). Service learning therefore helps to maximize the learning opportunity from the service, and adds to the experience of volunteering.

### *The "Service" Component of Service Learning*

The "service" component of service learning is volunteering activity performed by the participant in the program. The service may be provided on an on-going basis, such as over a semester at school, or it may be for only a day, such as cooking at a homeless shelter (Gray et al., 1999). The volunteer activities can be on-site, or they can involve providing help at a distance such as packing food-stuffs to be sent for foreign relief. There are a multitude of different service projects that have been developed ranging from providing highly skilled support to an organization, such as nurses volunteering at a senior care complex; or providing relatively unskilled work such as picking up trash as part of a community clean-up effort. Regardless of the activity, the goal of community service is always to provide positive support the community (Narsavage, Batchelor, Lindell & Yea-Jyh, 2003).

### *The "Learning" Component of Service Learning*

The "learning" component of service learning can be facilitated in various ways including, lectures about the social issues addressed and having participants reflect on their experiences in journals, debates, presentations, writing essays, video journaling,

lectures or art-work (Long, Larsen, Hussey & Travis, 2001; Sedlack et al., 1999). This process of reflecting and analyzing the service experience helps to connect the service experience to the specific learning goals set by the institution offering the program and helps to reinforce the experience as a learning opportunity (Brown & Roodin, 2001). Students can also be made aware of the potential benefits of the program for the community, the institution, and the participant; therefore making students aware of the reciprocal benefits of participating in the program (Long et al., 2001). Learning about the service also prepares participants for the service activity and provides them with skills that will help them succeed in the work they will undertake, and allows the experience to be a positive and beneficial one (Meyers, 1999).

#### *Distinguishing Between Different Forms of Service.*

There are a number of different forms of service participants can engage the community with. In an attempt to classify the diversity of service related experiences and provide clarity between alternative forms, Sigmon (1996) developed a service learning typology which distinguishes between the various forms of service. Sigmon's (1996) typology is academic focused and highlights the multiple ways that service can benefit both the recipient and the provider. The different types of service include field education, internship, volunteerism, community service and service learning. These different forms of service vary in the focus of the service and the beneficiary of the service. Table 1.0 outlines these different forms.

Table. 1.0: Sigmon's (1996) Service and Learning Typologies (found in Furco, 1996)

Volunteerism	Service	Service-Learning	Field Education	Internship
Participants are involved in service where the primary intended beneficiary is the recipient of the service. Participants may benefit from the process, but this is unintentional.	The engagement of participants in activities focusing primarily on service provided and the benefits the activities have for recipients. Participants may learn about how their service is making a difference in the lives of those they serve.	A form of experiential education where the intention is to equally benefit both the provider and the recipient of service. There is also a balance between the service and the learning aspects.	Provides student with co-curricular community service experiences that are related, but not completely integrated with academic studies. Students perform service as part of a program that is designed mainly to enhance student's understanding of a field study, while providing substantial focus on the service being provided.	Internship programs engage students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study. Students are the primary intended beneficiary and the focus of the service activity is on student learning.

### Objectives of Service Learning

Depending on the institution delivering the program and the participants in the program, there can be different objectives and goals developed for a service learning program. Most service learning programs have learning objectives that focus on the intellectual, social and personal development of the participant (Brown & Roodin, 2001). Mandated objectives in service learning programs can also include enhancing self-esteem, self-confidence, civic responsibility, and making students aware of the larger societal issues (Corporation for National Service, 2004). Serving the community and filling the needs of non-profit organizations so that they can better service their other is another goal in service learning (Gray et al. 1999). Another goal for service learning programs is to provide structured, monitored and evaluated processes for the different parties involved to ensure that the diverse objectives and goals are achieved (Furco, 1996). Regardless of the program structure, the major over-arching objective is always to benefit both the institution offering the program, the participant and the recipient of the service (Furco, 1996; Long et al., 1999).

Eyler and Giles (1999) completed a national survey of both the cognitive and affective outcomes of service learning programs. This survey provided a summary of the goals of current service learning programs. They found five categories dominating these programs including, personal and interpersonal development; understanding and application of subject-matter learning; critical thinking; perspective transformation; and citizenship skills and values.

### Theoretical Foundation of Service Learning

The theoretical underpinnings of service learning are not solid. There is much research and theory building that is needed within the field. Eyler and Giles (1999) commented that service learning is more social action than theory building. Although there are not strong theoretical pillars upon which service learning stands on, most advocates of service learning cite John Dewey's (1938) experiential learning as the theoretical basis (Johnson & Notah, 1999; Meyers, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Experiential learning is based on two principles: the principle of continuity and the principle of interaction (Carver 1997; Frankena, 1966, found in Johnson & Notah, 1999). These principles state that both life and the educational experience influence the participant's educational experience both in the present and in the future (Dewey, 1936). Therefore, experiential methods include both a classroom and a real world component where the student can put learning into action.

Carver (1997) states that the three major goals of experiential education are helping participants as agents of change, developing participants skills and competencies, and connecting the student to the community they are a part of (found in Johnson & Notah, 1999). Experiential learning enhances and reinforces the learning goals of service learning programs and focuses on cultivating participants who are able and willing to contribute to the community.

## History of the Service Learning Movement

### *Service Learning in the United States*

Service learning grew out of a social and education reform in the United States and has had widespread acceptance and acclaim in the academic setting over the past twenty years (Lewis, 2002). Faris (1999) reported that in 1999, there were over 500 universities involved in service learning programs. The growth of service learning has been a result of the substantial funding allocated to educational institutions by the American government and because of the ever-expanding body of literature chronicling the positive impact that service learning is having on participants (Gray et al., 1999).

In the recent past there has been an increase in government funding and support for service learning in the United States. This was initiated in 1990 when the Bush Administration developed the Commission for National and Community Service (Johnson & Notah, 1999). This organization provides financial support for educational institutions that develop and facilitate service learning programs (Gray et al., 1999). The Clinton Administration followed suit and established the National and Community Trust Act in September of 1993, which spawned the Corporation for National Community Service (CNS). Three service initiatives were championed by this organization including, Learn and Service America, AmeriCorps and the National Service Corps (Corporation for National Service, 2004).

As different social and political institutions in the United States have embraced service learning, it has grown into a wide-sweeping social movement supported by a diverse infrastructure of professional, administrators, scholars, and participants (Silcox &

Leek, 1997). One of the major players in this movement has been Learn and Serve America.

#### *Learn and Serve America*

Learn and Serve America supports service learning initiatives with financial, human and intellectual resources. The organization provides support for service learning programs in both schools and in communities. The primary focus of Learn and Serve America is promoting the development of service providers by awarding grants for the development of new programs, or changing existing ones, training facilitators and participants and responding to and coordinating the diverse needs of the recipients of service that are connected to service learning programs (Gray et al., 1999)

Learn and Service American is funded in part by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Learn and Serve American has dual goals of providing support and addressing the need of service recipient and ensuring the development of students involved in service learning programs (Corporation for National Service, 2004). Learn and Serve American can be found on the World Wide Web at: <http://learnandserve.org>.

#### *Service Learning in Canada*

Compared to the United States, Canada is underdeveloped in the field of service learning. Like numerous other social movements that have gravitated north from the United States, service learning in Canada is now expanding slowly. Faris (1999) conducted a national survey on service learning in Canada and found that the term “service learning” was seldom used by institutions in Canada and less than 1/3 of the

institutions surveyed in voluntary and education sector were familiar with the breadth of experience and research that has developed. At the time of the survey there were only two provinces, British Columbia and Nova Scotia, where there was any widespread usage and acceptance of the term service learning (Faris, 1999).

In Canada there has been substantial demand and interest from the non-profit sector to develop ties with groups and institutions that want to develop experiential learning opportunities for members (Faris, 1999). The Canadian government has also expressed a commitment to deepening its engagement with the voluntary sector and there have been on-going developments and initiatives directed at expanding and developing service learning in Canada (Faris, 1999). One of the major partners in Canada that has helped to forward service learning has been the Canadian Centre For Philanthropy.

The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy is presently building partnerships to develop service-learning curriculum in a nation-wide citizenship education project in high schools (Faris, 1999). Another major player that is forwarding service learning initiatives in Canada is the Centre of Curriculum, Transfer and Technology of B.C which is currently focused is promoting service learning initiatives in post-secondary schools (Faris, 1999).

A major advancement in the service learning movement came in 2001 when St. Francis University in Nova Scotia hosted a gathering of Canadian individuals and institutions who were participating in or interested in service learning programs (<http://www.communityservicelearning.ca>). It from this symposium that a nation-wide association for community service learning began to evolve. In 2003 representatives from universities across Canada gathered at the University of British Columbia to discuss how

service learning could be promoted, sustained and initiated in Canada (Grove-White, 2004). A number of national conferences have been staged subsequently, in order to further the development of service learning as a pedagogical strategy in Canada. This process culminated in 2004 during a conference in Ottawa when the community service learning “steering committee presented, through the listserv and to participants at our Ottawa meeting, draft documents regarding a name, vision, and mission for our developing association” (<http://www.communityservicelearning.ca>). This was met by generous funding from the J.W. Mconnell Family Foundation to establish the Canadian Association for Community Service Learning which is leading universities across the nation in service learning (<http://www.communityservicelearning.ca>).

#### Service Learning at Universities in British Columbia

In 2002, at the University of Victoria, the Cooperative Education program developed a two-year pilot project fund that would facilitate the hiring of Co-op student on service learning projects. The purpose of the fund is to create a sustainable source of funding to support cooperative positions for students in community based, non-profit organizations working with the University (<http://mycoop.coop.uvic.ca/moreinfo/slip.php>).

Currently, there is no learning curriculum for service learning programs and there are no courses in service learning available; however, mentoring for students involved in service in the community service from the research faculty member working with the organization is a mandatory requirement for participation in the program. The service learning project focuses on providing students with work that supports local community

needs and provides learning experiences for students. Information about service learning programs at the University of Victoria can be found at

<http://mycoop.coop.uvic.ca/moreinfo/clip.php>.

The University of British Columbia has implemented a community service learning program as part of the Trek Volunteer Program. A planning process is also in place that is working to integrate community service learning experiences into courses. There have been a myriad of different volunteer placements arranged for students including work in homeless shelters, hospices and drop-in centers for the mentally ill. The impact of this program on the community, and the participants, has been similar to that which has been recorded in other service-learning evaluations: students comment they are gaining new skills and becoming more aware of their community. Information about service learning programs at the University of British Columbia can be found at

[http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/trek\\_program\\_community\\_learn](http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/trek_program_community_learn).

#### Extending Service Learning Outside of the Academic Environment

Service learning has moved slowly out of the academic community. Several attempts to develop service learning programs outside of the academic setting have been documented in the literature (Lewis, 2002). There are three populations in which service learning programs have been implemented and researched including older adult populations (senior citizens), alternative education settings and in after-school care programs for youth (Faris, 1999; Jennings, 2001; Lewis, 2002).

In alternative education settings with youth populations, service learning participants have reported benefits of civic learning, personal growth, and career

exploration (Faris, 1999). Students in programs have involved themselves in after-school community projects that connect them with their community, and potentially empower them to make change and give them skills that compliment their academic endeavours. These attempts to bring service learning out of the confines of the academic setting have helped lead to other initiatives in older populations.

In adult populations, program facilitators have recognized the opportunity for older adults to become involved in their community and continue to learn (Lewis, 2002). Lewis (2002) outlined some of the service learning programs already in existence in the United States such as the Senior Service Corps, Life Option Centers and the Institutes for Learning in Retirement. In her study, she also reviewed some of the potential benefits of bringing service learning to a senior population which included increasing volunteerism in elders, enhancing learning, improving and the quality of service in communities (Lewis, 2002). It has been hypothesized that older adults who engage in service learning programs may have a greater capacity for higher levels of critical thought and reflection on their volunteer experience; therefore, the service experience may be may be of greater value to adult participants (Faris, 1999). Adults also have a wealth of knowledge and wisdom that they bring with them into the service experience that may supplement and enhance both their and the recipient's experience.

### *Service Learning in the Corporate Sector*

The corporate community is experiencing a range of issues in the workplace that could, in part be helped through the implementation of service learning. Forte (1997) commented that a hierarchical structure and authoritarian leadership style being used in

the workplace may result in workers having less power and decision-making and therefore are experiencing a lack of empowerment in the workplace. Schwalbe (1988) added that contemporary workplace conditions could lead to reduced employee empathy and a sense of community (found in Forte, 1997). Service learning programs may provide part of a solution that improves current workplace conditions and provides a source of empowerment and enhancing a sense of community both inside and outside of the company walls.

Companies in Canada are starting to recognize the benefits of social responsibility and are endeavoring to give back to the communities that support them through volunteer initiatives. This is evident in the increased employer support of workplace volunteer programs and in the increased flexibility on the part of employers to allow for workers to modify schedules in order to volunteer (Hall et al., 2006). Hall et al. (2006) found that over one-third of employees reported that they were able to modify their work schedule because of volunteer commitments, and almost one quarter of employees surveyed received recognition for their volunteer work from their employers. Although there has been increased support for volunteering in the workplace, there have been few companies in Canada that have developed service learning programs, and have coined them as such. This lack has resulted in few studies being undertaken that evaluate or inquire into corporate service learning programs.

### Benefits of Service Learning

The benefits of service-learning programs are numerous and all partners involved, the host institution, the recipient of the service and the service providers, have the

potential to benefit (Faris, 1999). The benefits for the parties are both tangible and intangible. The benefits cited in the literature are numerous and for the purpose of the inquiry, only four areas will be addressed in the proposal. These areas were deemed by the researcher to be of the greatest interest in the corporate sector.

### *Civic and Social Responsibility*

A mandated learning goal for most service learning programs is to increase the level of civic affiliation and participation in service to community and to make participants more aware of the impact they have on their community (Lewis, 2002). Service learning provides participants with the knowledge of social issues within the community and attempts to endow students with the tools necessary to effect positive change in the academic arena and outside in the community (Brown & Roodin, 2001). Faris (1999) states that service itself is a contribution to the social capital of a community and an expression of civic responsibility. Participants in service learning therefore can benefit from the service learning experience and learn to be actively involved in their communities.

The learning component of service learning capitalizes and builds upon participant insights about social and civic responsibility through the instruction and reflection about service and the larger social issues being tackled (Rhoads, 1998). This learning process occurs before, during and after the service experience (Meyers, 1999). The experiential learning contextualizes and reinforces the values and goals of the program by providing participants with hands-on experience. The service experience enhances participant understanding of the value of social and civic responsibility and this

understanding in turn leads to more positive action in the community (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Several studies looking at student participation in service learning programs have documented increases in civic and social responsibility (Berkas, 1997; Weiler, La Goy, Crane & Rovner 1998; Youniss, Mclellan, & Yates, 1997). Improvements in civic and social responsibility have been reported at all levels of education, from elementary schools to university settings (Stephens, 1995).

For an individual to be socially and civically responsible an individual must first be aware of their community and the social issues that are prevalent. Students who engaged in high quality service-learning programs reported an increase in their awareness of the community needs, and also an increased belief that they could make a difference (Melchior, 1999). Students involved in service learning programs were also shown to develop an understanding of moral issues and of society and the learning components of the program help to promote thinking about ways to effect positive social change (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Another reason that service learning programs might help facilitate increases in social responsibility, as discussed by Rhoads (1998) is that they allow participants to work with diverse others or strangers in the community which results in mutual benefit understanding and desire to work for the greater social good. Students have also reported being more committed to making a difference both during and after the service-learning program community (Astin & Sax, 1998; Neururer & Roads, 1998; Rhoads, 1998).

Youniss et al. (1997) conducted a literature review of service learning studies that showed a linkage between social participation in youth and civic engagement. The study focused on the notion that the social responsibility, civic behaviors and attitudes can be

developed in youth and adolescence. The studies reviewed “demonstrate that participation in organized norm-bearing groups during adolescence or youth differentiates civic engagement in adults” (p. 621). The review found that participants who were involved in community service projects were more likely to be engaged in community organizations and to vote 15 or more years after their participation in the program than those who did not participate. The study confirmed the authors’ view that youth voluntary participation can help cultivate a sense of social responsibility in helping to create healthy communities.

Sedlak et al. (1999) in a study undergraduate nursing students ( $N=94$ ) found that caring for others was an important theme coming from student insights about their experiences in a service learning program. The service learning projects were completed in a wide range of care settings included nursing homes, non-profit agencies and day care centers. The service learning projects involved conducting internet searches about health information; selecting and contacting community agencies to work with; keeping a reflective journal, presenting a poster at the end of the course; identifying the needs and services provided by the community partner and developing learning objectives. One of the key findings of the inquiry was the theme of “caring for others” which involved “thinking of others and not just themselves” which helped move participants “from a ‘self-focus’ to an ‘other focus’” (p. 101). These findings express a shift in students towards being more socially responsible.

Narsavage et al. (2003) conducted an mixed method study involving 115 graduate nursing students involved in a health promotion course. The goals of the service learning program included developing student leadership skills and a sense of social

responsibility. Projects included updating the curriculum for a home health aid vocational program, conducting health history interviews with the homeless, and developing continuing education sessions for nurses at a local hospice. Data collection included both quantitative and qualitative measures. Qualitative sources included reflective journals, focus groups, open-ended surveys and one-minute papers. Quantitative summative assessment questionnaires were used to capture achievement levels for pre-defined objectives. The two major themes from the qualitative findings included, gaining insight into community needs and that students “achieved personal growth as they understood their role as a resource to the community” (p. 305). Of interest was the statement that the lowest response in the questionnaire was “this course made me more interested in community service,” with only 54.5 % of participants reporting this.

Brown and Roodin (2001) conducted a qualitative inquiry into students involved in service learning projects attached to a university course. The inquiry included qualitative data from 104 undergraduate university student reports over the course of two semesters in one academic year. The service work included volunteering with seniors who were understood to be “socially isolated” in the community (p. 92). Students were involved in different types of volunteer service including visiting adults in their homes, nursing homes or assisted-living residences. The learning components of the projects were varied and included discussing their experiences in class, lectures and reading about the issues involved in their service work, small group discussions, journal writing and take home assignments focusing on issues they were experiencing in their placements. There were several themes captured in the study and these included insights about aging, personal growth and understanding, service and volunteering, impressions of long term

care, and careers skills. The theme of service and volunteering represented a desire by students to continue their volunteer work in the community.

### *Self-Esteem*

A mandated goal for most service-learning programs is to enhance the self-esteem of participants in the program (Corporation for Service Learning, 2004). In the same study reported in the section on social responsibility, Brown and Roodin (2001) captured the experiences university students involved in a service learning program in a qualitative inquiry, one of the major themes in the responses of students was enhanced feelings of self-worth, pride and personal efficacy from being able to provide a service to people in the community.

Johnson and Notah (1999) used both qualitative and quantitative data to study the effects of a service learning program on eighth grade students ( $N = 156$ ). Increased self-esteem was a goal of the service learning programs studied. Qualitative data were recorded from student reflective journals, narrative essays, interviews, field notes and observations. The qualitative data showed that the service learning program did have a “positive effect on student’s self-esteem” (p. 460). The quantitative data included a pretest and posttest using the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory. Growth in self-esteem was recorded, but was not found to be significant.

Toews and Cerny (2005) conducted a content analysis of reflection papers of students ( $N=36$ ) involved in service learning. The study revealed there were several benefits for being engaged in community service, even when the service experience was short. The service learning assignment involved a 15 hour service learning project.

Students wrote a 7 – 10 page paper reflecting on their learning experiences in the program. Several themes were captured including becoming accepting of others, realizing the importance of service to the community and an increased sense of self-efficacy and a sense of self-esteem from participation in service in the community.

In the middle school setting, increases in self-esteem and fewer behavioural problems were reported for participants after engaging in service learning programs (Switzer et al., 1995). Switzer et al. (1995) followed 85 students involved in a helper program and 86 in another group which served as a control and did not participate in service. The researchers used a six-item version of the Rosenberg (1965) scale to measure “global self-esteem or feelings of self-worth” (p. 438). A repeat measures ANOVA was used to uncover the effects of service work on feelings of self-esteem. The results were gender specific, with boys participating in the program experiencing significant, positive changes in self-esteem. The researchers suggested that the gender differences may be a result of a lack of helping behaviors being a part of the socialization process of boys and that with program modification the benefits to girls could be increased.

#### *Personal Growth and Skill Development.*

A fundamental goal of service learning is to enhance the personal development of participants (Lewis, 2002). The potential for service learning to have a positive effect on the personal growth and development of participants has been reported in recent literature (Brown & Roodin, 2001). The diverse activities that can be pursued in service-learning programs allow participants to acquire skills and knowledge in a plethora of areas depending on the type of work being performed and the setting of the service experience.

There are a number of different areas and measures of personal growth that have been documented in the service and service learning literature. In an academic setting, scholastic achievement and improvement have been cited as benefits of service learning programs (Rolzinski, 1990; Supik, 1996).

Weiler et al. (1998) conducted a study that assessed the academic benefits of involvement in well-established, service learning courses in grades 6-12 in California. Data were collected through student achievement tests, surveys, interviews with students, teachers, administrators and community partners and observations of student service work and classroom activity. Participants included 775 students engaged in service learning and 310 students in traditional classes without a service component. Students in over half of the high quality service learning programs showed statistically significant, moderate to strong positive gains on educational achievement tests including language arts, reading, engagement in school and sense of educational accomplishment. A majority of students engaged in service learning expressed that they learned more than in traditional style of classes.

Separating the service from learning, the 1997 Canadian Report on Volunteers found that over three-quarters (79%) of individuals involved in service reported that volunteering had given them interpersonal skills including, learning to motivate others, learning how to deal with difficult situations, and learning to understand others better (Hall, Knighton, Reed, Bussiere, McRae, & Bowen, 1998). Two-thirds of respondents in the in 2000 Canadian National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating reported that volunteering endowed them with communication skills like speaking, writing and conducting meetings and over half of respondents reported gaining organizational and

managerial skills (Hall, Mckeowen & Roberts, 2001). A baseline analysis of the 1987 volunteer survey in Canada was conducted and showed that more 16 million separate skill experiences were recorded, and 1/3 million volunteers found they could transfer skill from their volunteer experience to work (Ross, 1990, found in Faris, 1999).

Arai and Pedlar (1997) conducted a qualitative study of volunteer participation as a form of leisure involving 16 individuals. Volunteers were involved in a Healthy Communities initiative in Canada, in which participants worked on different aspects of community development including issues of developing sustainable communities, clean waterways, well water quality and stream rehabilitation. In-depth interviews using open-ended questions were used to capture the perspectives of participants of what the benefits of volunteering in the Healthy Communities program were. The authors uncovered five themes including: 1) learning and developing new skills, 2) becoming more vocal, 3) balance and renewal, 4) group accomplishment and 5) ability to influence change and development of community. The learning of new skills was connected to the different issues tackled by the different groups in the service projects.

### *Empowerment*

Empowering individuals gives them more control over their lives and allows them to make more decisions. Participating in service or volunteering has been shown to have a relationship with empowerment and individuals who volunteer feel more empowered and those who feel empowered are more likely to volunteer (Arai & Pedlar, 1997). By becoming involved in community service, participants become stakeholders in their community and therefore can feel that they have more control over their social

environment. Some of the most commonly cited benefits found in the literature are empowering students to make decisions (Lewis, 2002). Lewis (2002) in her inquiry into service learning in older adults commented that if service learning has been reported to help students become empowered to make decisions, why not develop service learning in older populations. The following studies highlight student reports on different aspects of empowerment from increasing the ability to make decisions to feelings of making a difference in the community.

Wade (1997) inquired into service learning projects as a means of empowerment for student teachers. Student teachers were involved in community service projects with their cooperating teachers (mentoring teachers). Twenty participants including ten student teachers and ten cooperating teachers were interviewed before and after the service learning program. Survey questions and observations were also used to triangulate data collection. Student reflections on their experiences showed that service learning was a source for student empowerment. Empowerment was found to develop from student-teacher initiative, student-teacher leadership and creative development of the service learning projects, using community and school resources, recognizing the benefits for students and student teachers, gaining positive feedback from cooperating teachers and enhanced relationships between the cooperating and student teachers as a result of being involved in service learning.

