

Exploring the Commitment of Contractor's Employees in a Municipal Recreation  
Environment

by

Vanessa Morley  
BA, University of Victoria, 2010

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in the School of Exercise Science and Physical Health Education

© Vanessa Morley, 2013  
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or other means, without the permission of the author.

## **Supervisory Committee**

Exploring the Commitment of Contractor's Employees in a Municipal Recreation  
Environment

by

Vanessa Morley  
BA, University of Victoria, 2010

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. John Meldrum (School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education)  
**Supervisor**

Dr. Douglas Nichols (School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education)  
**Departmental Member**

## **Abstract**

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. John Meldrum (School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education)

#### **Supervisor**

Dr. Douglas Nichols (School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education)

#### **Departmental Member**

With an increased focus on health promotion and chronic disease prevention, municipal recreation centres are becoming predominant places for community members to become physically engaged in a diversity of pursuits (Barnes, Maclean, & Cousens, 2010). Recreation Organizations are increasingly searching for flexibility in programming and staffing (Connelly, Gallagher, & Gilley, 2007; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006; Lepak, Takeuchi, & Snell, 2003) and new forms of employee-employer relationships are evolving. One of the most common trends in the provision of recreation services is the use of third parties (contractors) who place their employees with client organizations (municipal recreation centres) on a long-term basis. This study explores the perspectives of four contract recreation service provider employees and their experiences delivering recreation programs at municipal recreation centres. Transcripts were used to illustrate each individual's perspectives with their own words wherever possible and the four interviews were compared to identify similarities and differences. Three themes emerged from the interviews: focus of commitment, impact of perceived organizational support (POS) and the dynamic with the recreation centre. It was found that contractor's employees in this type role were generally affectively committed to a variety of aspects of their jobs (the participants in the program, their career and the program/activity itself). Incidents were also identified that influenced POS (organizational policies and procedures and those perceived by the employee). It was also found that interactions with municipal recreation centre staff impacted the employee significantly. Future studies should explore this topic further and specific attention could be given to the working relationship between the contractor employee and the recreation centre. Research should also be conducted from the perspectives of the two other key

players in this study: the recreation centre (recreation programmer) and the recreation contract service provider.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
Acknowledgments .....	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Purpose of Study .....	5
1.2 Operational Definitions .....	5
Chapter 2 Review of Literature .....	8
2.1 Partnerships .....	9
2.2 The Contractor, Contractor's Employee and Client Relationship .....	15
2.3 Perceived Organizational Support .....	16
2.4 Commitment .....	18
2.5 Psychological Contract .....	21
2.6 Summary .....	23
Chapter 3 Methods .....	25
3.1 Research Design and Data Collection .....	26
3.2 Recruitment .....	27
3.3 Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations .....	29
3.4 Analysis .....	30
Chapter 4 Results .....	33
Introduction .....	33
4.1 Participant Profiles .....	33
4.2 Themes .....	39
4.3 Focus of Commitment .....	41
4.3.1 Definition of Workplace Commitment for the Participant .....	41
4.3.2 Commitment to the Organizations and Career .....	44
4.3.3 Commitment to the Participants and/or the Program .....	47
4.4 Impact of Perceived Organizational Support .....	49
4.4.1 Employee POS Impact .....	49
4.4.2 Impact of Policies and Procedures .....	53
4.5 The Dynamic Among the Recreation Centre, Contractor and the Contractor's Employee .....	58
Summary .....	65
Chapter 5 Discussion .....	66
5.1 Focus of Commitment .....	66
5.2 Impact of POS .....	73
5.3 The Dynamic with the Recreation Centre .....	80
5.4 Implications and Recommendations for Practice .....	84
5.4.1 Implications for recreation centre .....	84
5.4.2 Implications for the contractor .....	85
5.4.3 Implications for contractor's employee .....	87
5.5 Future Research .....	88

	vi
Conclusion .....	90
Bibliography .....	92
Appendix A - Recruitment Letter .....	97
Appendix B - Phone Script for Approaching the Community Recreation Coordinator ...	99
Appendix C – Interview Guide .....	100
Appendix D – Letter of Informed Consent .....	101

## **Acknowledgments**

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. John Meldrum for all of his guidance and support over the past two years. He has always been available, supportive and able to share his wealth of knowledge and experience throughout this process. I am very happy to have been able to work with him. I would also like to thank Dr. Douglas Nichols for his time and valuable feedback.

A big thank you to the participants in this study for taking the time to share their experiences with me and answer my questions throughout the process. Your experiences highlight how passionate you all are about what you teach and your communities.

I would also like to thank the recreation centres in Victoria BC, and the recreation coordinators who assisted with the recruitment for this study. Thank you for taking the time to help me be in touch with potential participants.

Finally, I would also like to thank my family for your ongoing support and reinforcement throughout this journey. Your ongoing positive encouragement has made all of my education opportunities nothing short of fantastic.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

With an increased focus on health promotion and chronic disease prevention, municipal recreation centres are becoming central places for community members to become physically engaged in a diversity of pursuits (Barnes et al., 2010). Recreation Organizations are increasingly searching for flexibility in programming and staffing (Connelly, Gallagher, & Gilley, 2007; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006; Lepak, Takeuchi, & Snell, 2003) and new forms of employee-employer relationships are evolving. One of the most common trends in the provision of recreation services is the use of third parties (contractors) who place their employees with client organizations (municipal recreation centres) on a long-term basis (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). These partnerships are formed for several reasons including the sharing of resources and infrastructure, the ability to quickly offer popular new programs that require expertise, specialized instruction and financial and budget constraints (Babiak, 2009; Barnes et al., 2010; Glover, 1999a; Hodge & Greve, 2007). The municipal recreation centre and the contract recreation service provider (or contractor) partnership is vital in meeting the needs of the community to provide essential physical activity services and programs (Barnes et al., 2010).

In the context of municipal recreation, the “client” is the municipal recreation centre and the “employer” or “third-party” is the contract recreation service provider. This partnership occurs when the contractor agrees to handle a set of work responsibilities on a long-term basis for a client organization at the client’s work location. The contractor develops the program, supplies the employees, and is the legal employer

of record. For example, a contractor might offer a specialized yoga program; they are responsible for hiring the yoga instructor, planning the details of the class and paying the instructor their wages. The contractor and the recreation centre formulate a shared contractual relationship concerning the employee and recreation program, creating a triangular system of employment relations (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). These partnership relationships are becoming more prevalent as they allow parks and recreation organizations to provide enhanced programming and fulfill the needs of the public (Kerstetter, 2006).

Public-private partnerships involve a professional relationship whereby a government or non-profit organization (public or community recreation centre) collaborates with a private company to supply a public service. These arrangements often cover all aspects of service delivery including program development and design, finance, ownerships, staffing and design (Glover, 1999a). Partnerships are expanding in their inclusiveness, scope, and impact across organizational sectors (e.g., public, non-profit, commercial) as well as various levels of governance (Kerstetter, 2006). These work arrangements have implications concerning the contractor's employee and their commitment to their employer, customer, and the recreation centre. Working at multiple recreation organizations could impact the contractor's employee's workplace commitment because they do not have a traditional work model, but instead, they often run programs and have minimal interaction with their employers.

Workplace commitment is a well-established construct with antecedents and consequences fairly well understood (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011). The position of a contractor's employee can be viewed as a unique situation compared with traditional

employment roles because these working conditions quite often resemble those of temporary staff, except that employment is often long-term or permanent. There is evidence to suggest that contractor's employees develop feelings of commitment toward their client organization rather than their employer (McElroy, Morrow, & Laczniak, 2001). Previous studies have also noted that little is known about workplace commitment among contractor's employees and with the growth of this type of work, research is needed to help understand this specific employment role (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006; Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, & Six, 2008; McElroy et al., 2001).

Workplace commitment can take various forms, is multidimensional and has the potential to influence organizational success and employee well-being (Meyer, 2001). Building workplace commitment for the contractor's employees is important for several reasons. Employees who express high workplace commitment show high levels of job satisfaction and are more likely to engage in behaviours that contribute to an organization's competitive advantage (Felfe et al., 2008; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994). Employees who enjoy their work are more likely to have participants reregister in their classes as well as refer their friends to the program. Commitment, as defined by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) is, "a stabilizing and obliging force that gives direction to behaviour and binds a person to a course of action" (p. 301); commitment is a bond linking an individual to their clients, supervisor and/or workplace. Contract based work may then have implications for employee commitment.

Contract-based work conditions are comprised of both risks and opportunities for the contractor's employees. The conditions of their work can make it difficult to obtain a steady income when hours of employment rely on participant registrations to run, or to

maintain a proper work-life balance when hours of work are scattered throughout the day. These circumstances may make it difficult for contractor's employees to develop substantial commitment to their organizations and their jobs because of the uncertainty that comes with working in these positions. However, a flexible and autonomous job may have benefits to the individual employee. A job that has high autonomy and flexibility and is influenced by the individual's own efforts, initiatives, and decisions rather than by the instructions from the boss or by a manual of job procedures (Oldham & Hackman, 1976) creates a circumstance where an individual should feel strong personal responsibility for the success and failures that occur. Much of the research done in this area has focused on the commitment to the organization rather than what it is like to be the employee in this position.

Creating a healthy work environment where employees feel supported, respected, and where their needs are being met is fundamental in retaining staff and sustaining motivation and commitment ("Employee Satisfaction Equals Retention," 2004). Organizations will have to create a successful employee value plan (rewards and benefits in return for positive performance in the work place) in order to successfully attract and retain talent in an increasingly free agent workforce (Kroth, Boverier, & Zondlo, 2007). In many cases, satisfied employees produce satisfied customers and satisfied customers can grow any organization that relies on participant registrations for success (Piper, 2006).

The use of recreation contract service providers in the provision of recreation programs is becoming increasingly popular in recreation organizations (Cousens, Barnes, Stevens, Mallen, & Bradish, 2006). This type of work arrangement is common in the

private sector, but little research explores this dynamic in the field of public recreation.

Employee commitment can have implications for retaining program participants, program registration and leading to the successful growth and sustainability of the organizations.

Therefore, it is important to explore how this work arrangement affects the contractor's employees and their commitment.

### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore what it is like to be a contract recreation provider's employee working at a municipal recreation centre. It is clear that the traditional assurance of job security and rewards in return for hard work and loyalty no longer exist (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) and therefore it is essential to understand what is the "lived experience" for the contractor's employee at a municipal recreation centre. Research questions include: (1) how does working in a contract dependent position impact the employee? (2) How does the contractor's employee view this type of service delivery and its impact on the patron, the recreation centre and their employer? (3) And what overall implications might this have on employee retention and commitment?

### **1.2 Operational Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following key terms have been identified and defined as to their context for interpretation when addressing this area of research:

**Municipal (Public) Recreation Centre:** A building or site, usually owned by the city council or municipal district where people go to recreate. Can also be referred to as a Community Centre.

**Contract Recreation Service Provider:** An organization that contracts or sells its services to a client organization on a fixed term or project basis (Connelly & Gallagher, 2006).

**Perceived Organizational Support (POS):** A reflection of an employee's general belief that their work organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Further, it has been indicated that POS is capable of influencing performance by neutralizing stressors and increasing affective commitment to the organization (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008).

**Contractor's Employee:** The employee of a contract recreation service provider. This role is usually responsible for the direct provision of services or programs.

**Affective Commitment:** An employee's positive emotional attachment to their organization. An employee who strongly identifies with their organization and desires to remain a member (Rhoades et al., 2001).

**Normative Commitment:** A reflection of an individual's feeling of obligation to maintain organizational membership because he/she believes it is morally right to be loyal to, and stay with the organization (Erdheim, Wang, & Zickar, 2006).

**Continuance Commitment:** An individual's need to remain with the organization resulting from her/his recognition of the costs (tenure, pay, benefits, vesting of pensions, family commitment, etc.) associated with leaving the organization (Meyer, 2001; Wang, Indridason, & Saunders, 2010).

This will be a qualitative exploratory study, using in depth one-on-one interviews to collect data from participants. A “Critical Incident Technique” will also be used to draw a timeline with each participant to help with recall of events (Frankmann & Adams, 1954). Assumptions will be that all participants will respond truthfully and that the use of the timeline will enhance accurate recall. It is also assumed that participants work for a contract recreation service provider. Due to the use of interviews as the primary source of data collection, the number of participants will be limited to four or five individuals. Delimitations set by the researcher are that participants must work for a contractor who provides recreation programs to municipal recreation centres. Further assumptions, limitations and delimitations will be explored in the methods and design section of this paper.

It is expected that several factors and themes will be identified that may reflect some of the key areas in workplace commitment literature such as perceived organizational support and psychological contract and commitment to the recreation centre, recreation patrons and contract employer. Little is known about employees working in contract positions in recreation centres. Research identified explores implications for the employer but no research was identified that seeks to understand the employee’s perspective. Research does indicate that commitment levels toward the employer and the client organization are effected (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006), but we do not know what the experience is like for the contractor’s employee. This paper explores the perspective of the contractor’s employee.

## Chapter 2 Review of Literature

To understand all of the possible influences and dynamics in the municipal recreation centre and contract recreation service provider partnerships, several key elements will be examined. When providing quality recreation programs, it is crucial to understand the person who is delivering the contracted service/program, what this type of employment is like for them, their clients and the organizations they deliver programs for. First, background information pertaining to partnerships and why these are becoming an increasingly common form of programming in recreation centres will be presented. Second, perceived organizational support is essential to an employee feeling valued by their employer and this is key to long-term employee commitment. Finally, psychological contract must be maintained through the eyes of the employee in order to maintain a successful employer-employee relationship.

Partnerships in recreation are not only seen between the recreation centres and contractors, but there is also a notable similarity in the employee-employer relationship. These partnerships are essential for several reasons such as the successful delivery of a program, increased business, trust and maintaining long-term employment. Both the employer and employee must rely on each other to fulfill their responsibilities of the partnership. Employee perceived organizational support (POS) is essential in the delivery of quality programs and client retention (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Feeling supported and needed by their employers is key to the employee commitment, self-fulfillment, empowerment in the workplace, and “serves to strengthen the social exchange relationship, and thus, increases

employees' performance commitment" (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008, p. 55). This has a direct impact on a client's participation in the growing business. Understanding what establishes this commitment and which types are strongest is the key to learning what it is like to be a contractor's employee. Some forms of commitment are greater than others and when an employee is affectively committed to their organization, they are emotionally attached and not just invested for monetary gains or out of necessity. It is possible that commitment is two-fold for contractor's employees, to both the employer and the recreation centre. Therefore, having an understanding of this commitment is going to be essential in the evaluation of this data. An important constitutive element of the employment relationship is the psychological contract between employees and their organizations. Psychological contract can be understood as the employees' beliefs concerning mutual obligations between the employee and the organization (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994) and if there is a breach, it is thought to lead to intense emotional reactions which can adversely affect the employment relationship (Bal, Delange, Jansen, & Vandervelde, 2008; Cassar & Briner, 2011).

## **2.1 Partnerships**

Although little research has been conducted concerning partnerships in municipal recreation and sport settings, literature within private sector partnerships does give us insight into the benefits and challenges of these arrangements. This research is relevant because a number of the recreation contract service providers are private business and many public recreation centres operate on a business model. Partnerships are a

ubiquitous component of park and recreation service delivery systems. They have been defined as the voluntary pooling of resources (labour, capital, information) between two or more parties to achieve collaborative goals (Kerstetter, 2006). The term partnership has become a broad label for describing a number of organizational and interpersonal transactions for parks and recreation professionals. Much of the research conducted pertaining to partnerships has been accomplished in the private sector where they are recognized as cooperative ventures, interorganizational agreements, strategic alliances, coalitions, collaborations, and workforces (Hodge & Greve, 2007). Partnerships are becoming increasingly popular and thus there is a growing need to understand how these alliances can be used to provide and improve public services.

The Partnership Matrix illustrates a continuum of partnerships and ranges from a *collaboration*, which is considered an autonomous partnership, to a *corporate integration* (which includes a corporate merger/acquisition, parent/subsidiary corporation and joint ventures) that is integrated in nature and involves strategic restructuring (“The Partnership Matrix,” 2013). The contract recreation service provider and the recreation centre partnership falls under the strategic alliance section of the partnership matrix. A strategic alliance is considered a strategic restructuring that includes a formal commitment to continue, for the foreseeable future, shared or transferred decision-making power. It does not involve any change to the corporate structure of the participating organizations (“The Partnership Matrix,” 2013).

Kerstetter (2006) described partnerships in recreation to be, “The pooling of resources [which] allows park and recreation organizations to stretch existing staff, facilities, equipment, and finances to provide enhanced programming or to be more

relevant or inclusive in their programming” (p. 1). Both public and private organizations have access to specific resources or specific qualities that the other does not. By combining these resources, there can be benefits for not only the two parties directly involved, but also for the public. Key factors have been identified as essential in forming successful partnerships. These factors include shared responsibility, investments, risk sharing, an established timeframe for the partnership and clear contract terms (Hodge & Greve, 2007).

Organizations across Canada are also being called upon to adopt a collaborative approach in the provision of programs, services and facilities (Babiak, 2009; Provan & Milward, 2001). By working together, recreation centres can increase their program offerings, reach a broader community and provide expertise in delivery with less of the financial overhead coming down directly to them. With partnerships becoming a common mechanism for the delivery of public recreation programs, research is needed to evaluate their effectiveness within the recreation context (Provan & Milward, 2001).

Hodge and Greve (2007) suggest that risk sharing is a vital component of the partnership. Both parties are in a partnership together, on equal terms and therefore have to bear parts of the risks involved (Coulson, 2005). These partnerships must jointly produce something (a product or a service) and, perhaps implicitly, both stand to gain from mutual contributions (Hodge & Greve, 2007).

Recently, there has been a focus on the importance of evaluating relationships among organizations such as assessing joint programs, identifying how they work, and considering the impact of such relationships on organizational structure and behaviour (Provan & Milward, 2001). Much of the research being done in this area of evaluation

has focused on how to build, maintain and evaluate interorganizational relationships. Recent literature exploring public-private partnerships has had a focus on evaluating network effectiveness as the critical point for understanding whether partnerships are effective in delivering needed services to the community (Babiak, 2009; Cousens et al., 2006; Provan & Milward, 2001). A key consideration in this research is that there has been no indication as to the importance of the contractor's employee in successful service delivery in these partnerships.

Establishing parameters, responsibilities and expectations are key to forming successful partnerships. Provan & Milward (2001) state that, "public-sector networks are most effective when they enhance the capacity of organizations to solve problems and to serve clientele" (p. 418). In the article, *Collaborative advantage: Successful partnerships manage the relationship, not just the deal*, Kanter (1994) suggests eight key characteristics to creating successful partnerships that can be applied to recreation partnerships. These are:

- Individual excellence
- Importance
- Independence
- Investment
- Information
- Integration
- Institutionalization; and
- Integrity

(Kanter, 1994, p. 100)

Organizational relationships and partnerships should not be entered into lightly. They should be entered into thoughtfully with full commitment from both parties to ensure the needs of both parties are met and the relationship is maintained.

Development in recreation and leisure participation has led to the expansion of park and recreation partnerships beyond the traditional direct service delivery model. This has been occurring for several reasons and Kerstetter (2006) suggests that this is due to diminished public resources combined with an expanding, demanding, and increasingly diverse population that requires public agencies to cooperate to seek assistance from commercial and non-profit organizations. Financial constraints combined with increasing expectations from the public for the continued provision of quality recreation programs and facilities has contributed to the need for partnerships between public and private organizations (Cousens et al., 2006). One of the issues of financial constraints raised by Glover, (1999b) is that public leisure service agencies have moved from being producers of service to in many cases, being the arrangers of services. Glover (1999b) questions whether this may or may not be the best practice, however it is a reality for many public recreation agencies in today's fiscal and political climate. These influences, coupled with a heightened awareness of social issues cannot be effectively addressed by a single organization or governing body. Various partnerships have allowed public recreation centres to expand their goods and services and reach a broader audience through the increased provision of services (Cousens et al., 2006).

During times of financial constraint, there is often reduced public spending, which can affect the direct provision of services. Municipal recreation centres must partner with other public, private, and non-profit organizations (Cousens et al., 2006) in order to

continue to provide comprehensive services to community members. As a result, municipalities are now pursuing a wide array of methods to deliver public services, including parks and recreation (Glover, 1999a). The decision to collaborate is often one of necessity, since organizations need to obtain resources from alternative sources to survive. These collaborative arrangements appear to offer more stability to public recreation agencies through the acquisition of necessary resources, access to specialized expertise, and the adoption of an efficient organizational structure (Babiak, 2009; Glover, 1999a).

Research indicates that successful recreation partnerships are dependent on key factors that emphasize the importance of setting expectations and responsibilities prior to entering the agreement (Coulson, 2005; Cousens et al., 2006; Provan & Milward, 2001). Collaboration can be challenging which is particularly evident in strategic alliances involving agencies from different sectors (Glover, 1999a). Successful partnerships may bring about a number of advantages for both organizations such as, increased revenue and enhanced services for clients; while unsuccessful partnerships may lead to negative consequences like wasted resources, tarnished reputations and dissatisfied customers (Babiak, 2009). The appropriate selection of partners, planning, and competent relationship management is essential to maintaining long-term, productive interaction among organizations. The relationship among the contractor, contractor's employee and the recreation centre is dynamic in nature and is a key area of exploration in this study.

## **2.2 The Contractor, Contractor's Employee and Client Relationship**

Many partnership relationships are forming in the delivery of successful recreation programs. One of the most common forms has been the use of third parties who place their employees with the public recreation organization on a long-term basis to deliver a specific program(s) (Connelly & Gallagher, 2006). A contractor is a professional organization (private or non-profit) that agrees to handle a set of work responsibilities on a pre-determined timeline for a client organization. The contractor places their employees with the client organization to fill a specific role or deliver the recreation service/program. The contractor is the legal employer of record and is responsible for paying the employee, providing benefits, etc. The formation of a contract relationship creates a triangular system of employment relationships (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006) which is often confusing. Some employees will regard the contractor as their employer while others may feel that their client organization is the main point of reference (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). This work environment can be considered a “nonstandard work arrangement” and can have benefits and consequences for all parties involved. Benefits can include a flexible schedule, autonomy and a regular change of work location while some of the drawbacks include irregular hours and unpaid downtime between program seasons.

Recreation based contract work can comprise of risks for the employee and this likely makes it difficult for the contractor's employees to develop high commitment to their organizations and jobs (Felfe et al., 2008). It is difficult for these employees to rely on regular work hours, a fixed schedule and there is often unpaid downtime between program sessions. Whether or not a program runs is often contingent on registrations and

that can put considerable pressure on contractor's employees to retain participants and maintain registration numbers. The recent increase in contractor partnerships with recreation centres may influence the way employment plays out in the recreation workforce. Many of the people hired into these positions are the frontline workers at the recreation centres and they are the face of their employment organizations because they are in direct contact with the program participants (J. Meldrum & McCarville, 2010). This relationship can be complex (Meyer, 2001) and outcomes do not only impact the employee but also the client organization, participants and employer because the employee is often the "face" of the company and interacts with the participants. The participants are those who pay the program registration fees, tell their friends about a class they like and promote the program. They influence the success of the contractor service provider's business as well as the recreation centre.

### **2.3 Perceived Organizational Support**

A key component to any workplace is maintaining a productive environment where employees feel supported, valued, and appreciated because this can lead to affectively committed employees (Rhoades et al., 2001). Research indicates that an employer's ability to understand an individual employee's workload, needs, and obligations will enhance POS (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Vallerand, Paquet, Philippe, & Charest, 2010). Understanding an employee's individual needs, allowing for flexibility and connecting with them can reduce workplace stress because the employee will feel that their employer supports them. Benefits associated with a supportive and flexible

work environment mean that the employee may then be better able to concentrate on their work and experience positive affect, task satisfaction, flow, empowerment and control over their job. Perceived organizational support is essential in creating a work environment that relies heavily on customer satisfaction and retention. Creating healthy workplaces is fundamental in retaining employees, sustaining motivation and building a business (Kroth et al., 2007).

Transforming organizations into places that are both productive and humane are two means of creating successful, sustainable, healthy working environments. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) reflects employees “general belief that their work organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008, p. 54, as cited in Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). It can have a great influence over an employee’s commitment to the workplace and feeling of value for their contributions and may be interpreted as an employers demonstration of commitment toward the employee (Aubé, Rousseau, & Morin, 2007). POS may also be particularly potent in terms of maintaining or increasing organizational and individual outcomes such as customer retention, increase revenue and more. POS directly effects the employee’s affective commitment to their organization and can therefore be a powerful tool to understand what it is like to be a contract employee.

Research has shown that high levels of POS are associated with a host of positive work outcomes including increased affective commitment. In a study conducted by Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001), 413 postal employees were surveyed to investigate reciprocation's role in the relationships of POS. The study found

that POS was positively related to the employees' felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help the organization reach its objectives. Felt obligation also facilitated the associations of POS with affective commitment, organizational spontaneity, and in-role performance (Eisenberger et al., 2001). High levels of POS are associated with several positive work outcomes including increased affective commitment, job involvement, reduced absenteeism, turnover intentions and strain and this can have implications for employers in retaining their employees and establishing affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2001). This is important in contract recreation service provision because the contractor's employee is often the only person who has contact with the program participants.

Employees believe that their employer has a general positive or negative orientation toward them that encompasses both recognition of their contributions and concern for their welfare. Commitment among employees has three dimensions or levels: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Meyer, 1991). Perceived organizational support has been shown as a significant predictor of temporary workers' affective and continuance commitment towards the temporary agency (Connelly et al., 2007).

## **2.4 Commitment**

When one person treats another well, the norm of reciprocity obliges the return of favourable treatment (Gouldner, 1960). The reciprocity norm also applies to employee-employer relationships, obliging employees to return advantageous treatment they receive

from their work organization (Aubé et al., 2007; Eisenberger et al., 2001). This type of positive treatment fosters commitment between employers and employees that can often lead to positive benefits for those involved. Employees who care about the wellbeing and success of their organization are more likely to reciprocate this gratitude through greater affective commitment to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001). This could mean that employees might take more time in preparing for their classes, phone participants who missed the last class to check on them and willingly put in additional unpaid time that will contribute to the success of the recreation program.

Within workplace environment research, three main categories of commitment have been identified (affective, normative or continuance) (Meyer, 1991). Perceived organizational support has been shown as a significant predictor of affective and continuance commitment (Connelly et al., 2007). Affective commitment is what is generally referred to in employment literature and has established links to performance, turnover, absenteeism and organizational citizenship behaviours (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). Research indicates that actions by the organization indicating caring and positive regard for employees acts to enhance affective commitment via the reciprocity norm (Eisenberger et al., 2001).

Continuance commitment is when an individual commits to the organization because he/she perceives high costs of losing organizational membership, including the economic costs (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendships with co-workers) that would be incurred (Hackett et al., 1994). Normative commitment is when an individual is committed to the organization out of feelings of obligation. This felt obligation is a prescriptive belief regarding whether one should care about the

organization's well-being and should help the organization reach its goals (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Eisenberger et al. (2001) also state that because of the reciprocity norm, POS would lead to a felt obligation to care for and aid the organization.

Little is known about organizational commitment among employees working under contracted conditions. In some ways these employees resemble contingent workers, but their long-term employment with a contractor employer makes their situation unique, and increasingly common (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). There is evidence to suggest that contractor's employees develop feelings of commitment toward the client organization but the process of client-based organizational commitment is not well understood (McElroy et al., 2001).

Although little research was identified that specifically addressed commitment among contractor's employees working in recreation centres, commitment research in the private sector has identified that those employees who work with multiple organizations will develop some level of commitment toward their client organizations (McElroy et al., 2001). Literature by McElroy (2001) also suggests that those employees with multiple client organizations might be less dependent on their client organizations compared with contractor employees who work with just one client organization. This could be relevant to contractor's employee who works at multiple recreation facilities.

Contractor's employees are often in front line roles and are the "face" of the companies they work for. Employees who enjoy their work, feel supported and committed tend to willingly make contributions to the organization to help ensure its financial security and longevity (Piper, 2006). This pride in the importance and value of

their work directly impacts the customers who are then also likely to feel valued, welcomed and repeat their participation in the recreational activity.

## **2.5 Psychological Contract**

Psychological contract as an “individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party” (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994, p. 246). Rousseau (Aubé et al., 2007; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994) has done some of the most relevant and foundational work in this area. A psychological contract can emerge when one party believes that a promise of future return has been made. Psychological contract is widespread in all forms of employment and can come in many forms (such as pay or a contribution) when an obligation has been created. It has relevance to this study because it has a great influence over employee performance and job satisfaction. Psychological contract has also been linked to perceived organizational support in that, employee performance depends on the quality of the exchange relationship (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011).

It is important to consider that psychological contract is subjective and comprised of a belief that a promise has been made. Psychological contract is not a formal employment contract and events such as new job assignments, relocations, and organizational restructuring may overlay new terms upon old ones. Changes in employee attitudes and behaviour are explained through the process of reciprocation: employees weigh their “employment deals” and respond to employer contributions by adjusting their attitudes and behaviours (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011; Parzefall & Hakanen, 2010).

Robinson and Rousseau (1994) also found that during the first two years of employment, employees came to perceive that they owed less to their employer while their employers in turn owed them more based on perceived promises of reciprocal exchange.

Breach of psychological contract occurs when one party in a relationship perceives another to have failed to fulfill a perceived promised or obligation(s) (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Breach is the cognitive state that a discrepancy exists (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), and is thought to lead to intense emotional reactions (i.e. violation) that affects one's belief in the reciprocal employment relationship (Cassar & Briner, 2011). Previous studies have shown that employees who reported breach of employer obligations were also likely to report lower scores on affective commitment to their organization (Cassar & Briner, 2011). Likewise, other studies identified by Cassar and Briner (2011) found a positive correlation between affective commitment and contract fulfillment when there was an absence of breach.

Fulfillment of psychological contract and perceived organizational support is key in retaining employees. The many costs associated with hiring and training new staff can be avoided or lessened if employees feel valued and supported. Employees who feel pride and importance in the value of their work are more likely to perform at a higher level (Piper, 2006). Many tactics can be used to increase employee commitment and these can include various communication mechanisms, justification and explanation of the decision making process and well as a chance to take ownership over work (Kickul, 2001). Other procedural and interpersonal remedies may be employed to restore or reduce adverse consequences in psychological contract violation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). This can be particularly beneficial for employees who are an absentee workforce

like recreation contractor's employees. Increasing or maintaining high commitment levels through actions like supporting employees and making them feel valued will have a direct impact on the participants they instruct in their programs and this contributes to the success of the organization.

## **2.6 Summary**

In summary, the purpose of this research is to understand what it is like to be an employee working for a contract recreation service provider at a municipal recreation centre. Traditional forms of "permanent" employment are giving way to contract positions. This type of employment has been emerging over the past several years for numerous reasons including flexibility in employment, financial and budget constraints and shared use of resources. Not only are partnerships present between clients and contractors, but the employee-employer relationship can also be viewed as a partnership with a set of expectations. The position of a contractor's employee is unique, but it also resembles that of a contingent recreation worker. Gaps in the literature indicate that there is a lack of research specific to recreation contractor's employees and what working and living in this type of employment role is like. It is essential to understand what is the "lived experience" for the contractor's employee at a municipal recreation centre. How does working in a contracted position impact the employee? How does the contractor's employee view this type of service delivery and its impact on the patron, client organization and employer? Many factors including perceived organizational support, reciprocity, commitment and psychological contract will have implications that might

influence employee retention, job satisfaction, customer satisfaction and business success and survival.

## Chapter 3 Methods

This exploratory study aimed to understand what the “lived experience” was for a contractor’s employee working with a municipal (public) recreation organization in terms of commitment, partnerships, psychological contract and perceived organizational support. The researcher gained insight as to what it was like for the individuals working as a contractor’s employee at recreation and community centres and how this type of service delivery affected the customer, contract recreation service provider, contractor’s employee and the municipal recreation centre. Findings may have implications for employers when creating positive work relationships, customer satisfaction and retention and fostering employee commitment. Commitment influenced how the contractor’s employee connected with the client organization and their employer. It was important to know what factors impacted the commitment of contractor’s employees and if there are any common dynamics between participants. Findings have implications for the public recreation centres when entering into contract partnerships as well as insight as how to best facilitate these relationships. Due to this research study being the first known to take place involving contract recreation service provider’s employees, the researcher used the commitment, partnerships, perceived organizational support and psychological contract literature, to develop an investigative framework.

### 3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

This study used a qualitative design by conducting in depth one-on-one interviews. A Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was used as a second tool for data collection. The two instruments used together helped to increase the validity of the data collected.

The CIT has been used in service research and to study marketing and management issues (Gremier, 2004). A CIT consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviours in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness to solve practical problems (Frankmann & Adams, 1954). The CIT was used to draw a timeline with each participant and to will assist with recall. It was important to note that the CIT is used to identify an “incident” that is an observable human activity sufficiently complete to permit inferences and predictions to be made (Frankmann & Adams, 1954). “Incidents” were stories, positive or negative that were identified to facilitate recall of events that affected the employment relationship. The researcher used the data collected from the CIT timeline to carefully scrutinize and identify data categories that summarized and described the incidents that were identified in the interview (Gremier, 2004). Field notes were taken during the interview.