Bentley and Ellison (2000) inquired into the experiences of undergraduate nursing students involved in a service learning program. The community service work involved addressing the needs of pregnant teenagers in the community by helping them with the “transition from pregnancy to parenthood” and included “ultrasound visits, seeing the

teenagers at their homes and attending prenatal clinic visits” (p.288). Twenty students were involved in the service learning program. The service learning projects involved meeting six to eight times over a ten-week period. Reflective activities included meeting after class to reflect on visits and explore issues, reflective journals and developing a learning portfolio. Student themes included how experiential learning helped them understand class materials better, developing social responsibility through becoming aware of the needs of the community, and becoming more aware and comfortable with working with diverse others. Feelings of empowerment were expressed as the majority students reported that they believed they could make a difference in their community as a result of being involved in the service learning program.

Melchior (1999) conducted a national evaluation of the Learn and Serve America School and Community-Based Program, which consisted of 1,000 middle and high school students involved in high quality school-based service learning programs and comparison groups. The study focused on “fully implemented” or well-established service learning programs in schools (p.2). The average number of hours of involvement in service learning was 70 hours of direct service and 76% of students had face-to-face contact with agency members and service clients. Mixed-methods were used for data collection, including telephone interviews, on-site interviews, surveys of teachers in schools, and observation of service learning activities. Follow up surveys were also done one year after the service learning program. There were a variety of different reflective activities reported including, essays, presentations, group work, and papers. More than 60% of students had responsibility including a number of different tasks and chances to use their own ideas and creative input. Indicators of feelings of empowerment came from

participant reports of having made a difference in the lives of others. In the study 95% of students involved in service learning reported that their service work was helpful to the community and the majority of students felt their service did make a difference.

### Conceptual Framework

Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four-Frame Model, outlined in their book *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, is an organizational development theory that has been used to understand and analyze organizations. There are four frames of reference that are put forward in the book including, a Structural Frame, a Human Resource Frame, a Political Frame, and a Symbolic Frame. These different frames will provide a lens through which the researcher can collect, analyze and report the data for this inquiry. Bolman and Deal (1997) assert that frames are "both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus" (p.12). Therefore, the Four-Frame Model will allow the researcher to better order and understand the experiences of the employees. The conceptual framework will also help to uncover patterns and the interconnectedness of the service learning experience for employees.

Businesses are complex organizations and the service learning experience is a layered and complex phenomenon. Employees will have varied experiences because of the different service work they perform and also because of their varied backgrounds and positions at Sportswear. By connecting these experiences to the multiple frames a holistic picture of the corporate service learning experience at the Sportswear can be drawn. This will promote understanding of how the service learning experience impacts upon the workplace and the employees.

### *Structural Frame*

The structural frame uses the metaphor of a machine to guide the analysis of an organization. The emphasis in this frame is placed on the structures that guide and shape the company. This machine is usually organized from the top-down with a rigid hierarchy in place that directs and coordinates the business and workers with specialized tasks, and sequential work. The major challenge for organizations as viewed by this frame is to learn to adapt to the ever-changing business landscape. The image of leadership in the Structural Frame is social architecture and the basic leadership challenge is attuning structure to task, technology, and the environment. Effective managers and leaders within this frame must recognize the need for flexibility in designing and changing organizational structures in response to task, technology and the environment. By doing this, leaders are able to help ensure the machine works efficiently and adapts to change. Keys aspect of this frame includes, goals, specialized roles, policies, evaluation, procedures, technology, the environment and formal relationships.

The assumptions that support the structural frame are:

1. The main goal of an organization is to achieve goals and objectives established.
2. Organizations work most effectively when rationality prevails over personal pressures or external pressures.
3. Structures must be designed to fit an organization.
4. Problems and performance gaps arise from structural deficiencies and can be remedied through restructuring.
5. Appropriate forms of coordination and control are essential to ensuring that

individuals and units work together in the service of organizational goals.

6. Specialization and division of labour increases performance and efficiency.

### *Symbolic Frame*

The Symbolic Frame uses the metaphor of a theatre or a carnival to understand and interpret organizations. Bolman and Deal (1997) state that this frame, in comparison to a structural perspective, focuses less on objectivity and rationality and instead highlights the complexities and ambiguities of an organization through the use of symbols.

Symbols help to uncover the values, practices and beliefs of members within the organization and help to simplify the complexities of an organization. The central components of the frame include, culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories and heroes. The image of leadership in the Symbolic Frame is inspiration and the central leadership challenge is creating, faith, beauty and meaning. These facets provide a source of meaning and ritual allowing members to find purpose and inspiration. The corporate culture is a powerful shaping force in the company and leaders who want to understand and improve their organization must attend to the culture and meaning of symbols used in the company. Humor, play and metaphors are all used to help members deal with issues in the workplace.

The major assumptions of the symbolic frame are:

1. What is most important about any event is not what happened but what it means.
2. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled: events have multiple meanings  
because people interpret experience differently.
3. Most of life is ambiguous or uncertain—what happened, why it happened, or

what will happen next are all puzzles.

4. High levels of ambiguity and uncertainty undercut rational analysis, problem solving and decision-making.
5. In the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusion, increase predictability, provide direction, and anchor hope and faith.
6. Many events and processes are more important for what is expressed than what is produced. They form a cultural tapestry.

#### *Human Resource Frame*

The Human Resource Frame uses the metaphor of a family to explain the dynamics in an organization. In this frame the members of the family, the employees, are perceived to be the most valuable resource. The vision of this frame is to have employees do a job well done, and feel good about it and the main goal is the matching of organizational goals with the needs of the employees. For leaders in this frame, the main leadership challenge is to try and empower employees and allow them to perform and enjoy their work. The basic challenge for leaders using this frame in an organization is aligning organizational and human needs. Bolman and Deal (1997) state that the empowering of employees can take place in a number of different ways including, promoting employees and implementing training programs. The key concepts of this frame include, attitudes needs, skills and relationships.

The major assumptions of the human resource framework are:

1. Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the reverse.
2. People and organizations need each other: organizations need ideas, energy, and

talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities.

3. When the fit between the individual and system is poor, one or both suffer: individuals will be exploited or will exploit the organization—or both will become victims.
4. A good fit benefits both: individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed.

### *Political Frame*

The Political Frame conceptualizes organizations as arenas or jungles.

Organizations are viewed as being “alive and screaming political arenas that host a complex web of individual and group interests” (Bolman & Deal 1997, p. 163). In this frame, the central concepts are power, conflict, competition, and organizational politics. Companies are viewed as constantly facing a scarcity of resources, differences in needs, perspectives and lifestyle that results in competing interest and conflict. It is purported that in this frame effective leaders need to maximize their bases of power in their attempt to manage the politics of a business. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are tools used in the process of reaching goals and balance amongst the competing interests. The image of leadership in this frame is advocacy and the basic challenge for leaders is to develop an agenda and a base of power.

The basic assumptions of the political frame are:

1. Organizations are coalitions of different individuals and interest groups.
2. There stable differences between coalition members in values, information, beliefs, interest and perceptions of reality.

3. The most important decisions involve the allocation of scarce resources.
4. Scarce resources and enduring difference result in conflict having a central role in organizational dynamics and make power the most important resource.
5. Goals and decisions are a result of bargaining, negotiation, and jockeying for position among stakeholders.

### Conclusion

The Literature Review has detailed both the history of and theory behind service learning and given an overview of the current research in service learning. The next four sections include, Chapter 3: Methodology providing the details of the research design, data collection and management strategies, as well as a discussion of data analyses; Chapter 4: Findings presenting the results of the interviews; Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings as they relate to the theory and current literature, and Chapter 6: Conclusion and offering recommendations for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research “seeks to understand the meaning of an experience to the participants” (Thomas & Newman, 2001, p.332). The researcher utilized qualitative methods, through the in-depth interviews for the inquiry. When interpreting and analyzing the data, the assumption was made that participants in the service learning program have multiple, socially constructed realities (Gubba & Lincoln, 1989). Participants had different beliefs, motivations and attitudes that shaped their perceptions of the service experience and using a qualitative paradigm helped to capture these variations. Community service can also be perceived as an inherently qualitative experience as the service provider delivers some type of work but receives no financial or tangible returns for the work done; the volunteer instead benefits from some form of personal growth. Participants were also involved in different capacities, for example, some participant were involved in the organizing of the service learning service activities and involvement in the different learning and service sessions was not consistent and therefore participant’s experiences and their interpretations of those experiences were varied and diverse.

For this inquiry, phenomenology was chosen as an appropriate frame. There are several different types of inquiry available to the phenomenological researcher. These include heuristic inquiry, which mandates that the researcher have personal experience and intense interest in the phenomenon being studied; whereas, phenomenology searches for the essence of the experience from the perspective of those who experience it (Patton,

1990). The value of phenomenology is that it allows the researcher to “transcend the inadequacies of thin descriptions, decontextualized facts and produce thick descriptions of social texts characterized by the contexts of their production, the intentions of their producers, and the meanings mobilized in the process of their construction” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 286). The researcher determined that phenomenology was an appropriate frame because of the researcher’s interest in understanding how service learning is experienced and what it means to employees.

### Origins of Phenomenology

Phenomenology comes from the “Greek word *phenomenon*, which means to ‘show itself,’ to put into light or manifest something that can become visible in itself” (Heidegger, 1962 found in Morse, 1994, p. 118). Phenomenology is a type of philosophy, or a collection of philosophies, but for the focus of this inquiry can be understood as both a method and an approach to research. In phenomenology, the researcher inquires into the essence and structure of a particular phenomenon for people who have shared an experience (Patton, 1990). The intent of phenomenology as a method is to try to disclose the essence and meaning in human experience (Morse, 1994). The phenomenon of inquiry may be a number of activities or events such as a school program, a job, a leisure activity, or possibly an emotion such as anger or joy. For this inquiry, the phenomenon explored is the service learning program and those experiencing it were the employees at Sportswear.

## Schools of Phenomenology

There has been an evolution in the understanding and application of phenomenology in both the philosophic and research community. There are numerous schools of phenomenological thought that have developed different phenomenological approaches. German philosopher, Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938) first introduced Phenomenology as a framework for scientific inquiry (Patton, 1990). According to Patton (1990) Husserl was interested in how people experienced things through their senses. In Husserl's view of phenomenology there was an assumption that,

there is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced.

The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon (Patton, p. 70).

Husserl's goal was to remove all "conceptually bound and theoretically constructed beginnings" in the inquiry process and therefore aimed to bracket out one's conceptions and notions of the world in order to attain a more "genuine and true form" of a phenomenon (Morse, 1994, p. 119). The concept and practice of bracketing out the researchers preconceived ideas is known as *epoche* and is central to Husserl's approach to phenomenology. According to Husserl, the purpose of phenomenology from this perspective was to make "ordinary experience evident through reflection to clear intuition" (p. 119). Husserl's understanding of phenomenology is therefore eidetic or descriptive in the way it tries to uncover meaning (Morse, 1994).

Another school of thought in phenomenology originated with Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), who was both a student and critic of Husserl's descriptive phenomenology

and developed a new, interpretive perspective on phenomenology. As Morse (1994) describes, Heidegger made different assumptions about how to uncover the essence of an experience.

The central distinction between the Husserlian and Heideggerian approaches is that Heidegger articulates the position that presuppositions are not to be eliminated or suspended but are what constitute the possibility of intelligibility or meaning (p.120).

The Heideggerian school of phenomenology is understood as an interpretive form of phenomenology. The process involved in Heidegger's phenomenology or Heideggerian-hermeneutics is the use of "interpretations of a certain phenomena to uncover hidden meanings in the experiences of individuals" (Morse, 1994, p. 149). From this perspective it is believed that individuals make sense of their experiences through interpretations of them. Therefore, hermeneutics as research method is "a way of systematically dealing with interpretations" (p. 148.).

There are two central aspects of Heideggerian phenomenology; these include historicity of understanding and the hermeneutic circle (Koch, 1995). These two notions are understood to be inseparable and intertwined. In understanding historicity, Koch (1995) highlights the importance of several foundational components of Heideggerian phenomenology. These include,

1. Background – an individual's history or background is shaped by the culture they are embedded in and this determines how they understand the world. This background cannot be made explicit or bracketed out.

2. Pre-understanding – is the organization and meaning of a particular culture that are “in the world before we understand” and therefore pre-understanding is the “structure of our ‘being-in-the-world’” (p. 831). Again, this pre-understanding is not something that can be bracketed out.
3. Co-constitution - refers to the idea that a person is inevitably linked or connected to the world, and therefore is always in the world. The notion that we are separate from the world is a form of dissonance and we therefore we inhabit the world by being one with it.
4. Interpretation - is the notion that every encounter a person has is done in reference to their “background in its historicity” and therefore we are interpreting beings who make sense of our world through the process of interpretation (p. 831).

The hermeneutic circle is the research process of developing an understanding of a phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer a description of the hermeneutical circle.

Researchers in a hermeneutical circle (process of analysis in which interpreters seek the historical and social dynamics that shape textual interpretation) engage in the back-and-forth of studying parts in relation to the whole and whole in relation to the parts. No final interpretation is sought in this context, as the activity is a circular process with no need for closure (p. 286).

The researcher moves between the whole (the societal, organizational context) and the parts (the experiences of employees) in developing an understanding of the experiences

of the employees. In the end, this thesis is extended to the reader to begin again the circular process of interpretation.

Another interpretation of the circularity of the Heideggerian-Hermeneutical process is offered by Kaelin (1988). The author suggests,

we must remember that understanding is a way for a human being to be; and that our being exhibits a structure that is itself circular: a project towards a future possibility, but as authentic, resolutely repeating that acts which is most our own...albeit enriched by the journey we have only returned to where we were at the beginning of our inquiry (found in Crotty, 1996, p. 83).

The researcher moves through the research process or journey and in the end, returns to the phenomenon, or the service learning experience not with any new knowledge but with a more enhanced, richer understanding of it.

There are different methods used to understand the experiences of an individual in a Husserlian or a Heideggerian inquiry. In a Husserlian, descriptive phenomenological approach, a bracketed and presupposition-less interview would be conducted, in which the researcher would not develop interview questions, but would “flow within a clue-and-cue taking process after the initial meaning or analogy question is asked” (Morse, 1994, p.129). In a hermenteutic approach, the researcher is able to use questions involving a conceptual, and theoretical basis as a framework for the interview process (Morse, 1994). Choosing to embrace an interpretive approach allowed the researcher to use Bolman and Deal’s (1997) Four Frame Model to aid in the understanding of how individuals in an organization make sense of a service learning experience. As Morse describes, “the use

of theory in a phenomenological study needs to be used in conjunction with the hermeneutical perspective, rather than stating it is just phenomenological” (p. 135).

In an interpretive, Heideggerian-hermeneutical approach the history and experiences of the researcher are of importance in the research process. The researcher is understood to be always being ‘in’ the world and therefore does not try to bracket his history or worldview in the construction or interpretations of participants in the service learning program (Crotty, 1996). Instead of bracketing, the researcher enters into the text to illuminate the interpretations of the service learning experience of employees. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) “the hermeneutic act of interpretation involves, in its most elemental articulation, making sense of what has been observed in a way that communicates understanding” (p. 285). Van Manen (1990) describes the hermeneutic-phenomenological process as “a combination of descriptive, thematic process and metaphoric insight as the product is ‘given’ to the researcher in the text” (found in Morse, 1994, p. 129). The researcher understands that his history is shaped by the culture he inhabits and therefore influence the interpretations made in this thesis. The researcher has an understanding of the literature on service learning and has facilitated service initiatives for other companies. These are the experiences and knowledge that help the researcher to make sense of the interpretations of employees.

This circular process of the hermeneutic circle parallels the reflective process inherent in the service learning pedagogy where participants are asked to come back to the service experience repeatedly and interpret it through questioning and sharing of experiences with others. As a process, the researcher circled back to the interpretations of

the participants, the conceptual framework and the literature in the construction of this Account, or thesis.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) remind the researcher that “in the hermeneutical process the author’s answer is valuable only if it catalyses the production of a new question for our consideration in the effort to make sense of a particular textual phenomenon” (p. 286). The researcher was spurred to ask new questions about the service learning experience in the corporate setting and it is his hope that the reading of this document by others will similarly catalyze new questions and insight.

The themes, metaphors and interpretations presented in this inquiry do not offer one truth as “no conceptual formulation or single statement can possibly capture the full mystery of this experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 2, found in Morse, 1994). The researcher instead sought to engage the text in a way to illuminate new meaning and understanding of the interpretations employees have of their experiences in the service learning program. The purpose of the inquiry is not to predict or generalize, but to understand the meaning of the experiences and to gain practical understanding of what service learning might look like and mean in a business setting.

There are important precautions that can be taken to ensure the quality of the interpretations presented by the researcher. One process included having “another researcher with expertise in the field of phenomenology” check the categorizations and interpretations developed (Crotty, 1996, p. 23). This proved to be helpful as the researcher developed the themes and passed them on to his graduate supervisor in the presentation of the findings section. In particular this was useful with certain themes that

were not coalescing; these were left from the inquiry to focus on the most salient themes from the inquiry.

The researcher, through data collection and analysis, attempted to understand the shared experiences of employees involved in the service learning program, to help understand the impact of the service learning program. This study collected qualitative data through structured open-ended interviews in the service learning program guided by the organizational framework, Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model (1997). Most service learning studies originally found in the literature have followed a quantitative approach for data collection, interpretation and analysis (Astin & Sax, 1998; Neururer & Roads, 1998). Few have used a qualitative approach in the research process and therefore open-ended questions, although employed as methods to help participants evaluate their service learning experience, have rarely been used as data sources (Roads, 1998). Although there is an ever-expanding body of literature now using a qualitative approach, the researcher hopes this "Account" will be a unique contribution to the service learning literature as there is a lack of qualitative research focusing on service learning in the corporate setting.

### Inquiry Design

#### *Ethics*

An application was submitted to the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria in June of 2006 to receive ethics approval for the study. Ethics approval was received on July 31, 2006 from the Human Research Ethics Board (Appendix A). The inquiry was deemed as minimal risk because the inquiry was

retrospective, asking employees about their experiences in the service learning program. Also the inquiry was considered minimal risk because the researcher ensured participants of anonymity, confidentiality and informed them that they were free to leave the study at any time. These important ethical considerations were guided by the principles of Tuckman (1978) (found in Thomas & Nelson, 2001).

These principles are:

1. The right to privacy. The researcher will make sure that only information pertinent to the study will be asked of interviewees.
2. The right to remain anonymous. The researcher will use ID codes for each of the participants instead of their names.
3. The right to confidentiality. Participants will be assured that only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the original data.
4. The right to expect experimenter responsibility. The researcher will be compassionate and empathetic to the participants in the study, and ensure that participants are fully informed of the focus of the study.

### *Sampling*

The researcher chose to use a purposive sample to inquire into the perceptions of the population in question. The sample size of nine ( $N=9$ ) was deemed to be sufficient for the inquiry being undertaken. The qualitative inquiry design permits the use of small sample sizes. Here the quality and depth of the interviews rather than the quantity and breadth of responses will be of importance. Patton (1990) speaks to the issue of sample size in qualitative studies, stating that,

There are not rules for sample size for a qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources (p. 184).

The researcher judges that this sample size was sufficient to illuminate and tie together the common threads of experience and meaning for the participants involved in the service learning experience. The sampling strategy was believed to be appropriate when themes in the population became redundant and the central issues of importance were highlighted.

There were twenty participants in the service learning program the researcher was able to draw from. Participant recruitment occurred during the service learning program through discussion with employees and management. In total, there were 9 (N=9) participants who were interested and able to interview and explore their experiences in the service learning program.

#### *Sampling Method and Participant Selection*

There are several different strategies that can be used in purposive sampling including maximum variation sampling, opportunistic case sampling, politically important cases, chain sampling and convenience sampling (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Maximum variation sampling was chosen to capture the diversity of experience of participants in the service-learning program. Maximum variation sampling "aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation (Patton, 1990, p. 172). The goal of the inquiry is

to capture the core experiences that are shared by participants in the service learning program. Patton (1990) commented that “in a situation of great diversity common themes or patterns that emerge are of interest to the researcher in understanding the population being studied” (p. 182). These themes or patterns shaped the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the study.

Sportswear is a diverse business, employing people in different positions. Employees are of different age, gender, cultural background, physical ability and vary in their work experience. The researcher tried to maximize the variation in the sample taken from the participants in the service learning program. For these reasons maximum variation sampling was chosen as the strategy to ensure that the array of experiences could be collected and a full picture drawn of the service learning experience. However, because of the younger demographic employed at Sportswear, there was little variation in participant age. Also, employees who chose to participate in this inquiry were all women except for one man, therefore limiting variation in perspectives framed by gender.

#### Instrumentation

The major instrument used to garner the reflections, understandings and response of participants involved in the service learning program was in-depth interviews. Originally the researcher had intended to use reflective journals as another data source for the inquiry; however, these journals were not used by employee members as part of their learning process and therefore could not be used as an additional data source.

### *Interviews*

In-depth interviews, lasting for approximately one hour, were completed with employees from Sportswear. A sample size of nine ( $N=9$ ) was used. Email contact was used to recruit potential interview participants. This email included a recruitment letter that detailed the nature of the study and what would be involved in participating in the study (Appendix C). Once all interviewees were committed to the interviews, the researcher set up an interview schedule for the participants. Interviewees were given a consent letter during the interview.

### *Pilot Interviews*

A pilot interview was arranged with a colleague to ensure the researcher was prepared and comfortable in the interview setting. Thomas and Nelson (2001) state, “skillful interviewing takes practice” (p. 336). The pilot interviews helped to nurture the development of the researcher as a skilled interviewer. Decisions such as what to wear, level of formality, the ordering of the questions were made during the pilot process to help ensure rapport with the interviewees (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The researcher learned about proper posturing in the interview, body language and how to circle back to questions the interviewee wasn’t comfortable with or clear about how to answer initially. Also, practicing the interview helped the researcher develop interpersonal skills, such as learning to give the interviewee ample time to respond and how to present himself comfortably to the interviewee. Finally, the pilot interview provided the researcher with an estimate of the time required to complete the interview and allowed for modification of the questions that were used.

### *Interview Questions*

The questions asked in the interview were important because they are the main source for uncovering participant's interpretations of the service learning experience. The questions derived for the interview were meant to be open-ended to allow the interviewee to deeply explore their experiences of service learning. Patton's (1990) suggests six types of questions can be asked of people in regards to their experiences (p. 290). These six types of questions were chosen to guide the interview. Two additional questions were added to these six for a total of eight types of questions. First, questions can be described in both the past, future tense, and the researcher decided to include a separate question that looked at service experiences of interviewees in past, present and future (Patton, 1990). The last type of questions asked were open-ended questions that allowed interviewees the chance to add any other comments or insights about their experiences and the challenges they may have experienced. The questions used in the interview are presented in Appendix D. The standardized, open-ended interview allowed for each of the interviewees to receive the same questions in the same order.

Each of the interviews was audio recorded for the purpose of transcription. Written notes were also taken to help improve the accuracy of data collection as well as document other important information (e.g. body language, emotional content, setting, length of interview etc.). It was also important to label each tape to ensure that they were organized properly and that it would be clear in the transcription process which employee was being interviewed.

### *Transcription of the Tapes*

Transcriptions are the written record of the interview and record the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. Transcription of the interview tapes was a very laborious, time-consuming and challenging process. The quality of the recordings varied considerably, depending on the setting of the interview and the volume of the participants' voice. Therefore, the researcher often needed to replay certain segments of the tapes more than once to ensure that he accurately transcribed the interview dialogue. The researcher also had four of the tapes transcribed by a third party. After reviewing these transcriptions, however, the researcher found many errors and omissions, and was forced to review each of the four tapes and correct the parts of the interview that were not accurate. This again proved to be very lengthy, but a necessary action to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate.