The CIT and field notes were used in conjunction with the audio recording the transcripts. The researcher listened to the audio recordings of each interview multiple times and was able to use the CIT and field notes to help identify important “incidents”, tones and inferences from the participants. The CIT also provided an overall timeline that helped the researcher to create the employment story and identify significant life events for each participant’s data. The CIT was helpful in building the overall picture of

the employment history and identifying key incidents, but was not used for analysis as much as the researcher anticipated.

### **3.2 Recruitment**

The researcher recruited four participants through various recreation and community centres throughout the Capital Regional District (CRD) in Victoria BC, Canada. The researcher used her established networks to approach Community Recreation Coordinators who work at public recreation centres in Victoria. An email was sent to each Community Recreation Coordinator explaining the nature and purpose of the research. In one case, an in person meeting was held with the Community Recreation Coordinator and the Recreation Manager to discuss the scope of the research. Each Community Recreation Coordinator was provided with a recruitment letter and asked to forward it along with the researchers contact information to any possible participants. Possible participants were instructed to contact the researcher directly via email or phone to maintain confidentiality and ensure voluntary participation.

Five people participated in this study, although one participant's data was not used for analysis. As noted by Sparkes (2002), the interview process was "casual" to build a sense of trust, comfort during the interview and confidence in the researcher. The interview location and time was selected by each participant to ensure convenience and comfort. It is also important to note that the researcher shared her personal experiences with each participant at opportune times. This was used to build trust, collaboration, openness and honesty while developing the relationship in order to obtain robust information that allowed the participant to communicate with the researcher openly

(Sparkes, 2002). Participants provided signed written informed consent. They were aware of the type and scope of the research and no deception was used.

Social positioning is used to indicate the researcher as an instrument in the methodologies of this paper. The “researcher as an instrument” will provide useful information to the reader to ensure transparency and explain the researchers employment experience, qualifications, interests, and biases with regard to the topic of analysis (Sparkes, 2002). This was used to support the researcher’s credibility and personal insight.

Elimination criteria included anyone who previously worked for or the researchers former employer. This was to avoid the collection any biased data and the possibility of a power over scenario that could distort the data collected.

The interviews lasted between 50-90 minutes in length. Each interview was audio-recorded using an iPhone and then transcribed. An interview outline was developed to guide and probe each participant (see appendix A). The researcher transcribed the interview and provided the participant with a copy of the transcription one to two weeks after the initial interview.

The participants were asked to review their transcripts and add any additional information, provide clarification and remove anything they did not want to share. Each participant was asked to make their comments in a different colour of ink and use “strike through” to make changes obvious for the researcher. The researcher also added one or two additional questions into the transcripts for clarification and more information after listening to the audio recording. These additional questions were highlighted within the transcript and the researcher brought them to the attention of the participant. They were

asked to answer the questions as best they could and seek clarification from the researcher if needed. Three of the four transcriptions were sent back to the researcher with minor changes. These changes reflected changes in dates, sentence structure and topic clarification and the answers to the additional questions. The participants removed nothing from the transcripts.

After the initial interview, the researcher eliminated one of the five participants. Although this participant was in a contract position, he did not work for a recreation organization and did not meet other participation criteria set by the researcher for this study.

### **3.3 Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations**

Assumptions made by the researcher are as follows: (1) All participants were currently working for contract recreation service providers; (2) Participants all worked at public recreation centres (or remote recreation sites operated by the municipality); (3) The researcher assumed the participants ability to recall and to respond truthfully.

Limitations to this study included a small sample size of 4 participants. All participants lived in Victoria and provided services for one or more of the Greater Victoria municipal recreation and community centres. Researcher bias and expectations were also considered. The researcher has previously been involved in the contract recreation field and because of this, no participants were recruited from her previous place of work. There was a participation bias because participants volunteered to be involved in the research.

Delimitations were that participants had to be employed as a contractor for at least six months. This was to ensure that they had time to settle into their employment.

### **3.4 Analysis**

The following is the step-by-step process that the researcher used for data analysis:

1. All interviews were transcribed verbatim
2. The researcher added questions for clarification or additional information right into the transcript and highlighted this in yellow to make it easy for the participants to identify.
3. Each participant was given a copy of their transcripts and asked to review them. They were asked to provide comments, clarity, feedback using a different colour of text than the researcher used to make updates easy to identify. Participants were instructed to use “Strike though” to remove any unwanted text. They were also asked to answer the additional questions added by the research and once complete, email the updated transcript back to the researcher.
4. Upon receiving the edited transcripts, the researcher reviewed the changes and compared this with the original transcript.
5. The researcher then listened to each recording again and compared the CIT and field notes to the transcripts to help identify key themes, events or incidents.
6. The researcher listened to the interviews and read along with the transcription for a third time.

7. Throughout this listening and reading, she identified common themes and events that appeared in each interview and noticed similarities among all participants.
8. The researcher used these similarities to identify key themes and events that were common or different among the participants. These themes and events related to the literature because this was with which the researcher developed the interview guide.
9. The researcher took these sections of transcript, grouped them and copied and pasted them into separate documents under topics that were identified in the literature. These “topic documents” include; the recreation centre, POS, commitment definitions, signs of commitment and incidents. The researcher also added her own notes into the theme documents to identify if there was a change in tone (sarcasm, happiness, etc.), and provide inferred context and content that would not normally show in the transcripts alone.
10. The researcher tracked each participant in the topic documents and indicated breaks in text and conversation.
11. The researcher used the individual participants transcripts to create a profile for each of them. The profile was to build context, experience and relevance for each participant.
12. The topic documents were used for cross comparison and analyzed to identify themes from the data collection.
13. The researcher drew a concept map with her supervisor to help determine where the themes fit into the context of this study and how key components related and influenced one another.

14. Sub-themes were then identified. The sub-themes were; (1) Definition of workplace commitment for the participant; (2) Commitment to the organizations and career; (3) Commitment to the participants and/or the program; (4) Employee POS impact; (5) Impact of organizational policies and procedures; and (6) The dynamic among the recreation centre, contractor and the contractor's employee.
15. Sub-themes were then organized into major themes. These were; (1) Focus of commitment; (2) Impact of POS; and (3) Dynamic with the recreation centre
16. Results were then reported in a format that related to the themes identified in the interviews and topic documents.

The following results provide a descriptive insight into what the four participants experiences have been in contract recreation service provision. Excerpts of transcription have been used wherever possible to highlight experiences in the participant's own words. Key themes emerge from the data that could have implications for the contractor, recreation centre and contractor's employee relationship.

## Chapter 4 Results

### Introduction

As presented in the methods section, the purpose of this study was to understand what it is like to be a contractor's employee working in a municipal recreation setting. Each of the four participants were taken through an interview guide that asked questions about their current work status, what responsibilities they have as contractors, what workplace commitment means to them, if their commitment has changed, highlights and low points and what their relationship is like with their employer and the recreation centres for which they provide programming.

This chapter will provide a brief profile of each participant and myself and my experience in this area of recreation. The chapter is organized into three major themes and each theme is broken into sub-themes. These six sub-themes will be explored using the direct quotes of the participants. Participant's similarities, differences and experiences are explored, compared and connected to the themes.

### 4.1 Participant Profiles

Despite having difficulties recruiting, four contract recreation service provider employees agreed to participate in the interviews for this study. The participants ranged in age from 22 to 67 years old. They are all female and provide different program instruction at local recreation centres in the Capital Regional District (CRD) that include

yoga, youth education programs (like Babysitting and Home Alone preparation), dance fitness and dance instruction. Despite the fact that all of the participants were female, women as opposed to men disproportionately deliver contract recreation programs. For example, from my own experience, the male to female ratio is usually 1 or 2 male staff for every 8 to 10 female staff. The participants work at various recreation centres in the CRD. Between the four participants, 10 different facilities are represented with one centre being represented by two participants.

The following provides a profile of each participant as well as the researcher's personal experience in the field of recreation and recreation contract service provision. The names of the participants, recreation centres, employers, recreation programmer and any other identifying information have been replaced with appropriate titles or pseudonyms to protect anonymity and confidentiality while retaining enough information to help the reader have a good understanding of the context of their background and work context.

### Ariel

Ariel is in her early 20's and has just finished her undergraduate degree. She has been instructing dance fitness programs for a recreation contract service provider for a year. Ariel has worked in recreation roles for the past six years and has a dance background. She became employed by this organization because the owner recruited her after liking her "style and energy" when she attended classes as a participant. She instructs 5 to 6 classes a week at three different recreation centres. She feels that the classes she instructs provide a great outlet for her to de-stress, socialize and have fun.

Ariel is also directly employed by one of the recreation centres she teaches dance fitness classes as an aquatics instructor and lifeguard. Her work in aquatics is currently her primary source of income since she completed her undergraduate degree a few months ago. She is considering a career in recreation, but is taking some time to decide.

Although Ariel has successfully completed university and working full time, this is not a “forever” job for her. She is interested in the possibility of working in recreation for a long-term career, but this is not a definite choice of hers. She is happy working in aquatics and teaching dance fitness classes as a change to her weekly routine.

### Carol

Carol is a 67-year-old retired teacher who has been involved in yoga for the past 11 years. She began taking yoga upon her doctor’s recommendation and started seeing the benefits of practice on her body within a few months. She began taking classes regularly with the local Iyengar centre and soon her friends were asking if she could teach them. Carol understood the intricacy of teaching yoga correctly, which led her to inquire about teaching. She was told that she was not ready to start her teacher training, but this changed a year later. Carol took three years to complete her teacher training. In this time, she began running a satellite location for her local Iyengar centre that was contracted through the local recreation centre. Although the Iyengar centre is a non-profit organization, they still provide a contract recreation service to the recreation centre much like a private for-profit business does and Carol collects an hourly wage from them. Carol is retired and no longer needs the income that she receives from the Iyengar centre but teaches because she loves the practice and believes in the benefits for everyone.

Contributing to her local community by providing the benefits of yoga to its members is what keeps Carol motivated. Her husband jokes that she almost covers the cost of all of her yoga classes by instructing.

### Self-Contracting

The following two participants are both considered self-contractors. Erin and Alison are both responsible for their own contracts and only report to the recreation centre. They are not technically employed by a contract service provider like Carol and Ariel are, but instead provide contract recreation programs directly to the recreation centre. This means that they are the main contact for the Recreation Programmer but still operate in a partnership with the recreation centres. They are not employees of the recreation centre because they invoice upon completion of a program, remit taxes as a business and work at multiple recreation centres.

### Erin

Erin is in her mid 20's and is in her fourth year completing a degree in Exercise and Wellness. She has been employed in various public recreation positions over the past 10 years. Through her work instructing classes for the city, she was recruited to provide contract programs for the non-profit community centres. The programs she delivers include Home Alone, Babysitting and a Teen Wellness program. She is self-employed when she contracts these programs to the non-profit community centres in the CRD and therefore does not report to a contract service provider.

Erin is pursuing a career in recreation and started teaching public recreation programs before selecting her degree. She teaches a variety of community recreation programs on top of the programs that she contracts. She does not have a primary source of income but instead collects paycheques from four to six different organizations at a time. Her career aspirations include being a recreation coordinator and she sees her multiple jobs as contributing to her experience and network for future opportunities.

### Alison

Alison is in her late 30's and has been involved in dance her whole life. She was born and raised in Edmonton where her mother owns a dance studio. After completing her university degree in Edmonton, she moved to BC and began instructing classes for one of the local dance studios. Her boss knew she was in need of more hours and put her in contact with the local recreation centre. Alison began instructing preschooler dance programs twice a week only to have her contract programs expand to other recreation centres and schools. Alison was self-contacting at multiple locations and not reporting to an employer. Alison self-describes these years as the "craziness" where she taught at multiple locations at all hours of the day. She taught approximately 36 hours a week spread a six-day work week. She knew that she wanted to be a dance instructor and is very passionate about instilling the sense of love and enjoyment in young children beginning dance. She built herself into a position where she was able to co-purchase the dance studio where she started her first job in Victoria. She continues her recreation contracts at two recreation centres in the CRD. Although she does not instruct all of the recreation centre classes herself, she is very selective about which staff she sends into the

recreation centres because they are very important to her and she feels a strong connection with them.

### Vanessa

It is important that I provide a profile of myself because of my experience in the field of contract recreation service provision and the bias that I bring into the context of this study. I have been working in various recreation roles for the past 10 years. My first job in recreation was with a community rec centre where I was a summer camp leader. I loved what I did that summer and continued small jobs in community recreation through the school year.

My undergraduate degree is in Recreation and Health Education and a mandatory component of this was Co-Op (a paid work experience for four months). After completing a Co-Op for my second summer as a camp instructor, I moved to a new community recreation centre as the Summer Camp Coordinator. This was to build my experience and network in public recreation. After two other jobs in various health promotion roles, I wanted to get back into community recreation and was hired by a company that provided contract recreation services to community recreation centres.

For my first year back in recreation, I ran programs at several different recreation and community centres, schools and daycares around greater Vancouver. This required me to work six days a week, over several hours a day and drive to multiple locations. I would be paid for an average of 22 hours a week because I was paid per class. With my recreation background and degree, I ended up in a management position with a franchisee

on Vancouver Island. I was employed in the office for a regular five-day workweek and managed the contracts with the recreation centres, the company's staff and more. I learned the ins and outs of recreation contract service provision from a management role and what it was like for the staff running the programs, participants, Recreation Coordinators and the franchisee owner. I stayed in this role for three years before moving on. Like Erin and Alison, this was a career for me and I would take almost any opportunity that came my way for more hours and the chance of meeting new connections.

## **4.2 Themes**

As explained in the analysis section, topic documents were used to separate and organize sections of the interviews into topics guided by the literature. Within these topics, six common sub-themes emerged from the interviews and will be explored in this study. These sub-themes are supported by direct quotes from the participants. The six sub-themes are: (1) Definition of workplace commitment for the participant; (2) Commitment to the organizations and career; (3) Commitment to the participants and/or the program; (4) Employee POS impact; (5) Impact of organizational policies and procedures; and (6) The dynamic among the recreation centre, contractor and the contractor's employee.

These sub-themes can be grouped into three major themes that will guide and provide structure to the analysis and results of this study. The major themes are: (1)

Focus of commitment; (2) Impact of perceived organizational support; and (3) The dynamic with the recreation centre.

### 4.3 Focus of Commitment

#### 4.3.1 Definition of Workplace Commitment for the Participant

One of the major overarching themes for this study is workplace commitment. Each participant was asked what workplace commitment means for them. None of the participants had a formal definition of commitment but used their personal perceptions, experiences and examples to explain their answer. When asked about commitment in the workplace and what it meant for them, all four participants had similar comments about what was important to them. They all expressed how love and enjoyment need to be a part of commitment and without this, there is not a lot of point to instructing classes because it is a poor reflection for the participants. Collaboratively defined by the participants in this study, commitment means enjoying what you are doing and fostering that positive experience for the participants in the program or the community as a whole. This experience might just be the initial exposure to active living, improving health and wellbeing or just a fun recreation activity where one goes to blow off stress. Ariel defines commitment in the workplace as:

*A level of responsibility. If you say you are committed to something, you are responsible for it. You have to essentially see it through to the end unless there is something that happens where you can't. Therefore it is almost synonymous for responsibility. But if you are going to commit yourself to something, you should enjoy it. There is no point to committing yourself to something that you don't want to do or that you don't feel passionate about. Even if you don't enjoy it, well hopefully you enjoy it, but if you don't feel strongly about what you have committed to, hopefully just the knowledge that you are creating a positive change or the process is enough. Whether it be a small group of women who are trying to get fit, or if it is an actual community you are trying to impact... I just think there should be some level of happy involvement.*

*She [the employer] has to be able to trust us and I have to be able to trust that, you know, I am not going to go around and sell off her dance moves. So there is that, as well. And then the commitment in the fact that I will show up to every*

*class on time and be happy for it. So even just committing myself to knowing that each class will be a good class. And that I will have fun each class, because there is no point to having an instructor show up who does not want to be there. Or someone that hates coming to work, you know? I would definitely say that is a big reflection on myself as well as the program because if I say something or do something it reflects badly on her. So there is a level of that.*

For Erin, commitment to her work is not only about her participants and the community, but also her future career in recreation.