### *Analysis of the Data*

The purpose of collecting and analyzing qualitative data is "to facilitate the search for patterns and themes within a particular setting or across cases" (Patton, 1990 p. 384). The analysis of the qualitative data was guided by Creswell's (1998) Data Analysis Spiral, which is a circular process of data management, used in qualitative inquiries. There are five spirals described in the process by Creswell (1998). These spirals represent a non-linear, but progressive research process, where the researcher works to make sense of the data from the inquiry. As Crewsell (1998) describes, "to analyze qualitative data,

the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach” (p. 142). The procedures in the process are outlined below.

Data collection, involved conducting, recording and transcribing each of the interviews with the employees. In the first spiral, data managing, the researcher organized the interviews, converted them into rich text format files and imported them in the data management software program, QSR NVivo. The NVivo software helped to ensure the thick descriptions of employees were captured and that the data analysis would be manageable. Separate files within the program were also created. These files included information about the participants, (job description, gender) and the data source (interview transcriptions).

In the following phase, reading and memoing, the researcher thoroughly and carefully read the rich text files. Creswell (1998) discusses the importance of reading the text several times and the researcher did this for each of the documents. The researcher also read over the interview transcriptions as part of the process of understanding and entering the text before the transcriptions were imported into NVivo. The memoing process involved writing short notes and ideas about the interviews in NVivo. This helped the researcher understand and contextualize each of the interviews and prepare him for the next stage of the research process.

The third spiral of describing, classifying and interpreting the data, was important and it unfolded in different ways. In this process, QSR NVivo was a very helpful and effective tool. QSR NVivo helps to code, organize, and create linkages between ideas, themes and quotes (Bazley & Richards, 2000). There are four types of coding that NVivo performs including coding of exact words and phrases, broad brush coding, concept

coding and descriptive coding (Bazely & Richards, 2000). Bolman and Deal's (1997) framework served as the initial conceptual orientation for analyzing the data (Patton, 1990). Using Bolman and Deal's (1997) theoretical framework as the lens for the inquiry, the researcher coded quotes from the interview transcriptions that were connected to the different frames and the key words, metaphors and ideas that support those frames. This is described as an editing analysis process (Crabtree & Miller, 1992) of open coding and thematic analysis of script related to the theoretical framework. Once this was finished further themes, categories and dimensions were coded. Additional insights of importance from the researcher, the literature and the transcriptions that stood outside of the four frames were added to the NVivo database, helping to create a fuller picture of the experience of participants. The researcher also created files that captured the researchers' thoughts, and insights about the data as the research process evolved.

In the fourth spiral, representing and visualizing, the researcher began to organize the information spatially. NVivo allows the researcher to display information visually. Major themes were organized into what Bazley and Richard (2000) describe as trees, under which different nodes representing key quotations were connected to the overarching theme. The process of using NVivo allowed patterns of importance to be captured and displayed and this was important for the analysis in the discussion and conclusion of the thesis. Lastly, the presentation of this process unfolded in the creation of what Creswell (1998) describes as an Account. This thesis, the findings, discussion and conclusions that developed out of this research process, are the Account.

### Limitations

There are several limitations for this study, as a result of the qualitative methodology chosen for the inquiry. First, the results of this inquiry will not aid in predicting the experience of other participants in service learning programs. However, phenomenology does assume that there is an essence or essences to shared experiences, and therefore others who participate in the same program, may have similar experiences (Patton, 1990). Thomas and Nelson (2001) also add that in qualitative research there is user generalizability. User generalizability allows the reader (e.g. other companies, researchers, government administrators) to decide which part of the research is applicable to their unique situation.

One major limitation of the study was that participants had varied experiences and participation in the service learning program. Some participants attended multiple learning and service sessions, while several employees only attended one of the volunteer sessions. Therefore, the only learning that took place for certain employees was informal conversation with other employees and the reflective process of this interview and the checking process where employees re-read their transcriptions. Therefore, the major thread that ties together the participants in the study was participation in the service work.

Another potential limitation in the inquiry was the Hawthorne Effect. The Hawthorne Effect refers to changes in participant behavior or responses due to the attention from and reactive effects of the researcher (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). The researcher attempted to minimize this by ensuring the participant that interviews were free from critique and review from other participants and management. The researcher

was sensitive and aware of the effect he had on the behavior of employees and tried to allow participants to express the full range of opinions about their experiences.

The last limitation is the issue of researcher bias. It was important for the researcher to try to be free from bias, and attempt to ensure that full, accurate responses of the employees were captured. This helped to ensure that the researcher was true to the interpretations given by employees in the interviews. Throughout the research process the researcher attempted to be honest, direct and very thorough in attempting to uncover the essence of the experiences of employees.

### Timeline

It is important to establish a timeline to make sure that the research process unfolds efficiently and productively. The timeline for the inquiry is found in Table 2.0 and outlines the research process as it has developed. The timeline for the proposal defense and ethics reviews was short, however, both of these processes unfolded efficiently, allowing the researcher to move ahead with data collection, analysis and writing. Considering the complexities of research process, such as receiving ethics approvals and the development and implementation of the service learning program, the initial timeline needed to be flexible and this allowed for the researcher to complete the research stages.

Table 2.0

## Research Timeline

Date	Tasks
July, 2006	Proposal Defense
July, 2006	Ethics Review
July - August, 2006	Service learning Program
August, 2006	Pilot Interview
Augusts - September 2006	Interviews and Member Checking
September, 2006 – February, 2007	Data analysis, and Thesis Writing.

## Trustworthiness

The diversity and complexity of the service learning experience will be hard to replicate, and therefore the goal is not to generalize the findings of this inquiry. In a qualitative, phenomenological inquiry the goal of the study is not to predict behavior of others who have similar experiences. The goal of phenomenology is to understand the essence and structure of the phenomenon for those sharing a common experience (Patton, 1990). There are however, measures that were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the inquiry.

Adhering to a phenomenological perspective during the research process and ensuring that interviews were comprehensive and in-depth strengthens the credibility of this study. A phenomenological study focuses on descriptions and interpretations of what people experience and therefore it was important to collect thick descriptions in the interviews. This process was aided by asking open-ended questions in the interview and capturing these responses by taping and transcribing the interviews (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Member checking was done all with interviewees after the interviews to ensure the credibility of the data collected. Member checking happens when the data and the interpretations are brought back to the interviewees (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). This took place through email correspondence with employee participants. Participants were given a chance to correct errors of interpretation, add new insights and to judge how adequate the interview was in allowing them to communicate their experiences (Guba & Lincoln 1989).

Great care was taken during the inquiry to ensure an audit trail was left so there was sufficient documentation of the research process. This included keeping all taped interviews, transcriptions, literature reviewed and a research journal that allowed the researcher to outline the research process as it unfolded. Developing an audit trail allowed for the data collected and interpreted to be confirmed and this helped with establishing the dependability of information sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

There are different standards in the qualitative paradigm for assessing the credibility of research reporting. Morse (1994) describes a “validating circle of inquiry...where the descriptions and interpretations of experience are something we can

nod to and recognize as experiences that we had or could have had (p. 131). The researcher can also know that the “description or interpretation is correct because the reflective process, awakens an inner moral impulse” (p. 130). The researcher offers this Account, or text to readers and it “is open to multiple interpretations” and may be different for each person who reads this inquiry (Morse, 1994, p.117). The richness of this document is in how “well somebody else can use it” and whether it “makes sense to somebody else” and if there is “any relevance or validity in the context” of someone’s experience (Morse, 1994, p. 117).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

The aim of this study is to inquire into the experiences of employees in a corporate service learning program. As participation in the program varied substantially, the inquiry focus expanded to include the views of employees involved only in the volunteer component of the service learning program. Information for this inquiry was gathered through hour long, one-on-one interviews with employee participants. Following a brief introduction to the participants, the findings from the personal interviews are presented as seven major themes and two sub-themes that emerged in regards to the service learning program. The major themes include skill development, health, job satisfaction, improved workplace relationships, bridging into the community, social responsibility, and challenges associated with the service learning program. The two sub-themes were self-esteem and empowerment and are included under the theme of health. These themes represent the first layer of analysis for the discussion in the thesis.

#### *Overview of Interview Participants*

Each of the nine participants in the inquiry worked either in a full or part time capacity at Sportswear at the time of the study. Although participants were involved in a varying capacity in the service learning program, all participants were involved in at least one volunteer outing. Participants may have taken part in one or more of the learning components of the course. Each of the employees included in the study became involved by replying on-line to an email request asking them to participate in the inquiry. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, fictitious initials and identities have been

used in this thesis. A brief introduction to each participant is given in this chapter including, basic background information, job description, details on their involvement in the service learning program and volunteer experience. Table 5.0, found at the end of the section, outlines past, present and future volunteer experience of employees. Table 6.0, highlights which parts of the program employees participated in.

#### *DC*

DC is a male educator (an educator, is the title at Sportswear given to an employee who works as a retail sales associate) who has worked at Sportswear for fourteen months. DC is also a yoga instructor and serves as a resource for the company in regards to product development and yoga education. Before the service learning program DC had not been involved in any other group volunteer initiatives with the store; however he has volunteered his time with the company by teaching yoga to running groups and the staff. Outside of the service learning program, DC does not volunteer.

DC was involved in one volunteer out-trip in which he instructed yoga positions for the youth and camp leaders at the children's hospital and worked one-on-one with class members, correcting postures. Considering his extensive yoga training, DC was asked to open and close the yoga session he volunteered in. At the end of the interview for this study, DC cemented his enthusiasm for the service work and said, "*I'd liked to do it again!*" He was eager to share his insights about his experience. DC was leaving the company in the fall to pursue yoga training overseas.

*CT*

CT is a female educator on the retail floor at Sportswear. In her words, her job description is “selling the clothes and educating people on the company and the culture.” CT is also a community ambassador for the store who “represents the company” in her athletic pursuits. CT is a competitive athlete and as an ambassador she is “testing the clothes, pushing the clothes to its limits” and gives “feedback on the clothes.” CT has worked for Sportswear for three and a half years. In the past she has operated as the community educator, which entailed developing volunteer initiatives to connect the company and the staff to the community. CT was involved in one other volunteer initiative with the store prior to the service learning program, involving fundraising for a children’s charity event known as the 24-hour relay. She is presently involved in volunteering with a national non-profit association.

CT was involved in one volunteer session and instructed part of the yoga class and assisted both the youth and camp leaders. During the session, CT was “in conversations with them to help the actual kids get the most out of the yoga class...[to help them see] what their limits were and what was possible.” CT also took part in two learning sessions, one at the beginning of the course and the final learning session. She is currently in the process of leaving the regional store to pursue work in another community.

*BD*

BD is an educator and is mainly on the retail floor “interacting with guests and educating them on the features of the garments.” She also helps with unpacking and sorting new shipments of clothes. BD has been working with Sportswear for four months

and sees here self as one of the newer employees in the store. Most recently, BD was involved in volunteering with the local arts community, working in galleries and has volunteered with the YMCA. BD was also involved in selling lemonade for a youth charity fundraiser with Sportswear. Her experiences volunteering for a youth charity stimulated a desire to learn more about bringing yoga to persons with disabilities and volunteering with the children's hospital. BD felt like the service learning program fit with her "own personal interests and experiences that involve creative expression and art and youth." BD is not currently involved in any other volunteer work. BD was involved with one volunteer session at the children's hospital in which she worked with the youth, assisting them in their yoga poses and instructing a number of poses during her rotation in the yoga class.

*AE*

AE is a female manager "on the floor" at Sportswear as well as an inventory coordinator who is in charge of the "inventory aspects and product supplies." She has been working at the store for a year and a half. AE also works on the floor as an educator for half of her time. AE has not been involved in any other volunteer initiatives at the store in the past; however, on her own she has volunteered with seniors groups, worked with the food bank and been involved with outdoor wilderness volunteer activities. AE is not currently involved in any other volunteer initiatives, and dedicates much of her spare time to her child.

During the service learning program, AE was involved in one volunteer out-trip to the Children's Hospital. Along with instructing her component of the yoga session, she

also assisted youth with their yoga poses. During the volunteer outing, AE was “enrolling kids in activities; just helping them out and being a presence.” For her, the service experience “brought back memories” of volunteering with her family at the Children’s hospital as a youth. AE also attended a learning session where she learned about other participants’ experiences volunteering and gained an understanding about the volunteer work she would be completing.

*AS*

AS is a female educator at Sportswear and holds the position of Community Educator in which she handles “community relations for the store as well as coordinates with the head office.” AS has been working with the store for approximately twenty-two months. In the past she has volunteered with Sportswear and helped put on a fashion show for charity. Several months ago, AS participated in a service learning pilot program and worked with the same charity partner, teaching yoga to a younger audience. While working at Sportswear, AS has volunteered by donating yoga mats to local schools, and giving her time to sell lemonade for a 24 hour relay event for a children’s charity. In the past AS has worked with Aids Vancouver Island. AS currently volunteers with the Canadian Sierra Club. AS was involved in three of the four volunteer sessions at the Children’s Hospital. She took part in all four learning sessions including, the opening and closing sessions as well as two reflective sessions. Along with the instructing yoga, AS also volunteered by making the “initial contact of the organization and arranging times” for both the volunteer and learning sessions. She “worked closely with the [children’s hospital] facilitators there [coordinating] on-site and then on-site at the time of volunteering.” AS was the initial contact person within Sportswear who helped champion

the project, getting buy-in from ownership, management, and staff participants. She was instrumental in finding the charity partner, and organizing the volunteer and learning sessions. AS also used her home for the closing learning session. It was her passion and commitment that helped launch the service learning program. AS is currently changing professions, and is no longer working for Sportswear.

*MM*

MM is a female educator and sees educating as a process of teaching customers about “the garment they are looking at and ...are interested in and trying to tell them about the different functions of it.” She is a seasonal helper who works for three to four months in the summer and for a few weeks during the Christmas season. MM has been working at Sportswear for fourteen months. MM has been involved in one other volunteer activity with the company: a 24-hour relay fundraiser for a youth charity. MM is also a student and is pursuing a teacher’s degree.

MM was involved in one of the volunteer sessions. While volunteering, she instructed her portion of the yoga class, teaching several yoga positions. MM worked with a number of youth and assisted one of the female camp leaders. MM was excited about her participation in the program stating, “this is actually the first thing that I’ve done with the [children’s hospital] and to be a part of teaching them yoga is really cool.” MM shared that in the past she had worked for a local bank and that volunteer experience allowed a person, “open yourself up to something new and you make yourself vulnerable” which she reflected was brought back to the workplace in a positive way.

*CS*

CS is a female employee who, for the past year, has operated as the store manager. She has worked at Sportswear for four years and is the only employee who has been with the store since it opened. CS is involved in the hiring, merchandizing, inventory control, training, culture and the financial aspects of the store. CS works directly underneath the owner of the store and has been delegated the day to day responsibilities so the owner can work primarily on the business aspects of the store.

Prior to the service learning program, CS was involved in a trial service learning session at the children's hospital which included two volunteer sessions and two learning sessions; outside of that experience, this is has been her only experience volunteering with Sportswear. During the service learning program, CS was involved in one volunteer session and two learning sessions. CS both instructed yoga and assisted the teenagers at the children's hospital. CS commented that during the volunteering she "felt more comfortable because I have my teaching degree and that's where I kind of shine" and that she "would love to continue other volunteer work." She is not currently involved in any other service work. CS is also a certified teacher. She was the second participant recruited to the study and her involvement was key in getting other employees involved because of her position as manager.

*RB*

RB a female educator and works on the retail floor. She is also a part of the merchandising team at Sportswear and is involved in creating the product displays in the store windows. RB has been working with the company for five months. She has not been involved in any other volunteer activities with the company.

RB was involved in two volunteer sessions at the children's hospital and one short reflective learning session where employees were able to share their thoughts about their experiences. She instructed a number of yoga poses and in-between focused on helping to guide the youth through the activities. RB shared with me her reasons for being involved in the service learning program stating a "big reason why I chose to do a couple of sessions, [was] because I was like, ooh, this makes me nervous, but that's why I should be doing it!" RB likes "giving back to my [her] community" and is "always looking for outside things to help out with for the greater good, for everyone."

*JR*

JR is an educator and is also working in conjunction with the community educator, and will be taking over the role in the near future. JR has been working with Sportswear for two years with a six-month break in between. She has not taken part in any volunteer activities with the company, however, she does volunteer on her own time through dance instruction in the community. JR was involved in the organizing and planning of the service activities. She participated in three volunteer sessions, which consisted of instructing and supporting youth and leaders in the yoga class. JR also attended two learning sessions. When JR was asked why she participated in the program she said, "I have thought of volunteering but never had. This was a way for me to get out and actually do it. You don't need to be afraid of doing that."

Table 3.0

## Past, Present and Future Volunteer Work

Participant	Past	Present	Future
JR	No*	No	Yes
AS	Yes	Yes	Yes
AE	No*	No	Yes
CT	Yes	Yes	Yes
RB	No*	No	Yes
MM	No*	No	Yes
DC	Yes	No	Yes
BD	Yes	No	Yes
CS	Yes	No	Yes

\* Indicates the participant has not been involved with any volunteer work with Sportswear, but has volunteered on their own.

Table 4.0

## Service Learning Program Involvement

Participant	Volunteer sessions	Learning Sessions
JR	3	2
AS	3	4
AE	1	1
CT	1	2
RB	2	1
MM	1	0
DC	1	0
BD	1	0
CS	1	2

## The Service Learning Experience

### *The "Service" Component of the Service Learning Program*

The service component of the course took place in the summer, during two, week-long camps for youth with disabilities at a children's hospital. Four yoga classes were lead during the youth camp. Participants were generally involved in the same way during the volunteer work, in that they were instructing and assisting youth camp participants and leaders in a yoga class. However, there were different levels of participation and connection between volunteers and camp members. To understand and describe what the "service" component of the service learning program looked like participants were asked "What type of activities were you involved in during the service learning program?" The answers to this question have been threaded through a description of a typical volunteer session.

Employee volunteers were "involved with teenagers at the summer camp" which was a "whole different level of yoga" as "a lot of the children still hadn't ever done it [yoga] yet" [CS]. Yoga was a new activity for many of the children and camp leaders. After participants finished teaching their section of the class, they took on an assisting role. [DC] explained his role: "I assisted. We pretty much paired off, took, like, a section of the kids participating. So, I stayed in one spot and basically assisted the people around me." Employee volunteers not only assisted, but modeled the yoga positions, allowing them to also experience the benefits of the yoga session. [RB] described that she was involved by "participating with the kids and helping them out with other movements." Many of the employees worked one-on-one with the youth in their assisting efforts.

There were challenges in bringing yoga to a group of physically challenged youth, in that all the youth were not able to fully participate and therefore, poses had to be modified to suit each child. Many youth had neuro-muscular disorders such as spinal bifida and cerebral palsy and therefore could not participate in all the yoga positions. Employees were challenged to help vary the yoga poses with the youth so that everyone could participate. [MM] described how she did this, stating, "I found a couple of the kids to actually work with while I was doing yoga poses to try and help them. I tried to look at different variations of how they could do it; make sure they were having fun." Some of the children were confined to their wheelchairs, or did not have full mobility and sat on the floor. These youth received support and attention from the employees. [JR] provided this support and "was helping the kids get up, helping them get into postures, helping them to be moved around because they couldn't get around on their own."

Connecting with the youth was an important part of the program, and employees were encouraged get to know the youth. [BD] described her involvement reflecting that, "for the yoga, [she was] just interacting with the children at [The Children's Hospital] and showing the yoga poses." Just being a presence was also an integral part of the service activity. Helping participants bond and building bridges between the people was important, especially if students were not comfortable taking part in all the activities. A goal of the service work was to try and ensure everyone had a positive experience. During the yoga class there were "people reaching out and physically touching each other, arms patting on the back [and] a lot of supportive gestures." [AS] The group from Sportswear tried to create a positive and stimulating atmosphere and there was lots of "laughter, smiling and people having really amazing times... kids really challenging

themselves physically and opening themselves up to experiences that they weren't familiar with. [CS]

Physical touch and connection were also a focus for employees during the service work. Employees, not only helped participants get into their positions but they may have given their partner a hug or a shoulder massage at the end of the practice. [BD] shared, that she "helped some of the children with the postures and touched them and then when we concluded with the massage session." [BD]

Two employee participants organized the majority of the service activities for the employee group. They were in charge of the organizational aspects of the volunteer sessions that included recruiting participants at Sportswear. [AS] and [JR] bore the majority of the organizational work for the program. [AS] was the central figure in the volunteer portion of the service learning program and acted as a resource and guide for the course. She recounted, "I was involved with the initial contact of the organization and arranging times. So, I worked closely with the [Children's Hospital] facilitators there and then on-site at the time of the volunteering." [JR] also assisted in the logistics of the course and helped ensure that the coming together of these two groups (Children's Hospital and Sportswear) was mutually beneficial and helped employees feel comfortable in their new, volunteer roles. In [JR] own words, she described,

I was involved in organizing it, planning out what was going to be done and who was going to be doing what. I was involved in the actual session...I was talking to staff and trying to make people feel more comfortable. Helping before and after about the experience.

These two employees helped broaden the descriptive lens of the inquiry, showing the different roles and volunteer experiences of employees during the service learning program.

*The "Learning" Component of the Service Learning Program*

The "learning component" was facilitated over the course of the month. In total there were four learning sessions available to participants in the program. An opening and closing session helped frame the course and there were reflective sessions facilitated immediately after two volunteer outings. Participants had different descriptions of their learning experience that helped to give an understanding of the processes involved in the course.

The course took place in casual settings including, on-site at the children's hospital, at two different coffee shops and at one of the homes of the employee. [AS] and [JR] described these settings in their responses to the sensory questions in the interview.

You would see people sitting around in a casual environment, relaxed, chatting and sharing ideas, once again a lot of smiling a lot of openness. [AS]

You would see people having fun and coming together and eating. You would see people talking and sharing their experience. You would see people that were quiet. [JR]

Initially the course gave participants an opportunity to learn about the volunteer partner and what types of service they would provide, and discuss the connection between the service and their workplace.

We talked about sort of what was our job [was] during the volunteer experience. What we got out of it afterwards. Why we think it is relevant in the workplace setting... We were chatting about our experiences in a 360 degree way. [AS]

Employees also talked about the benefits, both to themselves, their co-workers, the company and the community.

Discussions about the benefits and the why's...and about the actual service learning and at the volunteer experience itself I would hear a lot of laughter and fun and instruction and guidance. [CS]

Employees participated in reflective activities, designed to stimulate dialogue about their service experience and how it might contribute to their workplace experience. [CS] discusses these activities.

The discussions I remember having were really involved around the benefits to corporations and to [Sportswear] specifically and why it was important to come together as a team ...and how it brought us together. [CS]

Employees also looked at how the company could make the most impact, in the service work and how community service could be come a sustainable part of their workplace.

We were looking at how it [the service work] could be improved. We talked about doing it more frequently and making it something that new staff could be involved in, because that is a part of our culture. [JR]

More specifically, employees looked at how the experience could be improved when they once again connected with the children's hospital.

Frank conversations about the experiences, and a lot of ideas for next time. And, a general support of the volunteer experience. [AS]

### *Theme Overview*

There were several themes that presented themselves during the research process. These themes emerged from the data analysis of the employee interviews and were captured with the qualitative software, QSR NVivo. An overview of these themes is presented in Table 6.0. The theme title and a description of the themes are provided. The themes included skill development, health (with sub-themes of self-esteem and empowerment), job satisfaction, improved workplace relationships, social responsibility, bridging into the community and challenges. The finding section is organized by these themes and sub-themes.

Table 5.0

## Theme Overview and Description

Theme/Sub-theme	Description
Skill Development	Development, enhancement, and practice of workplace skills
Health	Service work contributing to a sense health for individuals and the workplace
Self-Esteem	Feelings of pride, esteem and confidence
Empowerment	A feeling of control over oneself and influence over the community
Job Satisfaction	Feelings of enjoyment and appreciation of the workplace and the employer
Improved Workplace Relationships	Enhanced feelings of co-worker connection, understanding and positive relationships
Social Responsibility	Feeling of stewardship, care and responsibility to the community
Bridging into the Community	Employees connecting with diverse others in the community
Challenges Attendance Course Information Lack of enthusiasm for learning component Appropriate Instruction Feeling fearful about instructing	Employee perception of the issues and challenges of the service learning program

*Skill Development*

Service learning programs are guided by the principle of reciprocity: the notion that all parties learn and grow from the service experience. Therefore, it was important to understand what participants believed they gained from their experience. The third question of the interview asked participants, "What type of skills do you think you gained

from the service learning experience that might be of benefit at work?" There were a plethora of skills that were reportedly developed, enhanced or learned. Skill development was also addressed indirectly in other questions. For the two community leaders at Sportswear, they commented on the organizational skills they developed while facilitating the service learning program.

Skills; just in terms of organizing groups it is always a good experience: The ups and downs of doing that and getting a bunch of people together. [AS]

Preparedness when you are in charge of a group of people that you are taking elsewhere and you want to make sure everyone knows that they are doing so that you can bring the best possible program together for the kids. [JR]

A major component of the service experience was instructing yoga and employees were tasked with leading the yoga sessions. Educating was a skill that was practiced and enhanced during the instructional component of the service experience.

We educate people, so it was cool to educate on a different level. It was about yoga which we practice and are encouraged to practice by the company. It was teaching something we have knowledge about, but I have never taught before.  
[RB]

The type of educating and communicating done during the service outing was a change from roles and tasks employees perform at work. With the change in role, employees developed and improved public speaking skills by instructing the yoga class.

You know [you are] not out there on top of the cash desk [at work] in front of everyone. Whereas there [at the volunteer outing] I am going to get in front of

people and speak... at the store it is going to be a one on one...Here I get everyone involved. [AE]

Skills also, just more public speaking skills and preparedness when you are in charge of a group of people. [AS]

[AE] learned different ways to connect with the youth group while instructing the yoga session, which she believed could transfer into the workplace.

Finding different ways because all the students are so different and how they might react. They may not speak as much or some of them are quite quiet or can't.

So different ways of how to show them something or make it humorous. [AE]

So can you see that transferring to work? [CB (researcher)]

Yes all the people you work with are all unique. [AE]

Interpersonal skills were also developed and strengthened during the volunteer experience, which were believed to be of use in the workplace.

Interpersonal skills. Just, perception, like be able to better read people...Also, just being very forward and open with new people in order to get the maximum result and benefit for the volunteer kids. [AS]

These interpersonal skills are believed to be useful in connecting with different client populations at work, especially those customers who might have physical or mental challenges.

More an openness to people coming into the store with disabilities. I think. I always sort of shied away from it in the past and let someone else take the initiative, but now I am really open to that. [RB]

In the case that I would interact with a guest who themselves had physical disabilities...being understanding about limitations and just different needs. I think there is a certain approach that I have learned. [BD]

The learning sessions were also an opportunity for employees to discuss what things they learned and what skills were developed.

We talked about...what our job [was] during the volunteer experience, what we got out of it afterwards...why we think it is relevant to the workplace. [AS ]

### *Health*

Health was a central theme in describing the alignment of the culture of Sportswear and the service learning program. Organizations have their own unique culture, and it was of interest to find how service learning infused itself into the culture. The question, "What would you describe as the culture at [Sportswear] and how does service learning fit it with that?" Sportswear, according to participants, tries to create and maintain a culture of healthy living. The service learning program for many was a natural extension or manifestation of this culture.

It is a culture of health and positivity and ownership and integrity, so I think something like this helps reinforce all those values. [AS]

I think the culture is health and wellness and living it out in one's community and your home... I think service is what it is all about. Service whether it be in the workplace or in your home or out there. I think it goes hand in hand. [AE]

A goal orientated culture of Sportswear, focused on health was believed to be connected to and supported by the service learning program.

The culture for [Sportswear] is goal orientated - focused on greatness... And the health issue: encouraging people to transform themselves through health and fitness. [DC]

The learning sessions also aligned with a culture embracing a holistic perspective on health.

The culture at [Sportswear] is healthful...so that is a mental and physical combination of health....The learning session is reflecting on what it is that you have done which leads to growth in the things that you have done, like changing it for next time or moving forward. It is a skill and helps you to be a better person. [JR]

Participants were also asked whether the service experience filled a need, either for them or the business. The question was asked, "Do you think this experience served both your needs and the companies needs and if so, how?" For one participant there was a need to be involved in health promoting activities.

I think it met my need because I always look to get involved in things that are going to promote health and well-being and fitness. And especially to those people who may not see that their lives could be physical and active. I feel as though it met the companies' needs, because it involved yoga, and health and wellbeing. [CT]

[BD] highlighted that teaching yoga was a way for the employees to help the youth develop a positive outlook on exercise.

Looking at a healthy life as something that is fun and something that can obviously be beneficial to everyone. To some people there is still a stigma about incorporating fitness into life.

Finally, for [MM] the fact that the volunteer work focused on instructing and participating in yoga was a chance to learn about a new way to balance her life through stress relief.

For me yoga is such a stress reliever. I didn't know the benefits of yoga. I think that people go through a lot in life and carry things with them. There is a lot to yoga that people don't really know about. They get a benefit regardless of their ability.

#### *Self Esteem.*

Helping volunteers to feel esteemed is a fundamental goal of service learning projects. The question, "How does participating in the service learning program make you feel about yourself?" was asked of employees to understand if and how the service learning experience helped participants feel esteemed, or good about themselves and how the program or service work might contribute to this feeling.

For a number of participants, the service learning gave them a feeling of overcoming the initial challenges they perceived about being involved in the service experience.

It made me feel good that I was there. It made me feel... I wasn't really hard on myself, but I was in some way ashamed that I had only done this once in a long time right... It was, like wow: it is such simple thing. [AE]

I was scared, I have never taught a yoga class before in my life... I gained confidence in myself. [CT]

For some employees it altered their work experience by changing their mental outlook – giving them a more positive focus while at work.

Bringing positive kind of thoughts to things...I think it brought me back to pushing down the negative things that get at you at a job...mentally...it is a different approach. [AE]

[AS] felt good of her choice to volunteer instead of pursuing other activities.

It makes me feel pretty good... I don't have a lot of free time. It's kind of nice to allow myself to put the time in to do some volunteering, rather than spending it doing something else that's more self-orientated, rather than community-orientated.

[CT] was moved to tears from the up welling of joy she felt and the pride she had for the youth, herself and her co-workers.

It made me feel good... [CT starting to become tearful]. It made me feel proud to be involved with my co-workers. It made me feel proud that these kids were willing to put themselves out there and have other people help them do things that they might not necessarily do or feel comfortable doing.

For others employees the service work made them feel good and gave them a sense of personal reward.

It felt really good...It feels like something I have really internalized and it really becomes a part of my every day life, my interactions with people. It has spilled out to the rest of my life. [JR]

Community work and volunteer work I think is not emphasized as much how valuable it is for the people who are doing the work... It gives you a warm feeling [BD]

It was really exhilarating for me and rewarding. I love volunteering. [MM]

The positive feelings were believed to be passed onto the youth group participating in the yoga session.

Just being positive. Not even doing much of anything. Just going their for an hour doing the yoga, I think impacted them more than the fact that they knew it wasn't just yoga. They felt good about themselves after and they were positive and happy. [MM]

The learning sessions also provided a space where employees could share how the service experience made them feel.

It was neat to see the confidence that people gained from it as they went along through the process and actually being able to talk about afterwards or even beforehand. [CS]

### *Empowerment.*

Empowerment is a personal sense of having control or influence over oneself and influence over one's community. Employees described a sense of empowerment in different ways, but the underlying theme was the belief that they could make a difference

in the lives of others. The thread of empowerment stretched into both how employees felt about their involvement in the service work and also what meaning they attached to their experiences.

[CT] found meaning in being able to help the youth become physically active. By instructing yoga and witnessing the participant's eagerness to participate, she felt like she was able to positively influence their physical activity behaviours. [CT] also believed that a sense of empowerment would extend to the youth because of the new skills they would be endowed with that could contribute to their level of physical activity.

It meant that I could affect other kids. I could get them active, when maybe they would just be sedentary and they would just think that is ok. And I think now that they realize that doing that these little movements are good for them and that it is empowering to them.

The feeling of being empowered was drawn from the question, "How does being involved in the service learning program make you feel about your self?" [JR] felt a sense of empowerment because she was able to see how educating the youth and their leaders about yoga was making a difference in their lives. She distinguished her feelings of power as a positive force that could be used to benefit others.

I felt really powerful that I was doing stuff and that it was actually making a difference to people in their lives, be it the staff we were working with during the session or the kids...I felt I could really make a difference.

[AS] also felt empowered by being able to see first hand how her contribution was making a difference. This feeling, she believed would extend into the future giving her the confidence to work in the same, volunteer capacity.

It felt rewarding, I guess gratifying to see the fruits of your efforts turn out so well...I felt empowered for the next thing like that just because...I have done this before and I can do it again.

[MM] felt empowered to make a difference in the lives of others after being involved in the service work. This sense of empowerment was connected to feeling good about herself. The positive feedback and appreciation she received from the youth reinforced her feelings of empowerment and enhanced her sense of self as a giving person. When asked how the service work made her feel, she replied,

I felt so empowered as a person, that I can change things and make things better for people. I love it. If you have a gift and you give it, others appreciate it. Makes me feel like a better person.

Empowerment was also represented in the metaphors used by participants. [DC]'s metaphor, of a wildfire, represents what happens when employees are given the tool to empower themselves.

Like a wildfire you know you are starting little fires here and there. The idea is to support your staff and give them the tools to make themselves great so that they can then pass that on to the people they connect with all the time. Instead of making it some big mission; that we're going to change the world by doing this...No, you be the change you want to see in the world... It starts right here, right!

### *Job Satisfaction*

Service learning and volunteering both were viewed as a positive contribution to the level of enjoyment and satisfaction employees felt in the workplace and how they

viewed Sportswear as an employer. A goal initially developed by employees in the first service learning session was for the program activities to help employees feel more connected to their workplace and company. This goal was achieved, as evident by the employee reports in the interviews. Employees were asked, "How does participating in the service learning program make you feel about working for Sportswear?" All of the participants had positive comments, in regards to how it made them feel about their employer.

For [JR], it filled a need to be personally connected, passionate and involved in her work.

I need to have personal involvement in my work environment and an element of passion there for me. This definitely does and it builds our community.

For [DC] the feeling of connection to the company surfaced as a sense of pride. This positive feeling helped him overcome his feeling of cynicism about where the values of the company might lie and the fact that the primary role of the company is in retail and selling clothing.

It kind of reconfirmed the proudness that I feel for working for the company.

Most of the time... you get times when you are a little cynical about it. You think it is a [sports] company... we are selling clothes...it reaffirmed, that it is the best employer that I have ever worked for!

[MM] felt like she appreciated the company and the opportunities that were being afforded through the chance to volunteer.

I can only see it in a positive light. Anything we do for community service or helping others it just really makes us appreciate the company and what they are offering to us.

Putting the values of the company into action was also an important, positive influence for several employees. Instead of reading about the contributions of the company to the community, employees could directly see how the company was making a difference and be involved in the process.

It was a great. It made me feel confident in the company's commitment to actually being behind their values of community service. So, it made me feel like a more committed employee, it helped reinforce that. [AS]

It reaffirms how great it is and how fantastic of a company it is to work for and how they really do value balance in terms of work and your personal life and really giving back to the community in a real sense. [CT]

The service learning program was a positive point of difference between other workplaces for employees.

I have worked for places before where I was asked to do something that was a little bit out of my, per say the job description but it was never something that was a rewarding volunteer experience like that was. [BD]

I have always loved my job, but it just brought a whole new dimension to it. I never had that opportunity before in any of my previous experiences working for different companies. [CS]

For [MM] it was the recognition that in being empowered to volunteer by the company, the company was investing in her personal development and this enhanced her already strong feelings for the company.

It makes me realize that the company really cares about our self-growth in so many different ways, not just in training.

A greater feeling of satisfaction at worked also came out of feeling more authentic in the workplace.

Because of the authenticity of it, just because of doing something where you walk away and it is rewarding. It is like wow: my workplace has just offered me an experience that I wouldn't have necessarily [sought] out on my own. [BD]

Lastly, for [BD] the service learning program filled a need to work for a company that she believed in felt was socially responsible.

I do believe that there is time taken to consider just responsibility, whether that be social or sustainability... That's extremely important to me to work for a place where I feel like my beliefs are in tune with whom I am working for. [BD]

### *Improved Workplace Relationships*

The service learning experience helped many participants feel more connected to their co-workers. All participants commented that service learning experience positively affected their workplace relationships or maintained the positive relationship already existing. In the opinions and values section of the interview, employees were asked, "How do you think the service learning experience affected your workplace

relationships?” Several participants felt that workplace relationships were improved, strengthened and deepened.

It made them stronger. I feel that I know these people better. I feel more comfortable around them because we have had a shared experience outside of work and that is what builds a relationship. I can trust them more, I can be more open with them and more honest with them. [JR]

You come back and maybe have more respect and understanding for who they really are and how authentic they are...and when those things arise - which they have since this time - I know them on a different level. I am not just seeing the same issue arise at work. I know there is more to that person. [AE]

That is just another example of just seeing the people you work with doing something that isn't what they would do everyday and just interacting with the kids and it is endearing and it definitely draws you closer together. [BD]

[JR] used the metaphor of team to express the enhanced sense of personal connection she felt with her co-workers.

It definitely feels more like a team at work. I feel more connected to the people that I work with.

Several participants commented that the volunteer experience affected their interactions at work by giving them “stories” to share with their co-workers. For many participants the service learning program gave them a shared, positive experience with which they could connect with other employees in the workplace.

I think again just being able to relate to the people that also took it. Everyone who was part of the yoga at the [Children's Hospital] was so excited and everyone had something different to talk about and everyone wanted to share that. [CT]

There is a common shared experienced that everyone has a memory of... It was something that everyone shared and had come together in the way that was not confined to work type/company type structures. And perhaps show parts of ourselves that don't come out at work. A deeper level of intimacy in those areas. More sharing. [DC]

The shift in working environment – moving from the Sportswear retail floor to the children's hospital grounds - made an impact, as participants worked together in a different capacity than at work.

It just brings us together a little bit more, because here we are in a different venue. We are used to being at work together and that's great, but here we are having to support each other in another way another realm and it brings us closer together as a group because we have that experience... We were in it together. [MM]

For [CS] there was a change in the amount of passion shared between workers during the learning component of the program.

It's amazing to hear people express their own ideas. We have meetings where we try to have something they feel so passionately about is so amazing. There is that passion in the store but it is very different and there are a lot of things that we don't deal with in the store and this has brought that other whole aspect to us.

A sense of trust in workplace relationships was enriched by the service learning experience, as participants followed through with their commitments to the volunteer work.

I think if anything it was great for creating more of a sense of, I guess, maybe trust is the best word, but you can depend on these people... So it was a chance for people to sort of demonstrate their integrity outside of work in those kind of [volunteer] commitments. [AS]

Participating side-by-side in the service work also opened up new understanding between employees for both [CT] and [BD].

I think in a setting like that a lot of peoples' guards are down. There are, especially afterwards, people are a lot more open to talking and sharing their fears of that situation and relate it to other experiences... I think it is a really neat opportunity to get to know people at a different level as opposed to at work and what their work face is, or their work hat they have on. [CT]

I think you definitely learn more about your co-workers by seeing them in a setting like that. Because it is just very different from the workplace and that is the best way to learn about people is to see them in different lights than you have seen them before. [BD]

One employee felt like she was able to understand that others go through similar challenges that weren't highlighted at work or were covered up during work.

It was neat to see how other people reacted in that situation. Like, when we arrived, and whether anyone else nervous like I was.... It was kind of nice to see that I wasn't the only one a little bit nervous. [RB]

Would you see that in the workplace? [CB (researcher)]

Probably not actually. Just because in the workplace you tend to express perhaps, a little more confidence than you would normally because you have people relying on you all the time. [RB]

The relationship building was thought to be a moral booster once employees returned to the workplace.

It was nice to get everyone out there. It was a good springboard for other things. So it helps continue on what we are doing and I think it helps revitalize staff on the floor. And keeps up moral. [AS]

[RB] answered the question if workplace relationship were enhanced by the service learning experience by stating "No. We are all pretty good friends." [CT] also believed the employee group was close prior to the service learning experience, however, she felt the service work gave them a different, positive and community orientated activity to work together on.

I think service learning was really great, because as a store, in Victoria. We are very close. We are not just co-workers, we are friends and we hang out a lot outside of work... I think this gave us an opportunity to not only hang out as friends, but to affect the community.

The theme of improved workplace relationship also surfaced in the metaphors used by employees to describe their volunteer experience. [LM] used the metaphor of a fabric to describe the processes that take place during the volunteer work.

Our team at [Sportswear] I see them as the fabric. We are only as strong as the fabric that we are. Fabric can break down or it can be made stronger... It can be taken care with different washing... We are definitely tight knit like that and we make sure that we take care of each other. We carry the strength over to other things. I think it becomes stronger and we become closer knit ....and we carry that strength into what we are trying to portray to others. It stretches and it is pliable...How good does that feel too? After you have stretched. You are like: ahh! All the tension is worked out.

[AS] used the metaphor of a puzzle to convey how working together, for the good of the community creates something positive.

Like a puzzle, all the pieces fit together to create something nice. Each one has a shape on their own, but really without the rest you don't get much. [AS]

Is it the same puzzle at work or is it a different puzzle than at work? [CB (researcher)]

It is a pretty similar puzzle actually because you are still creating something good out of everyone's efforts. So although the focus may be a little bit different, essentially it is the same. [AS]

The sensory descriptions of the volunteer outing also highlighted an improvement in workplace relationships. [JR] comments that at the service outing, a person would see, "people working together, like physically working together... You would see friendships building."

*Bridging into the Community*

Relationships were also built, strengthened and formed between employees and the youth participants and leaders at the Children's Hospital. The service activity connected the employees to administrators, youth leaders, and youth at the Children's Hospital. This provided Sportswear staff with the opportunity to learn about and understand a different segment of the community. Employees found value in learning about and interacting with this group.

[CT] described bridging into the community as an opportunity for employees to learn more about a group of individuals in the city who are different than they are. She believed that this was of value for employees

I think seeing how amazing people are in dealing with their own challenges in their life and seeing how, how they have so much to offer. Sometimes even myself, even though I am born an amputee, sometimes I do stereotype other people who are in different situations and again, I think it just reinforced how everyone has their own abilities and their own magic to bring to the world. [CT]

Was there value for your colleagues? [CB (researcher)]

Maybe even more so for them than me. A lot of people haven't been put in a setting where they are dealing with disabled kids in wheelchairs or different physical disabilities....I think they really got to see these kids for kids, as opposed to people in a chair. [CT]

Metaphors used by participants, capture the theme of bridging in the service learning experience. [JR] specifically used the metaphor of a bridge, being formed between the two groups who would not have been connected without the yoga sessions.

Bridging the gaps between two components of the community - clearly can be easily bridged. Taking two groups that have that common interest and working together... The bridge is strengthened when you're working in a different way. We have built a bridge through one channel and strengthening this one bridge while, we are building lots of bridges.

[BD] used the metaphor of a group of kids which were connecting with other circles of friends in the community.

We were two groups of kids. Sort of interacting in an environment and one group of kids was familiar with their friends and we were familiar with each other. It was just trying to integrate as group.

Employees believed that this positive connection to diverse others was felt by the youth at the Children's Hospital as well.

I think that it is probably beneficial for the [Children's Hospital] children to interact with people from outside of their [Children's Hospital] world. They interact with their counsellors and their guides everyday, but I think it is probably beneficial to them to see people from outside that environment coming into to perhaps interact. [BD]

I think that it is really incredible for kids that feel disenfranchised... life can be hard for anyone regardless of your daily existence and how it can be different. But knowing that people are out there and they really want to spend time with you. [CS]

Interaction with an outside world and a group of people they wouldn't normally get to meet...Demonstrating that there are people out there that are willing to pay attention to what is going on for people who have disadvantages in those areas. To make them know that there are people who care and that they are willing to spend their time. [DC]

Bridging into the community is also evident in the sensory descriptions of participants. [CT] described the diverse group of people connecting through yoga.

You would see smiles, different people of different abilities, cultures, races being together, getting along helping and supporting each other. [CT]

### *Social Responsibility*

A major goal of the service learning program was to spark an interest in community service, and to cultivate a desire to continue serving the community in some capacity. All employees in the interview reported the theme of social responsibility and community involvement. There were several questions in the interview that elicited this response. The question, "What type of volunteer work can you see yourself doing in the future?" was asked to find out if employees would like to continue their service work after their participation in the service learning program. All participants responded positively to the idea of volunteering again in the future.

For some employees, working with the youth group at the children's hospital inspired them to work with youth in the future.

Probably a bit more with kids. I can't really say what I will jump at next, but, I think this has been one of the most difficult things to step into for me. From now on, I won't really have any barriers as far working with people. [RB]

Very similar things: being involved with kids and helping them to see that they can be active and be involved in sport and fitness no matter what their ability [CT]

I really enjoyed working with those kids and I can really see the benefit for me personally, working with people with disadvantages. [DC]

Participants were motivated to continue to specifically serve the Children's Hospital the service learning program connected them too.

I can definitely see myself doing this type of thing again with [the Children's Hospital]. I can see myself just going in and helping them in any capacity on an individual level. [JR]

For others, the spectrum of volunteer opportunities available to them in the future widened and they were open to new challenges, new volunteer activities, but did not have a specific idea about where they would volunteer.

I would love to continue other volunteer work. I don't know whether it would be in the yoga line of work or in the scholastic help reading and tutoring kind of work on a volunteer level. [CS]

I need to pick up another volunteer thing this year...I love the one on one. I am definitely willing to try something and go out to another realm, maybe go to hospitals. [MM]

The question of whether the program influenced participant volunteer habits, or desire to volunteer in the future was also asked to understand how the volunteer work or service learning program impacted employee perceptions of volunteer service. The question, "Has this (your desire to volunteer in the future) been influenced by the service learning program or service work?" was asked of participants. All participants commented that their experience in the service learning program influenced their desire to volunteer in the future. There were several reasons why employees were motivated to volunteer in the future, these included, having a group volunteer experience with friends, diversifying their volunteer experience, a feeling of gratification, reducing fear associated with volunteering and a sense of inspiration.

It definitely sparked interest in branching out and going out of my comfort zone.

I was scared of people with disabilities. I would definitely like to branch out.

[MM]

Absolutely. Quite a lot in a simple general sense. In what, you know, realizing, that there was immediate gratification. It wasn't something that you did and then a few months or a few weeks later, the thanks came along, it was immediate. [DC]

For [DC] having a service leader provided the structure and guidance needed to make him feel comfortable during the volunteering and want to volunteer in the future.

I liked to do it again. I think you were great in getting it all together. Having someone as a focal point, a go to person, who has experience...It made me feel comfortable knowing you have a lot of experience in this field. It was great knowing that someone that was the go to person.

One participant's perspective was that the desire to volunteer was also passed onto to fellow employees in the workplace. This was sparked by the stories shared by employees once they returned to work.

It created a lot of good conversations on the floor a lot of positive conversations about the experience with employees who had not [been involved]. For those who had not it created - whether they could not or choose not to- it created a want to afterward from the stories from of those who participated. [AS]

The theme of social responsibility also surfaced in employee reports about what the experience meant to them. Volunteering is often believed to be an intrinsic experience, where people give back to the community without gaining anything in return. The feelings people have in association with volunteering are an important part of why people involve themselves in community service projects. The question "What does being involved in the service learning program mean to you?" was asked to elicit the meaning employees derived from the experience. For [JR], involvement meant being socially responsible.

It meant that I care about my community and the people in it and their health.

That I do that and work on the feeling of care I have for people.

Being able to give back to the community and feeling authentic also brought meaning to employees.