*If you say something you are going to do, you are going to follow through with it. So I think that is very important. It is kind of like signing a contract without signing it. A verbal agreement that you have, or I guess signing for that matter, but it is really important... Being reliable, ties into that as well. It is really important to create those relationships and having communication and I think that is all under the umbrella of being a committed person.*

*I don't think I am 100% loyal only to one organization and don't want to leave them, kind of thing, because I work for so many organizations. I always kind of leave on a good note and ensure that the person coming in, kind of, everything is running smoothly and I have never had a problem being like, "sorry I am giving my two weeks. This is a position that has come up and I have decided to take it"... it's the working with the kids and working with the families and getting them to come in and hang out with the community is really what I love the most, so it really does not matter what I am doing... I am just, I love everything about rec.*

Much like Erin, Alison began her recreation contracting position because this was a career for her. She was looking to build her reputation and workload when she first moved to Victoria, but her commitment is to her participants and the community. Commitment means a lot to her, especially when it comes to her preschool aged participants. When I asked Alison what commitment meant to her during her contractor years, her initial response was:

*Ok, well since 1997, since I have moved out here, I have only missed one day of work. So, and that was because I had strep throat and they sent me home, after I was in the studio trying to teach my class... So, I find it very frustrating when people need subs and that sort of thing. Because I wont, I don't work like that.*

*I... to me, in general, giving little people, the preschoolers, and I say preschoolers because most of the dance programs at rec centres are... You have the odd Hip-hop class or something, but it is not the same. If you want to instil a love or enjoyment of dance in a child, you have to be consistent, you have to make it fun, they have to want to be there. And if you switch that out, then, and you disrupt their routine, it is not as enjoyable. I mean, they are still going to have fun, but it's not ideal.*

If one of Alison's students were to ask for her opinion and perspective on providing contract recreation programs, her advise to them would be:

*It's important; you need to love what you are doing. In programs like this, you cannot do your job because it is a job because, you won't put in the effort because there is not the same type of return for you. There is really no advancement, there is really no... as a contract worker so your as high as you can get in your own contract. There is... you have to do it because you want to do it, because you love it. You cannot do it, you cant do it purely to make money or as a boring old job. You wont last. You wont last and people wont want to be in your program. People will feel that you are just there and you are just going through the motions. And you wont get the registration and the program will fold.*

*I think by the time that I got into all of the craziness, I already knew it was wanted to do and I had already made the choice that I was going to do it and stick it out. So, there, I don't think in that sense I ever hit that point where I thought, "Oh yeah, this is for me", um, I think when I moved out here to Victoria, I had already made the conscious decision.*

Carol is teaching yoga because it is a passion for her. Being a retiree, she did not need the income but started teaching programs because of the encouragement she was receiving from friends and because of the positive affects it was having on her body. Carol was also 50 years old when she retired and felt that she still needed to give to her community. Her interaction with yoga and what the Iyengar method stands for is what lead to her becoming an instructor. When this is no longer a passion for her, she says she feels no need to continue teaching.

*So you just, it is so freeing that I really felt inspired to pass that on. And of course, as people see change you, you inevitably get, “my gosh, what are you doing, teach me what you are doing, I want to do this”, so one thing leads to the next. You don’t set out planning to do that, it sort of evolves as you are doing.*

*Yeah, and it is not needed to be an income when you are just giving back to the community and that’s what I like being a part of an organization that is not for profit and we were told right at the start that you never teach yoga as your income because then you compromise what you do to get students, to appeal to people.*

*I have understood the benefit of teaching local people. Now when I am in the grocery store, or walking, I pass these people that I teach. And that has added a lovely dimension that I never thought of as a part. So it’s quite neat. And I don’t need to stay with it; I have no idea that I must stick with it. When it is no longer my passion I will not do it. Because you cannot, you know. You cannot give it what it needs if you are like, well you know I am just going to hang in there and do it. It has to be that you really want to do it. We are blessed when we find something that we really love to do.*

#### **4.3.2 Commitment to the Organizations and Career**

A theme that emerged from the interviews was a personal commitment to a career in recreation and the organizations. The “organizations” are both the recreation centres and the employer organization because the participants did not distinguish one from the other when talking about the impacts on their employment and commitment.

As discussed earlier, Erin and Alison have a very similar experience to one another with recreation contract service provision. Both women are considered self-employed in their recreation contracts because they do not work for a larger organization, and are only responsible only to their selves in maintaining their contracts. They are also the primary contact for the Recreation Coordinator at the recreation centres. In her early career, Alison was in a very similar situation beginning her career, much like Erin is now.

Alison knew that she wanted to be a dance instructor and it was up to her to build her connections, work experience and hours.

*Well, I mean at the time it was fine because I liked doing what I was doing. Um, that's all I wanted. I wanted to dance teacher and that's where the work was. It was, and I would do it because I liked to feel secure with my income, and I like to be... I knew the only way to be secure in it was to work more. And so if you want to do things and you want to get ahead you have to put the effort in. So, you just did it. You know, it was there and I don't think I ever turned down a job. Like if they said, "I have this for you", as long as I could physically get there with enough time knowing that if there was a delay, I could still get there in time, then I would take it... Yeah, and it is about networking too. You need to, if you turn down an opportunity, then you probably pass up on possibly meeting that next person who is probably going to give you your next opportunity. So when you are young and when you are starting out, you have to.*

Erin also understands the value in networking to get ahead in the world of public recreation. She recognizes that it is up to herself to build a name and reputation for her and that one job often leads to the next contract or connection in the recreation field.

*I continue to contract to build relationships and my network of people. Being a Home Alone or Babysitters Instructor is definitely not where I see myself in 5 years but it is helping me get to where I want to go, its an opportunity and an experience so why would I give up the opportunity to learn and grow? In the recreation world it is really difficult to get in and maintain a certain position (unless you are a programmer or manager etc.). There are very few positions that are M to F type of gigs. I really enjoy bouncing around from center to center because it's a change from the norm, and it allows me to connect with multiple different communities and neighborhoods, and that is what I love about recreation. If I can get out there and be connected to as many different community centers or recreation centers as I can then I think it's awesome. I do it to help myself but more so to help the numerous amounts of families that I work with, I am a familiar friendly face and people like that, I like that. Without being a contractor I don't think I would have made some of the very important connections that I have.*

Both women understand the demands of working in a contract position. They both recognize the irregular hours that come with working at multiple locations running multiple programs. The programs that Erin and Alison offer are also geared at youth and

children, and this often means the majority of the programs they are running take place after school and on the weekends. Working within their selected fields is their drive and their passion to continue instructing programs.

Ariel and Carol are in similar positions with regards to their recreation contracts. Both women are employed by an organization that contracts recreation program services to recreation centres. Carol only delivers programs for one recreation centre, but Ariel teaches at three different locations. This is not a primary source of income for Ariel or Carol, but instead, they both instruct because they love it. They believe in the program and the benefits it can have on people and the community. Ariel describes how instructing this program fits into her life:

*Right now, it's really nice because I do work a lot with swimming lessons in my job and I do a lot with children. And sometimes I want to have a good recreation setting where I am not constantly reminding everyone of the rules and how to play properly and what to do, you know. It is a secondary source of income, so I think if anything, for me, it makes it easier to go to because it is not this job that I have to worry if it is going to pay my bills, help me pay rent... it is nothing like that. Which I think relieves some of the pressure off of the job itself. So then I can worry more about having fun and making a good class. As opposed to if this was my main source of income, I think I would have to rely on it more and if anything it would take some of the fun out, because it becomes more work... rather than just something I can just go to and make money on the side instead of it being a full on, you know, 9-5 Monday to Friday... A highlight... just getting to know people and make more friends and more contacts. And I think another highlight would be just knowing that I can go into a class full of (laughing) workout ladies, that are like fitness gurus who have all this experience, and not feeling intimidated. You know, it has really done a lot for my own confidence and my own building.*

Carol is also in a similar position as a retiree because she does not need the income from teaching yoga and this is not the focus of her career. She began instructing yoga because she really believes in its benefits and the positive impact it can have on not only the individual, but also community members. She does not need the income, but

instead instructs classes out of passion and the connection she feels with her local community.

*I ended up teaching in my home community... I have understood the benefit of teaching local people. Now when I am in the grocery store, or walking, I pass these people that I teach... And that has added a lovely dimension that I never thought of as a part. So it's quite neat. And I don't need to stay with it, I have no idea that I must stick with it. When it is no longer my passion I will not do it. Because you cannot, you know. You cannot give it what it needs if you are like, well you know I am just going to hang in there and do it. It has to be that you really want to do it.*

Both Carol and Ariel continue to instruct because it is something that they enjoy in their “personal” time. They do not need rely on the income that they receive from instructing classes. This is a part-time commitment for both of them and it is a different situation compared to Alison and Erin who are focusing on building their careers in the field.

#### **4.3.3 Commitment to the Participants and/or the Program**

All four participants feel a genuine connection and passion to the people in their community and the participants in their classes. Whether it is the young children in their programs participating in recreation programs for the first time, or contributing to a happy healthy community, all participants reflected this commitment during their interviews. Erin describes this experience and this commitment to her community:

*The most important thing to me about being in recreation is helping to build a healthier, better community and neighborhood. I absolutely love recreation and everything about it. I always say that I am so lucky that I fell in love with recreation at a young age because I was able to start early in focusing on my career. I have been given so many experiences and opportunities within rec that keep my passion for it continuously growing. I honestly could not see myself*

*in any other profession. In rec I am able to put my two passions together, working with the community and helping others as well as health and wellness. Over the years I think my motivation for recreation has changed depending on the center that I work at or new opportunities I have. I think at the moment my biggest motivator to stay working in recreation are all the youth that I work with. I want to be able to give the youth in the communities [that] I work in, the opportunities to be active, healthy and happy, as I was given when I was younger. Recreation and sport has definitely shaped the person that I am today and I really feel that all kids should be given equal opportunities to experience and participate in as many different things in life as possible. The downtown area that I work in at the moment has a population that is commonly considered low-income, therefore if we didn't run the programs we do, I feel like the youth in that area wouldn't have much else. The kids are my daily motivators and reminders of how much I love my job and love what recreation does for people. It seems so cheesy to say, but it is the truth and I am so grateful.*

Alison describes her commitment and connection to the participants in her programs as well as a former student's mom approaching her after a big dance performance in Victoria. This was a significant moment for Alison because she appreciates the years of hard work it takes to be successful as a contractor and that it can often take a long time to see some of the positive impacts you can have on others in these types of employment roles.

*I actually had a parent last year at festival come up to me and say, "Are you Miss Alison" and I said, "yes" and she said, "You taught my daughter at Esquimalt and because of you she is still dancing. And she said, "She is up on stage doing a solo right now", and she was like 15 years old.*

*I could go back and look at the photos that parents gave me at the end of the session, or they send you a thank you card or whatever... and yeah, those were my kids. And my kids at the High School too... you get attached to them. It's not just the [recreation] centre itself; it is the kids in your program because you get a lot of repeats. And I found that with the kids in my summer programs, I had one little girl who I must have taught five summers in a row and she never danced throughout the year, but she always came back and did my summer camp. And for a good five years. And I saw her, maybe a year and a bit ago, and she is, well almost grown, but they always new where to find you and they always knew [I] would be there and I think that's important.*

Ariel also describes her highlights as being associated with loving the participants and the program itself. She says that when she walks in to teach a class, she can just drop everything that is going on in her life and have fun.

*I would say getting to know just more people in general. Because it is really interesting in a recreation setting, I think it is because it is a recreation setting they are happier they are more willing to chat and ask questions. Versus any other sort of regular job. And so I think that has definitely just been a highlight... just getting to know people and make more friends and more contacts. And I think another highlight would be just knowing that I can go into a class full of (laughing) workout ladies, that are like fitness gurus, who have all this experience, and not feeling intimidated. You know, it has really done a lot for my own confidence and my own building. Just knowing that I can walk in and I am not [thinking], "oh maybe I should go to the back of the room" (laughing).*

As previously mentioned, for Carol it has always been about giving back to her community. She enjoys instructing yoga because she believes in the positive benefits it brings to others. She does not need the income and can instead focus on participating in something that is of her own free will and a passion. Participants and the program itself is a major component of commitment for all four participants in this study. The genuine passion, joy and belief in the programs that they all feel keep them connected and committed to their work. For all of them, if the passion and love is no longer there, they would not continue providing and instructing programs.

## **4.4 Impact of Perceived Organizational Support**

### **4.4.1 Employee POS Impact**

Before she began what she calls the "craziness", Alison knew that she wanted to be a dance instructor and she also knew that she would have to put in a lot of effort to be

successful in a community that was unfamiliar to her. Alison has been working in the recreation field delivering dance programs since 1998. She spent several years doing this before she had a family and children, bouncing around from location to location. This meant teaching at 9:30 in the morning and often not getting home until 9:00pm or 10:00pm, running classes at a loss to try and build numbers, taking ferries to get to locations on time and never saying no to an opportunity. This time also allowed her to “build her program”, a comprehensive set of lessons for four years worth of dance instruction. These are the lesson plans that her staff uses to teach programs for her at the dance studio today. The first few years of contracting, that she describes as the “craziness”, Alison says were:

*The hardest working years that I ever had to do. Not necessarily mentally because I was always prepared for my class, but it was physically demanding. Not just because of my classes, but because of the hours, travel and all of those things that you neglect to do, like pack your lunch. It was really demanding and it was a great experience and I learnt a lot from it and I have been able to take those opportunities and the connections that I have made, but also the experience I have had and use them to expand and further in all aspects of business. But unless you are 100% committed to doing everything you can to actually do your job and not back out, then I would not do it. So if you can say that you will commit to everything that is needed for you for that period of time, then I would, it would be a great experience but you have to know that it takes a lot before you get a return. You have to be able to work knowing that you might not get anything out of it until way down the road. And it is way down the road because it is the students, the students that I see, I mean I always loved my students when they were little, but the big moments of pride and realization of “yes, I did this for a reason”. The moments of being happy that I made the choices that I made don't come for like 10 years until you run into your students again.*

After years of work, Alison was in the position where she was able to co-purchase. She knew that it was up to her to put in all of the long hours and maintain the heavy workload to get to a place where she was able to support herself and develop a

long-term career. She continues to be the recreation contract service provider for two of the recreation centres where she originally started instructing. She is the main contact for the recreation coordinators at these locations, and if she is not personally instructing the programs, she sends trusted senior instructors to the locations. She has been able to move herself into a position much like what Erin is working towards in the recreation setting.

Erin began in recreation when she was in her teens leading summer camps for one of the municipalities in the CRD. She participated in recreation programs when she was young, so this was a natural fit for her. After running summer camps for a few years, she took some time to go traveling after high school. When she returned, she was offered a job with different municipality in the CRD because she had connections to this centre through friends. Her career in recreation grew from strictly running public recreation programs to being recruited as a contractor at two other community centres.

*I guess my first contract position would be through one of the [community centres]. I had worked at [the pool facility] here for five years and I run a lot of programs out of here as an employee of the city. And through that, [one of] the other community centres ... called over and said, "I need a babysitter course instructor and a home alone instructor" and my boss gave her my contact information, so I went and met with her and we sat down and she said this is what she needed. So we set up a contract of how my split was going to go and we set up dates, which was really flexible for me because I basically get to pick when I want to work there, what worked for me and what did not. So basically, it gets put into her guide and they do the whole registration process and I show up on day of.*

When the recreation programmer moved onto one of the other new community centres, Erin was asked to offer contract programs at the new location. In addition to her teaching the Babysitting and Home Alone course, Erin was able to offer a new program that was geared to teenage girls' health and wellness. She is able to plan the dates for all of her contract classes, have them promoted in the recreation guide, check in a week prior

to classes starting to check on registration numbers and show up on the day of with all of her supplies. Upon completion of the class, she receives a cheque from the community centre with her percentage split of the program revenue. This is common practice in recreation partnerships with private companies and the percentage split is predetermined before the program begins and both companies are assuming responsibility and accountability for the success of the program.

Ariel was also recruited into her contract position. She began taking the fitness classes as a participant nearly two years ago. After completing a four-month session as a participant, the owner of the company approached her to ask if she might be interested in instructing the program. The dance fitness class owner was interested in expanding her business and was looking to hire instructors to help her to do this by assuming some of the teaching responsibilities. Ariel describes her hiring process as positive and surprising.

*It was flattering and also intimidating. Because I had only been doing it for four months and I was like, "really, you want me to start instructing?" but she took me out a couple of times and really chatted about what it would really look like, and you know, what it was based off of and such. So she really laid it out for me, which was nice. She asked me in April to think about it and that she would give me some time to think. And it was probably May/June [when] we actually started to sit down and discuss. She was not like, "I need your decision now", she did not give me a [deadline], but she definitely gave me enough time to think about it and weigh the pros and cons. But um, the way I saw it, there were definitely more pros than there were cons. [She] really [made] sure that this was something I wanted to do because on her side, she did not want to invest a lot of time and money into somebody that was not interested... So that was really nice. I was probably just more shocked (laughing) and flattered. I did envision it as being a bit of an intimidating process. But it was a lot of fun.*

There was no pressure for Ariel to make a decision before she was ready. She understood that it would be an investment for both her and her employer and was given time to ask questions before accepting the position.

This type of hiring process made Ariel feel responsibility for her decision. She knew that her choosing to instruct classes was an important decision not only for her but also for her employer because of the investment in time that they were both making. She felt accountable to her commitment to her employer and was conscious to act in a manner that would be a positive reflection of her herself, her employer and her employer's growing business.

#### **4.4.2 Impact of Policies and Procedures**

The impact of organizational policies and procedures has an influence on the participants in this study. Both Ariel and Carol have a boss (or in Carol's case, a "mentor") to whom they report. Their bosses are both responsible for being the contact to the recreation centre and for the purpose of this study, fill the role of the employer. Their employer's set the dates for the classes, check the participant numbers and are responsible for operating the business and maintaining the contract with the recreation centre. Ariel and Carol are both given their schedule and show up to teach the classes to which they have been assigned. Both ladies continue to have a good work relationship with their employers but have both expressed benefits and difficulties working in a dynamic like this.

Ariel also gets paid in a unique manner as a contractor's employee. Her boss has worked a bonus structure into her pay, meaning, she is paid a flat rate for the class running, but is paid additionally or a bonus determined by the number of participants registered.

*I get paid as a wage, like as a baseline, and then depending on how many people drop in and how many people there are in the class, then I get paid either a fraction of the drop-ins or a fraction of how many people are registered.*

This is an incentive for her to encourage drop-in participants, fill her class up and create a fun and exciting class that will attract and retain participants. This is also unique compared with the other participants in this study. Carol is paid per 90-minute class she instructs and is expected to volunteer her time if there are not enough registrants in the class to cover her wage.

This is different in comparison with Erin and Alison. Erin and Alison are self-contractors and because of this, they both receive a percentage split. The take-home amount is dependant on the number of participants registered in the class. From my experience working in a contract position in the CRD, this percentage is often 70% for the contractor, 30% for the recreation centre. Alison would sometimes run classes at a loss knowing that having a presence in the centre was more important in building her relationships than cancelling a class because she would only be breaking even or possibly losing money.

*I have, I have on multiple occasions where I have run programs, where I know that I am actually going to lose money on that program. But because my minimum number is 6 and I have 8 [in one class] and I only have 4 in the other, I know that I am basically going to break even. And I don't want to have to cancel the program so I end up running an hour of classes for 10 weeks to make nothing. So, but you do it because if you don't offer... if you don't every now and then offer a program that you are going to end up losing money on, that*

*program may never build up and take off. So you have to weigh that too. I mean, so sometimes you do have to work for free.*

Alison recognized the amount of work it was going to take for her to be successful in recreation contracts and building her career teaching dance. She acknowledged numerous times during the interview that it was up to her to build her reputation and relationships with the recreation centres and future patrons.

Carol has experienced communication breakdowns among the recreation centre, her employer and herself. One example of this was when Carol was trying to set up a new class of Iyengar yoga using chairs. She thought this would appeal to the older population of her community and was in the process of setting it up with the recreation coordinator. Carol describes the situation:

*I thought for next year to try and get kind of a unique niche, because I am competing with a physiotherapist now, I would offer a chair class. But the chairs in Room B are not OK for what Iyengar chair yoga is. So I was discussing this with the Recreation Coordinator over several months, "Can we get folding chairs? Safe metal folding chairs."*

*And then I got into a complication; long after I had been discussing this with the Recreation Coordinator, my mentor was, "What are you doing?"*

*She did not recall three months ago when I said, "I am thinking of chair yoga next year, you know, see if I can get a niche" ...*

*It was just brought up in passing, she said, "yes is sounds like a good idea" and I did not run it through her [again]. I thought with all the mechanics and chairs and such, "why involve her?" She is a busy, busy teacher downtown and in Sidney... that thing is mine to remember now, to always "CC" her. Just like the last week, [my mentor] said to me, "Oh I am sorry, I forgot to CC you" and she forwarded me two contacts she had with the Recreation Coordinator.*

*We have that problem. We are trying to keep everyone in the loop but then forgetting because we don't necessarily want someone else to feel, "you have to do it. This is my thing to try to get worked out; we are just in the planning phases, don't trouble yourself". But it ends up with this kind of thing where perhaps you are stepping on toes where you don't mean.*

Ariel has had positive experiences with her employer but can relate to Carol when referring to the dynamic and complex relationship that exists among the recreation centre, her employer and herself (the contractor's employee). In one incident that Ariel brought up, she described starting a new set of classes at one of the recreation centres where she had two new participants. These two ladies did not participate well in the class and "goofed" around at the back creating a disturbance for the other participants. Ariel was new to contract instructing and was not sure what her authority was in dealing with this situation. After the class, the two participants went to the front desk, complained that the class was too hard and full of young fit girls and asked for a refund.

*I think that was the other hard part because they did not approach me. It was pretty bad actually. They were literally goofing off in the back and that was an interesting part for me, because as you were mentioning before, that how or what I do is a reflection of my boss, I was unsure what to do at that time. Whether I was supposed to stop my music and address the problem or to keep going and ignore it. Luckily the class was a bit smaller with people who regularly attend, so they know that is not the normal thing, which was very comforting at the time. But I still did not know what to do, which, it's a question I guess I should have asked my boss, but it is something that has never come up before. Like what to do if there is two people who are belligerent in the background!*

*And it was addressed to me... and if anything, I think the hard part about that was that they went to the front desk, which then took it to Community Recreation Coordinator who then mentioned it to my boss, who mentioned it to me. So I felt that roundabout way... Yeah, it was pretty bad.*

*The Recreation coordinator... questioned [what had happened] because I guess they took it up to her and you know, she was just wondering what had gone one. And it was not like anything, like accusations or anything. But she said, "This is what they said..." without asking for what I thought.*

*And then my boss defended me and it was all resolved and everything.*

*The part that really got to me was the fact, it did make me feel a little bit like they did not have trust in me and that I was... [That] maybe the Recreation Coordinator shared that doubt as well. You know, that maybe this class was*

*not as good as everyone said it was. So I think that was the part that really got to me... like, oh, you... not like agree, but there is that doubt...*

Ariel describes the way that the situation was dealt with “roundabout”. She did not feel that she had an opportunity to explain the problem in the way that she saw it unfold because there were so many organizational levels that the issue went through before coming back to her. She also did not want this situation to reflect negatively on her employer, especially because she was new to instructing the dance fitness program. She expressed concern that her actions would be viewed in a negative way and this would then be a reflection on her employer. She did feel that her employer supported her through the process and she later went on to describe how her boss followed up with the recreation coordinator and supported Ariel by dealing with the situation. This would have been a positive contribution to Ariel’s POS and workplace commitment because she felt supported and trusted by her employer.

Carol and Ariel did not talk about many interactions between them and their employers. In one case, Ariel felt supported by her employer and this made her feel a stronger connection to her work. In a different situation, Carol is still cautious to not go above her workplace status and ensure that her mentor is fully informed at all times. She does not want to overstep her boundaries, but also recognizes how busy her mentor is and wants to help alleviate some of this stress. Ariel and Carol’s experiences also relate to their interaction with the recreation centre and the recreation centre staff (the front desk staff and the recreation coordinators) and this is the same for Erin and Alison. The relationship between the recreation centre staff, policies and procedures and the participants in this study was a significant component of all interviews.

#### 4.5 The Dynamic Among the Recreation Centre, Contractor and the Contractor's Employee

The relationship between the recreation centre and the contractor's employee proved to be a substantial influence on the employee's workplace experience. All four participants had many experiences and stories that relate to their various interactions with the recreation centre staff and the recreation coordinator. When Alison first began providing contract programming to the recreation centre in the late 90's, she worked closely with the recreation programmers and now, she has a hard time remembering their names. Relationship building and networking was a very important component of the contract recreation work to her.

*I would stop in and see the Community Recreation Coordinator after my classes and say, "Yeah, they were great", or, "So and so has never shown up" and things like that would happen. And I also use to be able to email and say, "What are my numbers for my programs?" and say, "Can we discuss it" and now, I go online and I check my numbers myself. And that's... it takes some of the, its takes all that personability out of it. You want, sometimes you need that... I think it makes the coordinators at the rec centres a little more invested sometimes.*

She describes her interactions with the recreation centres now, as being more corporate and at the discretion of the recreation coordinators.

*I think you find you have to learn to be able to read their personalities and almost appease them. Because if you rub them the wrong way. Your program does not bring them anything. Like, they don't get a bonus if your program runs. So, I guess it comes back down to having that patience with the coordinators, because you are just program number 60419. Yours does not make a difference to them. I mean they understand that the rec centre makes money, but your program is not going to affect their wage... You can either make you time with them very miserable... Or you can just find what works best for them.*

Alison and Erin both brought up the issue of recreation program coordinators continually changing roles. The constant change in positions has been a regular occurrence for the past few years. The participants in this study recognize the reasons for these changes, whether it is a promotion or a maternity leave, but this has not made the adaptation any easier. Alison feels that:

*There tends to be more middleman work for me. Which in the big scheme of running the programs is not a big deal, it is really nothing. But changes like that make it difficult. It was difficult because [at one recreation centre] I ha[d] 4 [coordinators] in one season, because I was constantly emailing the wrong person and then getting the response, and then thinking, "OK, who is it now?" and going back to check through the emails. Because when you are in that many centres and that many programs, you cannot remember who is who. I am pretty sure that I called Donna, Janine at one point this summer because I, I know that she is here for the year.*

*I would get emails that said something like, "We need your information". And I was like, "Pardon? I have not put information in, in like five or seven years. You guys just roll my program over," and, "What do you mean I have to fill out all this paper work again, I have never had to fill that out again". And things like that were roadblocks for me. Because when you already have it set up there, it feels tedious to have to fill out the paper work again and again...*

Erin experienced a similar frustration when there was a new recreation coordinator at one of the community centres for which she provides contract programs.

*When they switched [Coordinators], it was a turning point, obviously for them, because they are getting a new employee and that kind of thing, but, um, I dealt with Melissa for so many years already. And she knew what it was like working at [the community centre] and I kind of knew what it was like working [there] ... It started to be a little last minute on things, or I would get asked to [run programs with] numbers that were lower than what I would do, and they would be like, "Oh, well why cant you do a course for two?"*

*So it was getting kind of frustrating because I was like, this is already what I have set out and this is what I am doing and this new person is coming in. I don't know if she had not read the contract, or if she was not informed. There are so many little programs that happen at community centres, it is so difficult to know the ins and outs ... That was what was nice with Melissa because she*

*had done it so long and she kind of knew everyone and what everyone's needs were and what their responsibilities were...*

*In the beginning she was like, "Well, I don't understand why you can't do it for this." So that was a little frustrating, but all those little kinks were pushed out. And I mean, I went from... at first I was a little upset going from four or five programs, courses a year down to one or two, and that's what it has been like since the new Recreation Coordinator came in. She was like, "I don't have the time or the space."*

Both Erin and Alison understand that recreation coordinators changing positions is a part of the process, but none the less, they both experience frustrations in getting to know what the new coordinators expectations are and where their responsibilities fall. Erin ended up losing half of her annual programs at the community centre because of the direction that the new recreation coordinator saw her facility going. Alison worries that with the inconsistency of program coordinators, one of her programs will be missed and she will receive a call that no instructor has shown up to teach a scheduled class.

Carol and Ariel both experience frustrations with being in the contractor's employee role while at the recreation centres. As previously mentioned, Carol appreciates that her mentor/boss is busy and she does not want to create extra work for her. She tries to communicate with the recreation coordinator herself as much as possible, but is cautious not to step on any toes. Carol also runs her classes at a satellite location for the recreation centre; meaning no recreation centre staff are on site, but instead the municipality maintains the space. She has been in situations where the facility itself is not being properly maintained and this puts her in a bit of a tough spot because does not know if her concerns are being addressed.

*One of the things that I see, the cleaning of the studio is done by municipality, I guess, so I have to be in touch with recreation coordinator. The last class that I taught, when I went to go into the class there was a handle from the window*

*that had been broken and it had been laid on top of the door so that the cleaner would know that somebody could get into this room.... But the cleaner had not been there. Right, so I go in and I have to sweep because it is not clean and there is a window, unless they know about it, somebody can easily come in there. So I get in touch with recreation coordinator. But I don't have any direct way to say, "I'd like this placed cleaned". I mean, when you do yoga in bare feet, you know a dirty floor...*

*So I have had to sweep many times. And that, I keep thinking, could that be improved? I remember saying to the recreation coordinator, or however took over, because she has had two maternity leaves.... I always am thinking, rather than trying to go through this network, should I just talk to someone here at the [satellite] centre and say, "look, the room is not being cleaned", or "I need this", or, "there is a chair broken".*

*But I never have, it is always passed through channels, you never know if it is going to be done... All I can do is say, you better alert someone to the fact that this place can be broken into and there is a window that is not secured.*

When teaching at this satellite location, Carol always shows up to prepare for her class at least a half hour early. This is because she has come to understand that the floor is never clean for her participants. She cares about her student's wellbeing and them having a positive experience in her class. She does not feel that she can trust the recreation centre or the satellite location to follow through with any of her requests or concerns.

Another frustration that Carol experienced with the recreation centre was when a set of her classes was cancelled without her knowledge or consultation. It was the first set of classes that she had run through the recreation centre and she was not aware of the policies relating to cancelling programs due to lack of registration.

*The recreation centre cancelled the class before it even started. Because I did not know about this, they have to give the students a five day notice, so it was just before Labour day, so to give the five days, the five business days, they had cancelled my class before it started. Because there had been only two had applied. But my mentor, they work directly with my mentor rather than directly with me and, so she had to clarify with them that we were going to run*

*this class even if there is not a lot of people. We are going to pay a teacher to be there even if... you know they have to start this program and build it up.*

This lack of clear communication was upsetting for Carol when she first began instructing contract services. She was hoping that her classes would be full, and although she understands that class numbers will fluctuate, she now checks in with the recreation centre to clarify how many registrants are in her programs and that they will be running.

When Ariel instructs programs at the centre where she also teaches aquatic programs, she feels “more welcome” and feels confident that any concerns she brings up will be addressed.

*You know if I say, “oh shoot, this is locked” or “this head phone is broken”, I know who to talk to, which is very nice and very lucky for me. Because I can go in and say, “hey Martin, this is not working” or “this is what I need” or something, so I definitely feel more welcome to that. Um, as opposed to going to [the other recreation centre] and saying, “this is broken”, I don’t know who to talk to. I am specifically a contractor. So I might talk to the front desk and sometimes it gets fixed and sometimes it doesn’t. So, that’s a little bit interesting to deal with*

*If I do send an email [to the recreation coordinator], I will CC [my boss] because I do want her to be a part and involved in knowing what is going on, because this is her program and like you said, I am a contractor for her. So I do want her to know of everything that is going on. But there have only been one or two instances where I have gone directly to the front desk, like if something is missing, and it is an immediate fix where if it is something that is consistently wrong, I will try and go through to [recreation coordinator] right away. But if there is dirt on the floor and I want it immediately, I will go right to the front desk and say, “I need this done now”.*

*Some people want to help and some are... I would not say considerate, but they are thinking, “hey, you do need this now” and have that level of understanding. However, I find that there is sometimes, where I am like, “oh this is an issue” and I felt like that has not been dealt with. So that can be a bit frustrating.*

Ariel is also in the situation where she instructs contract programs at a facility where she is also employed. She is then able to compare her experience as an employee

for the public recreation centre to her experience as a contractor's employee facilitating programs at a recreation centre.

*And it is a bit frustrating, I would say over at [the other recreation centre] because I don't know who to talk to, I don't know who's working at that time and I cannot directly say, "this is what I need". Where as at [my home recreation centre], because I work there, like if something is happening or something is wrong, I just say, "hey, this is what I need right now" and I feel like it is acted on... versus like at [the other location] I have to wait.*

*They know who I am and they know if I am going to say something, then it probably is a problem. Where as at [the other locations], sometimes I feel like I am that complain-y, whiney instructor that has just come in and saying, "Oh, this is wrong, this is wrong" and nothing will satisfy me. Whereas, like, they know me, and if I am to say something, that it probably is an issue and I am not just being (laughing)...*

Three participants in this study suggest that not having any face time with their recreation coordinators could limit the networking and their relationships. Although Carol does not directly state it, she does mention not being able to remember the recreation coordinator's name because of the two maternity leaves she has had in the past few years. Ariel describes her experience with the lack of face time with the recreation coordinators and compares the centre that she works at as an employee to the centres where she is strictly in the contractor's employee role.