I like giving back to my community. I am always looking for outside things to help out with for the greater good, for everyone. [RB]

It is another thing about authenticity. Because it is one thing to say: oh, this is where all our [Sportswear's] donations go. But, it is very important to know what exactly is that place and what goes on there. [BD]

Another way in which social responsibility surfaced as a theme was through employees learning about the values, beliefs and interest of their co-workers. Choosing to be involved in the service program to participate was a demonstration of social responsibility in action, and this value was illuminated by participation in the program.

People value new experiences, helping people, giving to people, sharing with them. It's nice because we work with so many different people. We have strengths and weaknesses, but we share the same values as people in general.

[MM]

Being able to relate to the people that also took it. Everyone who was part of the yoga at the [Children's Hospital] was so excited and everyone had something different to talk about and everyone wanted to share that and there was a feeling of wanting to get involved again. [CT]

A sense of social responsibility or wanting to help the community was present in [MM]'s description of the service sessions.

Everyone was being so compassionate and there and wanting to help everybody else.

Metaphors used by employees also speak of social responsibility as a function of serving the community. [JR] used the metaphor of community to communicate the expanded sense of belonging and connection that happened as participants volunteered.

We are a community. There are a whole bunch of participants who have a common goal that is there purpose... All of us in the session, the helpers at [Children's Hospital], students at [the Children's Hospital] and us are all community. My work is a community and there is a common goal. Now we are extending that out and they are a part of our community as well.

### *Challenges*

There were several challenges expressed by the employees of Sportswear in regards to the service learning program. These concerns were varied but grouped around a number of sub-themes including: attendance, course information, lack of enthusiasm for learning component, feeling fearful about instructing, and appropriate instruction.

#### *Attendance*

Attendance was an issue in terms of recruiting participants into the program and involving them in all of the sessions. The service learning course was not mandatory at Sportswear, and therefore, participants did not feel a sense of responsibility to attend all of the learning or volunteer sessions. Management in the store decided to keep an open door policy for the program to facilitate more involvement in the program, and permit all employees to participate, regardless of how much time they could commit to the program. [AS] explains why this choice was made by the management team.

We are not wanting to discourage people from volunteering. So they if they can come to one and not two; we are not going to say you can't do that.

As the event organizer, [AS] felt that attendance was scattered in the course, and this was because of the normal demands of the workplace.

Our attendance was definitely all over the place. That is just normal and that is the reality of what happens in the workplace.

The scheduling challenges and participation difficulties were echoed by [JR], the co-organizer who reflected on the conflict between store hours and the hours of the service learning program.

Scheduling with people. Because we are a store and we are open a lot, we need people to cover those shifts. Having a time when everybody is available for learning sessions or for the actually volunteering can be difficult.

The manager of Sportswear, briefly comment on the logistical challenges of the facilitating the service learning program.

Just kind of seeing the organizing of the times and stuff. I think that was a little bit challenging. [CS]

### *Course Information*

Several employees commented that there could have been more information given to employees before the beginning of the service learning program, so that a more informed decision could be made about involvement. Although there was an outline given to participants at the first session, and [CS] did attend the first learning session, she

expressed that there wasn't clarity in the workplace before the first session, about what exactly employees would be committing themselves to.

I guess I am wondering if in the organization of it, it wasn't clear to the people that we would do the volunteer session, then we would do the learning section

[JR] also saw the lack of information before the beginning of the course to be an issue, and was concerned that although the overview of the program was communicated by the leaders in the workplace, and written about in a communications book, employees may not have taken the time to read the overview.

Another thing would be communicating the goals and the purpose for doing it.

We have a communication book at the store. Does everybody read it? They are supposed to do that. Do they take the time to do that?

[AS] believed that if there were written hand outs to go with the verbal overview she gave to staff, it may have made the service program clearer in the minds of participants and allowed them to make more of an informed decision.

I think some people if they had maybe what the service learning program was way before hand. I think some of them weren't quite clear. It was just from me not explaining it well enough. But if they had something written down.

[CT] built on this issue, stating she would have like to have seen a more specific outline of the course before the beginning of the first service learning session.

An agenda would have been really great to see what you are getting involved, or know ahead, getting involved in the [the Children's Hospital] knowing what was actually going to be involved in the service learning part of it.

[CT] shared that not having a complete information laid out for employees before hand may have prevented employees from participating or if they did participate, they may have done so because they felt obligated to so by the store, and this may have prevented employees from being open to sharing their thoughts and feelings in the learning component of the course.

I think a lot of people just thought they were going to be involved in the [the Children's Hospital] and then to be asked to do all these other things was fine. But, people may or may not feel obligated, and not share or be open to it.

[DC] who only participated in one volunteer session commented that he would have like to have had more information before the session.

Just a tiny little bit more detail so that you can really resolve in your minds how you are going to fit it in and how convenient it is going to be to do. I think that is important to some people, especially when it is work related, because people think, this company already has a lot of my time.

[AE] also talked about how employee perception before the course may have been that the volunteer commitment would have been too much and this might prevent employees from attending. She commented that the program would have been more easily introduced to new employees as way to teach them about the culture of the company, whereas later on, employees might be more reluctant to get involved.

I think it was the perceptions ahead of time. You don't really realize it until you have been out there. And it speaks for it self. You can have some coercion and

eventually it gets them. But, I think perception people feel is it is a big commitment, or that you have to be a yoga instructor.

Another barrier to participation that was felt by [DC] at the beginning of the course, was the thought of whether the company was already expecting too much of this time.

I took a little time to examine my feelings about whether there were consequences involved with volunteering or not volunteering - actually simply came down to my time and whether it was really appropriate for my company to expect me to go and do that.

#### *Lack of Enthusiasm for Learning Sessions*

Several issues were expressed in regards to the learning component of the service learning program. [AS] offered, that the reason there was less enthusiasm for the learning component of the course, was because individuals were already quite familiar with volunteering, and the learning about service may not have been a major pull for people.

It is not like the service learning program was a revolutionary idea the company was putting forward. So I think there was less enthusiasm for that, from the bureaucratic side of it. People were all keen about the actual volunteering but things outside of that was less a draw for them.

Repetitive content was a theme reported by employees. The service learning sessions were always open for new employees to be involved at any stage and this resulted in a need to inform new participants about the goals, and content of the program.

For employees who had been to more than one session, this material became somewhat redundant.

I think as a result of that. Some people only ended up meeting a few times. And then so for them it [the content] became redundant a little bit. [AS]

[AS] continues,

I mean everyone got something out of it. It is just that some people had a chance to get something out of it more than once.

[CT] echoed this concern, in her sensory description of the learning experience.

From me you would hear yawning. You would hear things you heard the first time or the last time. So I think repetitiveness.

For [CT], who came to several learning sessions, she expressed that, without compensation from the company, it felt like the commitment was too much and suggested a schedule for the next service learning course.

Yes, to do one workshop before and one workshop at the end as opposed to a whole bunch of different things that feel like, oh my gosh this is too much.

#### *Appropriate Instruction*

Making the yoga poses appropriate for the audience at the children's hospital was a challenge expressed by participants. [BD]'s comments, highlight the concern felt by employees about the lack of diversity in the yoga poses available for the disabled youth.

She believed this was the main area that the group could learn about and improve on for the future.

I think that [learning more about yoga] needs to be a major area of focus and development if we do [Children's Hospital] yoga again. It is just learning what poses and postures are beneficial for people who are say in a wheelchair.

### *Feeling Fearful about Instructing*

A number of employees expressed the fear they felt about working with a disabled group of youth, or by the challenged of having to instruct youth and public speak. Participants may not have felt like they were well prepared to instruct the yoga, because they had never taught yoga, or worked with a group of disabled youth.

There was a bit of fear in public speaking for some. [MM]

With the summer camp, there were camp leaders that were our own age and just dealing with them - most of them have never done yoga before. That could be really intimidating dealing with your peers. [CS]

### *Second Interview*

The consensus amongst participants was that a follow-up email to review and make additions to the transcripts was appropriate. Several participants were leaving the community shortly: one was leaving to return to school in another province, another was leaving for a one-month vacation and one employee was about to take a two-month sabbatical. All participants were sent their interview transcripts via email, and allowed to make corrections. None of the participants chose to make additions or corrections to their interview transcripts.

## Summary

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore what service learning looks like in the workplace, and understand how it might impact employees. Descriptions of the service learning program through the employee interviews gave a picture of what service learning could look like. Metaphors were also used to describe the service experience and included community, fabric, kids, wildfire, puzzle, and a vehicle. The different metaphors used, help uncover the many different ways employees learned from and understood the service learning experience.

There were nine themes identified through the initial coding process. These themes represent the first layer of analysis and were coded as skill development, health (self-esteem, empowerment), job satisfaction, improved workplace relationships, bridging, social responsibility and challenges.

Interpretation of the interview data revealed that employees felt socially responsible after partaking in both the service and learning components. Employees also believed the service learning program was an expression of corporate social responsibility. The course helped employees feel connected to and satisfied with their employer. Employees experienced bonding with co-workers and many felt a shift in the workplace dynamic. Relationship building also extended into the community and connections were formed between staff and youth participants. A variety of skills were reportedly developed or strengthened during the service learning program including educating, public speaking, event organizing and interpersonal skills. Finally, there were several challenges employees commented on that may have affected the impact of the course.

The following chapter presents a deeper analysis of the findings, discussed in the context of the literature. The analysis is oriented by the conceptual framework and the findings will be compared to the service learning and volunteer literature that either support or challenge the findings of this inquiry.

#### Connection to the Four Frame Model

The themes presented in the findings section can be organized and connected to the different frames of Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame Model. The connections will be explored in the discussion section. Table 8.0 organizes the themes from the findings sections into the different frames of the Four Frame Model.

Table 6.0

The Connection Between Employee Service Learning Themes and Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame Model.

<p><b>Political</b></p> <p>Challenges</p>	<p><b>Human Resource</b></p> <p>Skill Development Health (Self-Esteem, Empowerment) Job Satisfaction Improved Workplace Relationships Challenges Bridging Social Responsibility</p>
<p><b>Symbolic</b></p> <p>Social Responsibility</p>	<p><b>Structural</b></p> <p>Challenges</p>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The initial goal in completing this research was to understand what service learning programs would look like in the corporate settings and how this process might benefit employees. The inquiry was also a reflective tool used to help employees understand what the service learning experience meant to them and how they learned from this process. Through in-depth interviews conducted with participants, the researcher began to uncover a fuller understanding and interpretation of the service learning experience. By collecting, and analyzing and distilling the essence of these experiences, a more detailed portrait of how service learning impacts employees and thus organizations emerged.

The lens through which the findings will be discussed will be three-fold including, 1) service learning and volunteer literature, 2) the conceptual framework, 3) my own analysis as the researcher of the inquiry. The metaphors and sensory descriptions of the service learning program are also brought into the discussion to help add depth and description to the service learning process.

The themes presented and metaphors used in the findings section are organized in the discussion based on their connection to the conceptual model, Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model (1997). The four frames include symbolic, human resources, structural and political frames. The model helps contextualize and frame the findings in a meaningful way, and is intended to give the reader and future corporate service enthusiasts and advocates an understanding how the service learning program impacted

participants. Bolman and Deal (1997) state that “for different times and different situations, one perspective may be more important than others” (p. 325). There may be other interpretations of how these frames are connected to the employee themes, and the researcher connected them in way believed to be most relevant and practical considering the context of this inquiry.

### *Service Learning Themes*

There were seven themes that emerged through the data analysis process. These included skill development, health, job satisfaction, positive workplace relationships, social responsibility, bridging and challenges. Initially there were nine themes evident in the analysis, and self-esteem and empowerment were categorized as sub-themes considering their connection and relation to health. Table 9.0 lists the different themes and sub-themes along with an example of an employee statement connected to that frame.

Table 7.0

## Service Learning Themes and Descriptions

Service Learning Theme	Employee Voice
Skill Development	Skills also, just more public speaking skills and preparedness when you are in charge of a group of people. [AS]
Health  (Self-Esteem)  (Empowerment)	I think the culture is health and wellness and living it out in one's community. [AE]  It makes me feel pretty good... I don't have a lot of free time. It's kind of nice to allow myself to put the time in to do some volunteering. [AS]  It meant that, I could affect other kids. [CT]
Job Satisfaction	Anything we do for community service or helping others it just really makes us appreciate the company and what they are offering to us. [MM]
Improved Workplace Relationships	I feel that I know these people better. I feel more comfortable around them because we have had a shared experience outside of work and that is what builds a relationship. [JR]
Bridging	Sometimes I do stereotype other people who are in different situations and again, I think it just reinforced how everyone has their own abilities and their own magic to bring to the world. [CT]
Social Responsibility	I would love to continue other volunteer work. [CS]
Challenges	A little more detail at the very beginning when we were asked to volunteer....Just a tiny little bit more detail so that you can really resolve in your minds how you are going to fit it is and how convenient it is going to be. [DC]

### *Skill Development*

An emergent theme presented in the findings section of this document was workplace and life skills. As is discussed in the literature review of this study, a primary goal of service learning is for participants to develop life and professional skills and experience personal growth (Lewis, 2002). All of the participants ( $N=9$ ) in the study listed some type of skill development or practice during their involvement in the service learning program. The skills recorded were varied including public speaking, educating, organizing, and interpersonal skills.

In the Human Resource Frame, employees are viewed as having “both skills and limitations” and “have a great capacity to learn” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 15). The service learning program was an opportunity for employees to apply their skills in their volunteer work, challenge themselves in a different environment and develop new skills. The service learning program provided employees with an opportunity to develop a broader range of skills and to feel like they were experiencing personal growth. By practicing workplace skills, such as educating in the volunteer sessions, employees were learning, and the learning sessions reinforced this process through reflection. According to Bolman and Deal (1991) a person’s “skills, insights, ideas, energy and commitment are an organization’s most critical resource” (p.120). By developing these skills and insights about their skills sets, employees can become more resourceful both inside the workplace and out.

Interpersonal and communication skills reported by employees were placed in the Human Resource Frame. This frame values communication as a way of dealing with organization life (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Communication skills were practiced in the

service outings as employees were given the task of instructing a yoga class. This was described as educating “on a different level” [RB] than at work. There were changes in roles, and task during the service work. These changes included having to lead, monitor and keep the attention of a unique group of youth with a range of physical disabilities. Employees were in “charge of a group of people” [AS] which was different for most employees not involved in a managerial role in the workplace. This responsibility challenged individuals to develop new skills or to bolster their current abilities.

The teaching role in the service work differed from employee work roles. In the workplace, employees typically communicate with customers on a one-on-one basis and the public speaking aspect of the program complimented the communication skill set of individuals. [AS] discussed changes in communication between work and the volunteer session and described it as being “more in an instructional sense.” Employees were learning to teach, and learning how to employ these skills as they volunteered. In the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, two-thirds of participants reported developing communication skills (Hall et al., 1998). Skill development will vary widely depending on the type of service work completed, and the educating aspect of the service learning program gave employees an opportunity to further develop their communication skills in a group context. These skills were believed to be of use in a workplace setting where employees are “educating people on the company and the culture” [CT]. Practicing interpersonal and communication skills in a different environment can transfer into the workplace. Transference of skills from the volunteer activities to the workplace and the lives of participants can unfold in the service process. This transference of skills has been reported by Hall et al. (1998),

Volunteer activities were perceived to help acquire new skills that people could use in their jobs. One-third (34%) of volunteers believe their volunteer activities had given them new skills that could be applied directly to their paid jobs or businesses (p.30).

Being involved in voluntary work gives employees a chance to develop skills that can be utilized in the workplace. This might include communication skills such as leading a group meeting, or speaking to a group of customers.

Organizing skills were reported by the two employees who took care of the logistics of the service learning program. Developing these skills and the accompanying confidence to use this skill set was seen as an asset by [JR] who described the event as “scary to organize” but she now feels “more confidence at work” because she learned how to organize an event. Organization and managerial skill development was reported by over half of those surveyed in a study of volunteers in Canada (Hall et al., 1998). Employees come back into the workplace with a broader, more refined skill set having had the opportunity to practice these skills in a different context.

Participants practiced interpersonal skills with diverse others, that enhanced their skills and abilities to connect with customers and colleagues in the workplace. Employees described having “more openness” [RB] to persons with disabilities, developing a “certain approach” [BD] and “enhanced...patience” [DC] when working with diverse others. Employees, who did not have previous experience working with the disabled, were given the chance to connect with individuals in an open, interactive way and this helped them develop a deeper understanding of, and better sense of how to relate to and connect with diverse others. This is important because the people employees work with

and serve are “*all unique*” [AE]. In one study, “interpersonal communication skills, patience and empathy were mentioned as newly acquired outcomes of service learning experiences” by students (Brown & Roodin, 2001, p. 100). The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating also reported the development of interpersonal skills. Hall et al. (1998) report that,

Over three quarters of volunteers reported gaining such interpersonal skills as understanding people better, learning how to motivate others and learning how to deal with difficult situations (p.39).

Developing these skills can endow employees with new insight and understanding about the subtleties of interpersonal communication with diverse others. This can give employees a sense of confidence in approaching and connecting with customers in the workplace. The employee may return to work with a greater sense of their abilities and skills and may be more likely to engage others and use these skills. In a study of students in a service learning program who served a seniors group in the community, a similar pairing of confidence and skills acquirement was reported in the qualitative reports. One student commented, “I developed skills and confidence in working with the elderly” (Brown & Roodin, 2001, p.99). With the service learning program explored in this inquiry, employees gained skills and confidence in working with individuals in the community who have a disability or with others who are different from them. The service experience helped participants build a skill set which will compliment them in working with diverse others in the workplace and in their personal lives.

The learning component of service learning programs is meant to equip participants with the skills necessary to feel effective in their role as volunteer (Meyers,

1999). This preparation took place through the education of participants of what types of activities they would instruct, and what group they would connect with. The learning component also allowed employees to reflect on the skills they were developing and think about how they could be connected back to the workplace. This type of reflective learning can be seen as a seeding of skills that will later take hold in the workplace. Employees discussed how the skills they gained and practiced in the volunteer sessions were applicable to the workplace.

The learning component of service learning programs are meant to provide a framework within which participants could become more aware of the benefits for all participants in the service experience (Long et al., 2001). By understanding and discussing how the skills practiced in the volunteer sessions could benefit them at work, employees become increasingly aware of learning opportunities while serving the community. Also, by listening to other employees talk about the skills they gained, employees could build on their own understanding of how they could transfer what they learned back into the workplace. This sharing and conversing widened their awareness of the skills that were cultivated. The circular, reflective learning process that took place amongst employees in the learning sessions gave employees a chance to share the challenges, successes and insights about skill development. This is in alignment with the experiential learning framework put forward by Dewey (1936) that pairs classroom learning with in-community experience to put learning into action

Metaphors were an important interpretive component reported in the findings chapter of this thesis. According to Bolman and Deal (1991), “metaphors can be used to make the strange familiar” and they help “compress complicated issues into

understandable images and they can affect our attitudes, evaluations and actions” (p. 266). The metaphors expressed in this inquiry highlight some of the different aspects of service learning in the corporate setting. By using the metaphor of a “car” or a “vehicle” [MM] was able to order and understand the volunteer experience in way that highlighted the importance of the changing context and skill development in the service work of the program. The different terrain that employees worked in gave them a new context in which to practice their skills. The team or “car” does not change but the context changes, allowing participants to try new skills or practice ones they have used before by going into “four-wheel drive” [MM]. Employees are normally limited to working inside the context of their workplace, but with the new environment, employees are required to use different skills. This gives everyone on the team a chance to practice their skills.

### *Health*

Health was a theme communicated by the majority of participants in the interviews and presented in the findings section. Health, as defined by the WHO (2006), “is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p. 1). The connection to health reported by employees can be understood through mental, physical and social aspects. Graff (1991) in her report, *Volunteer for the Health of It*, discusses the connection between the different aspects of health that are affected by service work.

Often the benefit is simply the good feeling that one experiences from helping others – from doing good. Sometimes volunteering provides a sense of control and personal empowerment. In other cases, there are more tangible physical,

psychological, or social rewards from voluntary action that can be stimulating and energy creating (p.1).

Discussion about the health benefits of service learning are much more robust in the volunteer literature compared with the service learning literature, and therefore both bodies of literature were referenced to help understand this theme which was presented in the findings section.

Health was connected to the Human Resource Frame. This frame discusses organizations as a family, where each member of the family has certain needs. The service component became a means of satisfying the need to improve their health while contributing to the community. Health was understood as an individual's need and promoting health was also an important desire expressed by employees. Maintaining health and balance are a need of every employee and the service learning program became another outlet for fulfilling this. The foundational needs in Maslow's (1954) model of hierarchy of needs - which is drawn upon by human resource theorists - are physiological or physical, and these were nourished through the yoga activities (found in Bolman & Deal, 1991). Participants commented upon the stress relieving aspects of participating in yoga. Learning about yoga was a new form of health education that could help participants reduce the effects of stress in their lives. The activity component of the service learning program therefore, allowed for the basic needs of physical health to be enhanced.

Employees perceived the volunteer work in the service learning program to be an extension of the culture of health and wellness at Sportswear. Seven employees commented that the culture of Sportswear was focused on health and well-being, and

commented about the connection between this culture and the service learning work. This was understood to be a meaningful connection in that employees are recognizing service is a part of a healthy culture and of promoting health in a community; therefore recognizing the social aspects of health and well-being. In this way, the service learning program became a direct way for employees to support a culture of health in the workplace. Instead of limiting yoga activities to an internal, employee health activity, the service learning program became an inclusive process, reaching into the community and working to elevate the health of youth in the community.

Employees were also able to teach others in the community the benefits of health activities and contribute to an increased level of health in the community. As [BD] explained, this involved, “showing that physical fitness is fun.” This theme of educating and promoting healthy activities coincides with the Ottawa Health Charter (1986) definition of health promotion where health is,

created by caring for one self and others, by being able to make decisions and having control over one's life circumstances, and by ensuring that the society one lives in creates conditions that allow the attainment of health by all its members. (WHO, 1986, p.3).

A sense of health is created by sharing health information and by leading community members through health activities. Health unfolds as a process of improving the quality of life for all. The service learning program became another means for employees and the company to promote health and well-being in the community. This notion of service learning becoming a form of health promotion has been advocated in the health promotion field, as governmental groups are championing a movement towards a shared

responsibility for health promotion by other institutions and individuals in society outside of the health care sector. The Ontario Premier's Council on Health Strategy (1989) put forward the idea of,

defining health in broader terms than had previously been considered, and extending the responsibility for health promotion beyond the health care sector brings the larger community into the field of health services (found in Graff, 1991, p. 4).

The larger community includes employees together with their company who become stewards of health promotion in their local communities and help shoulder the responsibility for the quality of life of community citizens. This speaks to the potential companies have in being a force for positive health change in the communities they are embedded in.

The pairing of volunteer work with a health activity was doubly powerful. Hopson (1998) has described a "high" that individuals feel after and during physical activity; a similar "helper's-high" has been reported from individuals volunteering (Luks, 1998, found in Graff, 1991, p. 13). The Public Health Agency in a review of volunteering and self-enhancement commented that "volunteers often report a 'helper's high': a physical and psychological 'feel-good' sensation linked to physiological changes" (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006, p. 1). During the yoga activities, participants experienced both effects, from the physical and mental benefits of the yoga class, along with feeling esteemed from assisting the youth in their yoga activities.

Yoga is, by itself, a health building activity that engages physical, mental and spiritual aspects of health. Employees and the youth were able to learn more about the

benefits of yoga and how to practice yoga in their own lives. The service learning program would therefore give employees along with the youth another way of taking control of their own health. This belief of the health benefits of yoga is captured in the comments of [JR] who shared that “yoga calms your mind and enables you to be kind to yourself.” The serving experience became a way for volunteers to learn about how to stay healthy, as they instructed and served the community. By participating in yoga, participants learned how to reduce stress and increase their physical fitness, in essence gaining a greater understanding of how to have control of their health. Health promotion can be viewed as “the process of enabling people to increase control of and improve their health” (World Health Organization, 1986, p. 1). The service learning course promoted health amongst the employees and those they served. This physical dimension of health reflected by employees may have been absent had it not been for the choice to use yoga as a means of helping others in the community. Therefore, the pairing of health activities with service work is an important part of the theme of health by employees.