*Not really, being able to pick Stephanie out of a crowd versus like, Martin like you know, I will see him and ask how he is doing and ask how the family is doing. That different relationship and I think this is pretty important when it comes to, you know, just saying if I were having issues, I feel like they are dealt with much faster because he knows who I am.*

Erin's communication with the recreation coordinator for her first contract position was all done via email or phone call. She did not meet the recreation coordinator

for several months and it was at an event that she was attending for a different employment role.

*Even when I first started working for Meredith, I had not met her; we had just done phone and email interaction and communication, for the longest time, for like months. And then I was finally at a different event that she was running with a different program that I was running, I went to her event and she was like, "Oh hey" and it was like, face to face. But with like Emily, I went in and resigned my contract with her. So that was fine, but that was the only time that I have really had any face-to-face interaction with her...*

*So I mean, that is difficult with being a contractor, from what I have found, because you are not there all the time. When you are an employee, you are there on a consistent basis so you know and you can be like, "oh yeah, no problem" or "no big deal." And you can check in on things...*

Alison spoke about the change in relationship that she has had with her recreation coordinators over the past 15 years. She used to stop in a chat with the recreation coordinator after her classes, but now she is not even sure if the current programmer would know who she is:

*If I ran into Steve, I would know who he is, but I am not too sure if he would know who I was. So that's disappointing.*

This has been a change that Alison has seen evolving since she began her contract recreation role. Although she is no longer the instructor at the recreation centres on a regular basis, she is still the main contact for the recreation coordinator. Evidently, this change has not been a positive one, but instead she is considering pulling out of her contract with one of the recreation centres because she no longer feels the same connection with them. She still plans on maintaining her contract with her local recreation centre because she feels that having the presence in her community is important to the long-term success of her dance business.

## Summary

Overall, all four participants discuss the significant impact that the recreation centres have on them. Whether these experiences are positive or negative, the recreation centres can influence the support that the participants feel. Having that connection with the recreation coordinator is expressed as an important component of feeling secure and supported in the successful delivery of their programs. All participants agree that in order to work in this type of setting, you must love what it is you are teaching. Having that passion, commitment and desire to be there shows through the people attending the programs and this reflection can make or break a program. For two of the participants, the recreation field is what they want as a long-term career. They recognize the hard work and long hours that must go into making this happen. The other two participants are instructing for themselves. They enjoy teaching; love the interaction with the participants and the benefits it brings to their community. When instructing these programs is no longer a passion for either of them, they will stop teaching because they believe that this type of work needs a 100% commitment or it will become a negative experience for the program participants. Even though two of the participants in this study are self-employed, the relationship between the employer and the contractor's employee was not a significant topic during these interviews. It was the recreation centres and the recreation centre employees that had a stronger impact on the participants in this study.

## Chapter 5 Discussion

The subsequent section will be guided by the three major themes that emerged from the data in this research: (1) Focus of commitment; (2) Impact of perceived organizational support; and (3) the dynamic with the recreation centre. This chapter examines the study's major themes and links findings to existing literature in commitment, perceived organizational support (POS) and contract employees. Findings will suggest possible implications for practice and future research in contract recreation partnerships involving workplace commitment, public-private partnerships, POS and impact. After discussing these themes, suggestions will be made for future practice in the public recreation centre and contract service provider dynamic as it affects contractor's employees. Finally, proposals for future areas of research and investigation will conclude this chapter.

### 5.1 Focus of Commitment

A major theme that emerged from this study was focus of commitment. Commitment is a large component of this study because previous research indicated that commitment among a contract employee might be two-fold; to their employer and to the agency they provide services to (McElroy et al., 2001) and little is known about employees working under this type of contract condition (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). Results relate to previous research on contingent recreation workers that suggests despite being a "temporary" workforce, who are often the front line workers and

responsible for running the programs (much like contractor's employees), workers reported being very much committed to elements of their jobs (Meldrum & McCarville, 2010). Without having a technical definition, each participant was asked what workplace commitment meant to them and, as discussed in chapter 4, each participant provided their own definition with overlapping characteristics relating to several elements of their jobs.

During this study, each participant was asked, "what does commitment mean to you in the workplace?" Although each participant had their own idea of what technical definition for commitment was, they all had very practical and key components to their definitions that relate to commitment literature. Ariel said that, "*There is no point to committing yourself to something that you don't want to do or that you don't feel passionate about.*" Alison echoes this sentiment by stating that, "*It's important; you need to love what you are doing. In programs like this, you cannot do your job because it is a job.*" Having a level of love and enjoyment in what you are teaching as a contractor's employee in a recreation context is an important component and can be related to affective commitment. These descriptions of commitment for the participants are consistent with data collected in a study conducted by Meldrum and McCarville (2010) that suggests passion or desire is at the heart of affective commitment. Affective commitment is a positive emotional attachment and this directly relates to having the sense of passion, love and enjoyment for what you are teaching and the participants with whom the employee is interacting (Rhoades et al., 2001).

Another area of commitment was described as a level of responsibility or moral obligation: to the program and the participants. Being responsible and accountable for your commitments as an employee was an important point for each of the participants in

this study. Ariel saw this commitment as a direct reflection of herself and of the business that she was representing. She wanted to do her employer's hard work justice and this meant being responsible for showing up prepared, on time and ready to instruct a good class that her participants would enjoy. This also meant not bringing in anything "negative" from her day into the class. Being able to drop everything, let go and have fun meant running a quality program for her participants. Ariel recognized that running a program that was positive for her participants means that she needs to love what she is doing and have a passion for improving the lives of her participants and possibly the community. This again relates to affective commitment but also normative commitment because for Ariel, it is important to her that she is doing her best to portray a positive image of her employer and the program. No one has told her that she must act this way, but she recognizes that this is the best projection she can portray and she feels responsible and accountable and wants to act in this fashion.

For Erin, *"If you say something you are going to do, you are going to follow through with it. It is kind of like signing a contract without signing it."* Maintaining the commitment to follow through with actions that you said you would complete is an important component of representing yourself to your participants and your boss. Exposing the youth in her community to a wide variety of recreation opportunities is an important component of her commitment to the field. It is not specifically the program that she teaches (she instructs many recreation programs), but the people she has the opportunity to influence that keeps her invested and seeking opportunities. *"I want to be able to give the youth in the communities [that] I work in, the opportunities to be active, healthy and happy, as I was given when I was younger. Recreation and sport has*

*definitely shaped the person that I am today and I really feel that all kids should be given equal opportunities to experience and participate in as many different things in life as possible.”* This desire to impact the community is supported by similar findings that suggest commitment may be directed towards clients served by that entity (i.e., youth, children, or certain populations that are disadvantaged or marginalized) (Meldrum & McCarville, 2010). This is similar to Alison who is committed to creating a positive experience for the children in her programs.

Alison’s actions speak to her level of commitment to the participants who register in her programs. Alison states that, *“since 1997, since I have moved out here, I have only missed one day of work. So, and that was because I had strep throat and they sent me home, after I was in the studio trying to teach my class.”* She teaches young children, mainly preschoolers in her recreation contracts and she understands the value in ensuring that she is there for every class because of the consistency in routine that this provides her little participants. Being there to show her little participants a positive experience and help instil a love and enjoyment for activity and dance is the most important part of Alison’s job and fuels her commitment. She believes that there is not enough in this type of work (monetary wise) to keep anyone working recreation contracts long-term unless the focus of their commitment is to their career, the program and the participants/clients. These foci of commitment are supported by Stinglhamber, Bentein and Vandenberghe (2002) who suggest that there are five foci of workplace commitment; the organization, occupation, workgroup, supervisor and customers. Alison spent years running contract recreation programs at several different locations, working for a hour here and there several days a week. Through this experience, she remains committed to the programs

she instructs, her career, the local recreation centre that she continues to provide programming for and to the children that she sees develop and grow through the years.

Alison and Erin are both instructing contract recreation programs as a part of their long-term career goals and aspirations. Through the interviews, it was apparent that both ladies feel passion for the positive affects that recreation program(s) can have on individuals and the community. Erin sees her contract recreation jobs as a means for connecting and networking with other recreation professionals. She does not instruct one program alone (compared with the other three participants in this study), but teaches several different contract programs. She recognizes the benefits that being involved in local recreation opportunities had on her in her childhood and believes that every child should be allowed this opportunity. Erin is also committed to getting herself into a position where she can have this influence on youth long-term and not from just a program instructor level. Her passion for teaching recreation programs has since led to her entering a post secondary program at the college in Victoria to pursue a degree in wellness and health.

Alison also says that her commitment is to dance and her career in dance. She believes that if this was not the case, she would never have moved to Victoria in the first place, nor would she have made it so long in the recreation contract business. Referring to how she became involved in recreation contracting; *“I wanted to dance teacher and that’s where the work was. It was, and I would do it because I liked to feel secure with my income, and I like to be... I knew the only way to be secure in it was to work more. And so if you want to do things and you want to get ahead you have to put the effort in.”* Alison was able to work and build the connections that Erin refers to and get herself into

a position where she could co-purchase a dance studio. Despite owning the dance company in her local community, she never completely gave up on her recreation contracts. She feels a commitment, attachment and a sense of responsibility to the recreation centres she has been providing programs to for years and especially to the one in her community.

Despite working in a profit driven model, it is interesting to note that all of the participant's connection and involvement to their work looks more like career volunteering or a serious leisure pursuit rather than typical employment in a for-profit work arrangement (Cuskelly, Harrington, & Stebbins, 2002). Within business literature, these jobs tend to resemble often what is referred to as a "calling" rather than a career or a job (Dik & Duffy, 2007). This area would appear to be important or a significant topic to consider for future research.

Carol is in a unique situation compared with the other three participants in this study because she is retired and does not need the money she is paid from instructing yoga classes. Carol is completely committed to the program, her belief in yoga and how it can positively influence people's health. She gets satisfaction from feeling that she is contributing to the health and wellness of her "home" community. Carol has seen first hand the positive affects that yoga can have on one's body and believe that she is in a better physical condition than she was as a child. In Carol's words, "*I ended up teaching in my home community... I have understood the benefit of teaching local people. Now when I am in the grocery store, or walking, I pass these people that I teach... And that has added a lovely dimension that I never thought of as a part. So it's quite neat. And I don't need to stay with it; I have no idea that I must stick with it. When it is no longer my*

*passion I will not do it.*” She is affectively committed to the people she is involved with, her community and the positive benefits associated with teaching yoga. Carol does not plan on continuing to instruct when it is no longer her passion. This is a view expressed by all of the participants in this study; if they no longer enjoy, feel passion for or believe in what they are instructing through recreation, they will stop instructing. They all share the sentiment that you have to be committed to the program and people you are teaching; otherwise, it will negatively affect the participants in the class. Teaching contract recreation programs is not something you can “fake”.

The views expressed by the participants in this study are consistent with the few studies that have looked at commitment among contractor employees. In a study conducted by Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) the researchers found that organizational commitment is more complex when considered in the context of alternative or non-traditional employment contexts. Connelly, Gallagher and Gilley (2007) also found that organizational commitment may need to be recast under some employment relationships and that client commitment may evolve into a more useful construct. This aligns with the views expressed by the participants in this study. Commitment to the employer or the recreation centre was not at centre of the relationship. Instead, commitment was geared to the actual content of the program and to the participants who attended the classes thought by the employee/participants in this study.

The four participants in this study also expressed a love or passion for the programs that they teach. As supported by Meldrum and McCarville (2010), the participants in this study demonstrate commitment and enjoyment to many elements of

their jobs. Further supporting the results of the current study, Meldrum and McCarville also found the contingent recreation employees' key focus was on their clients and that they were willing to go to lengths to take on additional tasks or aid their employers and clients. The participants in this study all went "above and beyond" their call of work by doing things like practicing on their own time, showing up 45 minutes early to prepare the facility and never cancelling or missing a class they had committed to teaching. These studies collaborate the findings in this study that the main focus of commitment among recreation contractor's employees is to their participants/clients and to the program that they are teaching. Should this affective commitment diminish, it is likely that the employees will no longer be willing or able to teach and commit to their programs and will likely remove themselves from their job.

## **5.2 Impact of POS**

The second major themes that emerged from the data collected in this study is, impact of POS. As outlined in the results section of this paper, impact of POS is two fold; employee perceived POS and organizational policies and procedures that influence POS. POS is an employee's belief that their organization cares about their wellbeing and supports them. POS is directly related to affective commitment because an employee who feels supported and respected by their employer is more likely to engage in behaviours that are beneficial to their clients and employer. Studies have shown that having flexibility in the workplace and autonomy can also increase POS in employees (Kroth et al., 2007). Flexibility, responsibility and autonomy go hand in hand with

recreation contractor employees because they are often required to work an irregular schedule, are the face of the program at the various recreation centres and responsible for ensuring that they have everything they need to run a successful program. It is also important to note that the majority of the studies conducted on workplace commitment and POS are from a quantitative perspective using surveys. The data in the current study aligns with previous findings in workplace commitment research but this data but provides more depth of understanding how POS could work in contract recreation partnerships due to the use of in-depth interviews.

Consistent with POS theory, the participants in this study perceived components of their work commitment and responsibilities themselves. These extra components have been identified in literature as “felt obligations” (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). These responsibilities or obligations had nothing to do with assigned tasks or workplace policies and procedures but were instead assumed or created internally by the participants. As employees of contract recreation service providers, Ariel and Carol both chose to assume tasks that were not necessarily required of them but they knew would be beneficial to their participants and creating a successful class.

Ariel believes that by practicing a few dance fitness routines everyday, learning new/old songs to build her repertoire and making herself available after class for the participants to chat to or ask questions, she is improving her ability and confidence to instruct and therefore creating a successful experience for her participants. This is not something that her employer has asked her to do, but instead it is something that she chooses to take on in her free time. Similarly, Carol always shows up 45 minutes early to her classes. She wants to make sure that the room she teaches in is clean and comfortable

for her participants and that the location has everything that is needed to create a positive environment for her participants. Actions like these demonstrate both Carol and Ariel's sense of accountability that they have imposed on themselves. They feel committed to creating an experience that is positive for their participants and therefore making a good impression of their employers, the business and the recreation centre. These actions are consistent with finding from Eisenberger et al. (1986, 2001) who states that positive relationships have repeatedly been found between POS and affective commitment and performance have been ascribed to felt obligation owing to the reciprocity norm.

Each of the participants in this study engaged in activities that were not requirements of their jobs, but instead choice activities that would add to the success of the program. On the basis of felt obligation, POS should also increase performance of standard job activities and actions favourable to the organization that go beyond assigned responsibilities (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to George and Brief (1992), such extra-role activities (organizational spontaneity) include aiding fellow employees, taking actions that protect the organization from risk, offering constructive suggestions and gaining knowledge and skills beneficial to the organization. Felt obligation would also lessen negative employee behaviours such as lateness and absenteeism which was a belief expressed by each of the participants in this study.

When Ariel had the experience with the two ladies in her class that complained to the recreation centre and were withdrawn from her class, her employer's reaction to the situation increased the POS she felt from her employer. *"The part that really got to me was the fact, it did make me feel a little bit like they [the recreation centre] did not have trust in me and that I was... [That] maybe the Recreation Coordinator shared that doubt*

*as well.*” Despite not feeling that the recreation centre trusted her, Ariel felt supported by her employer and was more worried about making a bad impression to her employer and of her employer’s business. When her employer reacted by following up with the recreation centre, supporting Ariel’s actions and ensuring that these ladies would not be allowed to register in the program again, Ariel felt that her employer “had her back” and trusted the way she dealt with the incident. Should the situation have not been dealt with in this manner, it possibly would have broken Ariel’s psychological contract, negatively impacting her POS and affective commitment (Bal et al., 2008; Chang & Hsu, 2009).

Ariel also demonstrated POS by expressing the positive feeling she has when her work responsibilities increase. As her time with the company has gone on, her responsibilities have increased. When she first began instructing classes, she considered herself as more of a “back-up” to her boss, who also instructs classes. With her employer working to expand the business, Ariel has been able to assume responsibility over certain locations and be the “face” of the program at these recreation centres. She feels that certain locations are “her” locations now and as more instructors have been recently hired, she now has a “back-up”. This increase in responsibility and the feeling that her employer supports and trusts her is consistent with POS literature that suggests Ariel’s POS and affective commitment increases with more responsibility and autonomy over her job. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Ahmad, Shah, and Hussin (2009) who found that an increase in trust and responsibility was positively associated with POS.

The impact of policies and procedures also influences Ariel’s feeling of success and POS. Different to the other participants in this study, when Ariel’s classes are

successful with increased participants registration, she is financially rewarded. Her employer shares this success with her by paying her a percentage of the revenue on top of her flat wage. This increase in pay also serves as motivation for Ariel to put the extra effort into making her classes a success and create a positive experience for that will maintain and increase participant registration. If participant registration increases, Ariel feels like she is doing a good job and that people want to and choose to be in the classes she instructs. This increase in participant registration coupled with the positive reinforcement she received from her employer of being paid more directly influences her POS and affective commitment. This impact of policy is similar for Alison and Erin who also receive more money with increased participant registration. These two participants are paid their percentage splits directly from the recreation centre, so a successful program with several participants means that both they are the recreation centre and making more money. This serves as an incentive for the recreation centre and Erin and Alison to be invested in the success of the programs.

Carol's POS was negatively affected due to a miscommunication between she and her employer. When Carol wanted to offer a chair yoga class for the participants in her community as a way of having a niche and increasing registration, she believed that she had been given the go-ahead from her mentor (employer). Carol realizes that her mentor is extremely busy with her own classes and operating the yoga studio and she wanted to take on as much of the responsibility and work in offering this new class as she could. When she and her mentor discovered that there had be a miscommunication, Carol felt that she had made a bad impression and overstepped her responsibilities as the employee. Carol's intentions had come from a good place, but she did not feel that her mentor

trusted her abilities to organize this new class. Since this incident, she has become very conscious of ensuring that her mentor is CC'd on all of her emails with the recreation centre and that she is not acting outside of her role, despite hoping to alleviate stress or extra work for her mentor.

Impact of employee POS is different for Alison and Erin because they are both self-contractors and not employees of a contract service provider. Stinglhamber et al. (2002) noted that commitment to one's clients and commitment to one's career also represents a relevant foci. For Alison and Erin, capitalizing on opportunities to build experience, network and create a positive impression on others in their field was the motivation for putting in the extra effort to be successful in their recreation careers.

Erin feels the positive affect of making a good impression on colleagues and the recreation programmers at the various centres she teaches in. She began contracting when her boss at the recreation centre she was employed with gave a contact her information and recommended her for a contract position. Erin felt that she must be a trusted, responsible and reliable individual to get recommended for this position that has since snowballed into more contracts with other community centres. Erin believes that making a positive impression so that her name is recognized and "out" in the recreation field will lead to a successful career and future opportunities for her. She reported this to be true with regular work opportunities and the opportunity to take on new responsibilities within the centres she instructs at. In other words, Erin will put effort into her work, create a positive experience for her participants and likely engage in other tasks that are beneficial to the organizations she provides programming for because she

believes that this will influence her future career opportunities in a positive way (Eisenberger et al., 2001; George & Brief, 1992).

Much like where Erin is now, when Alison began teaching contract recreation programs, she was committed to being successful at her career in dance. She chose to work six days a week and never turn down a potential work opportunity or contract. Alison was not employed by a contract recreation organization, but as a self-contactor, she imposed her own set of responsibilities to her participants and of the program she was creating and teaching. She felt support from the various recreation centres and studios she taught at as her name got out and she was offered more contracts. This support from the recreation centres also built in a sense of accountability and feeling of obligation for Alison to continue making a good impression by showing up to work and never turning down opportunities. This also supports the Stinglhamber et al. (2002) study that suggests that career as a foci is an important component of workplace commitment.

Literature also suggests that the participants in this study are also likely to develop their impressions of POS towards the recreation centres. This is consistent with other studies conducted by Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2006) on contingent workers in the private sector and by Connelly, Gallagher and Gilley (2007) who found that perceived organizational support from the client organization predicted affective commitment towards the temporary agencies. These studies support the findings in the current study that suggests that the dynamic with the recreation centre, the employer and the contractor's employee is a large component of workplace commitment among contractor's employees.

### 5.3 The Dynamic with the Recreation Centre

The recreation facility and the staff employed by the recreation centre was a large influence for the participants in this study. The recreation centre facility and the staff at the centre had the most interaction with the participants in this study and common stories and experiences emerged through the interview process. During the interview, stories emerged that had a negative influence over the workplace. These experiences ranged from fairly minor experiences like facilities not being kept clean or not receiving updated class lists when new participants registered in the programs to larger issues like working with several different recreation programmers in a short period of time or programming policies changing and not being aware of the shift and the threat of missing classes.

Studies show the client organization (the recreation centre) has the ability in influence employee affective and continuance commitment (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006) and negative experiences could adversely influence the employees. A common issue that was brought up by all of the participants in this study was recreation programmers changing positions, no longer knowing who to talk to about programming logistics and not having a relationship with the programmer.

Alison has been providing contract recreation programs longer than the other participants in this study. During the interview, she compared what her relationship was like with the first programmer she worked with to what it is now. She described how she use to drop-in to the recreation programmers office, check in and chat about how the program was going. She use to feel a connection and relationship with her recreation programmer and as a result, felt that she communicated more about the participants in her classes and that the recreation programmer was more invested in the success of the class.

She describes her experience now as feeling like another program number and that if she makes anything difficult for the programmer, they would not be invested or motivated to keep her programs running.

Both Carol and Alison say that they have a hard time remembering the names of the programmers because there have been several different contacts in just over a year at one centre, plus another five role changes in the past six months at another location. Alison describes this process as very difficult and confesses to not even knowing if she is emailing the right person with her program information. Both Carol and Alison worry that a classes will be missed and that this will negatively affect the participants who register in their classes. Concern for the welfare of their participants ties back to literature discussed earlier conducted by Meldrum and McCarville (2010) and suggests that commitment can shift to and from other foci but the importance of the client was a constant source of focus for the participants in both the current study and the Meldrum McCarville study.

Erin experienced first hand the negative impact of changing recreation programmers can have on contract service providers. When Erin first began instructing classes at one of the centres, her programs were each offered four times a year. The programmer she began working with was then offered a position and promotion at another local centre and left for the new position. Erin then began working with a new recreation programmer who had different ideas of where she wanted the facility to go and what programs she wanted to offer. As a result of this programmer change, Erin's contract was cut in half and she lost the opportunity to run her programs two seasons of

the year. She did not feel supported or valued by the new programmer and is now looking to expand her contracts to other centres.

The various experiences that the participants in this study have had with the recreation centres and recreation programmer suggests that building connections and relationships is an important component to developing successful contract recreation partnerships. Developing relationships with people (participants/clients and the recreation programmer) is important to the participants in the current study. The shifting of recreation programmers between positions has been described as having a negative impact on the partnership because of the lack of relationship, friendship or feeling that there is a shared interest and investment in the program. Literature in partnerships states that factors such as shared responsibility, investments, risk sharing, an established timeframe for the partnership and clear contract terms are vital to the success of a partnership (Hodge & Greve, 2007). This could have implications for creating and maintaining a direct connection among the contractor's employee, the employer and the recreation coordinator as a means to maintain a successful recreation partnership. The contractor and contractor's employee will likely perceive a mutual investment with the recreation centre for the success of the program.

Similar to Erin, Carol had a negative experience when the recreation centre cancelled her classes five days before the program was scheduled to begin without checking in with her. Although it is the recreation centre's policy to give five days notice to participants who are registered in classes that do not meet the minimum numbers, the policy of the contract service provider that Carol works for is to run all classes and build registration, despite the initial registration numbers. Carol was unaware of this policy

that the recreation centre had and was upset and frustrated when she found out. It made her question her confidence and ability to teach yoga because she did not feel supported by the recreation centre or understand why this policy was in place and why she was not consulted before this action was taken. Findings in a case study that analyzed municipal recreation partnerships in Canada, conducted by Glover (1999) found that clear decision-making authority and the delegation of responsibilities must be assigned. From Carol's description of the incident, all members of the partnership did not share understanding of roles and responsibilities or a clear decision-making process.

Ariel is able to compare two of the locations with the third location she instructs contract programs for. As previously mentioned, Ariel is employed by one of the recreation centres as an aquatics staff. When she is running her contract programs at this location, she feels that the centre staff are much more receptive to her, listen and act on any issues that arise right away. She is able to compare this experience to the other locations where she is only in a contractor role. She states that if something is broken, "*I don't know who to talk to. I am specifically a contractor. So I might talk to the front desk and sometimes it gets fixed and sometimes it doesn't.*" Carol had the same experience when she is instructing programs at a satellite location of the recreation centre. There are often times when she arrives that something is missing, there is no more toilet paper or the floors are dirty. She will bring this to the attention of the recreation coordinator and sometimes it is dealt with, other times it is not. To ensure that she is prepared for her classes and that the satellite location is in the best condition it can be for her participants, Carol arrives early to sweep the floors and make sure that

everything is there that she needs in order to run a successful class that is a positive experience for her participants.

No studies have been identified that specifically look into the dynamic of a recreation centre, contract service provider and the contractor's employee. With the increase in this type of recreation service delivery, future research ideas will now be discussed that could have implications for "best" practices and how to facilitate a positive work experience for all three parties involved in this partnership.

## **5.4 Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

### **5.4.1 Implications for recreation centre**

The current study serves as an overview and insight into what the experience of providing contract recreation programming is like for the contractor's employees. This window provides many implications for the recreation centre to influence and improve the contractor partnership, especially when it comes to facilitating a positive environment for the contractor's employee. The views expressed by the participants in this study suggest that they recognize the difference between feeling like an actual staff member of the recreation centre versus being "just a contractor". Limitations of this role are shared by all of the participants in this study and these insights have implications for the recreation centres and recreation management staff. Some practice suggestions for improving this workplace dynamic are:

1. Ensuring that there is "face time" with the contractor staff. Recreation coordinators could make sure that they introduce themselves to the contract service providers and their staff. Having a meeting or taking the opportunity to

meet the contractor's employee might increase their POS, affective commitment and feeling that the recreation centre cares about and is invested in the program.

2. Implementing a policy or procedure for having concerns, broken equipment fixed or ensuring facility maintenance is complete. All of the participants in this study expressed uncertainty when it came to feeling like their problems were being dealt with. Having a formal reporting system or implementing another strategy to make sure that the information is getting to the right person and being dealt with in a timely manner would be positive for the contract staff and build confidence in the recreation centre.
3. Recreation programmers changing roles was a common issue for the participants in this study. Although the participants recognize that some changes cannot be avoided (like when a recreation programmer goes on maternity or paternity leave) steps could be taken to ensure that contract information is being thoroughly passed along, recreation programs could spend time familiarizing themselves with the contractors portfolio and the program they instruct and again, set up a meeting to create that face time with the contractor and the contractor's employee.

#### **5.4.2 Implications for the contractor**

Consistent with other work in the area Findings from the current study suggest the contractor's employees are primarily affectively committed to their work and mainly to the participants they instruct (Meldrum & McCarville, 2010). Each of the participants in this study expresses a love and enjoyment towards the programs and the people that they

teach. Alison notes that this is not the type of work that anyone could get into and maintain long-term unless they are invested in it for reasons other than money. It takes a lot of commitment, time and effort and each of the participants note that they must be in a positive head space and show up to classes ready and willing to drop anything negative in their day otherwise it can have a bad impact on the people attending their class. Practical implications this can have for the recreation contract service provider are:

1. Contractor employees are generally affectively committed to the programs they run and the participants attending their class. In order to maintain this, employers should not do anything that could hinder this commitment like implementing too many policies or requirements of their staff and not supporting them through adverse situations. This commitment is essentially as good as it is going to get and should be maintained. Giving staff the freedom, flexibility, autonomy, trust and confidence to maintain and run a good class will increase the employee's affective commitment and ownership over their classes. The employees will likely put in the extra time and effort to make sure that their class is successful for their participants and reflects a positive image of their employer.
2. Each of the participants in this study also reflected on the ability and enjoyment they receive from instructing programs in their local community. This created a stronger bond for each of them because they expressed the positive affect they get from being able to positively influence the people around them. When possible, allowing employees to instruct the classes in their local community will likely increase their affective commitment, feeling of ownership and responsibility over their classes.

3. Maintaining a relationship with the recreation programmers is vital to successful partnerships. It is evident from this study that feeling connected to the recreation coordinators is key in maintaining the relationship between the contractor and the recreation centre. Taking the time to meet with new recreation programmers and familiarize them with the program will likely build the relationship between the programmer and the contractor and facilitate trust and a mutual desire for success.

#### **5.4.3 Implications for contractor's employee**

The overarching theme suggested by the participants in this study is having love, passion and enjoyment for the program that you are instructing. Both Erin and Alison began instructing contract programs because they wanted to work in recreation or teach their respective program for a living. Both of these participants recognize the amount of time, work and energy it takes to be successful in this type of work. For Ariel and Carol, their sole motivation for instructing contract programs is the enjoyment and feeling of satisfaction they get out of positively influencing their participants and the community. Neither Carol nor Ariel is dependent on the money they receive from teaching their programs, but recognize along with Erin and Alison that it takes a lot of work to create a successful class and this means wanting to put in the extra time and effort it takes to do this. Implications for contractor's employees is clear and simple:

1. Love and feel passion for the program. Contractor's employees need to be prepared and willing to leave anything negative from the day outside of the class. The attitude and willingness the instructor has is brought into the program is

apparent to the participants registered in the class. Instructors need to take ownership for and feel commitment and responsibility to the program because it will lead to a successful experience for them, the participants and community.

## **5.5 Future Research**

The partnership among the recreation centre, the contract service provider and the contractor's employee is complex. Although studies have been previously conducted that examine contract employees, no studies have been identified that specifically study this in a public recreation context. Studies have shown the commitment is two-fold for contractor's employees and the findings in the current study are consistent with this. A few studies have been conducted that examine contingent recreation employee's commitment to the recreation centre and these findings do relate to findings identified in this paper that suggest employees are committed to their work, despite the irregular schedules and registration dependant hours.

This unique partnership warrants further investigation. Future studies should explore this topic further and specific attention could be given to the working relationship between the contractor employee and the recreation centre. Research should also be conducted from the perspectives of the two other key players in this study: the recreation centre (recreation programmer) and the recreation contract service provider.

A longitudinal study would also provide further insight into this topic. Doing a follow up interview with each of the participants in this study in a year to three years

from now would likely provide further insight into the relationships. A follow up study could identify breach in psychological contract, incidents that increased POS and provide insight on commitment and assess whether the type and focus of commitment has changed at all.

Research could also be conducted with former employees of recreation contract service providers that would explore why they are no longer instructing programs. A study that assessed why employees quit could have implications for maintaining affective commitment and retaining staff long-term.

A larger sample would also provide more information on this topic. The research conducted in this study was limited to four participants who all worked in Victoria, BC and exploring this topic in other regions with different employers and recreation centres could shed new perspectives or ideas for maintaining affective commitment among contractor's employees.

## Conclusion

This study investigated commitment among recreation contractor's employees from the perspectives of four individuals who instruct contract programs at public recreation and community centres. With the increased focus on health promotion and the obesity epidemic, it is becoming evident that recreation centres are an ideal location for promoting fun physical activity programs that facilitate a healthy lifestyle. With a vast array of programs and activities sought by the community, recreation centres are turning more toward private companies who provide specialized instruction to meet needs. This was an exploratory study that aimed to provide insight from the perspective of the contractor's employee and suggest possible implications for improved service delivery, employee retention and maintaining successful partnerships.

Findings from this study suggest that contractor's employees are generally affectively committed to their work and the participants in their programs. This type of work often has an irregular schedule with most employees getting paid per class they instruct and not the hours it takes to travel to and from and prepare for their programs. Maintaining a workplace where employees feel valued, trusted and responsible for the programs they instruct is key to maintain affectively committed employees. Recreation centres can also facilitate this relationship by ensuring the contractor's employees feel valued and that their concerns are heard and met. Maintaining a facility, policies and procedure that are conducive to an instructor who is not an employee of the recreation centre will help the contractor employee to feel connected and committed to the

recreation centre. This positive relationship will help to maintain an open and successful, supportive relationship for all three parties.

Future research is still needed to assess this work dynamic from the other parties involved. Insights could lead to practices and policies that could be put in place that will facilitate a long lasting partnership. A further study exploring this dynamic in other communities could also lead to further insight that would benefit the contract service provider, the recreation centre, contractor employees, patrons and the community as a whole.