By choosing to volunteer through the instruction and participation in yoga, all partners in the service learning program had the opportunity to benefit from the experience in numerous ways. This is in-line with a fundamental goal of the service learning programs: to benefit all parties involved (Faris, 1999). This idea of a win/win in the helping process is captured by [DC] who reflected on helping youth reach become healthier, “helping others to be great like we discussed it automatically helps you attain greatness yourself.” Service learning is a process that can benefit both volunteers and those being served. Using physical activity as a way to give back to the community appeared to enhance this effect. All participants could benefit in their own way,

depending on how much they decided to participate in the yoga activity. This is expressed in the comments of [MM] who shared “everybody gets something different with is great. Everyone pushed themselves as much as they wanted to go.” This is an important finding as it highlights that the health activities were empowering in that the recipients of the service and employees were able to choose how much they were helped, or wanted to help themselves, by choosing how much mental and physical energy to invest in the yoga activities.

The learning sessions were also a space where health was cultivated and enhanced. Both aspects of the service learning program were believed to contribute to health: health was recognized by employees as a balance between physical and mental dimensions. The learning sessions were a space where mental reflection helped build upon insights from the volunteer sessions and contribute to a person’s sense of health. This type of health education can be understood as a form of developing life skills and is connected to the Ottawa Health Charter (1986) notion of health promotion which, “supports personal and social development through providing information, education for health, and enhancing life skills” (World Health Organization, 1986, p.3). The learning sessions were a means of helping employees stimulate mental health by providing them with a way of learning about their community, and helping them develop life skills that will help them connect to their community.

In the coding process with NVivo, there were multiple connection points between self-esteem, empowerment and health. Both empowerment and self-esteem were communicated in relation to individual health. Therefore, the researcher decided that the most meaningful way to categorize these interdependent themes was under the umbrella

of health. The threads of self-esteem and empowerment are understood to strengthen and support each other and influence overall health. The connections between self-esteem, empowerment and overall health have been reported in the literature (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Lord and Farlow (1990) discuss this interplay in their study of volunteering by individuals who have been marginalized by their communities, such as the elderly or the poor.

We found that the process of participation itself both empowering and self-reinforcing. As people gained in self-confidence; they would see more avenues for participation; their involvement in community activity would in turn, enhance their self-confidence and sense of personal control...Participation appears to contribute to empowerment because it increases social contact, reduces isolation and enables people to take part in meaningful activity...When people feel more in control, their stress level is reduced and they are freer to make decisions that will have a health impact on their lives (found in Graff, 1991, p. 12-13).

Self-esteem and empowerment were strong, interrelated themes in the employees' reports of their experiences in the service learning program.

#### Self-Esteem

An overall sense of self-esteem was a theme captured in the reports of volunteer participants. Feelings of self-esteem were communicated through a sense of pride, confidence, and feeling good about oneself both during and after the service learning experience. A mandated goal for most service-learning programs is to enhance the self-esteem of participants in the program (Corporation for Service Learning, 2004). The goal

of cultivating self-esteem was not a specific goal of the service learning program, but creating an enjoyable experience for both the employees and the youth was. In the academic setting, student reports of their participation in service learning have reflected themes of a sense of self-esteem from being involved in community service (Notah & Johnson, 2001; Toews & Cerny, 2005).

The vision of the Human Resource Frame is to have employees feel good and do a good job (Bolman & Deal, 1997). People need to feel esteemed in life and in work; service learning and workplace volunteering provided another outlet to serve this need. Feeling a sense of pride and esteem helped employees find a sense of satisfaction and meaning, which can be brought to the workplace. The service learning experience provided another venue through which work could help enhance this essential human need. As Tomkins (1962) states people are “likely to have positive emotions - happiness, contentment and love – in situations that are need fulfilling” (Tomkins, 1962, found in Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 123). The service experience, as reflected in the employee reports, served certain psychic needs of employees that produced positive feelings. Maslow (1954) posits that people have a need to feel esteemed - to feel valued by others and to value themselves (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p.123). Volunteering at the Children’s Hospital helped participants nourish these needs.

Participant volunteers felt a sense of pride and personal strength from their involvement in serving others in the community. For some employees this sense of pride came from feeling a part of a group that was making a difference and from witnessing other acts of altruism from staff members. There were powerful emotions expressed by employees in relation to how the service work made them feel. [AE] was moved to tears

in the interview because of the pride she felt as a result of how open and respectful her co-workers were with the youth. Employees felt a sense of pride from being able to serve the community in a meaningful way to a group who would benefit from the experience. Developing a sense of pride as a result of service has been reported in both the service learning and volunteer literature (Brown & Roodin, 2001; Graff, 1991). Brown and Roodin (2001), in their study of students engaged in service learning, identified the theme of “enhanced feelings of pride, self-worth and personal efficacy from being able to provide a valued and needed service” (p. 89). One student commented, “I felt pride in my successful accomplishments through service learning” (p. 97). Employees at sportswear also felt that their service was valued, and these feeling brought forward positive emotions of pride.

Employees reflected that contributing to their community through service made them feel good about themselves. Helping others gave employees a good feeling. Similar, positive feelings of self were reflected in volunteer comments from a Volunteer Ontario (1991) study where focus groups participants stated that feeling esteemed came from volunteer work. One of the participants reflected,

You feel good and you're there to serve the people. To feel appreciated. They can always count on you...It makes you feel worthwhile. You're a human being.

You're here to help people who need your help...You feel good really, deep inside (Graff, 1991, p. 22-23).

Giving back to community can help individuals feel good about themselves and feel appreciated because they realize they are making a difference in the lives of others. A student's comment in a study of service learning also highlighted positive feelings of self,

“I think it [service learning project] made me a much better person. I felt like I was making a difference” (Johnson & Notah, 1999, p. 464). A report by the Central Volunteer Bureau of Ottawa-Carleton (1989) found that the “greatest gain made by those who participated as a volunteers was in self-esteem” (found in Graff, 1991, p. 11). Self-esteem is found to be a key attribute and effect of volunteering in the community. Hadley (1998) discusses how themes of self-esteem may emerge in the service component of the service learning program.

Themes of self-worth and the common good have emerged as central to today’s discussion. Volunteerism many have observed has little to do with being a ‘do-gooder’. It is about valuing the person, and increasing the value of social and human resources, it is about self-esteem, freely sharing one’s talent and wisdom; it is about being valued, not paid; it is about empowerment, growth and creativity it is about enhancing the community’s quality of life (found in Chapell, 1999, p.2).

Service learning therefore is an opportunity for employees to make a difference and feel good about their contribution to society.

Feeling good and esteemed was also a theme displayed in the sensory descriptions of employees. [CS] described, “laughter, smiling and people having an amazing time.” Participants felt good while volunteering and expressed that enjoyment openly. They were having fun and sharing those feeling with others. This also took place in the learning sessions where participants could openly share how the experience made them feel. Employees were able to witness how others were gaining confidence and employees

commented that this made them feel good. Therefore both the service outings and the learning sessions created an environment that promoted good feelings and self-esteem.

### Empowerment

Empowerment can be understood as having a sense of control over the quality of one's life and the ability to contribute to the quality of life of others in the community.

Whitmore (1988) defines empowerment as:

an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live (found in Lord & Hutchison, 1993, p. 3).

Empowerment can also be understood at the individual, organizational and Community level (Schulz et al. 1995). The authors suggest that individual empowerment is connected with "organizational and community empowerment through the development of interpersonal, social and political skills and resources" (p. 310). The process of individual empowerment may result in a collective sense of organizational empowerment in Sportswear as participants develop skills and begin to understand the capacity they have to make a difference in the lives of others in the community. Schulz et al. (1995) discuss the notion of "empowered organizations" as those groups with "influence over their environment and the ability to affect the distribution of social and economic resources" (p. 310). The process of service learning was one where employees individual and collectively gained a sense of influence over themselves and their community. The employees and Sportswear helped to shape an "empowered community"

where “individuals and organizations apply their skills and resources in collective efforts that lead to community competence” (p. 312). This is evident in the intention, and implementation of the service learning program. Employees begin to understand and witness the collective difference they as employees and as an organization are making.

Gaining a sense of control over oneself and a person’s environment has been a frequent theme in the volunteer literature (Thoits & Hewitt 2001, Graff, 1991) and the service learning literature (Wade, 1997, Cairn & Cairn, 1999). Service learning has shown an ability to foster a sense of empowerment by employee reports in this inquiry. By giving back to the community, volunteers gain a sense of contribution, control and a belief that they are able to make a difference in the lives of others.

The Human Resource Frame of Bolman and Deal’s (1997) Four Frame Model, asserts empowerment is of importance in developing successful organizations. “Human resource theorists have typically placed little emphasis on power, though in recent year many of them have become enchanted with the notion of empowerment” (p.192). For leaders guided by the Human Resource Frame, the main leadership challenge is to try and empower employees and have them enjoy their work (Bolman & Deal, 1997). The service learning program became a process through which employees could develop a sense of empowerment by learning skills and feeling that they were making a difference through volunteer service and by endowing them with knowledge of how yoga enhances health. The service learning program helped facilitate a feeling of empowerment amongst employees and managers, as all strata of the business involved themselves in the same activities, shared similar roles and responsibilities and volunteered in the same capacity.

The experiential, hands-on approach to service learning, where employees engaged the youth group through yoga, gave employees a chance to see how they were affecting their lives in a positive way, giving them a feeling that could have influence and make a difference. Employees felt like they had influence by being able to affect the health behaviors of the youth and helping them to be active. Working side-by-side with the youth gave employees the insight and understanding about how they were making a difference in the community. Student reports in the service learning literature have also revealed that seeing how their community service is impacting individuals gives them a sense of being able to make a difference in their community (Forte, 1997). One student reported,

In seeing the many areas of problems and the sincere perspectives of the individuals in those situations, I have learned that I can volunteer on many levels and make a difference (p. 19).

This sense of control or influence over the community, may trickle into the workplace and give employees a heightened sense of control and belief that they can make a difference in their day-to-day work lives with their co-workers, managers and customers.

Participants involved in service learning have communicated a sense of control and empowerment developing through their experiences. Themes of making a difference in the academic literature have surfaced from student reports. Brown and Roodin (2001) captured this theme and it is reflected in a student's comments, "I learned that I really did make a difference" (p. 97). This theme is paralleled by the comments of employees in this study, who felt empowered that they could help make a positive difference in the lives of the youth. This theme of making a difference was also captured in student reports

in the literature about whether they believed they made a difference in their community service work. As was stated in the literature review, Astin and Sax (2000) recorded that a majority of participants in a service learning programs (80%), responded positively when asked if they believe their service made a difference. Also, in the volunteer literature, Arai and Pedlar (1997) under the theme of balance and renewal captured a similar sentiment of making a difference. One participant commented, "my involvement in the Healthy Communities gave me...some power and influence" (p. 175). Community service and service learning show participants that they can have an impact in their community and that they do make a difference with their small acts of service and charity. This understanding invigorates their perspective on community building and can infuse them with a renewed sense of community stewardship.

A sense of personal empowerment was also connected to feeling good about oneself. Employees reported that being empowered through community service made them feel good about themselves. Making a difference gave employees a sense of self-worth and esteem, contributing to mental well-being, and therefore overall health. This feeling was echoed by, [JR] who commented, "power is a positive thing." A feeling of being empowered was viewed as a positive quality that is connected to quality of life and feeling connected to oneself. Employees were empowered to take more control not only of their community, but also of their health. They realize they have latent capacities and abilities that they may not have recognized before. As [MM] shared, "It did teach me more about yoga and that anybody can do it." Employees learned that yoga is a tool for health for everyone: for themselves and the youth they serve. Block (1987) speaks about how empowerment is connected to a person's sense of health and well-being.

to empower ourselves... we have to believe that our well-being and survival are in our own hands, that we have an underlying purpose, and that we are committed to achieving that purpose now (found in Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 220).

The service learning program provided a way for employees to achieve the goal of improving their health through a positive, community project which would also benefit the health of community members.

Studies involving student-teacher service learning projects in the university setting have shown that teacher initiative and leadership contributed to a feeling of empowerment for participants (Wade, 1997). The researchers commented,

Service learning can be a means for enhancing student teachers' empowerment.

Student teachers who were leaders were more likely to experience the stages of authority and affirmation (p. 189)

Leadership was also a key part of the service experience for employees: some organized the volunteer sessions, and all of them had to lead a yoga class. By taking on a leadership role, participants recognize their ability to have a positive influence over others in the community.

[DC]'s metaphor of a "wildfire" is a useful expression of empowerment, and the idea that if employees are given the tools to help them feel in control of themselves and have the ability to affect the community they live in. The service work is not seen as a macro-level initiative or process, instead, when reduced, the service is about each individual taking charge of making a difference. He states that the "idea is to support your staff and give them the tools to make themselves great." This speaks to empowering

employees with the necessary attributes that will give them the ability to maintain their health and have control over their lives. He later paraphrases Ghandi, “you be the change you want to see in the world.” The locus of control for an individual shifts to an internal position so that each person feels responsible and becomes equipped to take care of themselves and their community. The service learning program became a process where reciprocal maintenance was taught, enhanced and forwarded.

### *Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction speaks to the level of enjoyment, passion and pride employees feel for their work and employer. Job satisfaction has also been defined as the “positive attitudes and beliefs towards several aspects of the job or the profession” (Organ, 1990, found in Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000, p. 650). Although individuals expressed it in differing ways, all nine employees reported a sense satisfaction, appreciation, or pride in their company as a result of their participation in the service learning program. The service learning program helped shape employee perspective of their jobs and the company in a positive way.

The theme of job satisfaction can be connected to the Human Resource Framework. In this frame a major goal is to find activities and processes that support both employees and the company and achieve a good fit (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Bolman and Deal (1991) commented that,

A good fit between individual an organization benefits both: human beings find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the human talent and energy that they need (p. 121).

The service learning program became a good fit for employees where they were able to find meaningful work to do under the umbrella of their company. The service learning program was seen as an extension of their work, even though they were not being directly paid for the work. Employees enjoyed their experiences in the service work, and brought this feeling with them to work. All nine participants in the study found a positive meaning associated with the service learning program, and thus the service learning program was perceived as meaningful volunteer work with the organization.

The service learning program was also need-fulfilling for employees, allowing them to connect to a sense of passion at work and to grow community at the same time. Employees found a source of enjoyment, passion and personal growth from their experiences in the service learning program. The company was able to help satisfy a need for employees to connect with a sense of passion in the workplace. Community service was a passion for certain employees fueled in the workplace through the service learning program. This sense of passion and purpose was something that employees could return to the workplace with.

The service learning program became a source of pride for employees in regards to their employer. Knowing that the company cared for the welfare of the community helped employees feel a sense of pride for their employer. As [JR] shared, it made her “feel glad to work for a company that cares or is a vessel for caring.” This gave employees an expanded sense of the role and responsibility of the business outside of the retail function of the store. Employees felt proud that their business had invested the time and resources to connect their employees to the community in a meaningful and helpful way. Considering the focus of most service learning literature is the academic setting, the

corporate service literature revealed insight into the connection between community service and feelings of satisfaction about work. Surveys in the corporate service literature have reported that being involved in employer driven volunteer programs, enhances a sense of pride in the business (GolinHarris, 2005; Points of Light Foundation, 2006). In an on-line survey, completed by the company GolinHarris (2005), of American businesses involving 3,500 corporate employees, the number one corporate citizenship influence report (of which volunteering and service can be understood as an expression of), was “increased morale, spirit and pride by me and my fellow employees” (p.2). Volunteering and community contribution can give meaning to employees and this can translate into a more positive outlook on their work and employer.

For employees at Sportswear, it was important to work for a company that valued community service as part of personal development. Employees felt good that the company was offering them a chance to experience personal growth that they might not have been able to experience on their own. The company provided workers with a positive community building experience, which may not have been available to them on their own time or with previous employers. Having the opportunity to be involved in the service learning program became an experience which added new depth and enjoyment to work. The service learning experience was an added dimension to work that enhanced employees appreciation of the company. Tuffery (2003) discusses the connection between volunteer service and a sense of morale or satisfaction at work.

... employee community involvement does have a real impact on morale and motivation. Even those who are aware of the schemes, but not involved, tend to be more likely to recommend the company to others and be motivated to do their jobs

than those who do not know of any schemes. This positive outlook increased further among those personally involved in schemes (p.4).

Service learning was understood to be a valuable addition to the normal workplace activities by some employees. Although the service learning program was voluntary – employees were not paid for any of their involvement in the program – employees appreciated the efforts made by the company to help the community and to invest in the personal growth of employees. The volunteer experience was understood as an offering to employees, a choice, to invest in their community and themselves. The job became more than just a means to a pay cheque and the volunteer work was perceived as a rewarding experience. An expanded sense of what work is and means evolved through the service learning experience as community stewardship becomes connected to making a living.

Employees also felt more satisfied and connected to their work because of their feelings of authenticity in their work roles from being involved in the service learning program. [CS] commented, “I felt more authentic as a manager of a store that donates a chunk of money and has conversations with guests all the time, but doesn’t really know where the money is going.” This feeling was brought onto the retail floor when employees engage customers in conversations about how the company supports the local community. Employees were able to live out what the social responsibility mandate of the company was by volunteering on their behalf. A feeling of authenticity helped employees feel aligned with their work and their employer. This can reduce tensions between what an employee understands as the values of the company and how these virtues are acted upon.

The reflective, circular process of considering employee reports of how service learning was impacting their workplace experience in a positive way, brought new insight for the researcher as to what meaning employees attach to their work, and how service learning contributed to their enjoyment of work. This process also brought up several questions. These included: how do these positive experiences become part of the fabric of day-to-day work life? If the volunteer connection is not repeated in the workplace will the memory remain strong enough to propel these positive feelings for employees?

### *Improved Workplace Relationships*

All nine participants in the interviews commented that the service learning program either had a positive impact on their relationships or maintained the already positive relationships existing in the workplace. The description given by [BD] is a pertinent representation of an employee who believes the service learning program was an opportunity to connect with their co-workers in a meaningful way.

I think it is just another example of being able to bond with your co-workers...it definitely draws you closer.

The service learning experience was believed to improve relationships and enhance connection and understanding and reduce competition between employees. Weiler et al. (1998) in their study of service learning in the school setting also found that service learning programs build “cohesiveness, mutual respect and more positive peer interaction among students” (p. 3). The descriptions of improved relationships in service learning programs point to the literature on social capital. Putman (1993) defines social capital as the “features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 35). Bonding social capital

is one dimension that develops between individuals who view themselves as being similar (Poortinga, 2006). At Sportswear employees felt like they had close relationships, and the service learning gave them a chance to strengthen the bonds between them. By working together for the common good, in a new environment, and seeing a different side of each other, that employees would not be privy to in the workplace, further bonding occurred between employees.

The service learning experience also opened up a new sense of trust for some employees with their co-workers. Trust is an essential element of social capital bonding, and the service learning experience, provided a way for trust to grow (Putnam, 2000). The Better Together Report (2000), in their discussion of building social capital purport that the workplace “is where people build trusting relationships based on mutual assistance” (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2000, p.13). The service learning program become another way to build trust in the workplace as employees worked together to facilitate the yoga sessions. Some employees felt that they returned to work with a greater sense of trust, and felt more open and honest with their co-workers, which in turn will facilitate greater bonding in the workplace.

The Human Resource Frame uses the metaphor of a family to explain interpersonal relationships and connections at work (Bolman & Deal, 1997). The bonds between employees bring the family closer, allowing them to connect on a different level. In the Human Resources Frame, organizations are perceived to exist to serve human needs (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Positive, healthy relationships are an essential need of human beings. In providing a service learning experience for employees, the company is

providing another outlet through which the need for positive relationships can be actualized.

Several employees expressed that service learning cultivated positive relationships through the process of team building. The service experience brought employees together, and this came with benefits. [MM] commented “I think it is a team thing, but it is individual as well. It benefits people at all levels.” There were individual and group benefits from participating in the service learning program. This is in alignment with the service learning paradigm which emphasizes a win/win model of volunteer service. The benefit of working together as team on a service learning project, and building relationships through this process, has been found in the literature looking at student-teacher relationships with placement teachers during their internships. One teacher commented,

It certainly heightened our relationship. I was really proud of [her] for going beyond the classroom and going out into the school and community...She and I both gained from working together as a team (Wade, 1997, p. 189).

These similar descriptions highlight the increased connection an individual feels when working with co-workers on a service project. Participants in corporate volunteer programs have also recognized that working together as a team benefits them. In a poll of corporate executives, 90% of corporate executives reported that volunteerism builds teamwork skills in the workplace (Points of Light Foundation, 2006).

Improved workplace relationships were also captured in the sensory experiences of employees. [JR] describes a scene from the volunteer session where people are working together, in the yoga classes and there were “friendships building” and in the

learning sessions people were “having fun” although you would “see people that were quiet.” Both the components of the program were viewed as bonding opportunities between employees. Employees were connecting and having fun together in a non-work environment and this gave them new opportunities to build relationships, and learn more about each other. This is important because employees were not only feeling closer to each other; they were witnessing other employees making similar connections. Employees observed the shaping of more positive relationships between employees and were affected by and remember these experiences. [JR]’s comment of there being quiet people might represent that not all the participants were not as fully engaged in the learning experience as others and therefore bonding and relationship building was not uniform across the group.

The bonding and connection that occurs between staff can be carried forth and transferred to the workplace. The service learning program became an experience that drew employees together and therefore, was a collective reference point for employees to relate to each other on. [CS] described,

In terms of the staff, just bringing everyone closer it was a lot of fun and that benefits everyone on the floor and being able to reference that amongst conversations with each other, it is great.

Bonding takes place between individuals who have shared or common interests, and the service learning experience provides another way for employees to connect. Employees helped each other remember different aspects of the experience and this became a positive source of connection back in the workplace.

Metaphors were again useful in understanding the service learning process. The metaphor of a “puzzle” [AS] was used to highlight the importance of the workplace team coming together to create something good out of the collective efforts of staff. This speaks to the extension of positive workplace relationships into other work related activities. The metaphor of “fabric” is also a pertinent representation of the relationship building that took place in the service learning program. In [MM]’s depiction, the employee group is understood as a “fabric” and the threads are the relationships and bonds between the employees. The staff group is described as being “definitely tight knit,” speaking to the strong bonds already in place between employees before the service work. There are certain workplace activities that can help strengthen or weaken the bonds between employees, and the “fabric can break down or it can be made stronger.” [MM] The volunteer work provides a positive challenge for the employees, in which relationships were strengthened. Lastly, the fabric “stretches and it is pliable” and she rhetorically asked, “how good does that feel too?”

The volunteer work provided a challenge in which employees work together around a purpose and this gives them a good feeling. Improving workplace relationships is a means of improving the quality of life for participants, particularly in the workplace. As Cox (1998) noted, “our sense of well-being must be in the linkages, in the bonds we have within families, amongst friends, workmates, neighbours, communities and the broader social system...as basically social beings the capacities we have to live and work in groups is intrinsic to our quality of life” (p. 161). Building positive workplace relationships was interpreted as a process that made employees feel good and therefore contributed to an individual’s sense of well-being and quality of life.

*Bridging into the Community*

Bridging into the community and connecting with diverse others was a theme that emerged in the interview data. Through the process of teaching and participating in yoga, employees interacted with a different segment of the population, a youth group who experience a range of different physical disabilities. This notion of connecting with diverse others can be connected to the construct of bridging in the social capital literature. The Better Together Report (2000) discusses the notion of bridging as the,

Connections between people who are different along some important dimension – such as race, socioeconomic status, or gender (Putnam, Feldstein, Cohen, 2000, p. 8).

Social capital theory also speaks of bridging into the community as the “linking together of different organizational entities within a community” (Kreuter & Lenzin, 2002, p. 239). In the service learning program the connections formed between the two organizations, Sportswear and the Children’s Hospital, and on an individual level, person to person. These connections formed new bridges that were not present before the inception of the program. This type of bridging is evident in the sensory descriptions where employees depicted a diverse group of community members from various racial and cultural backgrounds who had different abilities and were mutually supporting each other. The connections formed can be understood as a type of community bridging which enables mutual assistance and support to take place between the two diverse community groups as they interact. The two groups worked together, trying to support each other in the pursuit of health through yoga. People were also smiling during the sessions,

expressing a sense of joy from the process.

The theme of bridging into the community can be understood through the human resources frame. In this frame relationships, care and empowerment are important concepts. The concept of bridging as it applies to service learning is about extending business relationships further out into the community through voluntary work.

Relationships are formed between employees and the people they serve. The family metaphor used by human resources theorists is extended to include the communal family – or community - a business is based in. Through bridging, the family becomes more inclusive and moves from the metaphorical nuclear family to a more community-oriented, inclusive entity. Relationships are formed between families (Sportswear and the Children's Hospital) and between the 'children' of these families (employees and youth from the Children's Hospital). Bolman and Deal (1997) reflect on the leadership virtues that may influence the process of bridging which unfolded in the service learning program.

A caring family, or community, requires servant-leaders who serve the best interests of the family and its stakeholders. This implies a profound and challenging responsibility for leaders to understand the needs and concerns of family member so as to serve the best interests of individuals and the family as a whole (p. 346).

The process of building a caring family and community takes place through the bridging aspect of the voluntary service as diverse members come together and support each other.

Connecting with a unique group opened new perspective and insight for employees. Employees began to see individuals with disabilities for their more-full selves and not an imposed, limited perspective based on their pre-judgment of an individual's

abilities. As [CT] comments, "I think they [the employees] really got to see these kids for kids, as opposed to people in a chair." By working with diverse others, employees find that they are able to understand and relate to others in the community in a new way. These new understandings and relations may bring new perspectives to the workplace and their lives which influence their ideas, understanding and behaviours in interacting with community members in the future who may be co-workers or customers. In the literature, there are reports of individuals building bridges between different segments of the population and thus cultivating deeper understanding, knowledge and awareness amongst these groups (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Welier et al., 1998).

Brown and Roodin (2001) recorded the theme of gaining a greater understanding of diverse others in the communities as one of the developments students experienced in a service learning program. One student in their reflective journals reported, "I increased my abilities to relate to and understand the elderly" (p.99). In another qualitative study conducted by Rhoads (1998) that used participant interviews and observations revealed a deepening of knowledge, understanding and empathy towards others in the community, participants also had a heightened appreciation for diversity. The theme of connection to a diverse community and the development of camaraderie between groups in a volunteer project was captured by Arai and Pedlar (1997). The authors state, "the exchange that occurs between the diversity of people within the healthy community group is a benefit identified by participants" (p. 177). One volunteer described the importance of the links forming between diverse members in the community: "feelings of camaraderie and the links are important part of the group, so it is not the activity but also the links that are important" (p. 177). Clearly, for some, connecting with a diverse group in voluntary

activities is meaningful and viewed by volunteers as an important part of the voluntary process.

Bridging into the community is also evident in the metaphors used by employees. [BD] used the metaphor of a group of “kids” and commented, “one group of kids was familiar with their friends and we were familiar with each other. It was just trying to integrate as a group.” There was a connection and familiarity between each of the two separate groups and the bridging took place as the groups started to “integrate” through supporting each other in the yoga. Employees and the youth groups were both trying to connect with each other. The integration was a process that took place during the multiple service outings, as the “kids” became better acquainted with each other and more comfortable, and the boundaries between the two groups of strangers started to dissolve. [JR]’s metaphor of a “bridge” can be understood as an expression of social capital building. She described, “the bridge is strengthened when you’re working in a different way.” This metaphor represents the fortifying of a bridge that is already in place through the inroads Sportswear has made through other charitable efforts and the hands-on approach to volunteering reinforces and strengthens the bridge. The service learning program is perceived as a method of deepening the connection between these two organizations on a more personal level.

Connecting with others in the community was described as being an enjoyable experience. [BD] commented, “It was playful. It was fun.” A sense of pleasure and interest was sparked when employees serve new members of the community. The theme of connecting with diverse others in the community being a positive experience has been reported in the service learning literature. In a study of nursing students involved in a

service learning project, one student commented, “That was interesting working with different kinds of people with different backgrounds, so that was very positive” (Narsavarge et al, 2003, p. 304). Connecting with diverse others opens a person’s sense of community, broadens their understanding of the community and can give them a greater sense of connection to that community. Volunteer activities become positive, affirming experiences that give the participants a sense of joy from their expanded sense of community.

The experiences of employees connecting with diverse others in the community is in alignment with recommendations put forth by the Better Together Report (Putnam, Feldstein, Cohen, 2000). Bridging, as form of building social capital, is recommended in the workplace through volunteering. The report discusses the importance of community partnerships through companies engaging non-profits with voluntary service.

Partnerships benefit people of privilege by expanding their circle of relationships and allowing them to understand the community from different vantage points.

These recommendations follow our “Bridging” principle (Putnam, Feldstein, Cohen, 2000, 2000, p. 26).

Employees, volunteers, and the public are not necessarily aware of the diversity that exists in the community because they may operate in their own silos, separate from the diversity in their own local, community. By engaging the community in voluntary service, employees begin to understand how connecting to the community is a beneficial process for themselves, the workplace and the community being served.

### *Social Responsibility*

A sense of social responsibility, or the desire to give back to the community after the service learning program concluded, was a strong theme presented in the findings section of this thesis. The literature review also expressed that service learning is guided by the notion of building a greater sense of social responsibility and community stewardship through action in the community (Lewis, 2000). The service learning program introduced employees at Sportswear to a charitable organization, with the intent of fostering greater community participation. Employees learned about the charitable activities of the Children's Hospital directly by seeing the impact the summer camps were having on the youth participants and also through the teachings and discussions in the learning component of the course. This gave employees new insights and knowledge about a community agency and group of individuals with different levels of ability.

The Symbolic Framework stresses the importance of culture, meaning, faith, inspiration and beauty in understanding organizational processes (Bolman & Deal, 1997). The Symbolic Frame also views organizations as cultures propelled by "rituals, stories, heroes and myths" than by rules, policies and managerial authority (p. 16). Employee reports of social responsibility can be understood in part through this frame. The meaning employees attached to the service learning experience influenced their desires to become involved in community service work, whether with Sportswear, or on their own. This understanding of the service experience as an expression of social responsibility shaped employees' attitudes towards continuing to give back to the community in the future. The service learning experience provided a source of inspiration for employees - a catalyst - for community engagement in the community and thus shaped their attitudes about. The

program “sparked interest” [MM] and became a motivating influence for all of the participants to continue to contribute in some way to community agencies.

One of the essential assumptions of the Symbolic Frame is what is important about an event is that which is expressed, rather than what is produced (Bolman & Deal, 1997). What are important are the “myths” and “sagas” which come from these events (p. 244). Employees reflected on how “sagas” diffused into the workplace after the service outings. Conversations about the service experience were shared with co-workers at work and this stimulated an interest in and desire to volunteer. The service learning experience became threaded into the stories shared amongst the employees in the workplace and this became an entry point where service and social responsibility infused into the culture of the company. A sense of social responsibility is shared with others in the workplace, helping to shape and sharpen a sense of care in employees.

The theme of social responsibility can also be connected to the Human Resource Frame. Bolman and Deal (1997) use the metaphor of the caring family to describe companies that operate with this frame as a base. Caring, or compassion are important virtues in the Human Resources Frame. Bolman and Deal (1997) explain, “caring—one person's compassion and concern for another—is both the purpose and the ethical glue that hold a family together” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 346). In the service learning program employees were learning and practicing care for each other and the community. The experience also helped reduce the fear employees had in connecting with individuals with disabilities, and therefore enhanced their desire to give back and care for others in the future.

The service learning program, as told in employee reports, did stimulate a sense of social responsibility through a desire to volunteer in the community. Only two employees were volunteering outside of the service learning program. All participants expressed a desire to continue volunteering in some capacity in the community after the program whether with the Children's Hospital or with another organization. This finding echoes others' work in the literature. Several studies looking at student participation in service learning programs have documented increases in civic and social responsibility (Berkas, 1997; Youniss et. al. 1997; Weiler, et. al., 1998). By volunteering at the children's hospital, employees were exposed to a group of youth they would not have normally had the chance to connect with and learn about. Making personal connections with the youth was inspiring and bonding for employees and this helped cultivate a sense of care for youth in the community and a desire to help this group. This prompted some employees to want to continue to volunteer with the same organization in the future.

From employee reports, it cannot be determined if feelings of social responsibility have increased, however, there definitely is an attitude of social responsibility and a feeling of wanting to make a difference in the community after the program. Considering only two of the nine employees were currently involved in any other volunteer work, this attitude may reflect an increase propensity to become engaged in the community through volunteer work. As is evident from the comments of [JR] who stated, "I have thought of volunteering but never had. This was a way for me to get out and actually do it. You don't need to be afraid of doing that anywhere." Employees may not have had the gumption to volunteer on their own, or may have felt like there were barrier to doing this. Having a structured, volunteer experience in place for them provided them the connection

needed to engage their community. The experience also reduced fears about being involved in other volunteer opportunities in the community.

Employees' perceptions in this study mirror those in the literature. For example, in one study of community engagement through service learning, a student who mentored a third grade student stated, "I will continue to volunteer to help children who need a little help with their homework" (Toews & Cerny, 2005, p. 90). By opening a new door in the community to both volunteering and the Children's Hospital in particular, there was reinvigorated sense of community responsibility and stewardship.

Rhoads (1998) has put forward the idea that service learning allows heterogeneous groups to work together, which facilitates a desire to work together for the benefit of others. Working with a group of disabled youth gave [BD] a desire to work for the betterment of the community and this in part was because she did not have experience working with this cohort. In response to whether her experience in the service learning program has stimulated a desire to give back to community in the future [BD] boldly commented,

Absolutely, in the sense that I haven't had much experience with volunteering with youth with disabilities. And it is important to gain some basic skill sets to approach those types of situations just because I haven't been exposed to it.

Exposure to a new cohort in the community brought further awareness, understanding, and skills that might help the participants involve themselves more fully in the community through service work in the future. The service learning experience, reduced the barriers and fears that certain participants had about volunteering in the community, especially with diverse others who may be challenged. [RB] explains,

I think this has been one of the most difficult things to step into for me. From now on, I won't really have any barriers as far working with people.

Service learning, therefore, is an experience where interaction can cut across community lines, while celebrating differences, and in doing so help participants recognize the opportunities to help different segments of the population.

A sense of social responsibility was also recorded in the sensory experiences of participants. [MM] described individuals being "compassionate." Employees were putting compassion into action and taking care of members of their community. Acts of altruism and compassion – a direct manifestation of social responsibility – were constant. The service activity was a form of social responsibility and employees were cognizant of this expression through their sensory descriptions of the service work.

Metaphors were again a useful tool for employees to describe a greater sense of community stewardship. [JR] used the metaphor of "community" to express an expanded sense of belonging, connection and collaboration unfolding as employees volunteered. The description of "community" as a metaphor by [JR] and the meaning inherent in her comments, again points to the work of Rhoads (1998) who expressed that service work enhances an individual's sense of social responsibility because it allows participants to connect with members of the community and, in turn, develop understanding and an interest in serving the common good. In this particular service work, employees had the chance to connect with a group of disabled youth who they may not have had the chance to interact with in their work or personal lives. Arai and Pedlar (1997) also recorded a feeling of being connected to the community in an inquiry into individuals involved in voluntary work. One volunteer commented, "it is about getting out in the community.

And whether you really are or not, you feel as though you are part of the community, you really are part of it” (p.177). The act of engaging the community in a meaningful and helpful way helps to give volunteers an expanded sense of community and connectedness.

### *Challenges*

The challenges employees experienced in the service learning programs were varied and included issues of attendance, course information, lack of enthusiasm, appropriate instruction, and fear about instructing the yoga sessions. The literature reviewed for this document listed numerous challenges expressed by participants in service learning programs and volunteer programs in the workplace (Brown & Roodin 2001; Hext, 2006; Lewis, 2002,). The challenges expressed by employees can be understood through multiple lenses of Bolman and Deal’s (1997) framework. Bolman and Deal (1997) suggest that shifting between conceptual lenses can make situations and organizational issues expressed by employees easier to understand. By interpreting and understanding the challenges experienced in the service learning program through both the Human Resources, Political and Structural Frame the issues experienced by employees become clearer.

The issues of attendance, meaning a lack of consistent turnout and small numbers of employees participating, can be understood through the structural frame. The main leadership challenge of the structural frame is to recognize the need for flexibility in designing organizational structures in response to technology and the environment (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Mobilizing, organizing and coordinating employees in the

service learning program was a substantial responsibility for management at Sportswear. The priority for Sportswear, amidst the community outreach initiative, was to ensure employees were available to work at the store and there were logistical challenges in trying to staff the service learning sessions with a consistent group of employees. All employee reports of challenges in attendance pointed to the logistical difficulty of having employees participate in all of the service learning sessions. Brown and Roodin (2001) also found that there were issues of “time commitments” and implementation of service learning programs (Brown & Roodin, 2001, p. 95). As management suggests however, Sportswear, did not attempt to make employees participate in all of the volunteer or learning sessions. Instead employees were given flexibility because management did not want to prevent employees from volunteering if they could not participate in the entire program. The program therefore was not mandatory, and participants were free to choose which sessions they wanted to participate in. This was meant to ensure the full spectrum of employees could partake, regardless of their work and personal schedules.

The format chosen for the service learning program differs from service learning programs in the academic setting where students are not typically given a choice of whether they would like to participate in the program because it is a mandatory component of their class. However, in one study investigating student teachers’ involvement in service learning programs, participants did have the choice to be involved. Wade (1997) reflected that “if service learning was a requirement, students might feel resentful rather than empowered” and therefore “choice is an important component” in designing service learning programs (p. 197). More recently, a qualitative study of Australian youth involved in compulsory voluntary programs highlighted that

participants were conscious of their mandatory involvement in service programs (Warburton & Smith, 2003). The compulsory aspect of the service work resulted in a lack of engagement and feelings of frustration, which in turn weakened a sense of agency amongst students and a lack of “positive community attitudes” or “active social behaviors” developing (p. 772). Management wanted to give employees the choice to participate and ensure maximum involvement and flexibility for employees around their work commitments and therefore structured the learning sessions as an optional component of the service learning program. Choice therefore, was a positive aspect of the course that may have thwarted negative attitudes towards the service learning program.

Educating the staff fully about what the service learning program would entail was another challenge. This issue centered on communicating effectively the program goals and parameters. An introduction to the service learning course was given by management in the store and discussed at a staff meeting; however a written outline or syllabus was not given until the first learning session of the course. This information may have been critical in stimulating more interest and participation in the program.

Employees reflected on the challenges of communicating the structure and essence of the course in the work setting, and suggested that a written outline could have been given.

The expectations were varied for employees in stepping into the program. Without a full knowledge of the goals, objectives and structure of the course, employees may have been hesitant to partake in the course. There was a feeling by management and employees that the objectives of the course were not clearly expressed to all of the employees in the workplace. The Structural Frame asserts that “coordination and control are essential to effectiveness” and this is achieved in part through the development of rules, policies and

meetings (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 48). In another study of the challenges in employee volunteer programs the issues that surfaced included “having enough time and resources to organize volunteer opportunities” effectively and “creating good policies and procedures to protect employees and ensure the success of the volunteer programs” and “motivating employees at all levels to participate (Hext, 2006, p. 7). These were similar challenges faced by the team at Sportswear. Without these essential structures and information in place beforehand, employees may have lacked sufficient guidance and understanding to participate. Brown & Roodin (2001) have also suggested,

having students from the previous semester’s service-learning class come as guest speakers to small-group meetings before placement sites are selected to provide incoming students with pointers, reassurance and encouragement (p. 101).

The recruitment process may have been aided by the sharing of the experiences of other employees who had been involved in previous service learning experiences and if the instructor of the service learning program had given an overview to the staff along with a written outline.

The structure of the service learning program also presented issues of redundancy in the curriculum. Choosing to structure the course in a way that allowed multiple entry points throughout the course resulted in a non-linear curriculum, which circled back to the beginning of the course material in order to accommodate for the introduction of new participants into the program. The content for some employees therefore was “redundant a little bit” [AS] and there was some “repetitiveness.” [CT] Lewis (2002) in her study of service learning in older adult populations found there to be challenges of implementing high-quality service learning and discussed a lack of experience in designing educational

programs. This was true of the service learning team who facilitated the program. This was the second time the group had developed and implemented a program of this nature. Lewis (2002) discussed how “training, dialogue, and technical assistance can overcome the hurdles and help professionals need to succeed in new tasks” (p. 661). Further training and assistance, would have helped the service learning facilitators develop a high-quality, flexible corporate service learning project and may have been able to better accommodate for the challenges of educating participants entering at different points in the program.

The considerations and challenges employees faced can also be understood through a Political Frame. In this frame issues of consequence and power-over are important in understanding organizational forces that might shape an employees decision to be involved in the service learning program. One of the issues expressed by employees was whether it was appropriate for the company to ask them to be involved in the service learning program. [DC] asked himself, was it “was it really appropriate for my company to expect me to go and do that?” Employees in at Sportswear did question whether the company should be asking them to partake in work connected to the company outside of normal business hours. Employees also were concerned if there might be consequences for not participating. The service learning program at was not a paid commitment and on top of work responsibilities and the volunteer commitments, some participants felt volunteering was an significant addition to the their work requirements. This may have prevented participants from fully participating in the learning component of the course. Students in service learning programs have also expressed concern with being expected to volunteer as part of their academic work. Brown and Roodin (2001) found that

“students were less than enthusiastic when service learning was offered as an option, and even somewhat angry when it was required as part of a course” (p. 95). In the service learning program, employees also had concern over whether they should be involved in a company driven service learning experience and if there was an underlying expectation for them to participate.

Certain employees who participated in the service learning felt that participation was a large undertaking because as [DC] commented, the “company already has a lot of my time” and some participants felt like the program was a “big commitment.” [AE] Even with the structures in place to move forward with the program, there were other concerns that employees had which would influence their decision to participate. In one corporate service project, time commitments were also an issue (Hext, 2006). One individual in an employee supported volunteer program commented,

Time is probably the biggest issue that we come up against. Generally a lot of people say they are happy to do it then time gets the better of them. It’s very frustrating and it’s an issue that we can’t do anything about” (Hext, 2006, p. 26).

These concerns elicit questions about why specifically each of the participants decided not to participate fully in the program and why other employees did not decide to take part. There may have been other political and symbolic considerations that came into play in the decision making process of employees. This is important because employees may question the meaning behind the service learning session and why they are being asked to be involved in the program.

There were also challenges expressed in regards to having the confidence and sense of self-esteem to facilitate the yoga sessions and connect with the youth during the

service experience. Employees described feelings of “fear in public speaking” [MM] and they thought it would be “intimidating dealing” with participants in the yoga program. [CS] The central components of the Human Resource Frame include satisfying employee needs and skill development (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Employees have a basic need to feel safe and without giving them ample time to teach them the appropriate skills or having the chance to practice facilitating the yoga class, this elicited fear for certain participants.

Brown and Roodin (2001), in their inquiry into service learning on a college campus, found that there were several issues identified by students as challenging in their reflections on the service learning. These included, “fear of negative reaction and other emotional issues” (Brown & Roodin, 2001, p. 95). These challenges may hinder a person’s positive experience and growth in a service learning program. These were meaningful concerns that brought up questions for the researcher about what could facilitate the reduction of these emotions. In the initial learning sessions the focus was more on educating participants about the Children’s Hospital and giving individuals an opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings about service. Also, some participants were not present during this session and therefore were stepping into the sessions without a substantial amount of background information. Having a greater focus on praxis in the learning sessions may be more effective in helping to give employees the skills necessary to feel comfortable performing volunteer service in the community.

Certain employees already felt equipped to partake in volunteer work and may not have seen the full value in participating in all of the service learning activities. [AS] comments that one of the reasons there was a lack of enthusiasm for the learning

component of the course was that volunteering was “something they were already familiar with, so they don’t feel like it is a big need to do it.” Certain employees felt like there was not a need to enhance the volunteer skill set they had and therefore were less inclined to participate. Lewis (2002) in her inquiry into the potential to use service learning in older adult populations discussed how adults are perceived to be more prepared for voluntary work than youth because of their life and career experience.

Seniors may be seen as more prepared for service than youth, with more vocational and life experience; therefore, organizations may see it as unnecessary to provide older adults with additional training and related content (Lewis, 2002, p. 662).

This may be said for the value both Sportswear and employees placed on involving themselves in the learning component. Some employees perceived that the learning component was not a necessary component of their voluntary experience and therefore were not compelled to participate.

### Summary

Connecting the themes derived in the research process to the supporting literature was helpful in contextualizing the findings in a meaningful way. The Four Frame model helped the researcher understand organizations and frame the findings in practical way. Hermeneutics was the method used to illuminate the interpretations shared by employees of the service learning experience and uncover the meaning inherent in the text. NVivo was a powerful tool that enabled the researcher to enter into the textual interpretations of employees by coding, and organizing them into the themes and sub-themes. This allowed

the researcher to discuss the different themes of skill development, health, job satisfaction, improved workplace relationships, bridging into the community, social responsibility, challenges and the sub-themes of self-esteem, and empowerment. From these data a more in-depth understanding of how service learning is experienced and means to employees has developed. This study is the first of its kind to follow a service learning intervention in a corporate setting. In doing so, it bridges theories and literatures to forward our understanding of the elements common to the human experience of serving others.

#### Connecting the Frames, Themes and Literature

In the process of discussing the findings, the researcher began to deepen his understanding of the service learning experience through the different bodies of literature used to interpret the themes of the inquiry. Table 8.0 organizes the themes based on their associated frame from Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model (1997) and connects them to the literature reviewed. There was a diverse body of literature used for this thesis including, social capital theory, empowerment theory, the service learning literature and the volunteer literature. Originally the researcher had mainly explored the service learning literature for the literature review; however, to understand the themes that emerged in the research process, a more expansive body of literature was required. In the process of organizing this table, it became evident the themes from the employee reports were heavily dependent on a Human Resource Frame. The Political Frame and the Structural Frame were represented under the under the themes of challenges associated

with the service learning program. The Symbolic Frame was most strong in the employee theme of social responsibility.

Table 8.0

Connecting Bolman & Deal's (1997/1991) Four Frame Model with the Themes of the Service Learning Experience and the Supporting Literature.

Frame	Theme	Literature
Human Resource	Skill Development Improved Workplace Relationships Job Satisfaction Health (Empowerment, Self-Esteem) Bridging Challenges Social Responsibility	Empowerment Theory Social Capital Theory Volunteer Literature Service Learning Literature
Structural	Challenges	Service Learning Literature Volunteering Literature
Symbolic	Social Responsibility	Service Learning Literature Volunteer Literature
Political	Challenges	Service Learning Literature Volunteer Literature

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this thesis was to understand the experiences of participants involved in a corporate service learning program. The researcher did this through exploring employee interpretations of the service learning experience. There were several conclusions the researcher has come to in his understanding of service learning in the corporate setting. There are two sections included in this chapter. First the researcher presents his conclusions and major insights based on this inquiry into the experiences of employees at Sportswear and second, the researcher gives several recommendations for service learning practice and research which have developed from the inquiry.

#### Conclusions

##### *The Efficacy of the Four Frame Model*

Bolman and Deal's (1997) Four Frame Model for understanding organizations was an effective lens for capturing the diverse interpretations of the service learning experience. The four frames helped organize the structures, cultures, peoples and politics that shaped the service learning experience. This process helped the researcher understand the service learning experience in relation to the whole, or organizational perspective, and the parts, or the individual experience. Bolman and Deal (1997) purport that frames are tools for action. It is a hope of the researcher that

readers of this document will find new use and interest in the Four Frame Model as an effective tool for both understanding the service learning experience in the workplace and for planning effective service learning programs.