## Bibliography

- Ahmad, T., Shah, B., & Hussin, R. (2009). Antecedents of Perceived Organizational Support, (November), 121–131.
- Allen, N., & Meyer, J. (1996). Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment to the Organization: An Examination of Construct Validity. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 49(3), 252–76. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8980084>
- Aubé, C., Rousseau, V., & Morin, E. M. (2007). Perceived organizational support and organizational commitment: The moderating effect of locus of control and work autonomy. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(5), 479–495. doi:10.1108/02683940710757209
- Babiak, K. M. (2009). Criteria of effectiveness in multiple cross-sectoral interorganizational relationships. *Evaluation and program planning*, 32(1), 1–12. doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2008.09.004
- Bal, P., Delange, A., Jansen, P., & Vandervelde, M. (2008). Psychological contract breach and job attitudes: A meta-analysis of age as a moderator. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72(1), 143–158. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2007.10.005
- Barnes, M., Maclean, J., & Cousens, L. (2010). Understanding the structure of community collaboration: the case of one Canadian health promotion network. *Health promotion international*, 25(2), 238–47. doi:10.1093/heapro/daq002
- Byrne, Z. S., & Hochwarter, W. A. (2008). Perceived organizational support and performance: Relationships across levels of organizational cynicism. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(1), 54–72. doi:10.1108/02683940810849666
- Cassar, V., & Briner, R. B. (2011). The relationship between psychological contract breach and organizational commitment: Exchange imbalance as a moderator of the mediating role of violation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 78(2), 283–289. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2010.09.007
- Chang, C.-P., & Hsu, P.-C. (2009). The psychological contract of the temporary employee in the public sector in Taiwan. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 37(6), 721–727. doi:10.2224/sbp.2009.37.6.721
- Connelly, C. E., & Gallagher, D. G. (2006). Independent and dependent contracting: Meaning and implications. *Human Resource Management Review*, 16(2), 95–106. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2006.03.008

- Connelly, C. E., Gallagher, D. G., & Gilley, K. M. (2007). Organizational and client commitment among contracted employees: A replication and extension with temporary workers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *70*(2), 326–335. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2006.10.003
- Conway, N., & Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. (2011). The reciprocal relationship between psychological contract fulfilment and employee performance and the moderating role of perceived organizational support and tenure. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, no–no. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8325.2011.02033.x
- Coulson, A. (2005). A plague on all your partnerships: theory and practice in regeneration. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *18*(2), 151–163. doi:10.1108/09513550510584973
- Cousens, L., Barnes, M., Stevens, J., Mallen, C., & Bradish, C. (2006). Who's Your Partner? Who's Your Ally? Exploring the Characteristics of Public, Private, and Voluntary Recreation Linkages. *Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration*, *24*(1), 32–55.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A., & Morrow, P. C. (2006). Organizational and client commitment among contracted employees. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *68*(3), 416–431. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2005.10.002
- Cuskelly, G., Harrington, M., & Stebbins, R. a. (2002). Changing levels of organizational commitment amongst sport volunteers: A serious leisure approach. *Leisure/Loisir*, *27*(3-4), 191–212. doi:10.1080/14927713.2002.9651303
- Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2007). Calling and Vocation at Work: Definitions and Prospects for Research and Practice. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *37*(3), 424–450. doi:10.1177/0011000008316430
- Eisenberger, R., Armeli, S., Rexwinkel, B., Lynch, P. D., & Rhoades, L. (2001). Reciprocation of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(1), 42–51. doi:10.1037//0021-9010.86.1.42
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived Organizational Support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *71*(3), 500–507.
- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: Contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(3), 565–573. doi:10.1037//0021-9010.87.3.565
- Employee Satisfaction Equals Retention. (2004). *Broker (New York, N.Y.)*, *6*(4), 12.

- Erdheim, J., Wang, M., & Zickar, M. J. (2006). Linking the Big Five personality constructs to organizational commitment. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 41(5), 959–970. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2006.04.005
- Felfe, J., Schmook, R., Schyns, B., & Six, B. (2008). Does the form of employment make a difference? Commitment of traditional, temporary, and self-employed workers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72(1), 81–94. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2007.10.008
- Frankmann, J. P., & Adams, J. a. (1954). The Critical Incident Technique. *Psychological bulletin*, 51(4), 257–72. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19586159>
- George, J. M., & Brief, a P. (1992). Feeling good-doing good: a conceptual analysis of the mood at work-organizational spontaneity relationship. *Psychological bulletin*, 112(2), 310–29. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1454897>
- Glover, T. (1999a). Municipal park and recreation agencies unite! A single case analysis of an intermunicipal partnership. *Journal of Park and Recreation*, 17(1). Retrieved from <http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:Municipal+Park+and+Recreation+Agencies+Unite+!+A+Single+Case+Analysis+of+an+Intermunicipal+Partnership#0>
- Glover, T. (1999b). Reinventing local government in Canada: Contemporary challenges facing leisure practitioners. *Ninth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research*, .... Retrieved from [http://lin.ca/Uploads/cclr9/CCLR9\\_27.pdf](http://lin.ca/Uploads/cclr9/CCLR9_27.pdf)
- Goulnder, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity. *American Sociological Review*, 25(2).
- Gremler, D. D. (2004). The Critical Incident Technique in Service Research. *Journal of Service Research*, 7(1), 65–89. doi:10.1177/1094670504266138
- Hackett, R. D., Bycio, P., & Hausdorf, P. a. (1994). Further assessments of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organizational commitment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(1), 15–23. doi:10.1037//0021-9010.79.1.15
- Hodge, G. A., & Greve, C. (2007). Public–private partnerships: An international performance review. *Public Administration Review*, 67(3), 545–558. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00736.x/full>
- Kanter, R. M. (1994). Collaborative Advantage: Successful partnerships manage the relationship, not just the deal. *Harvard Business*, 72(4), 96.
- Kerstetter, D. L. (2006). Introductory Comments to the Special Issue on Partnerships : Partnership Advances and Challenges Facing the Park and Recreation Profession. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 24(1), 1–6.

- Kickul, J. (2001). An Exploration of Employee Attraction and Retention Practices in Small Business. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 39(4), 320–335.
- Kroth, M., Boverier, P., & Zondlo, J. (2007). What Managers Do to Create Healthy Work Environments. *Journal of Adult Education*, 36(2), 1–12.
- Lepak, D., Takeuchi, R., & Snell, S. A. (2003). Employment flexibility and firm performance: Examining the interaction effects of employment mode, environmental dynamism, and technological intensity. *Journal of Management*, (5), 681–703. doi:10.1016/S0149-2063
- McElroy, J. C., Morrow, P. C., & Laczniak, R. N. (2001). External organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11(3), 237–256. doi:10.1016/S1053-4822(00)00050-4
- Meldrum, J., & McCarville, R. (2010). Commitment Among Selected Contingent Leisure Service Workers: Perceived Outcomes for Employers, Clients, and for Those Workers. *Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration*, 28(4), 81–95.
- Meldrum, J. T., & McCarville, R. (2010). Understanding commitment within the leisure service contingent workforce. *Managing Leisure*, 15(1-2), 48–66. doi:10.1080/13606710903448004
- Meyer, J. P. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. *Human resource management review*, 11(3), 299–326. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S105348220000053X>
- Morrison, E. W., & Robinson, S. (1997). When employees feel betrayed: A model of how psychological contract violation develops. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(1), 226–256. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/259230>
- Oldham, G. R., & Hackman, J. R. (1976). Motivation through the Design of Work. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, 279(21).
- Parzefall, M.-R., & Hakanen, J. (2010). Psychological contract and its motivational and health-enhancing properties. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 25(1), 4–21. doi:10.1108/02683941011013849
- Piper, B. (2006). Why employee satisfaction? *Professional Builder*, 71(1), 43.
- Provan, K. G., & Milward, H. B. (2001). Do Networks Really Work? A Framework for Evaluating Public-Sector Organizational Networks. *Public Administration Review*, 61(4), 414–423. doi:10.1111/0033-3352.00045

- Rhoades, L., Eisenberger, R., & Armeli, S. (2001). Affective commitment to the organization: The contribution of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(5), 825–836. doi:10.1037//0021-9010.86.5.825
- Robinson, S., & Rousseau, D. M. (1994). Violating the psychological contract: Not the exception but the norm. *Journal of organizational behavior, 15*(3), 245–259. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/job.4030150306/abstract>
- Sparkes, A. C. (2002). *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Activity* (p. 248). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Stinglhamber, F., Bentein, K., & Vandenberghe, C. (2002). Extension of the Three-Component Model of Commitment to Five Foci. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 18*(2), 123–138. doi:10.1027//1015-5759.18.2.123
- The partnership matrix. (2013). *La Piana Consulting*. Retrieved October 17, 2013, from <http://www.lapiana.org/insights-for-the-sector/insights/collaboration-and-strategic-restructuring/partnership-matrix.aspx>
- Vallerand, R. J., Paquet, Y., Philippe, F. L., & Charest, J. (2010). On the role of passion for work in burnout: a process model. *Journal of personality, 78*(1), 289–312. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00616.x
- Wang, C. L., Indridason, T., & Saunders, M. N. K. (2010). Affective and continuance commitment in public private partnership. *Employee Relations, 32*(4), 396–417. doi:10.1108/01425451011051613

## Appendix A - Recruitment Letter

### **Partnerships in Recreation: Understanding the Experience of a Contract Employee in Municipal Recreation**

You are being invited to participate in a study that is looking to understand the unique employment conditions of a recreation contractor employee.

Vanessa Morley is a masters' student in the faculty of Exercise Science and Physical Health Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact her should you have any questions about this study by emailing: [vmorley@uvic.ca](mailto:vmorley@uvic.ca). John Meldrum is the masters' supervisor for this project. He can be reached by emailing [jmeldrum@uvic.ca](mailto:jmeldrum@uvic.ca).

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria ( [REDACTED] or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

#### **Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of this research is to understand what it might be like to be an employee working in the contracted position at a municipal recreation centre. In recreation centres, it is becoming common to provide specialized programs via experts, or contractors. A contractor is a private business or organization that contracts or sells its services to a client organization (i.e. Recreation centre).

The goal of this study is to understand what it is like to be a contractor employee. Little is known about employees working in the contract recreation environment and your participation in this study will help us to understand your unique employment perspective.

#### **Importance of this Research:**

This research will be the first known to take place. Results could have implications for employee commitment, customer retention, partnerships and the workplace environment. Contract service delivery is on the rise and your participation in this study would help us to better understand this type of employment.

#### **Participant Selection:**

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are the employee of a contract recreation provider.

#### **What is Involved:**

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to attend an interview at a location that is convenient for you. Here, the researcher will ask you questions about

your work experience and the two of you will draw a timeline and plot your employment. The interview will take 45-60 minutes to complete. The interview will be audio-recorded. The researcher will then transcribe your interview and ask you to review a copy of the transcription. No names will be used in the transcription. The transcript review will take approximately 45 minutes to complete and you will be allowed the chance to clarify any answers, take any comments out or add additional comments, ideas or events that come to mind after the initial interview. If you wish, the researcher will provide you with a final copy of her masters' thesis.

**Inconvenience:**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the loss of the time spent completing the interview and reviewing the transcripts.

**Risks:**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Benefits:**

Benefits to participation include a better understanding what it is like to be a contractor employee. This could have implications for employers, recreation centres, customers, and for the contractor employee.

**Voluntary Participation**

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 withdraw part way through the study, the researcher may request consent to use the data that has already been collected.

Should you wish to participate or have any questions about the project, please contact Vanessa Morley via email, [vmorley@uvic.ca](mailto:vmorley@uvic.ca) or telephone, [REDACTED].

Thank you for taking the time to review this information and for considering participating in this study. You would be a great asset and shed an important perspective into a unique work position.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Morley

## **Appendix B - Phone Script for Approaching the Community Recreation Coordinator**

- I am pleased to invite you to assist with the recruitment process for a study titled, “Partnerships in Recreation: Understanding the Experience of a Contract Employee in Municipal Recreation”
- The purpose of this research is to understand what it might be like to be an employee working a recreation contractor at a municipal recreation centre. In recreation centres, it is becoming common to provide specialized programs via experts, or contractors.
- Being employed by a contract service provider can be a unique situation. Like many municipal recreation, front line employees, contractor employees hours of work can be scattered, dependant on registration numbers and have highs or lows between programming seasons. The difference of a contractor employee is that this is often a full-time position and not necessarily seasonal.
- I am looking for support in the recruitment phase of this study.
- Participation in this study is completely voluntary
- This study have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria
- I have prepared a recruitment letter for contractor employees detailing the nature of the study and providing my contact information.
- I would be asking you, the Community Recreation Coordinator, to hand out a copy of the recruitment letter to each contractor employee who comes into your centre over a 7-day period and ask them to review it.
- Do you have any questions?
- What would be the best time for me to come into your centre and provide you with the recruitment letters?
- Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

## Appendix C – Interview Guide

Example questions and probes are:

- Tell me about your job. What was it like? What are your responsibilities?
- What was your hiring process like? When you got the offered the job what did you feel?
- What does commitment mean to you?
- Tell me about your work experience?
- What was your life like at this point? How did the job fit in your life?
- What was a highlight? What was a low point?
- Where was your strongest connection?
- Did it change? Why?
- How would you describe your commitment to the job now?
- Where did things start to change? Please describe the events leading up to the change.
- Is there anything on this timeline that is missing or that you would like to add?
- Is there anything I have not asked you that I should have?

## **Appendix D – Letter of Informed Consent**

Thank you for considering participating in this study, Partnerships in Recreation: Understanding the Experience of a Contractor's Employee in Municipal Recreation. Your contributions will be valuable in helping to understand what it is like to be an employee in this unique work condition.

### **Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of this research is to understand what it might be like to be a contractor's employee working in municipal recreation centres. In recreation centres, it is becoming common to provide specialized programs via experts, or contractors. A contractor is a private business or organization that contracts or sells its services to a client organization (i.e. Recreation centre).

The goal of this study is to build a picture of what it is like to be a contractor's employee. Little is known about employees working in the contract recreation environment and your participation in this study will help us to understand your unique employment perspective.

### **Importance of this Research:**

This research will be the first known to take place. Results could have implications for employee commitment, customer retention, partnerships and the workplace environment. Contract service delivery is on the rise and your participation in this study would help us to better understand this type of employment.

### **Participant Selection:**

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are the employee of a contract recreation provider.

### **What is Involved:**

1. You will be asked to attend a one-on-one interview where the researcher will ask you questions about your experience as a contractor employee. You and the researcher will draw out a timeline detailing your employment experiences. The interview will be audio-recorded and last 45-60 minutes.
2. After the researcher has transcribed the interview, you will be asked to review the transcription. This will allow you the opportunity to add any additional information you may have forgotten, clarify any details, or remove any content. This will take approximately 45 minutes.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality:**

- I understand the information I provide in the interview and on the timeline will be kept confidential and that privacy will be maintained by not using any names that could compromise my identity.

- I understand that data will be kept in a secure location at the home office of the researcher.
- I understand that the information I provide will be combined with other participants' data and at no time will individual names be used.
- I understand that all transcripts will be shredded after the research is complete and that audio files will be deleted.
- I understand that all computer files will be deleted upon completion of this study (Approximately November 2013)
- I understand that due to the context of this study, it is possible that the community recreation coordinator could guess who is participating, but this is unlikely and every effort will be made to maintain my confidentiality.

**Inconvenience:**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the loss of the time spent completing the interview and reviewing the transcripts.

**Risks:**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Benefits:**

Benefits to participation include a better understanding what it is like to be a contractor employee. This could have implications for employers, recreation centres, customers, and for the contractor employee.

**Voluntary Participation:**

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 withdraw part way through the study, the researcher may request consent to use the data that has already been.

**Dissemination of Results:**

The results of this study will be used to prepare and fulfill a masters' thesis for Vanessa Morley. It is anticipated that the results of this study may also be published in a scholarly article or paper. A copy of the masters' thesis will likely be shared with the community recreation centres, but not with any individual employers.

**Contacts:**

I understand that if I have any questions regarding this study, I can contact Vanessa Morley at [REDACTED] ([vmorley@uvic.ca](mailto:vmorley@uvic.ca)) or John Meldrum (Vanessa's Graduate Supervisor) at [jmeldrum@uvic.ca](mailto:jmeldrum@uvic.ca) or by telephone at [REDACTED].

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE RESEARCH PROCESS AND HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE RESEARCHER.

**I agree to participate in the one-on-one interview:**

Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview:**

Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I agree to participate in the timeline drawing process:**

Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I agree to participate in the follow-up (post-interview) to review the transcripts from the audio-recording of my interview:**

Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand my participation in all parts of this study is completely voluntary and I may decline any question, provide no comments or withdraw at any time without penalty to myself. I understand that if I choose to withdraw, the researcher may request consent to use the data that has already been collected. If I refuse, my data will not be used and will be destroyed. I may also obtain a copy of this consent form to keep upon my request.**

Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator:

Vanessa Morley  
School of Exercise Science and Physical Health Education  
University of Victoria  
[vmorley@uvic.ca](mailto:vmorley@uvic.ca)