Bolman and Deal (1997) also discuss how managers in organizations typically focus on one or two frames in the delivery of workplace programs. This was evident in the service learning experience in question, as there was a heavy emphasis on the Human Resource Frame, as reported by employees. As the authors recommend, it will be important for managers and coordinators to use to different lenses in understanding organizational processes in order for service learning initiatives to be successful and sustainable. The Four Frame Model is not just theory, but praxis. As service learning migrates from the academic setting into the workplace the Four Frame Model may help embed service learning in the workplace in a practical, effective and meaningful way. This new insight and understanding uncovered with the four frames may help connect corporate volunteer programs to the roots of service learning philosophy of creating sustainable, high quality volunteer and learning experiences.

#### *Service Learning Themes, Metaphors and Sensory Descriptions*

The themes that emerged in the inquiry represent a range of potentials benefits for participants in the service learning program. These themes included, skill development, health, improved workplace relationships, job satisfaction, bridging into the community, social responsibility and the sub themes of self-esteem and empowerment. There were several metaphors used to describe the themes that helped to provide a robust understanding of the service learning experience. These metaphors

included a puzzle, fabric, wildfire, kids, bridge, community, and a vehicle. The sensory descriptions of participants also provided an understanding of the service learning experience in a corporate setting for the people who were involved. These portrayals will hopefully spark new insight for employees, managers and other individuals interested in service learning in the corporate setting.

### *Social Responsibility*

The service learning experience did promote and prompt feelings of social responsibility in all of the employees. This is an important finding as a major goal of the program and of other service learning programs is to develop a sense of community responsibility amongst participants. All participants, even those who participated in only the service work, expressed a desire to want to continue volunteering after the service learning program. This was important as well because at the time of the interview only two employees were currently volunteering in the community. The ability to interact one-on-one with recipients of the service, to see the results of their volunteer work, and to connect with diverse others were all important parts of why employees were motivated to want to give back to the community.

### *Social Capital Building*

The building blocks of social capital, bonding and bridging social capital were evident in the employee reports of their experiences in the service learning program. Employees discussed bonding amongst co-workers in their descriptions of improved workplace relationships. Bridging into community and connections forming amongst

diverse others as a result of the volunteer work was also apparent. The Better Together Report (2000) states that “we need to focus on the needs and interdependence of employers, workers, and communities” (Putnam, Fedlstein & Cohen, 2000, p.12). Service learning may provide a unique vehicle to connect these groups in a meaningful way that supports and benefits everyone through the development of social capital.

### *Challenges*

There were various challenges that hampered the effectiveness and the attractiveness of the service learning program. The challenges reported by employees highlight the diversity of experiences participants have in a service learning program. The lack of participation in all of the service and learning experiences by the employees resulted in a lower quality service learning program. The challenges posed significant obstacles in adhering to the normal protocol and structure of service learning. These challenges included a lack of enthusiasm for the learning component, scattered attendance, and a non-linear course structure. These challenges offer insight to other individuals in the workplace who are considering implementing service learning programs. They will hopefully allow individuals think about and plan for effective service learning programs. These insights may also help individuals think about what service learning means in the workplace and how it is different from the academic setting.

### *Pairing of Health Activities with Service Activities*

Pairing health activities with service work was a powerful combination as reported by employees. Employees felt that serving the community through physical fitness was a health promoting activity that empowered all members involved: volunteers and recipients. The service learning program was understood to be an extension of a culture of health and wellness in the company and therefore was a unique addition to health activities in the workplace. The experiences of employees in this inquiry might be helpful to other individuals who are looking for unique health promotion activities or service activities in the workplace.

### *Choosing a Qualitative Inquiry*

Embracing a qualitative approach in this inquiry yielded rich and lengthy interpretations of the service learning experience. These interpretations will hopefully be useful information for other companies choosing to pair service with learning. They provide a textured portrayal that highlights the various challenges and successes of service learning and paints a picture of what it would be like to be involved in a corporate service learning program. The in-depth descriptions and interpretations help to highlight the unfolding process of service learning for employees.

### *The Benefits of the Learning Sessions*

The learning sessions provided opportunities for intellectual growth, a heightened awareness of the benefits of service learning for all parties, enhanced opportunities for connection between employees, and deepened employee

understanding of the purpose and benefits of the volunteer work. The learning component was another space where employees could benefit from the experience of serving the community. The insights provided by employees might be of use for individuals who are looking to add learning experiences to service activities in the workplace.

#### *Lack of Service learning in the Corporate Service Literature*

There was a lack of examples of corporate service learning programs found in the literature. This dearth does not mean that service learning programs are absent in the corporate setting; however, they may be underrepresented in the academic literature. Service learning in various forms may be flourishing in the workspace, but may be termed community service, volunteering or other monikers. The author of this inquiry supports the development of research within this area to further understand the corporate service learning experience.

#### *Lack of Resources for Companies Wanting to Engage in Service Learning*

There is a plethora of volunteer literature focusing on how companies can structure effective volunteer programs in the workplace; there was however a lack of information found in the literature review about how companies can structure service learning opportunities. Having these resources may provide companies with added resources and incentive to add learning programs to service initiatives and therefore enhance the quality of volunteer initiatives for the businesses, employees and communities they are serving.

connected to the theme of health in this inquiry. Studying the differences between using health activities as a method for volunteer service as opposed to regular volunteer activities could provide insight into how service learning activities could promote health both in the workplace and the community. Businesses might consider pairing workplace wellness programs with service learning. This coupling may strengthen positive feelings and outcomes for employees, and therefore potentially increase the likelihood of continuation of the service work. One vision in the workplace might be of employees taking one-hour lunch sessions off in the week to participate in and lead yoga sessions at non-profits that serve the homeless, elderly, special needs or youth in the community. However, in order for these initiatives to properly benefit employees, companies will need to ensure outreach work enriches employees' professional and personal lives, is not perceived as coercive, and does not detract from their well-being or add undue stress. If developed safely, with employee and community input, service learning experiences may help to facilitate a less stressful workplace and build a more connected community.

#### *Providing Incentives for Employee Involvement in Service Learning Programs*

Employers and service learning facilitators may consider providing incentives to entice participants into service learning programs. With the scattered attendance and participation in the service learning program these incentives might have been a useful addition. Using incentives, such as additional yoga training, or paying employees to partake in the learning sessions (if the employer sees benefit in doing so) may have helped to increase the likelihood of participation. Helping employees to

### *Limitations*

As a service learning program, the experiences in question are not representative of other programs. The findings here do not represent any universal truths regarding employees involved in a service learning program. This account contains only a sliver of the truth or reality of employees who were involved in the service learning program. This inquiry does not assume generalizability and instead is inserted into the literature as another account of the experiences of employees in a service learning program. Employees from other business, involved in different service learning initiatives may have a different understanding or interpretation of their experiences. The lack of participation in the learning component of the service learning program was also a limitation of the inquiry. For some participants, the only reflective process that could be considered a learning process was informal conversation about the experience and the guided interview for this inquiry. Another limitation was those employees who participated in the study choose to do so, and therefore are not necessarily representative of all the participants who participated in the service learning program. The amount of hours spent volunteering was also small in comparison to other service learning programs in the literature. Another potential limitation was the Hawthorne effect, in that the researcher was the instructor for the service learning course and this may have influenced the reports of employees.

### Recommendations for Practice and Research

#### *Choosing Health Promotion Activities for Corporate Service Learning Projects*

The choice by Sportswear to use yoga as a volunteer activity was positively

understand the benefit of participating in both facets of the service learning program could increase involvement, and continuity in the course, and therefore yield greater gains for all. Further research of service learning programs in the workplace might inquire into the use of incentives in promoting participation in all aspects of programs.

### *Resources for Service Learning*

There is currently a wide range of resources available for the creation of service learning programs in the academic setting. There is also a wide range of governmental volunteer resources for companies wanting to contribute to communities through service. There still seems to be a gulf in terms of pairing learning and service sessions in the corporate setting. There may be an opportunity to build upon the current volunteer resources available and include different suggestions for the addition of learning opportunities. These might include example curriculum, lesson plans, pedagogical strategies and case studies of other successful service learning programs.

### *Include all Service Learning Partners in an Inquiry*

Including the diverse partners involved in service learning in an inquiry will help researchers to better understand the experience of service learning for all of those involved. These partners could include the owners of business, management, employees, non-profit administrators, support workers, and the clients of the non-profit agency. Service learning is rooted in the notion of reciprocity, that all parties involved will benefit. Involving these different voices will help lead to higher quality,

more sustainable service learning programs, and a greater understanding of how service learning impacts the community being served.

#### *Using other Methods of Research Representation*

Other modes of research representation could be explored as a means of communicating the experiences of participants in service learning programs. These forms might include fictional representation (Sparkes, 2002) to recreate the service learning experience through the lens of the different partners involved. This will help to provide a plausible, visceral account to help deepen readers' understanding of what service learning means to those involved and serve as a catalyst to motivate the reader to volunteer in the community and possibly advocate for workplace service learning programs. This type of account could also be shared amongst the different partners as means of creating greater understanding and empathy between the different partners involved in service learning. Using video representation, or photovoice methodology (Wang & Yanique, 2001) might also provide a compelling account of the service learning experience, and serve as an educational tool for employee training in an organization.

#### *Social Capital Research*

The potential for service learning to build social capital in the corporate community could be an area of interest for researchers. In the population health literature, social capital is offered as a means to close the gradient between social positions in society (Raphael, Macdonald, Colman, Labonte, Hayward & Togerson

2005), and is helpful in emphasizing the importance of place, relations, and structures of the collective rather than the individual (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). High levels of social capital and its assets (e.g., social cohesion and inclusion, social networks, social participation) have been found to be associated with lower morbidity and mortality. It may be that it serves the same purpose in a workplace hierarchy, bonding and bridging employee relationships and contributing to decreased absenteeism and higher morale. There are different quantitative measures which have been developed to capture the depth of social capital in a community and using these measures might help develop an understanding of what type of social capital is being built in service learning programs and to what depth this is occurring. Putnam (2000) suggested that the workplace may be a fertile ground for building social capital. High quality service learning programs may provide an effective process for building robust social capital.

#### *Sustainable Service Learning Programs and Participation*

An important follow-up question which could be asked of participants involved in service learning programs, months or years after the program, would be: is your company still serving the same volunteer partner; or are employees volunteering in the community? Service learning is different from volunteering or altruism in that it tries to create strong, lasting relationships between volunteers and their charitable partners. It is important to know if involvement in the service learning program leads to increased involvement in the community in the distant future. It would be interesting to know if the attitudinal shift of individuals leads to actionable steps taken by employees in the future. It is of interest to know if new skills and insights lead

employees to volunteer in the community on their own, or do the structural supports of corporate volunteering, provide the necessary bridge for employees to serve their community.

#### *Literature Review on Service Learning Programs in the Workplace*

A comprehensive review of employee volunteer programs with a learning component in Canada could be completed as both a beginning point for research on corporate service learning and to serve as a resource for other companies who are looking to pair volunteer initiatives with learning. This could be an important resource for workplace leaders who intend to develop service learning programs. There may be pedagogical strategies already employed by companies that are an effective means of engaging employees in the learning process. This type of review would also help to compare corporate volunteer programs with service learning programs to better understand how service learning might create more sustainable, higher-quality volunteer experiences in the workplace.

#### *Research Design and Triangulation of Data*

Collecting additional sources and types of data would have been useful establishing greater credibility of the findings for this inquiry. Initially, the researcher had intended to use reflective journals as a source of data; however, participants in the service learning program were not motivated to use them as an educational tool. Reflective journals may not be an appropriate educational tool for the workplace, considering the time-constraints and other responsibilities of employees; however,

other strategies, such as having employees write down short reflective statements in the learning sessions may help to illuminate other insights into the service learning process. Other methods of data collection compatible to the phenomenological approach could include participant observation and focus group discussions.

Quantitative measures of volunteers' perceptions might also help to gather more information about the impact of service learning in the corporate setting. Integration of these data collection strategies in mixed-methods research design, particularly a longitudinal and prospective design, could track and document the service learning experience for its influence on both employees and the workplace culture, including the production of social capital. Mixed-methods design allows for the adoption of several philosophical paradigms recognizing the value of both subjective and objective knowledge (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), and can result in a more sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005).

### *Tapping the Potential of Service Learning*

Service without learning is an untapped potential, a veritable sun waiting for its energy to be harnessed and warmth to be spread amongst all of those who are involved. In the corporate setting this could mean customers, suppliers, co-workers, management, owners and the community. As the Canadian social activists Craig and Marc Kielberger (2004) suggest, our generation needs to transition from a "me" focused society to a "we" focused society. This could be focused to say, our businesses, and those existing in these organizations need to transition from "me" to

“we” in the way they engage the community. Servicing learning may provide a vehicle to move forward the act of corporate service and build bridges across communities that enrich the social fabric of companies and the communities they are located in. The great challenge for advocates of service learning will be to develop resources for the development of high quality service learning programs in the workplace that will provide a sustainable, practical and enticing framework for businesses and their employees to embrace. If this is done, with the consultation of the communities being served, there is unlimited potential for growth and benefit on many levels for all the parties involved.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

*Ethical Review of Human Research*

University  
of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Board  
Office of Research Services  
University of Victoria  
Technology Enterprise Facility, Room 218  
Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-7836  
Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

## Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u> Christopher Bratseth Master's Student	<u>Department/School</u> PHYS	<u>Supervisor</u> Dr. Joan Wharf Higgins	
<u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>			
<u>Project Title:</u> An Inquiry into the experiences of Employees in a Corporate Service Learning Program			
<u>Protocol No.</u> 06-199	<u>Approval Date</u> 31-Jul-06	<u>Start Date</u> 31-Jul-06	<u>End Date</u> 30-Jul-09

### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Richard Keeler  
Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions or minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of a "Research Status" form.

## Appendix B

*Participant Consent Form*

Good Company: An inquiry into experiences of employees in a corporate service learning program

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled *Good Company: an inquiry into the experiences of employees in a corporate service learning program* that is being conducted by Christopher Bratseth. Christopher Bratseth is a graduate student in the department of Physical Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phoning him at (250) 858-5463, or email him at [cbratset@uvic.ca](mailto:cbratset@uvic.ca)

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Physical Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Joan Wharf Higgins. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-8377.

The purpose of this research project is inquire into the experiences of employees in a service learning program, and to explore the value of service learning in a corporate setting.

Research of this type is important because there is a lack of study into the corporate service learning experience. Service learning programs have potential benefits for both the organization implementing the service learning program, for society and for the participants. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have participated in the corporate service learning program and your experiences are of interest for this inquiry.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include submitting your reflective journals and email responses to questions you answered during the service learning program and partaking in a one-hour interview and approximately, a 45 minute follow-up interview.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including approximately 2 hours of your time for the interviews outside of work time.

There are potential risks associated with this research. In reflecting on your service learning experiences you may become sad, anxious or distressed if your volunteer experiences involve disadvantaged citizens (e.g children with special needs). To help

you cope with or prevent these feelings, a list of community resources including contact information will be given to you.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be given back to you if you so desire, or destroyed.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be interviewed for a total of 2 hours. To ensure accurate data collection, I would like to audio-record the interview, and I will ask your permission before beginning the interview process. I will ask you to review the transcripts from the interview to ensure their accuracy and to clarify any points. If you so desire, you will be able to change or delete statements from the interview. The review process may take another 30 minutes of your time. I will again ask for

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as the program facilitator. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion: first, steps have been taken to ensure that information gathered for the study will not be available to other staff or management at the retail store, and second, you have the option leave at any time and this will not affect your work status.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by holding all interview collected data in a secure room with no identifying information. After the interview sessions, only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the information that will be stored in the researchers home office. All audio tapes will be destroyed after transcription. Your reflective journals will be returned to you after they are transcribed.

To ensure the anonymity of participants and all of the information collected from interviews, journals and email documents, coding will be used to identify participants and only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to this coding system and the raw data.

Since the participants in this study are coming from the same employee group that participated in the program, complete anonymity is limited by the sample size, although participants in the service learning program will not know which co-workers volunteered to be in the study.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: through thesis work and in journal articles.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

*A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.*

## Appendix C

### *Interview Guide*

Interview questions for employees in the inquiry, Good Company: An inquiry into the experiences of employees in a corporate service learning program.

Reminders for the interview:

- Discuss the inquiry with the participants
- Explain the focus of the interview
- Informed Consent Sheet
- Develop Rapport with Participant
- Outline the Interview questions

1. Background/ Demographic Questions - asked to identify the characteristics of the interviewee.

What type of work do you do for Sportswear?

How long have you worked at the Sportswear for?

Are there other volunteer initiatives you have been involved in at Sportswear other organizations?

2. Experience/Behavior Questions - aimed at drawing out description of behaviors, actions, experience and activities.

What type of activities were you involved in during the service learning program?

Can you think of a metaphor to describe what it was like to be involved in the service learning program?

Could you speak about how roles and tasks for employees were different from work during the service learning program? Did they support each other in any way?

What type of skills do you think you gained from the service learning experience that might be of benefit at work?

3. Opinions/Values Questions- used to look at the cognitive and interpretive processes of participants

In your opinion what was the value of the Service Learning Program for the community?

How do you think involvement in the service learning program contributed to your workplace experience?

Was there value for you, your colleagues or the business?

Do you think like this experience served both your needs and the companies' needs? If so how?

How do you think the workplace dynamic differed during the service learning experience?

How do you think the service learning experience affected your workplace relationships?

Was power shifted amongst employees and managers during the service learning experience. If so, how?

4. Feeling Questions- asked to find out the emotional responses of participants to the programs and their thoughts about it

What did being involved in the service learning program mean to you?  
e.g., What did it feel like to learn more about service?

How does participating in service learning program make you feel about working for Sportswear?

How does participating in the service learning program make you feel

about your self?

5. Knowledge Questions- asked to find out the factual information the participant has about the service learning program

What do you see as the major goals of the company and how does service learning contribute or detract from this?

How would you describe the culture at Sportswear and how does service learning fit in with this?

Did participation in the service learning program give you a better sense of the values, beliefs and interests of other employees? If so, how?

6. Sensory Questions - Asked to find out the sensory experience of the participant

If I were present at either the service outing, or the instructional periods, what would I hear?

Can you describe to me what you saw during your community service work?

Can you describe to me what you saw during the learning component

of the program?

Can you describe to me what you touched during your community service work?

7. Time Frame Question - to find out what type of service experiences the participant has been involved, is doing now and is planning to do in the future.

What type of service work can you see yourself doing in the future? Has this been influenced by your experience in the service learning program?

Can you tell me about any current service or volunteer work that you are currently involved in?

8. Open Ended Questions -to allow the participant to add any new further insights, to build upon previous questions or to clarify any interview content.

Are there any challenges that you experienced in the service learning program that you would like to share?

Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share about your experience in the service learning program?

## Appendix D

*Email Recruitment Letter*

Dear, XXXX

School of Physical Education.

As you know I am a Masters Student at the University of Victoria in the School of Physical Education. I am currently finishing my Masters research in the area of Corporate Service Learning. The title of my study is “ Good Company: an inquiry into the experiences of employees in a corporate service learning program.”

The purpose of this research is to:

- 1) Provide insight into the experiences of employees in a workplace service learning program.
- 2) Inquire into the values of service learning in the corporate sector.
- 3) Understand how corporate service learning can be improved.

As part of my study, I am recruiting employees involved in the service learning program delivered at your workplace. It is my hope, for the purpose of this study, you will be able to: give me access to your service learning journals, email responses to questions asked in the course, take part in an hour long interview and a half and hour follow-up session to clarify your answers during the interview.

Why might you consider involving yourself in a study corporate service learning?

- Over the past twenty years, service learning programs have spread widely throughout the North American academic community; however, except for a few initiatives, service learning has been slow to take hold outside of the academic environment (Lewis, 2000).

- As a result, much of the corporate community has yet to experience or benefit from the service learning experience.
- Service learning programs could complement and build upon other workplace wellness initiatives that cultivate and promote a healthy workplace

As is evident, I as the researcher have a relationship to potential participants in this study as the service learning facilitator. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion: first, steps have been taken to ensure that information gathered for the study will not be available to other staff or management at the retail store, I will not be revealing to staff or management who participated and who did not participate in the study; and second, you have the option to leave at any time and this will no way affect your work status. If you care to find out more about this study you can contact me at [cbratset@uvic.ca](mailto:cbratset@uvic.ca), or you can call me at xxxxx.

If you are interest and would like to participant, I will ask you to sign a consent form that will inform you of the focus and procedures of the study and how I will ensure confidentiality of the information you provide me.

If you have any additional questions you may contact my advisor, Joan Wharf Higgins at 721-8377 [[jwharfhi@uvic.ca](mailto:jwharfhi@uvic.ca)]. You may also verify ethic approval of this study by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

I look forward to your reply. I will follow up with a phone call in the next three or four days if I have not received a reply.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Chris Bratseth  
Masters Student,  
University of Victoria

## Appendix E

## Phone Script

Good morning/afternoon XXX, this is Chris Bratseth. I was the educator for the service learning course you participated in.

As you know and I am a Masters Student at the University of Victoria in the School of Physical Education. I am currently finishing my Masters research in the area of Corporate Service Learning. The title of my study is " Good Company: an inquiry into the experiences of employees involved in a corporate service learning program."

As part of my study, I am recruiting employees involved in the service learning program delivered at your workplace. It is my hope, for the purpose of this study, you will be able to: give me access to your service learning journals, email responses to questions asked in the course, take part in an hour long interview and a half and hour follow-up session to clarify your answers during the interview.

As is evident, I as the researcher have a relationship to potential participants in this study as the service learning facilitator. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion: first, steps have been taken to ensure that information gathered for the study will not be available to other staff or management at the retail store, and second, you have the option leave at any time and this will not affect you work status.

I would like to give you some time to think about if you would like to participate. If you are interested, I will send you an email with more information about the study.

Please feel free to contact me when you have time. If you care to find out more about this study you can contact me at cbratset@uvic.ca, or you can call me at xxxxx.. You can also contact my supervisor Joan Wharf Higgins by email at xxxx or by telephone by xxxxx. Thank you very much for your time. Good bye.

## Appendix F

*Letter of approval from business*

June 6, 2006

To whom it may concern,

As the Community Educator for (Sportswear) in Victoria, it is my pleasure to help facilitate the graduate research project titled, "Good Company – an inquiry into the experiences of employees in a corporate service learning program" by Chris Bratseth. It is my understanding that this research aims to help understand the impact of service learning programs in the workplace and will involve working with several of our employees.

I intend to help Chris recruit employees to be interviewed about their experiences in the service learning programs at (Sportswear). I will also work to provide a space to facilitate interview with the employees.

If you have any further questions regarding our store's involvement, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Person's Name  
Community Educator  
Sportswear, Victoria  
Person's Phone Number

School of Physical Education  
University of Victoria  
PO Box 3105 STN CSC  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 3P1  
Telephone

Dr. Robert Sigmon,

I am completing a Master's thesis at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, entitled, *Good Company: An Interpretive Inquiry into Employees in a Corporate Service Learning Program*. I would like your permission to reprint in my thesis, one of your models from the following source:

Sigmon, R. L. et al., (1996). "The problem of Definition in Service Learning: Why no one definition works." In Sigmon, R.L. and colleagues (Eds.) *Journey to service learning: Experiences from independent liberal arts colleges and universities*. Washington, DC: The Council of Independent Colleges, 9-11.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions, and editions of my thesis including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publications of my thesis by UMI, an agent of the National Library of Canada. This agent microfilms all thesis and dissertations. These rights in no way restrict publication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own [or your company owns] the copyright to the above-described material, or you have the authorization to grant copyright permission.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign the letter below and return to me by faxing it to (250-721-8728), email a pdf to [cbratset@uvic.ca](mailto:cbratset@uvic.ca) or by mailing it to Chris Bratseth, School of Physical Education, University of Victoria, PO Box 3015, STN CSC, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8W 3P1.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Chris Bratseth,

Masters Student.

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: