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# Investigating student outcomes from a service learning project

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# **Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

**Doctor of Philosophy**

from the

**University of Wollongong**

Faculty of Education

by

**Shona Gibson**

B. Teach (dist), M. Ed (Research)

## **Certification**

I, Shona Gibson, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other university or academic institution.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the outcomes of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in a service learning project, referred to as the 'Adopt a School' project. This study was undertaken to understand what effect the project had on these students, and how it impacted on them as people. This study focused on the experiences these students had during their field trip in Sri Lanka in September 2005.

A qualitative methodology incorporating the grounded theory was selected to analyse the data.

The study identified that service learning engagement provides powerful and deep learning experiences which encourage students to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes and relationships with others, especially on their life as teenagers in Australia and, as a result, what they had come to take for granted or have not questioned.

A core finding from this study was that service learning involvement promoted identity formation. Immersion in the host community facilitated new and more complex thinking about their personal and social identities, the construction of identity in relation to serving others, and the kinds of commitments participants wanted to make in their lives. Because students were introduced to and developed relationships with, individuals and experiences with which they were unfamiliar, previously held notions of self and other were challenged, and reconstructed. Implications for education have been drawn from the results of this study.

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## **Definition of Terms**

### **Adopt a School**

‘Adopt a School’ refers to a project linking Presbyterian Ladies’ College (PLC) Sydney with three tsunami affected schools in Sri Lanka.

The ‘Adopt a School’ project is aimed at providing the students involved with an ‘immeasurable opportunity for personal growth as they make contributions as responsible global citizens’ (Brewer, 2005).

### **AdoptSriLanka**

AdoptSriLanka is an organisation helping villagers along Sri Lanka’s southern coast, following the tsunami on December 26, 2004. The organisation comprises Sri Lankans and expatriates with intimate knowledge of the situation on the ground. They are all volunteers. (Brewer, 2005)

### **Experience**

This term reflects Dewey’s definition of experience. Dewey argued that educative experiences could be judged by whether or not the individual grew, or would grow, intellectually and morally, the larger community benefited from the learning over the long haul, the ‘situation’ (Dewey, 1916) resulted in conditions leading to further growth, such as arousing curiosity and strengthening initiative, desire and purpose.

### **HSC**

The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is a locally, nationally and internationally recognised qualification for students who successfully complete secondary education in New South Wales (NSW) Australia.

### **Non-government, Independent, and Private Schools**

Non-government schools are defined as schools that are ‘founded and wholly organised by individuals or non-government bodies’ (Grimshaw, 2002, p. 18). These

schools are ‘self-managed by their own board of governors, hence the use of the term independent’ (Daniels, 2003, p.3). These schools, despite government funding since the 1960s, have also been tagged ‘private’ (Meadmore, 2004).

## **Outcomes**

Outcomes are intended and unintended consequences of a project, usually in the context of knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, behaviour, condition or status concerning the project’s participants (Mark, Henry and Julnes, 2000).

## **PLC Sydney**

The Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC) Sydney is a non-government day and boarding school of girls from Reception to Year 12. It offers an academic curriculum underpinned by ‘Christian values that encourage the pursuit of excellence in all areas of life’ (PLC, website, 2005).

## **Service Learning**

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience and strengthen communities.

## **Year 11**

The NSW school education system is structured into five educative groupings: Pre-school, Infants school, Primary school, Secondary school and Tertiary studies. The school groups are further identified by ‘Year’ labels, concluding with Year 12, the last year of secondary school, which requires the students to undertake a formal externally prepared examination. The participants in this study were in Year 11 at PLC.

## **Chapter One: Introduction to This Study**

### **Introduction**

Service learning is an educational model that is Deweyan (1938, 1959, 1966) in character and has grown out of the American progressive traditions. As a philosophy of education, service learning reflects the belief that education must be linked to social responsibility and that learning must be meaningful and active (Kolb, 1984). The pedagogical method of experiential education posits that learning is best done by direct participation and that the service community becomes the classroom (McElhaney, 1998). Service learning begins with a ‘felt’ community problem. Through reflection, solutions are considered, then applied to the problem in the form of community service. Reflection, the core component, provides the connection between what is learned in the classroom and the application of that learning to the particular community problem.

### **Background to the Study**

For the past 200 years, Australian school learning and serving the needs of society have been inextricably connected. Educating students intellectually, as well as socially and morally and for good citizenship, has been a part of Australian schools since their inception (Renchler, 1992; McCalman, 1998; Meadmore, 2004). Organisations such as the Royal Guide Dogs Society, the Royal Flying Doctor and various church missions have provided opportunities for students in schools to give to communities in need (McFarlane, 1988). Today, there has been a formalisation of this facet of K-12 school education as the principles and value of service learning have captured the attention of educators and students alike.



The formation of Australian Federal Government initiatives such as those of The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century (MCEETYA, 2005) and The National Framework for Values Education for Australian Schools (Brown, 2004) not only provides broad directions to develop Australian school students' attitudes, skills and values required to become involved in their communities and in service, but also shows that they are viewed as the nation's best resource to build the Australian community (Lingard, 2000; Groundwater-Smith, Ewing, & Le Cornu, 2003). These initiatives place responsibility on all schools to instil in students a sense of civic and moral responsibility through community understanding and involvement.

An underlying assumption of this attention is that service learning does, in fact, promote positive moral and social behaviours and provide positive educational outcomes in participating students. Its advocates in America (Billig, 2002, 2004, 2005; Fiske, 2002; Billig & Eyler, 2003) suggest it is a way to make education more responsive to the needs of the students and a way to strengthen democratic and participatory practice. Although it is clear that involvement in service is directly related to school education's mission of producing 'good citizens' (Brown, 2004), the complexity of the outcomes of service participation is not as clearly understood. Some proponents of service learning have reported positive outcomes including increased academic understanding, citizenship and civic responsibilities and more intense student engagement than that found in traditional approaches to education (Billig, 2002, 2004). Service learning has also been shown to engage students' values in areas that may be difficult to teach through abstract reasoning (Billig & Eyler, 2003) and affords students opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations (McElhaney, 1998).

Research on service learning proposes that at the core of service learning is recognition of the importance of social context in learning, and the need to integrate knowledge with its practical use (McElhaney, 1998; Astin, 1993; Billig, 2002, 2004, 2005; Fiske, 2002; Billig & Eyler, 2003). Furthermore, this approach to learning emphasises engaging practitioners in activities that allow them to draw on their own personal accounts of learning, understanding and formative experiences.

Within definitions of service learning, the terms ‘volunteerism’ and ‘philanthropy’ are often used. Wilson proposed that volunteerism applies to the millions of citizens whose ‘volunteering occurs when one devotes their time to benefit another human being, or group of persons, without compensation and that it primarily occurs in an organizational setting’ (2000, p. 215). This term ties in closely with the term philanthropy, which is primarily seen as sponsorship and or support and is a term commonly used in conjunction with the activities of organisations and their ‘giving programs’ (Swift, 1990). Neither volunteerism nor philanthropy places an emphasis on developing curriculum outcomes. Rather the emphasis is on meeting the immediate needs of those being supported, rather than impact on the ‘giver’.

### **Purpose, Goal and Significance of This Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in a service learning project, referred to as the ‘Adopt a School’ project. This was done to understand what effect the ‘Adopt a School’ project had on these students and how it impacted on their development as people.

Interest in service learning in Australian education has increased with the literature generated in America espousing the civic, social and community benefits of service. Moves towards positive student and community interaction have advanced since the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999, p. 3) into Australian schools was published. This declaration recommended that all young people be encouraged to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world.

The goal of this study was to expand the understanding of the kinds of outcomes that derive from a service learning experience. The experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in the ‘Adopt a School’ service project provided the setting for this study. The majority of these experiences were embedded in the practical component of the ‘Adopt a School’ project, the 10 day field trip made by these volunteer students to Sri Lanka in September 2005 and the impact this had on

them. There was no explicit selection process to determine participation, each student volunteered. This study, which spanned from March 2005 to July 2007, focused on the service learning outcomes for this student group, not on the effects of service learning on the Sri Lankan service community or on PLC community as a whole.

The following broad question was used to frame this study:

How did a service learning experience affect Year 11 school students?

To answer this question, this study analysed these questions;

What is the 'Adopt a School' service learning project? and

How did participation affect the students?

Because the study focuses on experiences in context, it utilised a naturalistic research method. Appropriate to naturalistic inquiry, the grounded theory analysis was applied to this task of reviewing the data as it 'focuses on the study of the experience and those who lived it' (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510). This enabled the researcher to obtain the views, values and facts of the participating students in a specified time and context (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525).

The significance of this study is that it is a way to determine the potential of service learning in Australian K-12 education. For service learning to fulfil its potential and for its outcomes to be determined, research must be done in this area of education. However, such research will be worthwhile only when based upon a clear understanding of what happens during service learning and how it impacts participants. Without a basis for making choices in practice, uninformed decisions about service learning practice may result. Once service learning is clearly understood, it may well revolutionise Australian school practice and help solve some of those educational problems about which politicians and the public talk - student engagement, behaviour management, skill development, the promotion of lifelong learning and become a means to demonstrate outcomes in ways that traditional classroom settings can not. This study will be significant in providing understanding and in informing this debate.

## **The Literature Review**

The literature review focused on those studies investigating service learning; relationship between service learning and experiential education; stakeholders' involvement in service learning activities and school culture.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Given the depth and complexity of research literature that relates to the domain of service learning education, this review required a theoretical framework that could not only contain this depth and complexity, but could also limit it to a manageable size. Dewey's philosophy of education and his belief that the 'experience grows out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences' (Dewey, 1916, p. 164) provided this framework.

The movement towards experience based education emerged from the Progressive Movement of the 1930s. Within the literature, experiential education posits that learning is best done by direct participation in the activity (Dewey, 1916, 1938, 1938a, 1959) and that the world is the classroom (McElhaney, 1998). As a philosophy of education, service learning reflects the belief that the most effective learning is active and connected to past experience in some meaningful way (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

## **The Participants' Service Learning Program**

The service learning program which the participants in this study undertook was offered by the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney (PLC). While there is a long tradition of community service activities in PLC's curriculum (McKeith, 2005), the 'Adopt a School' project was an additional form of service in which information and understandings were shared through classroom processes of knowledge building, problem solving and reflection. Jointly developed by executive teachers in PLC, the director of the Senehasa Girls' Home, Galle, the director of the Ruhunu Orphanage,

Galle and the principal of the Sudharma College, Galle, the project was designed in response to the immediate need of these Sri Lankan institutions after the tsunami on Boxing Day 2004 and in line with literature which, in summary, found that service learning reflects the belief that education must be linked to social responsibility and that learning must be meaningful and active (Kolb, 1984).

Because it aimed to increase the degree of social responsibility, and thus better prepare participants for ‘real life’ situations after school (McKeith, July, 2005), the ‘Adopt a School’ project was designed to help students to establish long term supportive relationships, promote intercultural understanding and enhance the learning experiences of these young people about the complexities of global citizenship. It is an expectation of the project organisers that participants will continue to use the skills developed in Sri Lanka in their lives after school.

## **Scope of the Study**

This study focused on the service learning outcomes for the individual participants, who volunteered to travel to Sri Lanka in September 2005, to work alongside tsunami victims in three educational institutions. As a consequence, this study researched the experiences of thirteen students. Whilst the thirteen Year 11 students involved in the study made a trip to Sri Lanka, due to a pre-existing medical condition it was impossible to follow the students to the field sites. Therefore, data was gathered at PLC. As these students were Year 11 students with extra academic and school demands, restrictions were placed on their available time. As a result, interviews were conducted during lesson breaks and during recess and lunch breaks. Each interview was prearranged prior to the site visit. This stance supported the agreement made with the Principal of PLC that, this study was limited to the thirteen students who volunteered to participate and that consideration be given to their time and their school commitments, therefore, no attempt was made to generate findings from the wider Year 11 student population.

## Organisation of This Thesis

Having introduced and given justification for the study in the present chapter, **Chapter Two** is organised into two major parts and presents in the first part a brief historical overview of Australian education to frame the theoretical background for this study. This is a necessarily abridged historical account and is based on the few texts that deal specifically with the key moral and social developments in Australia's education history. The overview of service learning develops a definition, presents an historic overview and additionally examines the work of philosophers from which essential service learning concepts have evolved. The work of these philosophers is crucial to understanding where service learning has been and how it should be further developed. The second part provides a background to the qualitative research method used in this study.

**Chapter Three:** This chapter presents the methodology that supports this study and identifies it as qualitative study created in order to respond to the guiding research question. This chapter outlines and justifies the grounded theory methodology and data analysis procedures employed in the study. The use of interviews, observations, email correspondence, and document analysis are discussed, and their importance to the study detailed.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter presents the findings relating to the research questions. This chapter has been divided into two parts and both of these parts are divided into sub-parts.

Part A: presents the result of a search into PLC Sydney's culture, a snapshot of the 'Adopt a School' project and a profile of the research participants.

Part B: presents the findings in light of the main research question and synthesises the findings into the major categories that emerged from the data. The concepts that informed this grounded theory are identified.

**Chapter Five:** This chapter is the discussion chapter. The concepts and categories informing the grounded theory have been identified in Chapter Four and are discussed as interrelated categories that illustrate the grounded theory.

**Chapter Six:** This is the final chapter in this thesis. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations. This summative chapter suggests other areas of research that must be undertaken to further understand service learning education.

### **Chapter Summary**

The function of this chapter was to provide an overview of how this thesis has been constructed to fulfil the purpose of this study. A grounded theory approach has been adopted to explore and determine the learning outcomes of a service learning project so that conclusions can be drawn. The remaining chapters of this thesis will describe how the literature, the process of data gathering and analysis and the findings relate to the future of education.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

This study is an investigation of student outcomes from a service learning project. Because of the influence service learning has on participants, this chapter presents a review of the literature to define service learning and its practical developments and states the place of service learning in Australian education. This chapter is divided into four parts: Part One is a summary of the definitions of the terms ‘volunteerism’, ‘service’, ‘charity’, and ‘philanthropy’. Part Two is a summary of historical events in Australian education and how these events impact on Australian schooling. Part Three reviews studies on service learning and Part Four reviews studies on qualitative research and its relationship to education research.

The following diagram ‘maps’ the literature relevant to the purpose of this study.

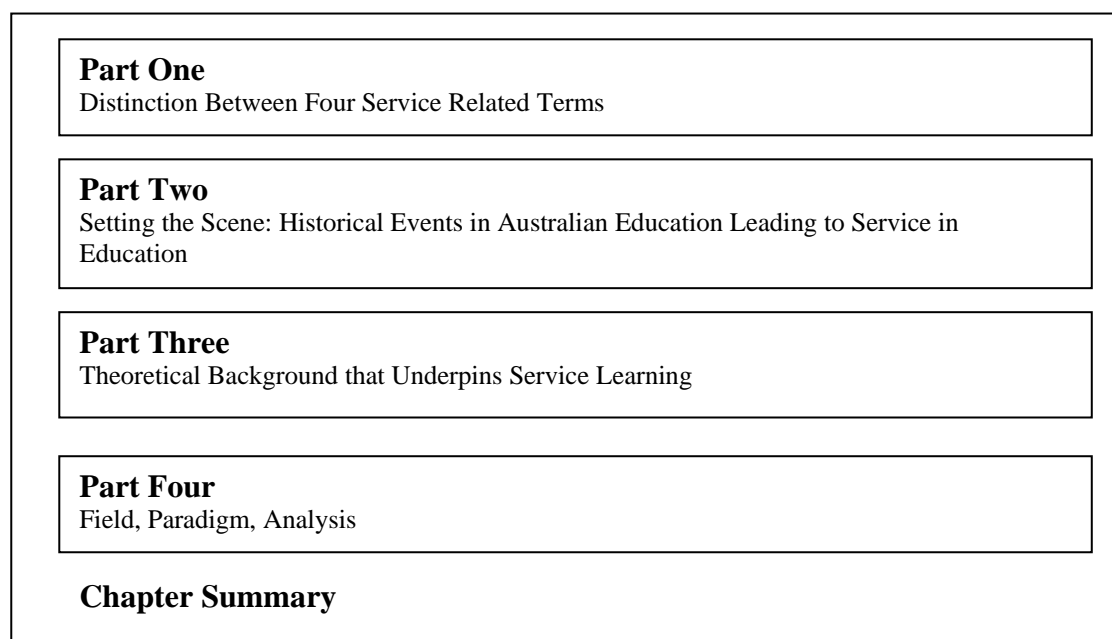


Figure 2:1 Map of the Literature Review



## **Part One**

The service concept as it works in service learning is often mistaken by traditional notions of service, such as ‘volunteerism’, ‘service’, ‘philanthropy’ and ‘charity’ that confuse rather than clarify its meaning. A clear understanding of the service concept in service learning is necessary to understand its successful practice. Given this, the distinction between the four similar terms ‘volunteerism’, ‘service’, ‘philanthropy’ and ‘charity’ need to be made clear.

### **Distinction Between Four Service Related Terms**

Although the concepts of ‘volunteerism’ and ‘volunteer’ are familiar, they are not consistently defined. Park suggests that ‘the heart of volunteerism is the countless individual acts of commitment encompassing an endless variety of tasks’ (1983, p. 118). In the Volunteer 2000 Study conducted by the American Red Cross, Smith (1989) defines volunteers as individuals who reach out beyond the confines of their paid employment and of their normal responsibilities to contribute time and service to a not-for-profit cause in the belief that their activity is beneficial to others as well as satisfying to themselves. The Webster’s Third International Dictionary defined a ‘volunteer’ as ‘one who enters into or offers himself for any service of his own free will’ (Gove, 1986, p. 2564). Sociology researchers such as Wilson (2000) suggests volunteerism is largely done for self-fulfilment on the part of the volunteer and the resources given through such goodwill are typically readily renewable social resources such as, money, clothing or specific skills. He argues that this allows individuals to engage in moral acts of goodwill and responsible giving to others in need.

Although definitions of volunteerism and volunteer are varied, a unifying concept is the idea that volunteers give themselves to others freely. Scheier (as cited by McCurley, 1985) defines volunteerism as any activity that is relatively uncoerced, intended to help, conducted without primary or immediate thought of financial gain, and is work, not play.

Upon examining the language and practice associated with volunteering, it becomes clear that the concept is not descriptive of service necessary to service learning. Barber argues that, 'volunteerism drives a wedge between self-interest and altruism, leading students to believe that service is a matter of sacrificing private interests for moral virtue' (Barber, 1992, p. 20). By arguing this, Barber identifies volunteerism as a one-way endeavour in which only the served have needs and only the student servers have goods.

Service differs from volunteerism in its inclusion of the element of reflection and Donohue argues that this is critical if the service is to be a 'thoughtful, sophisticated and responsible examination of context' (1999, p. 694) and the ethical dilemmas inherent in giving to others. It differs also, in its inclusion of education programs that focus on the learning potential of the educational context for the student. Fiske (2002) and Billig and Eyler (2003) argue service is reciprocal learning, that balances learning goals and service outcomes so students develop through collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving skills.

As a result of their review of service practice, Terry and Bohnenberger (2003) report on three types of service: hands-on service, advocacy service, and second hand service. They claim that:

- In hands-on service, students take positive, hands-on action to make a difference in the community through needed projects that are identified, organised, and implemented by the students and their facilitator;
- Students performing advocacy service engage in social action and advocacy designed to impact decision making on public issues by raising public awareness; while
- Students involved in second hand service assist and support existing, established efforts such as the Cancer Society, Kidney Foundation or Meals on Wheels.

(Terry & Bohnenberger, 2003)

The term 'philanthropy', is primarily seen as the act of donating money, goods, time or effort to support a charitable cause, usually over an extended period of time and in regard to a defined objective. Much theoretical work has been done in defining what philanthropy means to a community and what it means to the psyche of the 'giver' and the 'receiver'. Noddings (1984) and Sheffield (2003) argue that philanthropy is a one-

way transfer of desirable financial support for the needy. For them, in the philanthropy act there is no 'living it' (Sheffield, 2003, p. 45), nor is there social interaction necessary for active reconstruction of experiences (Noddings, 1984). For them philanthropy is not considered educational. In this regard Sheffield argues that:

As the progressives argued, 'to learn it, is to live it'. In a philanthropic act there is no 'living it' no social *interaction* that is necessary for active reconstruction of problematic experience. There is no opportunity to 'feel with' the other, in the words of Nell Noddings, and, therefore, there is no opportunity to learn about the other'. (Sheffield, 2003, p. 45)

Philanthropy, therefore, is an approach of giving to the less fortunate that develops as monologues in which the needy are talked about and tended to by those who perceive themselves as able to assist.

'Charity' has been described as more than simply a financial giving, such as that practised by philanthropists because there is often personal service as well (Coles, 1993; Sheffield, 2003). Coles describes charity as an enterprise based on strong religious and spiritual notions of service (1993, p. 54). Similarly McElhaney claims charity to be based on the belief that helping others is one's social responsibility (1998). It is therefore, understood that the application of charity provides an important means of financial and practical support for those in need.

'Charity', however, is not viable in service learning education. There is nothing in the concept of charity that is, again, educational to the server. Clarifying this, Sheffield claims there is often community division rather than community connection as the result (2003).

It is evident from these definitions of 'volunteerism', 'service' 'philanthropy' and 'charity' that the emphasis is on meeting the immediate financial and altruistic needs of those being supported. In this respect these practices ignore the fact that to make something different and beneficial in the long term there must be an educational process. In this sense volunteerism, service, philanthropy and charity cannot be embraced as mediums for service learning.

Table 2:1 below presents a synthesis of the definitions and provides examples for these service related terms.

	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Volunteerism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Activities in which there are mutual benefits to server and recipient in that server feels good and does service out of enjoyment and the recipient receives the needed service;</li> <li>- Done out of goodwill of server and free of charge;</li> <li>- Resources are readily renewable social resources;</li> <li>- No focus on learning process;</li> <li>- No reflection process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acts of civic involvement;</li> <li>- Supporting a local sporting team</li> <li>- Assisting with a community group such as Scouts.</li> </ul>
<b>Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service is an activity students do outside a classroom</li> <li>- Focus is on the recipient</li> <li>- Little long term social change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students assisting a local charity</li> <li>- Doing service activities such a cleaning up parks, waterways.</li> </ul>
<b>Philanthropy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Donation of time, money or services mainly in conjunction with social organisations and corporations;</li> <li>- Giving programs;</li> <li>- No focus on process of learning; and</li> <li>- No reflection process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporations giving contributions to developing or charity groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Charity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial and practical service;</li> <li>- Based on strong religious notions about giving to others;</li> <li>- With the belief that helping others is one's social responsibility; and</li> <li>Working with the intention to make a difference in the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financially and physically supporting charity groups such as Canteen.</li> </ul> <p>(Adapted from Sigmon, 1979; Swift, 1990; Bringle &amp; Hatcher, 1999; McElhaney, 1998; Sheffield, 2003; Terry &amp; Bohnenberger, 2003)</p>

Table 2:1, Synthesis of Definitions and Examples of Service Related Terms

## **Part Two**

### **Setting the Scene: Historical Events in Australian Education Leading to Service in Education**

The missions of Australian education have been multiple and ever-changing, but a brief look at Australian education and the evolution of these missions shows the purposeful movement towards a learning style that includes service in education.

An exploration of service and education in Australia traverses the social and cultural landscape of the nation, beginning with the birth of the nation, the subsequent establishment of schools and continues to school practices of today. Wight identifies that from its beginnings ‘the purpose of Australian school education was to control the population and bring social order’ (2003, p. 1). She further argues that Australian schooling was governed by the principle that it served as a moral benefit to the colony and was touted to be ‘for the students’ and colony’s own good’ (Wight, 2003, p. 3). Wight’s understanding is repeated in the literature. McCalman for example, states that, during the days of the early settlement, school education was to be considered as a tool for ‘social engineering’ (McCalman, 1998, p. 71). Whereas, Barcan’s historic report states the doctrine of the 1700s was that:

The education considered suitable for the lower classes was one emphasising the basic elements...intended to develop political loyalty to England, to prepare boys and girls for the social station in which it had pleased God to place them and to implant principles of morality and religion, to provide immunity to the doctrines of Roman Catholicism, to develop the habit of reading the Bible, and to engender respect for the authority of the Church of England. (Barcan, 1965, p. 1)

It was also refuted in many articles that during this period, education was characterised by direct instruction because students were seen as ‘empty vessels to be filled up with socially agreed upon “important knowledge”, mainly founded upon an ethnocentric British view of the world’ (Groundwater-Smith, et al., 2003, p.7).

In the early 1800s, there emerged in the mission of education a new emphasis on the discovery of the laws of science and nature. Commentators of this time, claim the Industrial Revolution was largely responsible for this (Austin, 1963; McCalman, 1998). While previously there existed the notion that every man should be educated in the 'moral principles' and the 'classics', the trend was now moving towards a more broadly practical form of education. McCalman argues that this concept was derived from the Germanic model of education rather than the Irish model that had been emulated in the past (1998).

As a progression, Australian educators shifted the emphasis from socialising citizens to preparing individuals with specialised workforce skills (Austin, 1961; Meadmore, Burnett, & O'Brien, 1990; McCalman, 1998; Meadmore, 2004). The educational values in the early 1900s embraced scientific methods with the emphasis on providing industry with a workforce necessary to develop the economic conditions of the nation (Astin, 1993; McCalman, 1998; Meadmore, 2004). Education during this period was largely considered to be about sorting and selecting the more intelligent young people for professional or trades courses, and examinations were used to measure knowledge and thought processes (Meadmore, 2004). Consequently, for the first time, education favoured competence over compliance.

In the mid to late 1900s, the mission of education reconsidered religion, morality, citizenship and the knowledge necessary for national growth after World War II. There was now a call for education to reconnect students to a changing world and to the society in which they lived. Prominent in this period Dewey argued that good education should have a social and individual purpose and be conducted in a way that is socially responsible to the present and the future, this suggests that learning does not lie only in future skills, knowledge and experiences; it must have meaning in the present as well. McCalman (1998) claims that the education theory of Dewey and the Progressive Movement was a driving force for educational change. Groundwater-Smith, et al., state that as a result a number of English traditions were being changed and influenced by the new ideas about the ways in which children learn and what childhood itself actually is (2003, p. 8-9). There was therefore an increased attention given to citizenship and the students' social value.

On entering the twenty first century, education systems around Australia encountered further change as a result of globalisation (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2003; Gilding & Wallace, 2003; Meadmore, 2004). School education came to be seen as necessary to maintaining democratic life and democratic institutions. More specifically, an emphasis on cultivating citizenship and social responsibility was the thread present in many of the policy statements and reform documents (Beagley, 1997; Butcher, Howard, McMeniman & Thom, 2003). As a result, educational activities focused on building on the strengths and abilities of young people in ways that supported lifelong learning and connections with community in the present, as well as encouraging participation in actively shaping their futures (Lingard, Ladwig, Mills, Bahr, Chant, Warry, Ailwood, Capeness, Christie, Gore, Hayes, & Luke, 2001; Gilding & Wallace, 2003; Meadmore, 2004).

The preamble to the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century propose that ‘Australia’s future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills, and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society’ (MCEETYA, 1999, p. 1). In this way, twenty first century schooling provides a foundation for young Australians’ intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development, by providing a supportive, interactive environment, schooling contributes to the development of students’ sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future especially in multicultural global settings.

In this sense developments in Australian education have come full circle, the current approach to education is consistent with early approaches which emphasised the principle that education serve as a moral benefit to society (Austin, 1963). Suggestions and efforts to enhance Australian students intellectually, as well as socially and morally and for good citizenship have been presented by various sources (Lingard, 2000; Meadmore, 2004; Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2003). As a result, there has been an increased emphasis on teaching social values and in giving service to others. These are underpinned by the perception that, ‘students who see the world around them at least partially from the perspective of others, will find it increasingly difficult to maintain an insensitive, unreflective orientation towards these others’ (Loller & Butcher, 1999, p. 3). This reflects the increasing interest (Luke, 2002) in the social

components of education to create an education program that take Australian students into a global and dynamic world (Lovat & Schofield, 2004). Kennedy suggests that, an education program based on strong civic values could, ‘act as a bridge between personal and national identities so the young people develop a sense of themselves and how they ought to relate to their peers and others with whom they share the planet’ (1997, p. 9). Whilst civic values are the fundamental means of making students aware of the world around them, they provide the framework by which students convey interests in serving and giving to others.

This brief look at Australian education and the evolution of these missions shows the purposeful movement towards a learning style that can include service into educational practice. Therefore, these accounts serve as a platform for the service learning literature presented in the follow section of this review.

## **Part Three**

### **Theoretical Background that Underpins Service Learning**

#### **Experienced Based Learning**

The movement towards education that emphasises the use of civic and socially motivated activities to develop learning emerged from the Progressive Movement of the 1930s and points to Dewey as the ‘father’ of this method of education (Giles & Eyler, 1994a; Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995; Fiske, 2002; Billig & Eyler, 2003). It is repeatedly reported in the literature that, Dewey’s (1938, 1959) premise is that education should be active and involved, and that knowledge must be linked to experience, not set apart in abstract forms divorced from life. His style of education used as its frame of reference the connection between education and personal experience. Dewey wrote a cursory warning in the publication *Experience and Education*, ‘The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or really educative...in fact some are



even miseducative as it has the effect of arresting or distorting growth of future experience' (Dewey, 1938, p. 34). Dewey made it clear that, the interaction between an active purposeful learning experience and a cognitive consideration of the activity lead to learning.

Since Dewey's introduction to this learning style theorists have described it as experiential education and promoted that learners should freely explore and construct meaning through interactions with meaningful experiences (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1976, 1981; Kolb & Fry 1975; Jarvis, 1995). These theorists contend that learning occurs in a cycle. Although they differ in how they express the cycle, they agree that learning takes place as an individual changes thinking based on experience and by reflecting on that experience. Early work described as 'discovery learning', 'inquiry-based', 'problem-based' and 'constructivist' adopted the central principle that the learners must interact with the environment to construct their own knowledge structures (Dewey, 1938; Lewin, 1951 cited in Atherton, 2005). At the core of these approaches is the understanding that, learners learn by being immersed in an authentic learning environment. As participants make sense of the situation and build their own cognitive structures, learners develop a deep understanding of a situation or problem.

To acknowledge the authentic and active integration of knowledge and experience, Kolb contended that, learning occurs in modes referred to as concrete experience, to abstract conceptualisation, and from reflection, to active testing (1976; 1981, 1984). Kolb found that: concrete experience involves direct and immediate experiences; reflective observation involves focusing attention on certain experiences and thoughtfully comparing them or creating new meaning; abstract conceptualisation involves creating new ideas and concepts that organise experience, action and observations; and active experimentalisation involves acting on ideas and theories, or at least using them as guides for experimenting in the real world. The influence of these modes on participants will see learners revisit their thoughts again and again as they experiment in new situations and modify their thoughts through the results of new experiences (1981, 1984).

In accordance with Dewey and Kolb, Vygotsky proclaims learning to be a social process that requires interaction and social experiences. Vygotsky argues that,

‘students can solve problems collaboratively and learn from one another’ (1978, p. 86). Social interactions are therefore, crucial for students to increase their level of potential development (1978). This collaborative process stems from the idea that learning comes from understanding that as individual, students are constantly involved in the process of reshaping their understandings as they listen and share with others.

Education researchers such as Connor, assert that social based learning requires more than seeing, hearing, moving or touching to learn. Learners need to integrate what they sense and think with what they feel and how they behave. Her proposal is that, ‘Without that integration, we’re just passive participants and passive learning alone doesn’t engage our higher brain functions or stimulate our senses to the point where we integrate our lessons into our existing schemas’ (2007, p. 2). Kraft and Kielsmeier claim ‘learners remember not what they encounter while learning so much as what they do while learning’ (1995, p. 245). Other researchers establish that, being intricately involved in constructing their own learning, learners develop a sense of responsibility and a personal commitment to what is being undertaken (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Jarvis, 1995; Sheffield, 2003; Billig, 2004).

Proponents of experiential education have identified the various forms of experiential education activities undertaken by students in schools and universities. A study by Henry (1989) reports on a range of educational activities using the term ‘experiential education’. Figure 2:2 below summarises these activities:

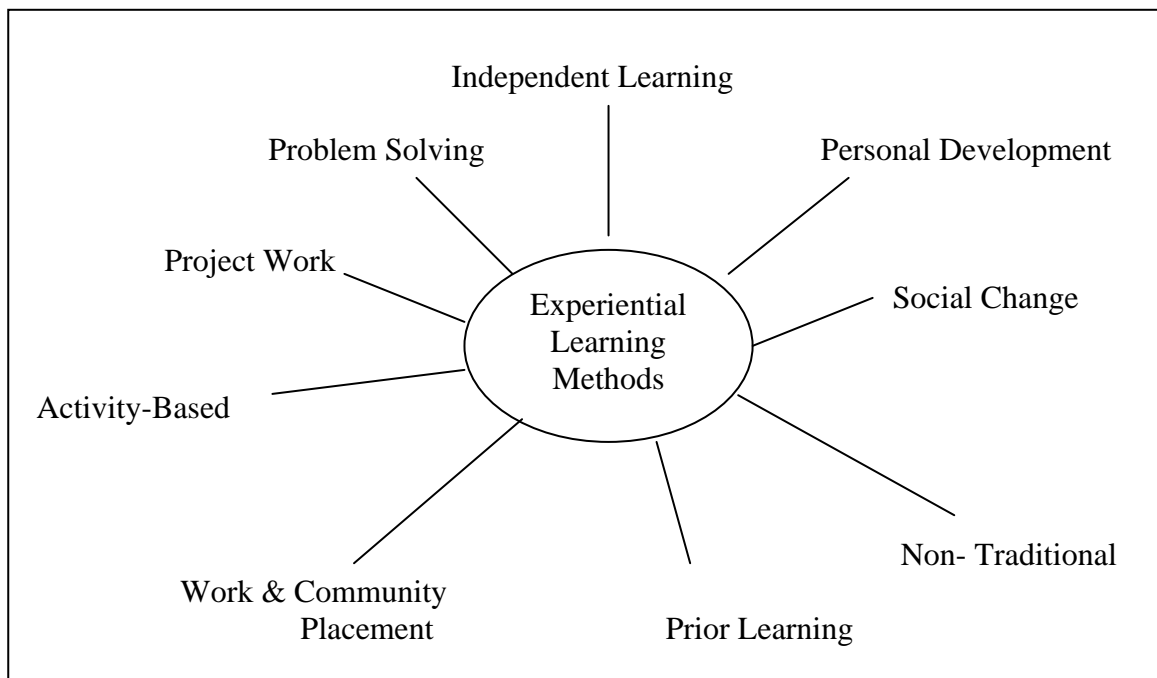


Figure 2:2 Adaptation of Henry's (1989) Meaning and Practice in Experiential Education Model

Another useful categorisation of the field of experiential learning was developed out of the work of the First International Conference on Experiential Learning in London in 1987. Their authors wrote:

Experiential learning refers to a spectrum of meanings, practices and ideologies which emerge out of the work and commitments of policy makers, educators, trainers, change agents, and 'ordinary' people all over the world. They see 'experiential learning' - with different meanings - as relevant to the challenges they currently face: in their lives, in education, in institutions, in commerce and industry, in communities, and in society as a whole. Across such diversity, however, we discern four emphases for experiential learning. Each emphasis forms the basis for a cluster of interrelated ideas and concerns ... We have chosen to refer to these clusters of people and ideas as 'villages' ... we see the four villages as follows:

- Village One is concerned particularly with assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience as the basis for creating new routes into higher education, employment and training opportunities, and professional bodies.
- Village Two focuses on experiential learning as the basis for bringing about change in the structures, purposes and curricula of post-secondary education.

- Village Three emphasizes experiential learning as the basis for group consciousness raising, community action and social change.
- Village Four is concerned with personal growth and development and experiential learning approaches that increase self-awareness and group effectiveness. (Weil & McGill, 1989 p. 3)

The theoretical work done on experiential learning has established it as a method of learning which is useful to both educators and learners now and in the future. The review will now consider how service learning developed into a recognized education practice.

### **The Development of Service Learning**

Service learning is said to be a structured and theoretical practice in which service experiences are directly connected to academic objectives (Rhodes 1997). It emerged in the late 1970s as a development of experiential education practices. Since its development the term has been used to describe purposeful service experiences undertaken by students in schools and universities across America and internationally. This area of the literature identifies the prominent and widely accepted definitions.

Even though there are many different interpretations of service learning, as well as different objectives and contexts in which to conduct service learning, what distinguishes it from other educational approaches is the means used to meet broad academic goals. Whereas the emphasis in the more traditional modes of education is on memorising and testing, service learning emphasises construction of academic skills and the application of these skills in authentic experiential contexts. In this way, academic skills learned in the classroom are strengthened by applying them to authentic problems in the community. Reflective thinking is then used to guide the application of these skills to develop a solution to a felt community problem. Consequently, academic lessons become vitally important tools to the students and are, therefore, more deeply valued and understood (Sheffield, 2003).

In 1993, the American National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (Adams & McDonald, 2006) developed a definition of service learning that refers to it as a

teaching method with the potential to actively link institutes of education with the community. This Act's definition of service learning states:

- Service learning is a method under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- Service learning is an activity coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education or community service program, and with the community;
- Service learning helps foster civic responsibility; and
- Service learning integrates into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience. (Adaptation of Adams & McDonald, 2005)

The [American] National Commission on Service-Learning issued a report entitled 'Learning in Deed: The Power of Service-Learning for American Schools'. This report outlines the most essential features common to service learning and says service learning is a worthwhile teaching method because it:

- Promotes learning through active participation in service experience
- Provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and/or writing about their service experience
- Provides an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations
- Extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community fosters a sense of caring for others (as adapted from the National and Community Service Act, 1990)

Both these reports promote learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom out into the community. In such a learning environment, participants must dedicate themselves to others to explore, test and evaluate their own learning experience.

## **Service Learning a Socialisation Process**

There is an agreement that service learning can be likened to a socialisation process, where participants interact with others to make sense of the experiential world (Freire, 1970; Astin & Sax, 1998; Billig & Eyler, 2003). Friere, a philosopher and social educator advocated learning is best achieved in social contexts (1970). Accordingly, it is the interactions with ‘others’ that generates the socialisation processes between participants. Eyler and Giles suggest that service learning, occurs as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems (1996). There appears to be a growing recognition that socialisation enables participants to discover the similarities that exist between them, and think critically about their own personal values and foster an appreciation of differences (Sigmon, 1979; Billig & Eyler, 2003).

Sigmon’s study on the relationships associated with service learning reports that, service learning ‘represents the coming together of many hearts and minds seeking to express compassion for others and to enable learning styles to grow out of service’ (1979, p. 9). Sigmon’s claim implies that the educational exchange occurs largely through the exchange of knowing and being touched by others especially those in the service community.

Further support for the influence of social interaction in service learning is provided by researchers such as Astin and Sax (1998) and Sheffield (2003) who suggest that, as a consequence service learning participants; sense the wholeness of a situation, come to terms with personal values and goals, listen to the dilemmas and reason of others, understand cultural perspectives on how people live their lives, experience how power is and is not used, experience a variety of ways of learning and gain a feeling for strength of community, all of which are not readily available in the traditional classroom. In such a learning environment social experiences lead to the development of a body of values, attitudes, beliefs and practices, which include well developed ideas about others.

Kendall additionally points out that, service learning is based on ‘the exchange of both giving and receiving between the “server” and the person or group “being served” and

is the core concern of 'service learning' (1990, p. 19). A process Noddings establishes to be a 'two-wayness' (1984). In fact, the findings from Noddings' study shows that, service learning generates mutual interactive relationship between do-er and done-to (1984).

Irrespective of how the socialisation process is described, research in the field commonly mention in discussions that as a result of social interactions participants see the wholeness of the learning situation, and understand cultural perspectives on how other people live their lives and argue this to be an important outcome of service learning (Noddings, 1984; Kendall, 1990; Eyler, 2002; Billig, & Klute, 2003; Sheffield, 2003).

This concept of service learning involving interactive socialisation process means that, a range of personal and structural factors influence the development of service learning programs. The degree of involvement in service learning has the potential to impact on participants' development. Congruent with this notion, are models of service learning that recognise that participants mature and develop as they pass through a series of stages that mark change in the way they see themselves and others, and how they understand knowledge (McElhaney, 1998).

### **Service Learning Does Not Occur in Isolation**

On the whole, service learning expresses the use of using past experiences and knowledge to frame a solution to a service problem that sees participants construct and engage in new knowledge. Vygotsky's theoretical contributions help elaborate and expand the idea that, 'the more we hear, and the more interaction we have, the richer our knowledge choices can be' (1978, p. 90). His theories have many important implications for service learning. The simplest is that, by its very nature, service learning is a social activity and is thus enhanced through social interaction. Through social contacts, students learn new ideas and processes that stimulate their own development. Vygotsky (1978) described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a learner interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment. Central to this construct of knowledge is its concept that, it requires self-regulation and the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction.

Consequently, most of what participants come to know and understand develops through constructed experiences in a learning community.

The structure and nature of such learning communities seem to have powerful influences on the learning outcomes of learners. Good and Brophy (1994) remind us that an important factor affecting opportunities to learn is the nature of the learning environment. Where as Johnson and Johnson reported that, learning communities benefit all students because the ‘students work together to maximise their own and each other’s learning’ (1999, p. 61). Seely-Brown and Solomon-Gray agree that learning potential is increased when students work in small groups. They referred to these as communities of practices and suggested that:

At the simplest level, communities of practice are small groups of people who work together over a period of time. People in communities of practice can perform the same job; collaborate on a shared task, or work together on a product. They are peers in the execution of ‘real work’ held together by a common sense of purpose.

(Seely-Brown & Solomon-Gray, 1995, p.7)

Learning in communities is supported by the explicitly expressed understanding that the learning is achieved through collaboration, a process, which Bruffee argues embraces various active learning approaches which value the voice and contributions of all the participants (1993). The benefits of collaborative learning were stated to be positive and significant, as ‘one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning, without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant’ (Dewey, 1916). This is interpreted to mean that those who see education through this lens credit the sharing of experiences as the real source of knowledge.

The use of collaborative learning strategies takes a variety of forms in the service learning arena, group work being one. Homan and Poel define group work as ‘students working together in a group small enough so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in a task that has been assigned’ (1991, p. 2). In support, Baloché argues that research indicates that group work strategies increase students’ academic success through strengthened social interaction, which places students in



situations in which they must cooperate (1994). One could argue that such collaborative skills are valuable to service students not only in the academic setting, but also in preparation for future life.

### **Models of Service Learning**

In an attempt to demonstrate how participants of service learning can change and develop as a result of their association with a service activity, various models provide illustration of this process. Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990) use their model to identify the stages of development which contribute to transformation as those described as exploration, classification, realisation, activation and internalisation.

Delve, Mintz and Stewart encourage educators to assist students to become involved in their communities in order to develop a better understanding of the needs and realities of the world around them. Breaking down the barriers to mutual isolation can help students take their places in a globally interdependent world (1990). As these authors note, however, it is not enough to merely require students to do community service, it is imperative that the instructor integrate these experiences into classroom discussion. They label this process ‘The Service Learning Model’ and consider service learning to be an intervention in student development. The following is a synthesis of the Delve, Mintz and Stewart’s (1990) model:

- The ‘exploration’ occurs at the beginning of a service learning activity in which the student is eager to explore new opportunities to ‘help other people’, but does not feel any particular connection with the community group.
- The ‘clarification’ occurs as students begin to explore opportunities presented to them and clarify what is important to them.
- The ‘realisation’ occurs when students begin to see how their experiences ‘fit together’: ‘Usually through a profound transforming experience, the student is able to grasp a larger truth for himself or herself; as a result, students become focused on a particular population or issue and more confident in their beliefs. At this phase, the concept of reciprocal learning becomes clearer to the student’.
- The ‘activation’ stage occurs as students begin to address larger social issues and students begin to realise that they are learning more from their service than they are giving.

- In the ‘internalisation stage’, students who fully integrate their service learning experiences into their lives begin to make decisions based on the values they have developed from their experiences. While not all students reach this phase, many do begin to make individual choices based on values they have learned from the community in which they have participated. (Delve et al., 1990, p. 15)

In the model referred to as Morton’s Paradigm of Service Learning involvement, the progressive stages of development that participants are expected to experience during service learning are presented (1995). It is Morton’s claim that, service learning programs should consider progressive stages. The following is an adaptation of a model proposed to illustrate Morton’s paradigm of service:

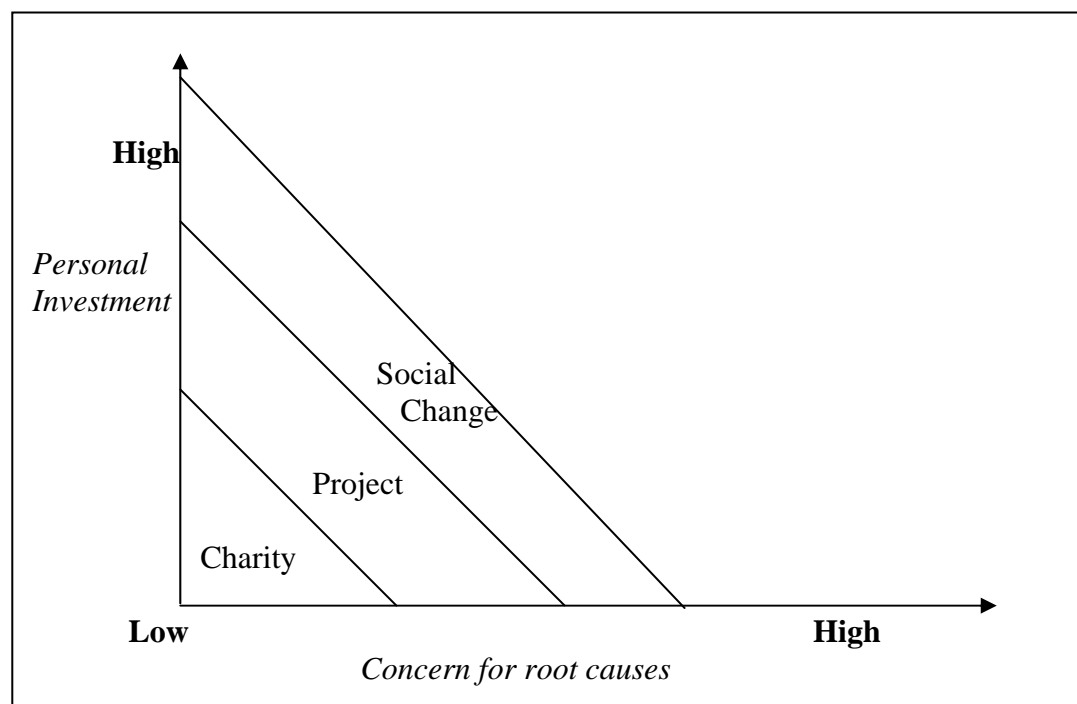


Figure 2:3 Adaptation of Morton’s Model of the Paradigms of Service Learning Involvement

Morton proposes that, ‘high’ versions of service are sustaining and potentially revolutionary, and are ‘grounded in deeply held internally coherent values, match means and ends, describe a primary way of interpreting and relating to the world, offer a way of defining problems and solutions, and suggest a vision of what a transformed world might look like’. In contrast, ‘low’ versions are disempowering and hollow, and

can be paternalistic and self-serving. Morton proposed that ‘thin’ engagements magnify inequalities of power, lead to additional problems that are worse than the original ones, or create unsustainable dependences (Morton 1995, pp. 24-28). According to Morton:

While we can and do work across these paradigms, we are most at home in one or another, and interpret what we do according to the standards of the one in which we are most at home,...all paradigms lead ultimately toward the transformation of an individual within a community, and toward the transformation of the communities themselves. (Morton, 1995, p. 29)

The above models provide an illustration of how participants of service learning can change and develop as a result of their association with a service activity. It is evident that, the reflective experience associated with service activities is important to participants’ learning.

### **Reflective Practice a Component of Service Learning**

Since Dewey gives the discourse for undertaking this study, it is necessary to discuss how an experience is significant and important to service learning. One in which a person actively and mindfully takes in what is happening in the context of their learning, records it in the memory for reflection and sharing with others. A process referred to as reflective practice.

At the root of most concepts of reflective practice is Dewey’s philosophical statement that reflective thought is ‘the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge, in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends’ (Dewey, 1938, p. 6). In the past eighty years, the term ‘reflective practice’ has increasingly been used as a theme in many education programs (Boud, Keough & Walker, 1985; Hatcher & Bringle, 2000; Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005). Reflective practice, which is likened to the process of ‘self-evaluation’ is said to be the hallmark of service learning (Toole & Toole, 1995; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler, & Giles, 1999). It is described as a process, where the participants ‘systematically reflect’ on their actions (Billig, 2005). Authors, such as, Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) and Toole and Toole (1995) assert that, reflective practice is the

terminology used to describe reflection as a special form of problem solving done prior to, during and after a service learning project. Toole and Toole found that, the combination of these three stages of reflective practice enables participants to evaluate the project, assess their own development, look for generalisations to guide future decision making and to find new applications for what they have learned (1995).

Much of the current interest for engaging in reflective practice comes from Schön's work (1983, 1987). Schön believes practitioners think about what they are doing as they are doing it in a process he labelled 'reflection-in action', implying conscious thinking and modification of actions take place while in the context of their learning. Accordingly, when participants are faced with a problem, they immediately reflect on past experiences to evaluate the problem, which in turn improves their practice.

A second extension in Schön's theory is the process of 'reflection-on-action', which claims to be the 'thinking back on what we have done, in order to discover how our knowing-in-action, may have contributed to an unexpected outcome' (Schön, 1983, p. 26). This process implies that finding solutions to real problems involves thinking back over the experience. In doing so, the practitioner is able to develop clearer understanding of the relationships between what took place, the purposes intended, and difficulties which arose and view these within a broader culture or perspective (Zeichner, 1993).

On the whole, reflective practice expresses a belief in using past experience and knowledge to frame a solution to a problem as a desirable practice which has been proven to be essential in service learning programs.

### **Reflective Practice in Service Learning Programs**

Research into reflective practice in service learning programs emphasises the mastery of skills and improved social and cognitive understandings. Watson and Wilcox assert that it allows participants to 'catch themselves in the act of living in the world consciously and in a way that results in learning' (2000 p. 58). This implies that, reflective practice in service learning promotes the construction of abstract knowledge

through the process of deep or critical thinking. Velde, Wittman, and Vos for example, propose that, critical thinking skills correlate with service learning's reflective practice as participants do not just think about their learning, rather they critique it, remaining mindful of the cultural context (2006). Knowledge, therefore, becomes 'understands' in the mind of the student, obtained through making connections between existing knowledge and new facts. Thus, when it is applied to service learning, it helps participants acquire knowledge in a form that is both tied to the context of its use, while simultaneously being independent of any particular context. By promoting reflective practice, service learning facilitators acknowledge the need to develop, in their students, critical thinking skills.

Examples of current service learning education programs that view the capacity to reflect on practice as an essential component of the program, include those presented by Kraft and Kielsmeier (1995), Eyler and Giles (1999), Sheffield (2003) and Billig Root and Jesse (2005). According to Kraft and Kielsmeier (1995), in order for students to achieve the goal of service learning, which is to construct meaning from their service experiences, they must go through the methodical and slow action of deliberation about the experience through reflection. In this way, they must chew and ruminate thoroughly on the experience, ponder, weigh and judge the outcomes of the situation, and speculate on future experiences and their subsequent outcomes. Sheffield found that, reflective practice guides the application of academic skills to solve the community problem. In this way, academic lessons become vitally important tools to the students and are, therefore, more deeply valued and understood (2003). Where as Billig, Root and Jesse (2005) identified that, structured reflection:

- Helps young people name the experiences they are having,
- Enables them to think about their experiences deeply enough to articulate their impact on self and others, and
- Helps them make sense of how their studies in the classroom relate to real world concerns.

Within the gamut of literature, there seems to be a consensus that, unlike traditional passive learning practices, reflective practice allows students to capture aspects of their personal and human lives and make sense of them in the context of their service

learning. Within such a process, participants can explore their ideas, as well as the ideas of others in their community, to come to an understanding of their identity.

The shift in the discussion is now to the outcomes of service learning to determine how service learning affects participants.

### **Reported Outcomes of Service Learning**

It has been repeatedly reported that, service learning positively affects students' interpersonal skill development and the ability to work well with others. It also appears to reduce thinking in stereotypes so as to increase cultural and racial understandings. In this regard, it is considered by the majority of participants as the most powerful learning experience they have had (Astin & Sax, 1998; Giles & Eyler 1994; Furco, 2002; Billig & Eyler 2003 and Billig and Klute 2003).

Billig, (2002) review of service learning literature identifies that, the impact of service learning builds on four personal domains:

- Academic or cognitive domains, that is, what students were learning in terms of content or higher order thinking skills as a result of their participation;
- Civic domains, that is, connection to society and community;
- Personal/social domains, that is, personal and interpersonal development in areas such as youth empowerment, respect for diversity, self-confidence and avoidance of risk behaviour; and
- Career exploration skills, such as knowledge of career pathways and workplace literacy.

Supporting Billig's findings are numerous reports that further identify these four domains and the outcomes of service learning. As a synthesis, a variety of these has been presented in the discussion that follows.

In an attempt to determine the academic outcomes of service participation, Furco compared high school students who participated in service learning with: students who performed community service, those who engaged in service-based internships, and those who performed no service at all. Academic outcomes were defined in terms

of mastery of course content, thinking and problem-solving skills, and improved attitudes toward learning. The service learning groups scored higher in all of the academic measure (2002). Klute and Billig report similar findings and state that students in their study were more likely to pay attention to schoolwork, concentrate harder on learning and try as hard as they could in class (2002). This study also shows that, service learning was positively associated with the high test scores for students in this study.

In a longitudinal study conducted between 1993 and 1998, Eyler and Giles (1999) surveyed more than fifteen hundred high school students and interviewed 120, which explored changes in students' understanding of social problems and in their critical thinking abilities. These authors found that 'participation in service-learning leads to the values, knowledge, skills, efficacy, and commitment that underlie effective citizenship' (1999, p. 164). Among the program characteristics they found service-learning made a difference in education for effective citizenship were; placement quality, application, reflection, diversity, and community voice (Eyler & Giles 1999, pp. 166-180). These outcomes also match the results of smaller studies, for example, Billig noted that service learning was '...a key strategy for accomplishing the five core social-emotional competencies [of] self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making that all young people should develop' (2005, p. 11). Baxter-Magolda speculated that service learning programs develop self-authorship, which they state allows for personal control over identity through 'an ability to construct knowledge in a contextual world' (2000, p. 142).

Perry and Katula conducted a meta-analysis to examine the extent to which service affects citizenship. These researchers found that three dimensions of citizenship were impacted by service:

- Individual's motivations and skills that include civic and political involvement and community attachment, cognitive capacities, and ethics;
- Philanthropic and civic behaviour, defined as non-political behaviour that produces public benefits, such as volunteering and charity; and

- Political behaviour, including voting, campaign contributions, service on public boards or commissions, and running for public office.

(Perry & Katula, 2001)

Further examination of the literature identified that the ‘real’ world value of service engagement translates to positive outcomes in personal development and include positive changes in judgement, feelings, knowledge and skills and identity formation (Billig & Eyler, 2003; Billig & Klute, 2003).

To view that development skills are being grounded in service learning, learning moves well beyond the school setting. Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer and Hofschire explored outcomes relating to career development. In comparing two groups of students; service participants and non service participants, they found that students who had participated service learning had a stronger set of job and career related skills and aspirations, including knowledge of how to plan activities, desire to pursue postsecondary education and job interview skills (2006).

In a comparative light, not all research on the impact of service participation report significant differences in outcomes for service learning students. With the use of a control and experimental group, Waskiewicz (2002) compared 69 students that had been divided into service learning and non service-learning classes. Measurements included a pre and post test survey including a series of semantic differentials and the Community Service Involvement Preference Inventory (CSIPI). The semantic differentials are an assessment of attitudes, values, and concepts. The Community Service Involvement Preference Inventory measures the level of involvement and civic values and responsibility. Analyses of the quantitative data from these surveys revealed no difference between the two groups. However, journal entries were also completed and their qualitative analyses revealed differences in commitment to and responsibility felt towards the community.

Few studies so far have investigated the long-lasting outcomes of service learning. There was one claim by Youniss and Yates that, students continued to identify the project as ‘a clear landmark’ in their development and ‘an empathetic outlook toward the other, reflectivity on the self’s agency, and relating one’s own agency to helping



less fortunate individuals' (1997, p. 127). Unfortunately, this study did not report on any long-lasting academic developments with service participants.

### **Why People Participate in Service Learning**

As previously stated Dewey's claim is that 'education is the reconstruction of experience' (1938), this metaphor can be interpreted to mean that, experience stands at the centre of service learning endeavour and that learning from experience is the making of backward and forward connections, between experiences. By arguing that experience is reconstructed from prior experience it is necessary to look at what may influence people to participate in service learning projects. There has been considerable researching service participation.

In a comprehensive study conducted by Sax and Astin in 1997, the correlation with service participation and pre-existing values and practices were identified. These authors claim that, the associations with religious organisation influenced participants to be social activist. They determined that, experiences gained from these associations stimulated the desire to help others in difficulty and increased an interest in participating in community action programs (1997).

Perry and Katula (2001) added antecedents such as, intellectual stimulation, socialisation, and conscious need to practice skills as influences that encourage people to participate in service activities. Their findings speculate that past experience gives significance to current experience, as they are elaborated upon and given new meaning in considering service participation. This acknowledges the role that present experiences play in the assigning of values to service events and experiences.

Researcher such as Williams (2000) and Astin (1993) claim that, another influence on service learning is that of the educational environment and identified: a strong interdisciplinary emphasis, having a high degree of peer interaction, peers having a strong commitment to social change, socialising with members of different ethnic groups, and having a high degree of interaction with staff and school community members. Accordingly, Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer and Hofschire (2006) found these influences were the pivotal ingredient for participation in a service project. They

claim that, school environments provide opportunities for students: to feel valued as being a part of the community; to feel pride; to understand issues that affect the well-being of the community and to take actions to make changes.

Together these authors provide a background to some of the factors that influence service participation. They demonstrate that, service participation is affected by past experiences and that the reconstruction of these, impacts of the participants' growth and transformation. Important consequence of participation in service learning in this way is that, it actually promotes growth and change and gives meaning to past experiences.

This understanding of service learning's influences on experiences and outcomes, raises the issue of the role service learning is expected to play in Australian education.

### **Service Learning's Potential to Enhance Australian Education**

Much hope has been placed in the potential of service learning, a pedagogy focused on in-depth understanding, real-world connection and substantive communication to produce high quality student performances. Butcher, Howard, McMeniman and Thom (2003) for example, commented that the evolution of service learning, designed at fostering a holistic, student-centred pedagogy and aimed at improving academic and civic engagement, has been perceived to benefit not only students within the service programs, but also the service environment. Gilding and Wallace described the educational exchange provided by service learning to be one of those rare education models that motivated learning, academic engagement and civic responsibility (2003).

Although service learning is in its infancy in Australia, there are a number of models of service learning, with the orientation to community service, which focus on student development through community based experiences (Butcher, Howard, McMeniman & Thom, 2003). These include, for example, the 'Next Generation' project (Gannon, 2006), and Ausyouth an initiative of the Australian Government (Gilding & Wallace, 2003). There is an emerging interest in the link between the service learning approach and formal recognition of learning in Australian education. Research has begun to

acknowledge the need for better integration of Australian students' knowledge, understanding, skills and values so that they become involved in their communities and their global future (Lingard, 2000; Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2003). Australian Federal Government initiatives such as those of the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) and The National Framework for Values Education for Australian Schools (Brown, 2004) provides frameworks and explicates the values base for Australian school education activities which can be included in service learning projects.

## **Summary**

Essentially, research literature indicates that service learning experiences impact positively on the participant's development in many different ways. This study attempts to understand what effect the 'Adopt a School' project had on the participating students. Qualitative methods of inquiry have been combined with grounded theory methodology to investigate the proposed research question: How did service learning experience affect Year 11 school students? The remainder of this thesis follows the experiences and perceptions of participants from the 'Adopt a School' project and investigates the outcomes of these experiences.

## **Part Four**

### **Field, Paradigm, Analysis**

#### **Qualitative Research**

The methodology of social and behavioural research has undergone dramatic changes over the last 50 years. For most of the 20th century, social and behavioural research

has been dominated by quantitative methods, which relied heavily on objective measures and numbers.

Researchers dissatisfied with this dominant methodology developed qualitative research methods to study humans in natural settings. Research studies using these methods analyse words not numbers to give a complex, holistic picture based on the information from the study.

What counts as qualitative research remains consistent across researcher practice and with those who critique it. In much of the literature, the term ‘qualitative’ has been used as an overarching category for a contemporary form of research practice, which includes the collection and analysis of autobiographical and biographical data. In a definition presented by Creswell, qualitative research is ‘an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem’ (2002, p. 15). As a result, ‘the researcher builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting’ (2002, p. 15).

The significance of qualitative research is that it looks upon the data of the world not as facts, but as signs. Signs, such as the nature of reality in the situation the researcher chooses to examine and explore (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Qualitative research has often taken the position that an interpretive understanding is only possible by way of uncovering or deconstructing the meanings of a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The theoretical lens from which the researcher approaches the phenomenon, the strategies that the researcher uses to collect or construct data, and the understandings that the researcher has about what might count as relevant or important data in answering the research question are all analytic processes that influence the data. As qualitative research ‘typically employ multiple forms of evidence’ (Eisner, 1991, p. 3), ‘the particular design depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what information will be most useful, and what information will have the most credibility’ (Patton, 1990, p.50). Judgments about usefulness and credibility are left to the researcher and the reader.

Qualitative methods were first brought into education via the social sciences. Some of the early proponents of qualitative research in education included Jackson (1968), Erickson (1973). Early theoretical positions centred on the socially constructed models of reality.

More recent work refers to qualitative research as the study of experiences, or, of life generally, which enables a researcher to identify themes, issues, concerns and problems of individuals and communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This privileges the researcher, 'as extracting potentially pertinent and invaluable information from their needs and circumstances, pertinent to their culture' (Casey, 1995, p. 4).

Because qualitative research relies strongly on spoken communication they can facilitate connections between people, events and communicates and creates a sense of 'shared history'. Thus the context of the research becomes one that supports the strengthening of collaboration and builds self-esteem (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

It can be argued that qualitative research has been valued by many, not only as a process for eliciting meaning from experience, but as a legitimate methodological approach for addressing significant research questions. This is especially true to service learning research. If qualitative research encapsulates a wealth of experience embodied by service learning participants and the complexity of understanding of what service learning is, then it is clear why some educational researchers have advocated that qualitative research provides an important platform for furthering service learning programs.

Overall, qualitative research approaches to investigate learning, provide the basis for both entering the practical world of the participant and understanding socially embedded knowledge within the service community. Qualitative research, therefore, plays an important part in service learning education as it provides the framework for making sense of the 'lived and told' experiences. Table 2:2 below shows the Predisposition of Qualitative Mode of Research

<b>Qualitative Research</b>	
Assumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality is socially constructed</li> <li>• Primacy of subject matter</li> <li>• Variables are complex, interwoven and difficult to measure</li> <li>• Emic (insider's point of view)</li> </ul>
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualisation</li> <li>• Interpretation</li> <li>• Understanding participants' perspectives</li> </ul>
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ends with hypothesis and grounded theory</li> <li>• Emergence and portrayal</li> <li>• Researcher as instrument</li> <li>• Inductive</li> <li>• Searches for patterns</li> <li>• Seeks pluralism, complexity</li> <li>• Descriptive write-up</li> </ul>
Researcher Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal involvement and participation</li> <li>• Empathic understanding</li> </ul> <p>(adapted from Bogdan &amp; Biklen, 1992; Glesne &amp; Peskhin, 1992)</p>

Table 2:2 Predisposition of Qualitative Mode of Research

One framework supporting the qualitative mode of research is that of grounded theory.

### **An Overview of the Origin, Theoretical Development, and Use of Grounded Theory**

The grounded theory approach is a qualitative methodology that stresses theory must come from the data, not prior knowledge, and that the operations leading to theoretical conceptualisation must be revealed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this way, the purpose is 'to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study' (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990, p. 24). In an online article published as a forum item by the Qualitative Social Research, Glaser stated that:

A Grounded theory will be an abstraction from time, place and people that frees the researcher from the tyranny of normal distortion by humans trying to get an accurate description to solve the worrisome accuracy problem. Abstraction frees the researcher from data worry and data doubts, and puts the focus on concepts that fit and are relevant. (Glaser, 2002, p. 2)

Building the theory by its very nature implies interpreting conceptualised data and the concepts related to form a 'theoretical rendition of reality' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 22), therefore:

Theory may be generated initially from the data, or, if existing (grounded) theory seem appropriate to the area of investigation, then these may be elaborated and modified as incoming data are meticulously played against them. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24)

As a result, grounded theory is most commonly employed on naturalistic field data across a variety of social science disciplines (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Grounded theory is said by its advocates to be attractive to inquirers who prefer to immerse themselves in data before stating a theory (Rennin, 1998; Charmaz, 1990).

### **Grounded Theory Methodology**

Grounded theory methodology, as it is used in qualitative social science research, has its roots in the symbolic interactionist tradition that grew out of the Chicago school of sociology between 1920 and 1950. It was during this period that Dewey and Mead took the pragmatic, naturalistic approach to the study of human behaviour.

The symbolic interactionist approach is based on three premises based on Mead's understanding of social psychology, articulated thus:

Human beings act toward things based on the meanings that the things have for them; the meanings of such things is derived from the social interaction that the individual has with his fellows; and meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretive process and by the person dealing with the things they encounter.

(Blumer, 1969, p.2)

Early research based on these assumptions took the form of field studies in which the researcher observed, recorded and analysed data obtained in a natural setting. Glaser and Strauss explained that, 'although the final product would be theoretical, no reference was made to the analytic process used to derive the explanation' (1967, p. 5). The challenge, then, was to provide a rigorous explanation of these methods.

In the early 1960s, Glaser and Strauss joined in the task to 'explicate a method of developing theory from qualitative data obtained from field data' (Rodrecht, 1995, p. 170). In 1967, the culmination of Glaser and Strauss's work was published and introduced as 'the grounded theory method', a process that articulated the discovery of theory from qualitative data (Rodrecht, 1995; Babchuk, 1996; Creswell, 2002). Their publication titled: *Discovery of Grounded Theory* made mention of Glaser and Strauss' that the powerful objective of grounded theory is to expand upon an explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of the phenomenon and then categorising the relationships of those elements of the context and process of the experiment (1967). In other words, the goal is to go from general understanding to specific understanding without losing sight of what makes the subject of the study unique. This aspect of the research was claimed to be the most powerful way to bring reality to light.

What makes a grounded theory distinctive is that theory is derived from the data, 'it is grounded in it and emerges from it' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 205). Glaser indicated that constant comparison can proceed from the moment of starting to collect data, to seeking key issues and categories, to discovering recurrent events or activities in the data that becomes categories of focus (1978).

While, a grounded theory aims to trace 'real life' learning experiences as accurately as possible, inductive reasoning uses the data to generate these ideas. Inductive reasoning



in the form of content analysis and discourse analysis are strategies that recognise the extent to which the text provide insights about lived experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Cohen, et al., 2000).

### **Critiques**

Grounded theory although embraced by qualitative researchers has ‘come under attack’ (Charmaz, 1990, p. 509) therefore, what grounded theory is and should be has been contested. Turner developed a variation of the application of the classic grounded theory and so contributed to its understanding with articles in 1983 and another co-authored by Martin and Turner in 1986. Also in 1986, Corbin, another user of grounded theory, contributed to a book on qualitative research in nursing, followed by a book co-written by Strauss and Corbin in 1990. This last book criticises Glaser’s methodological ‘use of preconceived categories and frameworks that did not allow theory to emerge during the process of research’ (Cresswell, 2002, p. 440). In response Glaser accused Strauss and Corbin of ‘forcing the data’ (2002) and strongly criticised their use of ‘full conceptual description’ (2002) under the guise of grounded theory.

In addition to these Schatzman a colleague of Glaser and Strauss and an advocate of grounded theory as a general approach to naturalistic inquiry argued that ‘grounded theory does not have an easily recognizable research paradigm for anchoring the several operations that constitute it’ (Schatzman, 1991, p. 306), while Babchuk criticism states that ‘Strauss placed a great deal of emphasis on the “canons of good science” such as replicability, generalizability, precision, significance and verification’ (1995, p. 3).

In an attempt to take a middle ground between the postmodernism and positivism theory grounded theory disputes, Charmaz couples her adaptation of grounded theory with social constructionism (1990, p. 293) and the following is the definition offered:

Constructivist grounded theory celebrates firsthand knowledge of empirical worlds, takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century. Constructivism assumes

the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims towards interpretive understanding of subject's meanings.

(Charmaz, 2000, p. 510)

As a continuance to the development of grounded theory criticisms, Glaser challenged Charmaz's 'scholarly inspiration' of grounded theory and her proposal of a constructivist model. In his challenge, Glaser stated 'that constructivist data, if it exists at all, is a very small part of the data that grounded theory uses' (2002, p. 1) because the grounded theory perspective acknowledges that 'all is data' (2000). Glaser identified this to mean that:

...exactly what is going on in the research scene, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on must be figured out exactly what it is to be used for, that is conceptualization, not for accurate description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties.

(Glaser, 2002, p.1)

To acknowledge the worth and merit of grounded theory as a tool for constructing meaning from qualitative data, the ideas of prominent authors in the field are presented below. The review of these works reveals that each has written from the interest of personal experience and developed a case for grounded theory as a method of analysis for qualitative research.

### Review of Prominent Authors in the Field of Grounded Theory

	Reference	Definition	New Ideas	Coding Process
1967	Discovery of Grounded Theory  <b>Glaser &amp; Strauss</b>	'discovery of theory from data' (p.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- restricted literature search</li> <li>- field/site research (p.10)</li> <li>- comparative analysis (p.21)</li> <li>- theoretical sampling</li> <li>- emergent theory</li> <li>- in vivo code (p.40)</li> <li>- saturation (p.61)</li> <li>- constant comparative method</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concept from data</li> <li>- category or property</li> <li>- constant comparison (p.105)</li> <li>- theoretically saturate (p.111)</li> <li>- theory</li> </ul>
1978	Theoretical Sensitivity  <b>Glaser</b>	'grounded theory is a detailed grounding of systematically analysing data' (p.16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- theoretical sensitivity (p.1)</li> <li>- saturation of memos (p.16)</li> <li>- sorting of memos (p.16)</li> <li>- theoretical pacing (p.19)</li> <li>- fracturing data (p.34)</li> <li>- coding open, selective (p.56)</li> <li>- sociological construction</li> <li>- core categories (p.93)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concept &amp; indicator model (p.62)</li> <li>Indicators (apparent &amp; learned)</li> <li>- substantive codes</li> <li>- theoretical code (p.72)</li> <li>- theory</li> </ul>
1986	Grounded theory & organisational research  <b>Martin &amp; Turner</b>	Grounded theory is an inductive theory discovery methodology... researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic...simultaneously grounding the account...or data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- concept discovery (p.147)</li> <li>- concept cards (p.148)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note writing (p.145)</li> <li>- in vivo notes on the spot during observation or interview</li> <li>Concept discovery (p.147)</li> <li>- moving from data to abstract categories</li> <li>Concept definition (p.150)</li> <li>- assign incidents</li> <li>- common themes</li> <li>- memo</li> <li>- theory</li> </ul>
1990	Basics of qualitative analysis  <b>Strauss &amp; Corbin</b>	'A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents...' (p.23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prior literature search</li> <li>- techniques for opening up sensitivity – 'waving red flag'</li> <li>- story line (p.117)</li> <li>- transactional system (p.160)</li> <li>- conditional matrix (p.161)</li> <li>- discriminate sampling (p.187)</li> <li>- inductive/deductive</li> <li>- methodology (p.148)</li> <li>- constant verification (p.108)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conceptualise data (p.63)</li> <li>- compare incident with incident</li> <li>- label</li> <li>- categories</li> <li>- codes notes</li> <li>- develop profiles</li> <li>- axial coding (p.97)</li> <li>- selective coding &amp; validate relationships</li> <li>- theory</li> </ul>
2000	Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. An overview.  <b>Charmaz</b>	'Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed...' (p.510)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prior literature search,</li> <li>- thick description (p.514)</li> <li>- memo writing (p.517)</li> <li>- theoretical sampling (p.519)</li> <li>- constant comparison</li> <li>- interpretation with empirical reality</li> <li>- story line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- line by line coding (p.515)</li> <li>- develop actions codes to seek meanings</li> <li>- line by line coding</li> <li>- categories</li> <li>- memos notes</li> <li>- action coding/interrelated process (p.517)</li> <li>- theory</li> </ul>

Table 2:3 Evolution of Grounded Theory: Adapted from Charmaz, (2000, 2002) and Kriflik (2005) Reviews

## **Glaser and Strauss**

As stated above, Glaser and Strauss developed the original approach to grounded theory and an approach referred to as the 'discovery-orientated'. This was developed as a means of capturing personal and human dimensions that could not be quantified into dry facts and numerical data. To justify this approach they speculated that experiences are continuously evolving. Implying that, the only way to capture the richness of the phenomenon was to get out into the natural setting to understand what is going on. In building this approach they stated the importance of being objective, saying that 'the analysis rests with the objectivity of its groundedness' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

They additionally argue that, a grounded theory could not be achieved unless the researcher followed a set of systematic procedures that assisted the researcher develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. Consequently, Glaser and Strauss's work encouraged their professional contemporaries to reconsider research approaches and orientate their studies to discovery of theory from the data.

## **Glaser**

For Glaser the concept of emergence is a central tenet of grounded theory. His belief is that nothing is forced or preconceived and campaigned, that everything emerges in a grounded theory - the participants' main concern, the sample, the questions asked, the concepts, the core category, and so on. At the heart of Glaser's approach, grounded theory is to 'generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved' (Glaser, 2002, p. 3). The central issue in a grounded theory study is 'to know what our informants' main concern is and how they seek to resolve it' (Glaser, 2002, p. 177). In accordance with this approach, the researcher enters the field with only a broad topic area of interest in mind, without specific preconceived research questions, and without a detailed reading and understanding of the extant literature in the area (Glaser, 2002, p. 199).

In a report published in 2001, Glaser argues that, 'We do not know what we are looking for when we start ... we simply cannot say prior to the collection and analysis

of data, what our study will look like' (2001, p. 176). His argument puts forward that researchers should not bring any priori knowledge to the research study (2001). He argues that without this priori knowledge, researchers can engage in data, through actively and responsibly choosing between the differing images and experiences seen and told. Glaser's view enables the researcher to understand the actions of other peoples' lives in relation to their natural setting. It follows that this approach is likened to 'a one-way mirror through which the natural world might be revealed' (Locke, 1996, p. 241).

### **Martin and Turner**

Like Glaser, Martin and Turner place emphasis on the development of the theory. Martin and Turner identify a grounded theory as an 'inductive theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop theoretical account of the general features of the topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations of data' (1986, p. 141). Acknowledging that a key element of grounded theory is identifying 'a slightly higher level of abstraction - higher than the data itself' (Turner, 1983, p. 147). They reported, the movement from relatively superficial observations to more abstract theoretical categories is achieved by the constant interplay between data collection and analysis that constitutes the constant comparative method are, therefore, concrete, objective, and measurable. What is evident in their report is the importance of having strategies that integrate all the data. They considered that in grounded theory everything is integrated, it is an analytical approach where actions and concepts can be interrelated with other actions and concepts.

### **Strauss and Corbin**

Strauss and Corbin deviated from the original definition of grounded theory. They indicated that the considerations they offered to the debate on grounded theory arose from their own research experience and claim that, 'doing analysis, is in fact, making interpretations', clarifying this by referring to the inventive nature of scientific knowledge, rather than science capturing an imitation of a supposed reality (1990).

Strauss and Corbin argue that, ‘the perspective of the researcher will be reflected with the theory produced, as each perspective colors the approach’ (1990, p.26). This they added is as an integral part in the research process. Therefore, Strauss and Corbin’s techniques encouraged the use of the researchers own experience and acquired knowledge to advantage, rather than seeing this as blocking the data. In this way, the adaptation they suggested identified that theory developed in relation to conditions and context.

### **Charmaz**

In building her definition, Charmaz’s constructivist approach places priority on the phenomenon of the study and sees both the data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data. In this way, the grounded theory approach advocated by Charmaz means more than looking at how individuals view their situations (2006). It not only theorises the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation. In this way the theory depends on the researcher’s view. This process implies that finding concepts within the data involves thinking back over the research experience. In doing so the researcher is able to develop insights, in terms of a clearer understanding of the relationships between what took place, the purpose intended, and difficulties which arose and view these in a broader perspective.

The purpose of this review has been to present a background to and contemporary place for grounded theory methodology as an approach to qualitative research. The key influences as prescribed by grounded theory authors can be applied to the research of educational issues.

### **Grounded Theory: An Exploration of Educational Issues**

Grounded theory is about capturing personal and human dimensions of an experience that could not be quantified into dry facts and numerical data. It further allows researchers to use a systematic set of procedures to develop understanding about a

phenomenon. To view the development of skills and techniques as being grounded in personal experience, learning moves well beyond traditional wisdom. In a practical sense, grounded theory is the means for researchers to become better acquainted with the reality of teaching and learning and improve practice.

Not surprisingly, grounded theory offers educators an alternative approach to generate theory from the realities of teachers and students' daily work (Babchuk, 1996, p. 2). The literature base that supports this revealed that grounded theory has been used to study a wide range of education problems and experiences in their practice settings. These include the study of the life in an adult basic education classroom (Courtney, Jha & Babchuk, 1994), high school teachers' collaboration (Riordan, 1999), pre-service teacher education (Kiggins, 2002) and restorative practices and the culture of care in school settings (Cavanagh, 2002). This sample of research implies that, grounded theory practice promotes the development of abstract knowledge about education practices.

The limitations of grounded theory, as a methodology for service learning research, are mainly related to its reliance on the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. Without this sensitivity, the research will tend to be largely descriptive and interpretive, without leading to theory construction. It also demands intellectual discipline, emotional and physical commitment and a time structure that may be unavailable to some researchers.

In summary it has been determined that, grounded theory is a qualitative research approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Although it has been developed over the years, its systematic techniques and procedures of analysis enable the researcher to develop a substantive theory that meets the criteria that the theory generated from field data has the ability to capture, interpret and connect to the complexity of the phenomena being studied.

## **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to identify and investigate current and relevant literature pertinent to the issues explored in this research study. From this review of the service learning literature, it is apparent that participation in either or both community service or service learning leads to positive student outcomes in the academic, civic, diversity and developmental realms. Judging from the significant benefits that have been shown in the past, it would assist schools to include service learning opportunities in curricular activities.



## Chapter Three: The Research Approach

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the outcomes of the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in a service learning project. This chapter discusses and provides justification for the chosen methodology, describes participants, the data collection methods and the data analysis procedures used to answer the research question. Figure 3.1 below shows the organisational framework for this chapter.

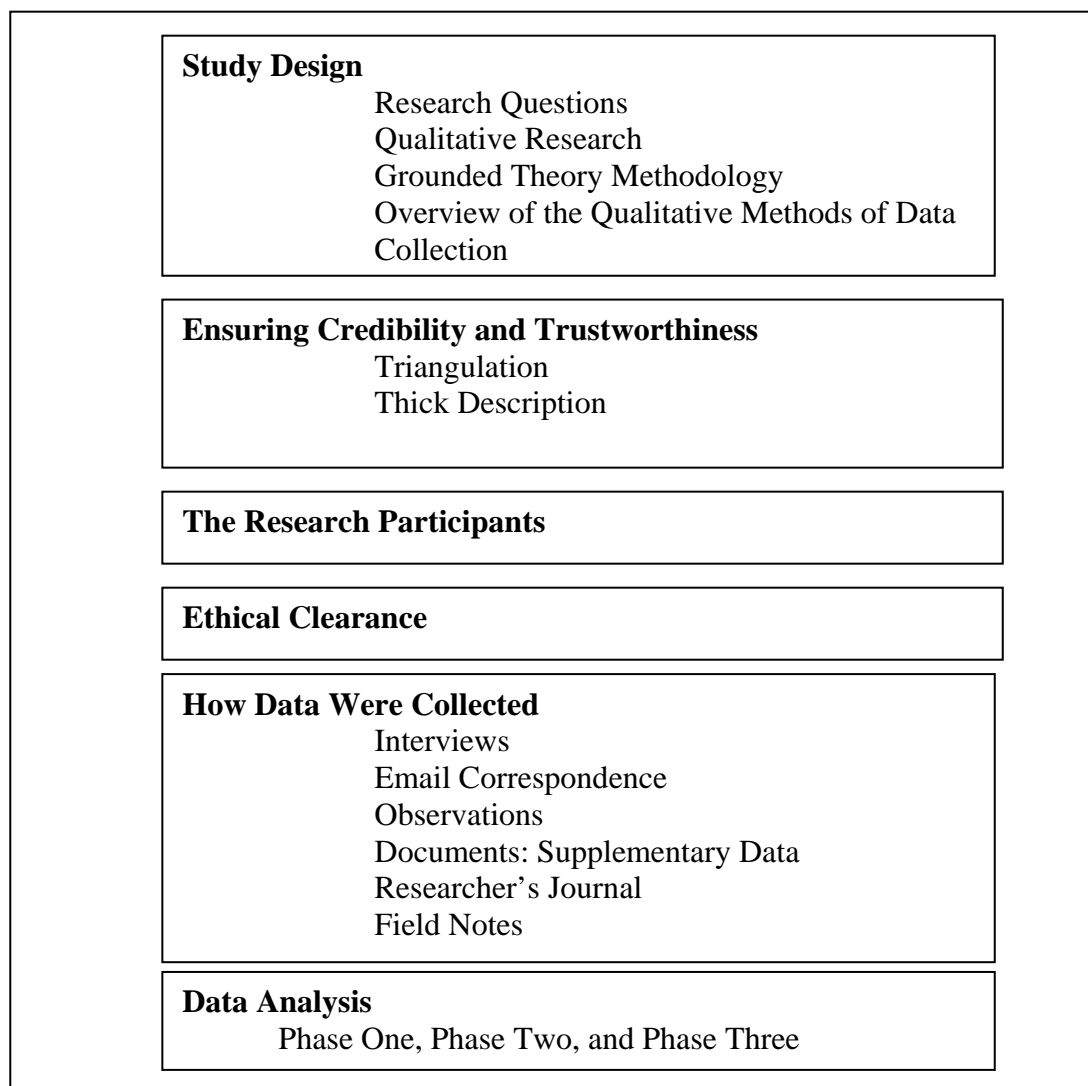


Figure 3:1 Organisational Framework for Chapter Three

## **Study Design**

Because this study focuses on experiences in context, it utilised qualitative research methods. Appropriate to qualitative research, grounded theory analysis was applied to the task of reviewing the findings as it ‘focuses on the study of the experience and those who lived it’ (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510). This enabled the researcher to obtain the views, values and facts of the participating students in a specified time and context (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525).

To gain greater insight into the participants’ experiences, the researcher collected information through interviews, the review of key documents and observations within the PLC setting. This contributed to the triangulation of the findings and increased their trustworthiness.

## **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following main research question and two sub-questions:

Main research question:

How did a service learning experience affect Year 11 school students?

Two sub-questions:

What is the ‘Adopt a School’ service learning project? and

How did participation affect the students?

## **Qualitative, Quantitative Research Approaches**

Research in education can utilise both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. These terms refer to two different research methods, each with its own terminology and techniques. While, qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand persons’ lives, stories, behaviour, social interactions and

relationships, quantitative research uses statistical procedures and measures to test hypothetical generalisations. The differences in the style of research and the types of data mean that researchers approach the investigative process differently.

Qualitative researchers believe that since humans are conscious of their own behaviour, then the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the informants are vital. How people attach meaning and what meanings they attach are the basis of their behaviour. Only qualitative methods such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing permit access to individual meaning in the context of ongoing daily lives. (Burns, 2000, p. 238)

## **Grounded Theory Methodology**

The grounded theory analysis derives its name from the practice of generating theory from research which is 'grounded' in data (Babchuk, 1997). It is recognised as 'a systematic, procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad concept, a process, or interaction about a substantive topic' (Charmaz, 2000, p. 439). A central element of this definition is the generation of theory. That makes this is an inductive approach, meaning that it moves from the specific to the more general (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2000).

Grounded theory analysis was chosen to capture the experiences of the 'Adopt a School' project from the students' perspective. This analytical method allows for 'the bringing together of social process, social structure and social interactions' (Annells, 1997, cited in Kiggins, 2002, p. 121). Grounded theory attempts, therefore, to identify and explain the nature of the experiences that supported or hindered the Year 11 students' learning as they participated in the 'Adopt a School' project developed by PLC (Sydney).

This method seemed fitting as it is similar in nature to Kolb's explanation of experiential learning. Kolb (1984) stated, experiential education relies on a four-pronged phase of learning. These phases include; discovery, concrete experience, observing and reflecting, forming abstract concepts and generalisations. Kolb's processes parallel with this study's framework. The praxis of this research's emergent

theory and the research practice in praxis informed one to another. The comparison of various qualitative strategies considered for use in the study is presented as an Appendix 13.

Utilising this research design resulted in a three phase study. The three phase design is illustrated in Figure 3:2 below. Each of the three phases of data collection and analysis is discussed later in this Chapter, whereas the data collection and analysis procedures involved in each phase of this study are discussed separately within these phases in order to provide triangulation and to ensure context for the reader.

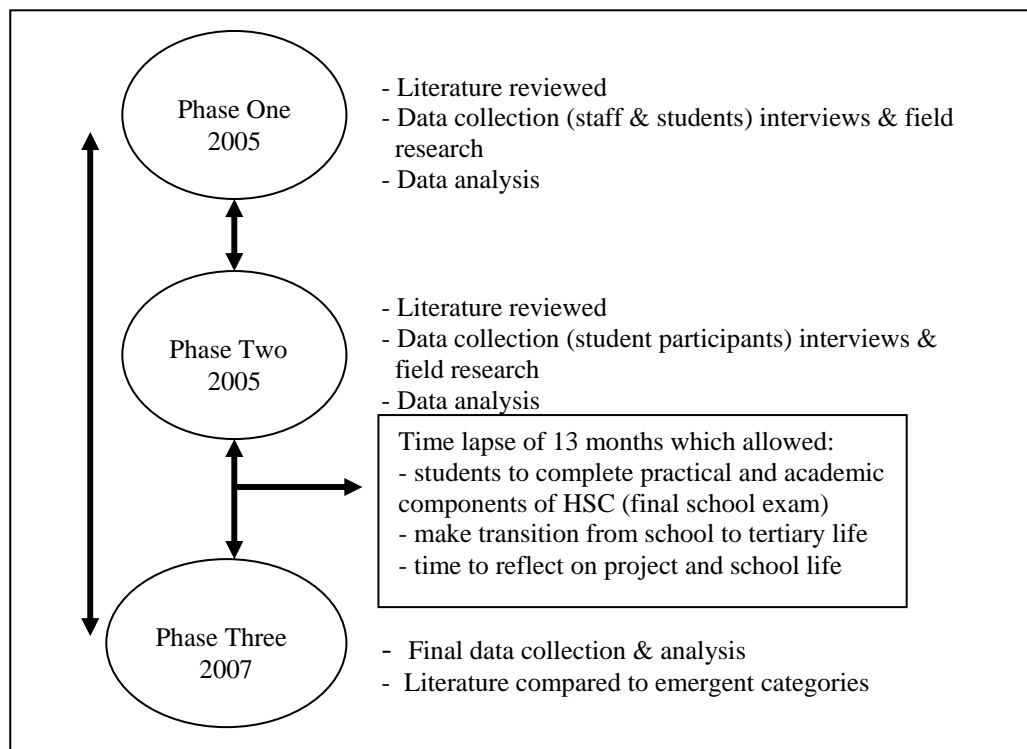


Figure 3:2 Three Phase Design

## Overview of the Methods of Data Collection

The interviews with the principal, teachers, participants and parents were the primary source of data. In addition, supplementary data were collected through the review of school documents, newsletters, Annual Reports and the participants' journals. Figure 3:3 below, summarises the timeframe and types of data collection conducted over the course of the study.

Week, and Date of Interview		Focus of Activity
March 2005		Met with principal and co-ordinating teachers
April – July 2005		Reviewed television and newspaper accounts of the tsunami Reviewed service learning literature
25-29 July 2005  <b>Phase One</b> (Form base data using staff as data source)		Attended “‘Adopt a School” meeting with students, parents and school executive staff Interviewed executives (background data) Transcribed the interviews and developed data categories Sat in on introduction of study to whole Yr 11 cohort Obs of school site – note cultural aspects of school Heard and noted school lexicon and peculiar jargon
1-19 Aug 2005		Re-read info on tsunami, and ‘AdoptSriLanka’ organisation & “‘Adopt a School” project Established thesis administration
22-26 Aug 2005		Returned to school with greater contextual knowledge Interviewed 3 teachers Transcribed the interviews and developed data categories Prepared follow up interviews based on data & literature
September 2005 <b>Phase Two</b> (Data from student participants)	T R I P	Interviewed 13 students prior to trip (initial interviews) Obs of students interacting socially during recess and lunch Interviewed 7 students with week of their return
17-21 Oct 2005		Interviewed 7 students and 3 teachers Transcribed the interviews and developed data categories Obs – interactions during fund raising event
24 – 28 Oct 2005		Interviewed 6 students and 1 teacher (still need data from 2 parents, 1 teacher and 2 students) Transcribed the interviews and developed data categories Obs of the site while participants were in class
1 – 4 Nov 2005		Observed Yr 11 assembly – focus ‘Our Sri Lanka Visit’ Transcribed field notes into data Met with 3 teachers informally
7 - 11 Nov 2005		Re-examined literature Reviewed transcribed data ‘zig zag’ data, literature to prepare follow up interviews
14 -18 Nov 2005		Interviewed 4 students Interviewed 3 parents (mothers) Interviewed 2 teachers Obs – of students interacting socially during recess and lunch Transcribed data and developed data categories Attended Yr 11 prize ceremony as a guest Confirmed rapport building as positive Invited by students to attend gymnastics comp following Monday (unable) Confirmed rapport building as positive
21- 26 Nov 2005		Interviewed 4 students and 1 teacher Transcribed the interviews and developed data categories Wrote reflections on ‘what I have learned’ so far.
7 Dec 2005		Interviewed 2 students (last ones) Transcribed the interviews and developed categories Interviewed 3 teachers
Feb, Mar, April 2007 <b>Phase Three</b> <b>Post school</b>		Emailed 11 students Transcribed the email data and blended with refined categories

Figure 3:3 Summaries of the Timeframe and Types of Data Collection Methods

## Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1981, cited in Mertens, 1998), state that research concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge is an ethical manner. To show trustworthiness there must be a level of accountability applied to the research. In a naturalistic study, Guba and Lincoln state, ‘the reader should feel confident that the interviews were conducted reliably, that the data were analysed properly and that the conclusions match the data’ (1981, cited in Mertens, 1998, p. 159).

There are several methods available to check for data trustworthiness.

### Triangulation

When printed material and other artefacts are combined with observation and interview data this practice is what Lancy (1993) referred to as triangulation. Triangulation, is described by Mertens as ‘the use of multiple methods and multiple data sources to support the strength of interpretations and conclusions in qualitative research’ (1998, p. 354). In this study the use of multiple sources to collect data was employed. The figure below captures how the sources interact in the triangulation process.

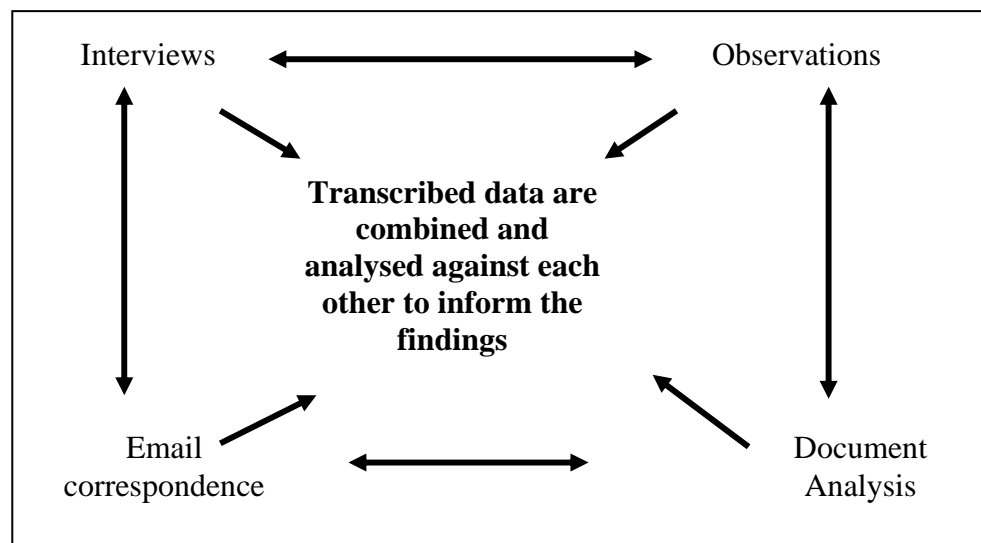


Figure 3:4 Triangulation Process

## Thick Description

The term ‘thick description’ refers to the essential information that a reader must know in order to understand the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.125). By providing such ‘thick description’ the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings are enhanced. Whilst all raw data cannot be included in the findings of the study, the voices of participants and vivid descriptions of the physical contexts and cultures in which they operate are included. Direct quotes from participants enable readers to gain insight into the ‘reality’ experienced and perceived by participants. The following example demonstrates in tabular form the processes this researcher employed to present the students’ voice in the research text.

<b>Ikka Observation as in Rough Field Text</b>	<b>Extract From Ikka’s Taped Interview</b>	<b>How This Appears in the Thesis Text</b>
<p><i>Background</i></p> <p>The literature search identified the importance of reflection during service learning. In an attempt to determine this notion, attention was given to asking the students about their journals as one of the ways the students were able to reflect</p> <p><i>Memo note:</i> Sitting in quiet area outside the PLC drama rehearsal room. Students in groups eating.</p> <p><i>Interviewee:</i> Ikka Appeared relaxed and happy</p> <p>Second interview (taped)</p> <p><i>Objective category; Reflection</i> -Ask Ikka about the importance of her journal re providing a vehicle for reflection.</p>	<p><i>Introduction and question posed:</i></p> <p>...You mentioned in your previous interview that your journal was important to you; ...‘Can you tell us why it was important to this learning experience?’ ...</p> <p><i>Ikka’s response:</i> ‘There are times when you can’t talk openly about things, the words you speak don’t represent what you think. My journal was written for me, it is in my words...’</p>	<p><i>Chapter Four - Category Reflection</i></p> <p>While in Sri Lanka the students spent their evenings reflecting on and debriefing from their daily experience. This reflection took two forms informal conversations and journal writing. Both of these were viewed by the students as valuable because...</p> <p><i>Ikka described the function of her reflective journal thus, ‘There are times when you can’t talk openly about things, the words you speak don’t represent what you think. My journal was written for me, it is in my words...’</i></p>

Figure 3:5 Ensuring Trustworthiness: Ensuring Student Voice

## **The Research Participants**

The majority of participants who informed this study were thirteen Year 11 students from PLC whose ages ranged from 15 to 17 years in August 2005. It should be noted that, there was no explicit selection process, each student volunteered to be part of this study. Each of these students was female and in her second last year of secondary education. As part of the agreement with the Principal of PLC and the governing rules of the Human Research Ethics Department of the University of Wollongong, each of the participants was issued with consent forms.

Whilst the thirteen Year 11 students involved in the study made a trip to Sri Lanka, due to a pre-existing medical condition it was impossible to follow the students to the field sites. Therefore, data was gathered at PLC. Included in Chapter Four, is a tabulation of the students' details; their age, statements on their prior experience and their goals and expectations regarding participation in the 'Adopt a School' project.

School administrators, teachers and parents were involved as secondary informants to the study. Their perceptions aided in gaining deeper understandings about the development of the 'Adopt a School' project and provided insight into the students' perceptions and proposed outcomes. These informants included the International Studies teacher, the co-ordinator of the project, the Head of Year 11, the Curriculum Director of Senior Students, the Head of Boarding, the senior students' History and Geography teachers and the teacher involved in charity and out-of-school aid work. In addition (but to a lesser extent) five parents were interviewed in order to understand the nature of their daughters' participation in the project. Access to the parents, however, proved difficult – time delays in email responses and cancelled interviews. This meant that the parents' interviews provided an auxiliary data source. The use of such multiple participants increased both the richness and diversity of data. Stake described the value of such data thus:

The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it. Thick description, experiential understanding, and multiple realities are expected in qualitative studies. (Stake, 1995, p. 43)



## **Ethical Clearance**

This researcher observed all ethical considerations to ensure sensitivity, anonymity and confidentiality and to guard against deception. Because the participants in this study were human subjects and the thesis report would be exposing their feelings and expressions, the following measures were taken:

- Approval for the study was obtained from the University of Wollongong's Human Ethics Research Ethics Committee and the Principal of PLC.
- Teachers, students and parents were informed of the purpose, confidentiality and processes of the research and their consent was obtained.
- Teachers, students and parents were informed that their interviews would be audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and used as extracts in this academic thesis.
- The Principal consented to the school and the service learning project being named in this research thesis.
- The records of the data excluded any information associated with personal identity.
- The records of interviews were kept in a secure cabinet in my private office.
- The participants were not identified by name.
- The participants were to be informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Each participant received a consent form and information sheet about the process of the study before data gathering (Appendices 1-8). The information sheet also included an outline of ethical issues relating to confidentiality, and freedom to withdraw from the study. All agreed to participate in this study.

Participants were also informed that although anonymity of their participation would be preserved by the use of pseudonyms, anonymity in a naturalistic inquiry can be

likened to the pixelation process undertaken to disguise peoples' identities on television. The participants identified were protected from a wide audience, but the news cameraman who took the pictures, and/or others present when the item was being recorded, would know whose face had been pixelated. This was analogous to the participants in this inquiry. While readers of this thesis would not be able to identify the participants, those at PLC and those who work in the 'Adopt a School' project could possibly work out who was who.

## **How Data Were Collected**

### **Interviews**

Interviews are employed as methods of data collection in many research designs. They are useful for collecting detailed information from a limited number of people. Mertens suggested that researchers use interviews to obtain descriptions and interpretations of specific events and experiences (1998). In addition, interviews give people an opportunity to explain responses that may not have been predicted. Rubin and Rubin describe qualitative interviews as an intentional way of learning about people's feelings, thoughts and experiences' (1995, p. 23). Gudmundsdottir refer to research interviews as a form of conversation where 'someone asks a question and another person responds' (1996, p. 2). In fact, this enables the researcher to determine the participants' perspectives on the issues, which contributes to the richness of the data included in the study.

In this study, interviews were the principal data gathering technique. The interviews used a semi-structured schedule based on the study's research questions. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the researcher prepared a set of guiding questions. All the participants were asked the same guiding questions, but as the interview progressed additional questions derived from the 'conversation' (Gudmundsdottir, 1996) were included. This meant that the majority of the questions were created during the interview, allowing the participants being interviewed the flexibility to discuss issues of concern or importance. These interviews allowed great flexibility

and depth of investigation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and enabled the researcher to seek expansions and comments and to record the participants' experiences and direct the conversation.

Interviews were conducted at pre-arranged times in private areas within PLC. Generally, these occurred during lunch and recess breaks. Proposed questions for the interview were made available to the co-ordinating teacher prior to the interview taking place. The interviews with the teachers, students and parents were taped to record exactly what was said. This increased the accuracy of the interview as a method of enquiry. All tapes were transcribed verbatim as soon after the interview as possible.

Each participant was interviewed individually for approximately 30 minutes. Most questions were open-ended questions, which were extended by 'probing' and 'follow-up' questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Interviewees were then asked to suggest anything that should be added to ensure that the interview response would be clear and reflective of their perspectives.

### **Email Correspondence**

The use of electronic communication for this research project proved to be a convenient and popular tool for both the participants and this researcher. The interview and email data were supplemented by interviews and observations. With the expansion of the Internet, email correspondence has become part of our culture and this meant that when it was not possible to engage in dialogue with the students, the use of email correspondence became a popular tool for data collection. The participants stated that 'the email was their choice of data collection'. They said that being able to read the questions 'posted' and take their time to think about their replies, meant that the replies or thoughts were not rushed, as they had the advantage of time. The use of email meant the participants could reply to questions at any time of the day and from any location in the world.

## Observations

The use of observation further capitalised on the decision to use a naturalistic form of inquiry. The utilisation of observation strategies provided for validation and corroboration of the messages received in interviews (Robson, 1993). Trochin claims observations to be ‘one of the most common methods for qualitative data collection’ (2001, p. 1) and identifies the three main characteristics of participant observation. Participant observation:

- emphasises the role of the researcher as a participant,
  - involves the collection of field notes,
  - ‘Often requires months or years of intensive work because the researcher needs to become accepted as a natural part of the culture in order to assure that the observations are of the natural phenomenon’.
- (Trochin 2001 p.1)

In this study, observations were made when the participants were in their homeroom, situated at their school, PLC, and when they were involved in social group activities in the grounds of the school. This approach enabled the researcher to note and record the physical activities of the participants. During these observations the researcher became acquainted not only with the characteristics of the participants, but with some of the other members of the school. On such occasions, relevant information was recorded through field notes. The interactions with the participants and the other members of the school enabled the researcher to come to a better understanding of the school context, form a profile of the school’s visual culture and record some of the characteristic behaviours displayed by the participating students. An overview of the cultural observations, have been included as Table 4:1 in the following chapter. It should be noted that revealing the actual lived PLC culture was beyond the time available to the researcher, therefore, Table 4:1 provides an overview of the cultural setting rather than a comprehensive review of PLC’s cultural.

## Documents: Supplementary Data

During the period of the study the participants produced materials, including student made posters and feature articles published in school news magazines. Yearly Reports and the formal accounts of the ‘Adopt a School’ project were utilised to provide data

to cross-check the claims and statements made by the participants during interviews regarding the experience of being a part of the 'Adopt a School' project.

### **Researcher's Journal**

During the study it was necessary to ask a series of self-directed focus questions such as: 'What have I seen?', 'What have I learned?' and 'What do these data tell me?' The purpose was to allow conversations with the researcher to take place. The answers to these questions were entered into a research journal (Creswell, 2002, p. 451). The value of keeping a research journal cannot be underestimated and human research is as much emotional as it is analytical. The journal allowed for personal notes to be recorded; it was a space where this researcher could express private thoughts, concerns or gripes. However, the research journal was a reflective tool that enabled the researcher to step back and revisit events that had occurred (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The entries in a research journal provided the basis for the generation of new ideas on the observable trends.

### **Field Notes**

In this study, the handwritten notes and data generated from my position as a researcher constitute 'field notes' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Field notes as described by Clandinin and Connelly, (2000) are 'interpretive texts' that record responses, body language, smiles and the questions that relate to moments of observation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94). Glesne agrees, commenting that texts created by the researcher represent aspects of field experience unique to a particular inquiry and the inquiry field' (2001, pp. 5-7). Therefore, the relationship between researcher and participant is central to the creation of field texts, shaping 'what is told, as well as the meaning of what is told' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94).

## **Data Analysis**

Clandinin and Connelly, (2000) claim that there is a wide diversity of approaches to qualitative data analysis. This means that the choice of analytic tools and or procedures depends on the purpose of the research, which in turn determines the paradigm the research is ultimately located within.

In this study, data analysis was a continuing and on-going process. Data were collected from the research participants during the three phases of the study. The remainder of this chapter includes the discussion on the data analysis processes specific to each of the three phases of the study. This discussion has been presented chronologically.

### **Phases of the Study**

As previously stated, this study was conducted so that it moved through three phases of data collection and analysis to the development of a grounded theory. The decision to carry out the study in such phases was based on an interview with the school Principal who noted amongst other things, the students' timetabled activities for 2005 – 2006. In addition, a phased approach supported the theoretical framework and the stated philosophies of the experiential educators.

### **Phase One**

Prior to the data collection, literature on service learning was reviewed and television images of the tsunami were viewed. After an analysis of this data, a range of possible questions and approaches for this study were identified. This enabled a link to be formed between the range of literature and the types of strategies the school used in sensitising the participants towards the project. It should also be noted that the school used the time between January and March to fully develop the project, their relationships within Sri Lanka and to establish in-school administration procedures.

Phase one data collection began in March 2005 when the researcher conducted interviews with the Principal and the co-ordinating teachers. These interviews were used to develop base data. At the same time it provided the researcher with an opportunity to become familiar with the terminology particular to this school. It also provided an opportunity to identify 'breakout' areas to conduct the subsequent interviews and observations.

This first phase was formally completed by the end of August 2005. The interviews in this phase were semi-structured (Bodgen & Biklen, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), in that the researcher had a set of guiding questions, but the style was open-ended and responsive, to lead the teacher participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Three types of semi-structured questions guided the interview sessions. See the samples below:

The central questions, common to all phase one interviews, were;

- 'What is the 'Adopt a School' project?'
- 'How is it part of the (whole) school curriculum?'
- 'How is it a part of the Year 11 curriculum?'
- 'What have the students learned in the 'Adopt a School' lessons?'

Probing question;

- 'What types of things do you think were prepared well?'
- 'How has participation impacted on the students (academically and socially)?'
- 'What caused these impacts/issues to arise?'
- 'What strategies resulted from it?'
- 'What resulted from these strategies?'
- 'Who are these students?'
- 'How would you describe the student participants?'

Follow-up question

- 'What are your expectations of the students?'
- 'How will the students' learning be assessed/determined?'

Five parents who volunteered as secondary informants were also briefly interviewed during this period. Timetabling interviews with the parents proved very difficult as work and family commitments impacted on time, availability and access. This affected their active participation in the study. In some instances the data retrieved from the parents replicated that of the teachers, in that the phrasing of responses was very similar. For example:

Teacher response; 'Participation in this project will give the students opportunities to move out their comfort zone and develop their world and life understandings'.

(Kathy)

Parent response; 'I look at this as a learning opportunity. My daughter will go overseas to help others and develop her understandings about the world'.

(Parent 1)

The general understanding derived from these interviews was that the PLC staff viewed service learning as more than a teaching method. The 'Adopt a School' project met the general school aims and principles in preparing the participants for 'life long learning' and 'service to others'.

### **Phase One – Data Analysis**

Within a naturalistic paradigm, 'data analysis' refers to the process whereby 'the findings gradually "emerge" from the data' (Mertens, 1998, p. 348). The role of data analysis with respect to a grounded theory study is to generate a theory that emerges from the data and explains the process under inquiry.

Throughout this study, the researcher organised the data to identify commonalities that were emerging and subsequently tested those topics. Specifically, in this study the researcher strove to identify any topic that appeared to relate to the manner in which the service experience was connected to student learning and the reviewed literature. There are several phases in the data analysis process that were used in this study and these are a combination of those prescribed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and



Corbin (1990), Glaser (2002) and Charmaz, (2002). This study in principle followed most closely the emergent grounded theory framework (Cresswell, 2002, p. 450).

### Phase One – Preliminary Coding

Immediately after the interview data were obtained from the teachers, they were transcribed from the audio-tapes and formatted as computer (Word) documents. Each transcript was read several times before beginning the process of coding. During this time, the nuances and lexicon of the teachers became familiar.

Working with a copy of the transcripts, chunks of data were underlined. At times this was a word or phrase, less often a sentence or paragraph. This process was used to identify common words and inferences in each of the teachers' interviews. Preliminary codes defined 'what the data are all about' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 37). See sample in figure 3: 6 below.

**Q. Can you tell me how the project came about?**

*(reasoning of project)* Following the Boxing Day Tsunami, I along with a few members of the College community, *(reasoning of project)* felt that we should as a school do something to support people who had been badly affected. We *(reasoning of project)* considered that the support of another school would be the most appropriate. Accordingly, at the beginning of the school year, a *(forming project)* small committee was set up to investigate the possibility of such a project. It took some weeks of investigation to ascertain what country and what school would be most suitable for this outreach. In the end it was *(forming of project)* decided to work through then later co-ordinate the organisation, 'Adopt a School' (Australasia). (Agnes, March, 2005)

Figure 3:6 Phase One Open Coding Sample

Once each interview had been worked through individually, those words underlined were transferred to a separate document for each teacher participant by means of (computer) 'cut and paste'. Still working on individual documents, the codes were coloured to make the common codes more visible. In addition, a matrix was created to contain all the titles of the category, a simple cue descriptor, date and the original

transcript page reference (Figure 3:7). These mapping techniques assisted in determining their position in the original transcripts.

Participant	Cue Descriptor	Date	Category	Transcript Reference
Agnes	small committee was set up to investigate	25 July 05	Forming project	p. 1
Agnes	decided to work through then later co-ordinate the organisation, 'Adopt a School' (Australasia)	22 Aug 05	(colour coded blue)	p. 1
Agnes	Following the Boxing Day Tsunami we felt that we should as a school do something to support people who had been badly effected	25 July 05	Reasoning of project (colour coded red)	p. 1
Agnes	considered that the support of another school would be the most appropriate	25 July 05		p. 3

Figure 3:7 Phase One Interview Open Code Matrix : A Sample

During observations, field notes were generated as an additional source of data. For example, asking; 'What is this school like in appearance?' resulted in the field note below:

Old and new building - modern facilities - massive gardens, this 100 plus year old school has a strong environment. Signs that read 'Care for Others', 'Respect Others' are complemented by the faculty who repeatedly commented that it is important for the girls to feel they to 'belonging to something', and 'have pride in what is around them'. Equally influential is the dress, the school songs, the prayers (I've heard sung this morning), the small seemingly insignificant symbols – badges, colours, awards, house names.... These bonds of loyalty and respect are not limited to the students – several of the teachers who instructed me as a student in this learning environment 30 years ago are still active and influential teachers in this school today.

(Field notes, July, 2005)

The field research was coded in a similar manner to the interview transcripts. Each was read through several times before beginning the coding process. Words and phrases were underlined to indicate the chunks of data that were significant. These underlined words were used to form a computer (Word) document. These were

labelled as above by sources, date, reference titles. However, an additional descriptor was introduced. This new descriptor identified one of the three aspects of school culture: the visual form, the observed behaviours and/or the symbols (Svetlik, 1999).

As a result of the phase one analysis, forty codes emerged from the data. A table of these codes is included as Appendix 14. The researcher then returned to the field to gather additional data (see 25-29 July, in Figure 3:3).

### **Phase One- Codes, Themes and Categories**

After reviewing the codes that emerged from the phase one analysis, the process was to test the codes. A reprinted set of transcripts was read and recoded to compare what was seen in the same data. As a result, some of the original codes were condensed or collapsed and in some cases new themes were developed. During this process, commonalities and distinctions among the meanings of the themes became clearer. In developing theme labels, the researcher tried to use participants' voices as they described experience. For example, theme 'doing something' and 'helping out' were placed into the refined theme labelled 'helping others'. A table containing these themes is included as Appendix 15. The results of this process produced a broad range of refined themes on the implementation and development of the 'Adopt a School' project.

The next step was to move towards thematic analysis described by Charmaz as a 'systematic trawl for key factors' (2002, p. 680). As a result, the researcher began determining which refined themes were predominant in the data and summarised their content onto a hand written spreadsheet and labelled them as categories.

With this understanding, the researcher developed a semantic knowledge of the school, the student participants and the 'Adopt a School' project. This allowed focused questions to be developed and in some cases, questions that needed to be avoided, for the phase two interviews. For example, there was a conscious decision not to ask the participants about their socio-economic situation, or to use the word 'privilege' in the questioning.

## Phase Two

Over a time period that ranged from August 2005 until December 2005, the fourth term of the school year, interviews were conducted with the participants. As previously identified, figure 3:3 above identifies the dates and the participant source (teacher, parent or student). The purpose of these interviews was to gain the views of the student participants' experiences regarding the development of the 'Adopt a School' project, as well as their expectations, perceptions, experiences and thoughts.

As above, the interviews were semi-structured (Bodgen & Biklen, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and again throughout the interviews, unplanned, contextually relevant questions emerged as the researcher became sensitised to the meanings that the participants were bringing to the situation (Mertens, 1998, p.321). This enabled more specific questions about individual experiences and perceptions to be asked. Subsequently, semi-structured interview transcripts became the most informative source of data. Three types of semi-structured questions guided the interview in this phase of the study. See samples below:

The central questions, common to these interviews were;

- 'What is the 'Adopt a School' project and how did it come about?'
- 'Why did you get involved in the 'Adopt a School' project?'
- 'What was your involvement?'
- 'What preparation (learning) did you have prior to the trip?'
- 'What did you plan to do in Sri Lanka?'
- 'Have you participated in another service project before?'
- 'What did you see in Sri Lanka?'

Probing questions;

- 'What did you do in Sri Lanka?'
- 'How did your participation impact on your thoughts about other people?'
- 'Can you identify if you are drawing on your experience and putting some of what you learned into practice in your daily life?'
- 'What are you doing differently?'
- 'What are the consequences of these new understandings?'

‘Do you see your life differently since your participation?’

‘Can you identify how you will put what you learned into practice in the future?’

Follow-up questions;

‘How did you feel about seeing tsunami damage, poverty, different racial groups?’

‘How do you now feel when you see charity workers, World Vision and such ads on TV, seeking help for needy people?’

‘Do you see yourself differently – since your participation?’

The observational field notes generated during this phase were more reflective than descriptive and as a result were used to verify issues and relationships. For example:

#### Behaviour

I sat to the side of the amphitheatre for a while. I watched the girls begin their lunch. Social groups were formed. The ‘special needs’ girls sat separately for a short time, an invitation was offered for them to join one of the already formed social groups. I watched the dynamics of this newly formed group – slow, controlled movements, focused talk directed at the special needs girls – totally inclusive. (Field note, October, 2005)

I have come away from the last group of interviews having heard the girls say they are confident in articulating their beliefs and opinions with me during these sessions. Ivy said ‘it is nice to share this part of my life with you, because you truly listen’.

(Field note, November, 2005)

The above extracts present two examples of behaviour. These were synthesised and used to help the researcher understand the student statements on the behavioural interactions in Sri Lanka. These notes also assisted in keeping the analysis active.

Throughout this phase two of the study, the participants produced articles on the project, identifying what they saw, did and felt. The majority of these were reflective (assessment) tasks, however, samples were published in the school newsletter, used as press release documents, and others were included in the Principal’s and other

executive teachers' speeches presented to the wider community. The extract below is an example of a participants' published writing:

As a Christian school, PLC has Christ's example of service to follow, especially to serve those in need. The decision to get in there and help the people of Sri Lanka wasn't hard; it was the easiest part! We wanted to get involved because we had the power to make the lives of those who had lost everything that little bit easier and bring just a little bit of happiness to Sri Lanka...

(Ash, October, PLC Newsletter 2005)

These data were formatted as computer (Word) documents.

## **Phase Two – Preliminary Coding**

Immediately after the interview data were obtained from of the students' interviews were transcribed from the audio-tapes and formatted as computer (Word) documents. Each transcript was read several times before beginning the process of coding. During this time the nuances and lexicon of the students became familiar. In this instance, the word 'Adopt a School' was given a peculiar meaning. For example:

'Adopt a'  
'Adopt project' and  
'Adopt Sri Lanka'

Analysis was guide by questions such as;

What is going on?  
What is this person/s saying?  
What was s/he doing?  
How does the context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions or statements?

Carrying out coding and analysis such as the above, helped to develop codes and areas for further investigation. Analysis enabled the researcher to make decisions about what kinds of data needed to be collected next.

Themes were formed from the phase two data. It should be noted that there was thematic overlap in many of the codes, because many of the issues raised in the transcripts were not mutually exclusive of one another.

### **Phase Two – Refining Codes into Themes**

It was then necessary to review the preliminary themes and compare them to each other in order to cluster them into refined themes (Strauss, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2002). The refining procedure required reading the transcript, coding word groups for the presence or absence of major issues such as insights, ‘ah ha’ moments, seeing differences, and growth in knowledge and transcribing them onto computer (Word) files.

For example, a coded extract from one of the teachers noted that, ‘The girls in this school experiences in their every day lives make them insular. They focus on teen life and personal issues’ (Kathy, October, 2005). This inspired the theme ‘growing and maturing’. A comparison was made with the statement from a student participant, who wrote; ‘I have come to realise that there is so much to do to help people out there in the world, but there is only so much I can do alone. But! And, although I’m only a teenager, I have done something’ (Belle, October, 2005). This was coded ‘growing and helping’ for its content regarding change in personal perception. As the analysis continued, each coded phrase was re-examined to decide whether it could be compared to the similar statement. The refining process captured, synthesised and helped the researcher understand the main themes in the statement. For example the groups of themes ‘making the trip’, ‘going and realising’, and ‘seeing things differently – a new world’ positioned onto a matrix for easy reference (Figure 3: 8) presented the range of information gathered about the perceptions and the participants’ active participation in Sri Lanka that contrasted with their normal daily lives.

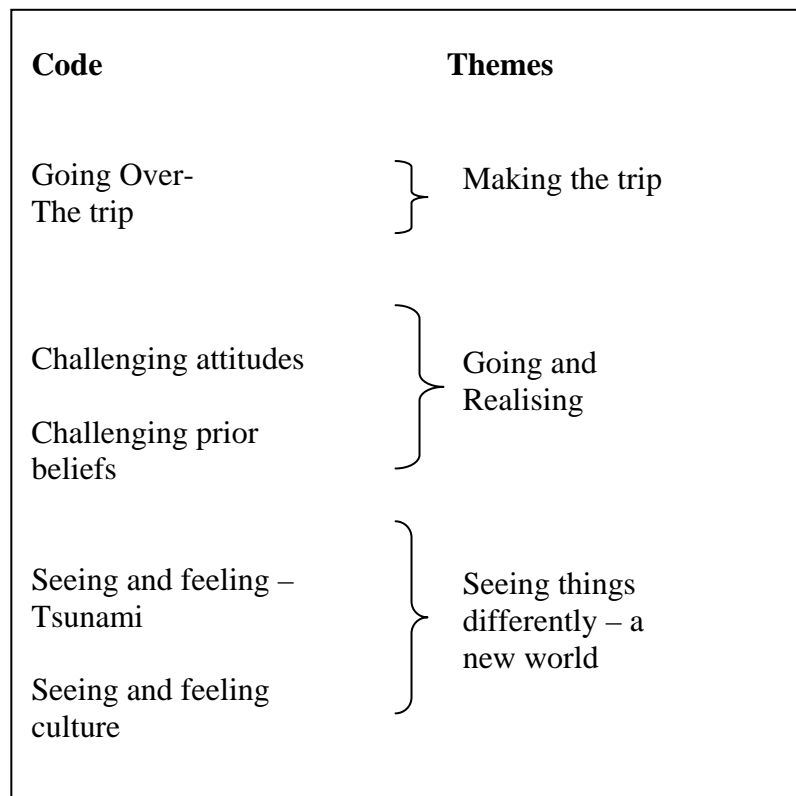


Figure 3:8 Developing Codes into Themes

The themes above emerged from the probing research question ‘What did you see in Sri Lanka? The follow-up questions allowed the participants to further explain what it was that they were experiencing and learning as students while in Sri Lanka.

This then allowed focused questions to be posed to the student participants in the supplementary interviews. These additional interviews were then transcribed to further inform and extend the study.

### Phase Three

In this study there was a break in the data gathering. This break of thirteen months was influenced primarily by the participants’ timetable but also had advantages in retrospect. In 2006 these participants began the last year of their secondary schooling. The climax of this year is an external examination referred to in NSW as the Higher School Certificate (HSC). Therefore, and in respect of the participants’ time and school commitments, data collection lay dormant until February 2007.



During February, March and April 2007 three email interviews were directed to eight student participants. These eight students had remained in contact with me or other students who had been involved in the 'Adopt a School' project and consented to continue their involvement in this study.

It was reported by the students that the email method of data collection fitted with the new and busy schedules of post-school life, as well as providing a contemporary medium for asking additional questions. The email correspondence with the student participants enabled a form of asynchronous dialogue to be initiated and assisted in rebuilding rapport and trust after the time lapse since the Phase Two data collection period. These email interviews were structured, yet were informal (Charmaz, 1990). The overall purpose of these interviews was to capture in the exact words of the participants their beliefs about their change in life learning since their participation in the 'Adopt a School' project in 2005. Email questions (Glaser, 1978, 2002; Creswell, 2002) asked of the eight continuing participants included:

- Now you have finished school, what part of the 'Adopt a School' project do you reflect on?
- Can you identify how your involvement in the 'Adopt a School' project impacted on you – your tertiary course, career path, job, friendship/community associations?
- How have outcomes, x y z affected/impacted/manifested in you?
- When you talk about your experience to others what do you tell them?
- Are you satisfied with what you did in Sri Lanka?
- Do you think you achieved your personal goal?

In some instances the responses generated a conversation between the researcher and the participants. The following was chosen as an example of part of an e-mail interview conversation:

**E-mail Question-**

When we last emailed, you mentioned that you would like to do more to help or support others. How do you envisage doing this? and What type of support would you like to give?

**Ikka's Email response-**

Well right now I am in Vietnam working as a Gap student for PLC. I am helping children learn to speak English. I'm an echo actually saying words like 'puzzle' and 'good morning' over and over again. I also tutor at a college in Hanoi. At this time in my life this is how I am supporting others.

The money I earn I am putting back into the local economy through my small shopping trips in the markets. Something we learned in Sri Lanka was to 'buy it local'.

I still would like to do more to support others. The type of support I want to give is practical support. I want to be the one on the field doing the caring, sharing and giving of myself. I'm thinking about my career and am considering nursing, or film making. Nursing, that is obviously a support area as you are caring for people. Film making can get the message and images out to the masses though.

(Ikka, (email) March, 2007)

Figure 3:9 E-mail Interview: An Example

### Phase Three – Codes to Theme: The Final Analysis

In this phase of the study, data from the email interviews was handled in much the same way as in Phase One and Phase Two analysis. The data generated were transferred from email files to computer (Word) documents and organised onto individual files. Questions such as; 'What happened to the students?', 'What changes are evident in the accounts of the project?' 'Have all the students been affected by project participation?' were posed to the data and each set of responses was read through with these questions in mind.

Still working on individual documents, the words and phrases were underlined and coloured to make the common connection visible. It became apparent that the researchers' sensitivity to the data meant that these codes were being fitted straight into the existing phase one and phase two refined themes and categories of data were beginning to become evident. Their addition into these emergent categories provided a clearer understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The next step was to move towards thematic analysis. Here Strauss and Corbin provided some advice: 'Grounded theory is an action orientation model, therefore in some way the theory has to show action and change, or the reasons for little or minimal change' (1990, p. 123). This process drew links between previous data, raw data, reviewed literature and ensured that data were analytically logical (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To achieve this, the research question: How did a service learning experience affect Year 11 school students? was written in the centre of an A3 page. Cards with the refined themes' names written on were placed randomly all around the question in the centre. The cards were then moved around until they were grouped into categories. In this way, the researcher was able to see the conceptual links in the categories. It was also possible to see some patterns in the data. Then linkage lines were drawn between each category and the research question. Doing this analysis generated more of a conceptual map of outcomes of the 'Adopt a School' service learning project. Importantly, categories were identified, representative of the emerging grounded theory.

A representation of the 'Adopt a School' service learning conceptual map looks like this:

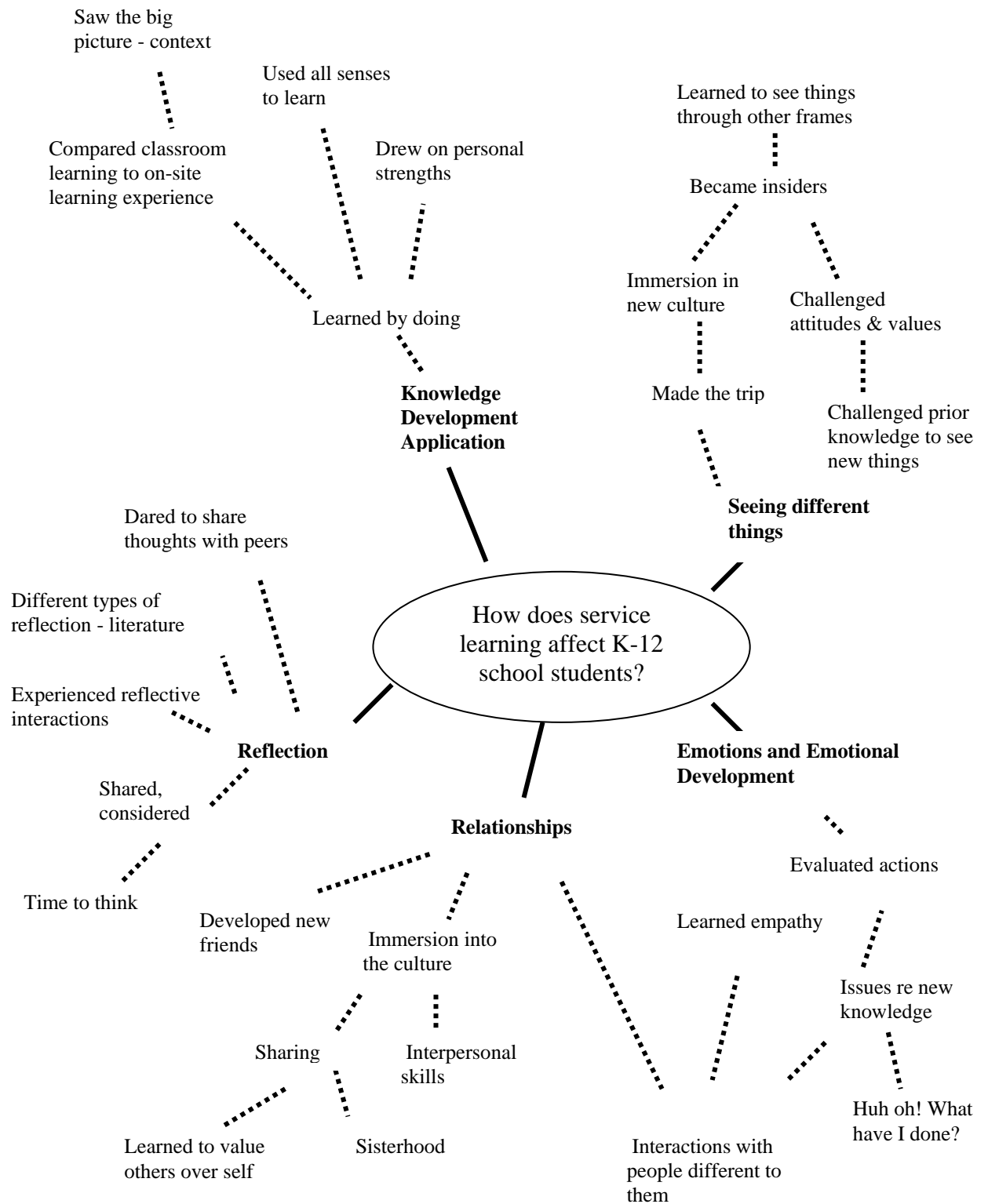


Figure 3:10 'Adopt a School' Service Learning Projects' Conceptual Map

### **Development of a Core Category**

The next step was to move towards the development of the final core category. During this phase the five categories emerged to identify the relationships between the grouped data. By this stage of the study, the researcher had enhanced knowledge of the phenomenon being studied, developed through academic and theoretical reading, and was drawing more so on past research experience and the professional analytical skills of a classroom teacher. The recurring ideas or language, and patterns of beliefs and behaviours that connected the participants and their settings with the service experience were identified. This process determined that the analysed data were rich in meaning, imagery and were responsive to the purpose of the study. At this time the core category emerged.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the methodological approach adopted in this study. The writing of the research report on data that emerged from a grounded theory study will reflect the methodological approach. Charmaz (2000) stated the writing should be simple with straightforward ideas that will make the theory readable. The following chapters will introduce both the development of the ‘Adopt a School’ project and the school that developed the project. This is necessary because to achieve authenticity it is important for the reader to be convinced that the researcher was present in the world where the study took place (Charmaz, 2006). It is therefore hoped that the written images will allow the reader to gain an understanding of the background experiences that the participants went through.

## **Chapter Four: Results of the Study**

### **Introduction**

In Chapter One it was identified that the purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of a group 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in a service learning project. To achieve this, data were collected through observations, analysis of documents and interviews. The respondents answered questions in relation to their participation in the 'Adopt a School' service learning project. The responses given to the interview questions were analysed using grounded theory methodology. This chapter presents the findings in two separate parts.

Part A: presents a portrait of PLC, its foundation and current form, a précis of the 'Adopt a School' service learning project and a tabulated profile identifying the participants.

Part B: The Outcomes from the 'Adopt a School' service learning project, presents the findings in light of the main research question and synthesises the findings into the major categories that emerged from the data. The concepts that form this grounded theory are identified by the categories.

Consistent with qualitative design, the study aimed to provide for the reader direct quotations of participant responses. These have been selected to illustrate particular views and perceptions of the participants informing the study. Responses from secondary participants to the study are also included throughout the presentation to supplement, triangulate and add greater depth to findings.

## **Part A: Portrait of PLC, Snapshot of the ‘Adopt a School’ project and a Profile of the Participants**

### **PLC’s Foundation and Current Form**

Established in 1888, PLC is a non-government day and boarding school for girls. The philosophy at PLC is to: offer a diverse range of opportunities at every level of schooling; to strengthen the students learning, and their connection with the global community, as well as encouraging the students’ participation in actively shaping their own futures (PLC’s Website). Whilst nurturing confidence and self-esteem to make these opportunities count, each student is encouraged to learn the value of tolerance and respect for others and to develop a personal moral and Christian faith.

PLC has evolved several lines of education. These are: academic, leadership, service, values and social-spiritual development. A teacher commented; ‘In PLC the students receive training in thinking, in leadership, in spiritual-moral enrichment and in social awareness’ (Agnes, 2005).

PLC publications (McKeith, 2006) indicated an emphasis on social engagement and conviction about social change through individual and group efforts. Student leadership is developed through camps, study tours, debates and political interaction with people. Students are, therefore, taught to be sensitive to social problems through (service) outreach projects.

Outreach projects are said to introduce each of the students to service and Christian charity. It was made clear that ‘concern for others’ is a significant part of the school’s culture:

An important aim of PLC is to encourage all to show a genuine concern for others and to care for those in need... (Principal)

Outreach projects include fund raising projects for major charities, the making of garments for Presbyterian Church missions, cultural and musical performances for local charities and participating in short term service to local community groups. In addition, students also undertake service learning projects such as the ‘Adopt a

School' project, which are integrated into the course work of senior subject areas. One teacher commented, 'service and outreach education at PLC cut across all the social and economic strata of society' (Kathy).

There was a general agreement within the school that what is learned and experienced through outreach could be applied in the 'real world context' of the students' individual lives. One teacher commented:

Our role as educators is to show the girls who they are, so that they can make judgements about how they want to live in the world. But for those of us who have a humanitarian heart, it is about helping others. So when people are in crisis or face disasters, we should do what we can as good neighbours or as Christians, depending on where you stand on that. We have to see what we can do to help. (Agnes)

There was also an understanding amongst most participants (n = 12) that outreach was much more than just 'giving' and 'serving'. Participant comments included:

During the act of outreach we are able to see the story with our own eyes for ourselves and are able to make our own decisions regarding the issue and what is needed to be done. (Jess)

In PLC the service and charity work isn't about raising money, it is about giving service to others. I think that just giving money is ineffective service. And for a school like ours, that is giving nothing really. For PLC, service is giving time, energy and heart. It is, after all, a church school; we should give and give value in our giving. (Meg)

Overall, PLC has a culture that involves the students in Christian endeavours and service to others. The Principal indicated that service was central to the development of genuine and meaningful relationships with the wider community to ensure improved personal outcomes in each of the PLC's students.

### **The School I Saw: On One Visit**

March 2005: One of the mornings of the interviews

I intended to arrive at PLC at 9:00am. To get to PLC I drove through the densely populated inner western suburbs of Sydney, where terraced houses have been built



close to the road and the iron gates were closed tightly to the general public. Traffic was slow as it was 'peak hour' in Sydney.

PLC appeared as an oasis. Two sandstone gate posts opened to historic multi-storeyed buildings, open courtyards and park like gardens. I noticed signs inviting visitors and guests to 'follow the signs to the reception area' and that students were to 'walk on the paths', and 'keep their noise at a respectable level inside'.

These surroundings were far from modest, with manicured garden beds, and paved paths leading to specialist teaching areas identified as Marsden, Drummond Field, and the Aquatic Centre. The setting with 'secret' paths encouraged curiosity, which I imagined seemed conducive to discovery and learning.

There were multiple science and music laboratories, a library, specialised teaching rooms, multipurpose hall, a sports field, a drama centre, an aquatic centre and established park like gardens. In addition, the school has an Extension Centre to provide for students who are gifted and talented intellectually, and a special education unit to provide for students who need additional help and support.

A few of the 1,300 students could be seen moving between classrooms. The girls' appearance was the same; Black Watch tartan tunics, green socks and black shoes. Their hair was mostly shoulder length, fastened with green ribbons.

In the reception area I introduced myself and was asked to take a seat and wait. An executive teacher arrived. We walked into the staff lounge, which was empty of people. We sat close to large window that overlooked the sports fields. For thirty minutes we spoke about the formation of the 'Adopt a School' project. She explained to me the structure of the project and how it fitted into the International Studies subject. She spoke with respect about the girls' motivation to be part of the project and their initiative in approaching the Principal to form a Year 11 committee and service group. One-by-one the seats in the staff lounge began to fill. The teacher I was with told me there was to be a staff meeting 'shortly'.

The same executive teacher took me to the Senior Quadrangle where I was shown a notice board. The notice board was a new feature to the area. It was a display area for the students' 'Adopt a School' projects, articles, photos and accounts of the project's

development. She said, 'in time it will display many more photos and articles on what the girls saw and did in Sri Lanka'.

This executive teacher explained that she was a Christian, and was encouraged by the altruistic activities of the school. She commented on the value of offering 'respect to others' and how it guided the actions of the community. She added that she consciously used the phrase 'community' because 'schools are more than teachers, students and support staff' they are 'communities of people and practice'. She also said, 'we don't dictate the value of respect, but the girls are encouraged to consider others in everything they do'. She continued describing the school's association with the Presbyterian Church and how 'unashamed they were to hold to traditional Christian values'.

The school follows the prescribed curriculum of the New South Wales Board of Studies. The students learn literacy, numeracy, science and humanities subjects. They also have opportunities to take languages, music, drama, art and design, hospitality, and health and sports subjects. They also participate in first aid, local community activities, inter-school academic and sporting competitions, international exchange, Tournaments of the Minds and public debates and social forums.

It should be noted that this information was noted during the visits to the school to interview each of the participants. In relation to the influence of school Maehr and Braskamp argue that 'perhaps more than we realise, we are what we are expected to be and we do what the task and our significant others allow and demand' (1986, p. 35). This has been interpreted to mean that the PLC's activities and attitudes played a role in creating an environment that influences participants and share values, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour, which are reflected in their behaviours. The table that follows is a summarised review of the some of the observed cultural features of PLC Sydney.

## Manifestation of PLC's Culture

<b>Verbal forms</b>	<p>Today the college aims to 'welcome all girls to a caring Christian environment, which encourages the pursuit of excellence in all areas of life' (Handbook, 2007, p. ii). The teachers commented that the girls are encouraged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Share and talk about their faith' (Nan)</li> <li>• 'Contribute to discussions and talk' (Agnes)</li> <li>• 'Speak their mind' (Ian)</li> <li>• 'Develop and demonstrate their understanding of and respect for, the value others' (Agnes) and</li> <li>• 'Be confident in communicating their ideas' (Kathy)</li> </ul>
<b>Visual interactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black Watch tartan uniform introduced in 1918 is still worn today</li> <li>• The school crest, which is the same as that of the Presbyterian Church of NSW, is evident on the sandstone gate posts, the buildings, stationery, the girls' uniforms and sundry items</li> <li>• The school motto within the crest encourages students to 'Strive for the highest' and 'Be holy, wisely'</li> <li>• The stained glass window in the main building features prominent historic scholars such as Plato who serve as role models</li> <li>• Academic results and university entrance exam results are publicly and proudly displayed and espoused</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to take risks in their learning</li> <li>• Students given leadership opportunities – 'they were encouraged to take control of a project'</li> </ul>
<b>Observed Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing of The School Hymn (reiterates Christian values and traditions of the school)</li> <li>• Through its service work the school endeavours to be 'as much as possible, a microcosm of the world' (Marsden, 1926, cited in McFarlane, 1988, p. 55)</li> <li>• Influenced by Dewey the school adopted a curriculum approach in 1923 that allowed 'children to follow their own ways in purpose, planning and execution of judgement' (McFarlane, 1988, p. 53), which is evident today</li> <li>• Evidence of activities, service and success include photos, posters and newsletter reviews of work done for charities both local and international</li> <li>• The students are given leadership experiences, public speaking, conferencing, attending out-of-school seminars and</li> <li>• The students are encouraged to be socially and politically aware, so they can exchange and share broader experiences and participate in opportunities of service.</li> </ul>

Table 4:1 Manifestations of PLC's School Culture

## **The ‘Adopt a School’ Service Learning Project**

### **Background to the Project**

The ‘Adopt a School’ project, is the name of a service learning project developed in 2005 by a team at PLC, to link this school with three schools in Sri Lanka affected by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. Based on the principle of ‘respect for others’, the project was initiated after seeing television images and hearing reports on the tsunami and its effect on the coastal areas of Sri Lanka, for example:

The local people in the town of Weligama in southern Sri Lanka now have a saying. ‘When there is no water in the bay, it’s time to run away’. On Boxing Day 2004, the water receded, leaving much of the sea floor exposed. As fish flipped and flopped, stranded by the suddenly retreating waters, adults and children hurried down the beach to collect them. As they raised their eyes, they saw a huge wave, up to seven metres high, rushing towards them...

(Cited in Qantas Flight Magazine, April, 2005)

It was reported in various publications that over 70% of the Sri Lankan coastline was affected by the tsunami, with some of the most serious destruction and loss in the region around Galle. The Sri Lankan citizens were greatly affected by the tsunami’s impact on their lives. The majority lost property, but a large number lost members of their families. According to an online article, ‘on the 16 June 2005, the government of Sri Lanka reported 31, 229 people dead and 4,100 missing’ (AdoptSriLanka website). It was also reported that ‘Schools were also affected in various ways. Some reported complete or near destruction of their facilities’ (PLC Principal, December, Newsletter, 2005).

### **How the Project was Formed**

In January 2005, PLC investigated how they could support these Sri Lankan people in a meaningful way. They united with the ‘AdoptSriLanka’ aid organisation and began to co-ordinate the ‘Adopt a School’ (Australasia) project. This international aid project was formed so schools such as PLC were able to ‘Adopt a School’ in the devastated areas in Sri Lanka. The aim was to then build a direct relationship with this school, its

teachers and pupils, so they could help them ‘get back on their feet’. One of PLC’s teachers commented:

As a Christian school we are involved in the outreach to a wide range of charities. This was an opportunity to be involved in something on a global scale. On the one hand, it is part of the Christian ethos of the school to instil in our students the need to be aware of the plight of others. At the same time, we are so very aware that it is in reaching out to others and being sensitive to the need of others that in the end we find our fulfilment, and this should be part of our all-round education of our young people.  
(Kathy, 2005)

PLC adopted, in the sense that it took on supportive roles for, the following three educational institutions:

The Senehasa Girls’ Home, which was reported to be a home for forty ‘physically abused’ (Ash) young girls aged between 10 and 18 years. ‘In some cases these girls had been abused by members of their family’ (Nan), therefore, they had been placed in this home ‘for their own protection’ (Agnes).

The Ruhunu Orphanage, which was described as ‘run down orphanage for children aged from a few weeks, to five years of age’ (Agnes), and

The Sudharma College was said to be a ‘high school for boys and girls struck by the tsunami, demolishing classroom blocks and flooding the playgrounds’ (Kathy).

### **Developing the ‘Adopt a School’ Project**

Contact was established with each of these institutions and some discussion was held on what their immediate needs were. In this way, the service projects were jointly constructed by PLC’s Principal, the International Studies teacher and the directors of the educational institutions in Galle. Teachers commented that the aim was ‘to be socially responsible’ (Agnes) and that learning were to be ‘meaningful for both parties’ (Kathy).

A representative group of Year 11 students wanted to do something to help (Kathy, August 2005). Teachers (n = 4) commented that the students’ actions and their

involvement in the 'Adopt a School' service learning project were 'sincere' and 'selflessly motivated'. As one teacher said:

It was the girls who initiated their involvement in the Sri Lanka project. I thought how impressed I was with their level of maturity, their innovation and their willingness to do something potentially very demanding for others. (Kathy)

The idea was that these Year 11 students would organise in-school fund raising events. To do this, a student committee was formed through two elected representatives from each of the school house groups (ten students in total) to develop activities that would raise money and awareness of the needs of the adopted institutions.

Having decided on what the recipient schools needs were the girls were able to commence fund-raising. A letter of appeal was sent out to parents and at the same time activities such as a cake stall was held at the local hardware store... The response was enormous. The amount of donated cakes and home baked products was an indication of the importance given to this project and the empathy the whole school community had for the tsunami victims. (Kathy)

Any money raised was to be spent in Sri Lanka, so that it would benefit the wider community and their struggling economy. (Nan)

Concurrently, a program of study was introduced as part of the International Studies elective subject area. Included in this program was a proposed field trip to Sri Lanka planned for September. Service learning pedagogy was the instructional method used to structure the program for the students. As much as possible, the literature in the service learning field was followed in the project's design and implementation (Agnes; Kathy). The lessons were organised so that they built a developmental learning sequence from theoretical content and facilitator direction, to student centred experiential learning in Sri Lanka.

The International Studies elective subject provided the curriculum component for this project. The students in this subject area formally investigated the history, language and political state of Sri Lanka. Typically, these lessons included discussions on

religious practices, the education system, and provided general overviews of the country's geography, tourist and trade ventures. (Agnes)

Although incorporated into a subject area, all Year 11 students were invited to participate in the September trip to Sri Lanka.

The students, who chose [volunteered] to participate, yet weren't part of this subject, were involved in lunch time and after school sessions, during which knowledge was shared and developed through formal instruction and collaborative group discussion. The students developed a knowledge base on Sri Lanka. (Agnes)

### **Reflective Journal**

The students were asked to keep a journal of the time they spent in Sri Lanka. They were asked to note the activities they undertook, and the impressions formed as a result of their interactions. The expectation was that they would write only a paragraph or two for each journal entry, but it had to include reflection about how the experience impacted on their thoughts and life, not be just a list of things they did.

The students were asked:

- Write down your thoughts and feelings about the experience (not a list of things that you did).
- Consider how the experience is different from what you expected and write about that.
- Observe the environment and write about your observations.
- Consider what kind of experience you think the people in Sri Lanka are having.
- What are you taking away from the experience?

Consider how the experience helps you apply your classroom-based learning. What are you learning in the 'real' world? (Agnes; Kathy)

### **Principles of the 'Adopt a School' Project**

The 'Adopt a School' service learning project aimed to better prepare participants for 'real life situations in Sri Lanka' (Agnes, 2005) and 'increase the girls' degree of social and cultural responsibility' (Principal, 2005). Therefore, the project was designed to help participants to build a direct relationship, develop an intercultural

understanding and enhance the perceived learning experiences that resulted from participation. ‘Adopt a School’ project organisers referred to these as the ‘principles’ of the ‘Adopt a School’ service learning project. It was reported by the International Studies teacher that these principles were developed from an in-depth review of current research into the skills central to the development of effective service practitioners. Throughout their service learning experience, participants within the ‘Adopt a School’ service learning project were expected to gain an understanding of the value and place each of the principles had in their service associations and their future endeavours with others. The teachers commented thus:

‘Adopt a School’ principles were to be met through students having the opportunities to recognise individual human rights, appreciate the importance of cultural diversity and value the diversity in the Sri Lankan culture. (Agnes)

Through various collaborative, individual and service tasks and sharing activities, the girls were to be assessed on their ability to recognise and apply the principles of service to their developed understanding about this service environment. It is also expected that if there is true learning the participants will continue to use these principles in their continuing development as citizens. (Nan)

### **While in Sri Lanka**

While in Sri Lanka, the participants worked one-on-one and in small groups with students in the adopted institutions. The majority of the students in these Sri Lankan institutions were young teenagers, yet the infant residence in the Ruhunu Orphanage encompassed children from birth to five years and their carers.

The participants’ work in these institutions was to encourage positive relationships through: English language, social interaction, practical assistance and sporting activities. As one of the teachers said:

Our time at the high school was spent mainly in their English language room where we read with the students and played the language games which we took over. The most enjoyable time was playing cricket with them and seeing their faces light up as we fumbled the ball. (Ian)



To demonstrate more clearly what happened in Sri Lanka, an extract taken from one of the school's publications has been condensed and included below:

...On our first day in Galle, we visited Ruhunu, an orphanage for children aged from a few weeks, to five years of age. Immediately they [the participants] were confronted with over a dozen babies, many of whom were very tiny indeed. We learned a little about them, their illnesses and how they had come to be accepted at the orphanage. One of the tiniest had been found abandoned in the rubbish. Tears rolled down the cheeks of quite a few faces that afternoon...not all of them students, but no-one was in the least bit deterred. In fact, in every case, the visit strengthened the resolve of our girls to do what they could to help at the orphanage.

By the end of the week, every one of our girls had, ...played with them, cradled them, bathed them and changed nappies...and given them a huge party at the end of their time, hugged them goodbye and then, and only then, did the tears roll down their cheeks again.

...On the second day, we visited Senehasa, a home for nearly forty physically abused young girls aged between 10 and 18 years. All had been taken into care for their own protection... Our PLC students had gone to help them with their English. Despite knowledge of the terrible ordeals these girls had endured, the visiting PLC students launched straight in with their previously prepared English activities. Within a very short time, there was chatter and laughter, talking and writing, singing and clapping...Then came the cricket match on the front lawn of the orphanage. Sri Lanka versus Australia. And test match it was. Sixteen a side...When Sri Lanka won the match; there was great excitement and cheering.

During our visit we had enquired about what the Senehasa girls most enjoyed. Traditional dancing and singing were numbered amongst their responses...They were invited to dance for us at the hotel one evening...We left a modest contribution for them to purchase material for costumes...It was a warm clear night...A crowded bus drew up...traditionally costumed young ladies, wearing make-up and costume jewellery, walked slowly and silently in pairs up the drive to be greeted by the PLC girls. This was their special night out...the young girls danced and sang for us...when they had finished, there was lengthy applause, hugs from our girls...and chatter.

When the tsunami struck, the Sudharma College was severely damaged. It lost a two storey block, all toilets, and most other buildings were badly damaged. One hundred students died. Fifty lost parents. Hundreds lost their homes...we visited this school and we witnessed the devastation...our girls conducted English lessons with them. The Sri Lankan students were, at first, quite shy and hesitant to respond, but the confidence, vitality and enthusiasm of the PLC girls brushed all of their hesitancy aside. Within a short time, all were participating in the lessons with great enthusiasm...

The hours were long and the pace hectic during our stay in Sri Lanka, but our PLC girls gave of themselves until they dropped. Everyone they met was greeted with great warmth and a huge beaming smile. Rich or poor, and most were very poor, male or female, young or old. All were treated in the same way and all were clearly impressed by these fresh and effervescent young Australians...

(Reproduced document undated, 2005)

The section that follows profiles the participants.

### **Profiling the Participants**

The majority of participants that informed this study were thirteen Year 11 students from PLC, whose ages ranged from 15 to 17 years in August 2005. Each of these students volunteered to participate in this study. Each of these students were female and in their second last year of secondary education.

In addition to the students, school executive teachers, two classroom teachers and parents were involved as secondary informants to the study. These informants included four executive teachers, a History teacher and one teacher involved in out-of-school aid work. In addition (but to a lesser extent) five parents were interviewed in order for the researcher to further understand the nature of their daughters' participation in the project.

Tables 4:2, 4:3, 4:4 provide profiles of the study's informants.

<b>Student</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Prior Service and/or School Experience</b>	<b>Goals &amp; Expectation regarding your participation in the 'Adopt a School' service learning project</b>
Ash	16	School leader, prior international field trip, international exchange, active church participation, in-school service projects	I need to do something positive and practical with respect to their situation. My goal is to give them my time in as constructive a way as possible.
Belle	15	School leader, moderate church participation, international exchange trip, coaches sport, assisted with school charities	I have been involved in service before...I needed to help out. My goal was to see a smile or see some sort of change in their lives.
Chris	16	Prior international field trip, in-school service activity, church participation	I decided to do something directly for them. At this stage in my life simply going and sharing with them will be big.
Helen	16	In-school service, active church participation, service work in and out of school	I discussed the pros and cons of this trip with teachers here at school and with my family at home. I understand that I don't know what is ahead. I've seen images of the tsunami. I know aspects of the culture. My goal, therefore, is to go and just do what I can in the short time. I wanted to learn from them so my mind will be open to what I see. Having friends by my side will be an important support.
Ikka	16	School leader, community work, moderate church participation	They need help. My goal is to do what I can even if it is only a little thing in the scheme of things. I know I am a teenager but I will be able to give them something of my life.
Ivy	16	School leader, prior international field trip, school service	I go because I can. I go with a group who collectively can do something. My goal is to go and do.
Jess	16	School leader, prior international field trip, in-school service activity	I wanted to move from my comfort zone and do something for someone else. My goal is to simply give to others.
Laura	16	Local community service activities, coaches junior sport, moderate church participation	Even if all I could do is sit with one of the Sri Lankan people so they could see they aren't alone. That will be my service.
Lee	16	School leader, prior in-school service activity	It would be immoral for me not to go. It would be immoral to watch my friends go and I stay here in comfort.
Sandy	16	Prior international service trip, coaches junior sport, active church participant	I knew I had to do something for these people.
Meg	16	School leader, prior international field trips, service work outside school, international exchange, moderate church participation	I know I am in a privileged position as an Australian and as a student here at PLC. This is my chance to share that privilege.
Rach	16	School leader, in-school service activity	I need to see and feel what those people have to live with now. How could I help if I don't see firsthand?
Sam	16	School leader, prior international service trip, moderate church participation, school charity and service worker	I considered that leaving a memory of our visit behind may be enough reason to go. I also need to develop my service and giving base.

Table 4:2 Student-Participant Information

Participant	Position	Gender	Went on the Service Trip
Agnes	Executive teacher	Female	Yes
Kathy	Executive teacher	Female	Yes
Nan	Executive teacher	Female	No
Justine	Executive teacher	Female	No
Ian	Senior History teacher	Male	Yes
Jo	Teacher - out-of school aid	Female	No

Table 4:3 Staff Information

Number	Gender	Active Member of Parent Association
5	3 female male	2 2

Table 4:4 Parent Information

## Part A Summary

Established in 1888, the PLC aims to develop an attitude of Christian and moral faith in the context of showing tolerance and a respect for others, through a developed self-confidence, an enthusiastic commitment to excellence, and a commitment to learning (PLC's, website, 2007). This is achieved by offering a diverse range of opportunities, to strengthen the students' learning, and their connection with the global community, as well as encouraging the student's participation in actively shaping their own futures (PLC's Website). This concept of the school's culture, and the evidence of its influence on the participants, demonstrates Maehr and Braskamp's notion that 'perhaps more than we realise, we are what we are expected to be and we do what the task and our significant others allow and demand' (1986, p. 35). The development of and commitment to, the 'Adopt a School' project appears to have been influenced by the cultural attitude and behaviour of PLC.

The 'Adopt a School' service learning project was developed in 2005 by a team at PLC to link this school with three schools in Sri Lanka affected by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. The project, aimed to better prepare participants for 'real life situations

in Sri Lanka' (Agnes, 2005) and to 'increase the girls' degree of social and cultural responsibility' (Principal, 2005). Consequently, the project was designed to help participants to: build a direct relationship, develop an intercultural understanding and enhance the perceived learning experiences that resulted from participation. 'Adopt a School' project organisers referred to these as the 'principles' of the project.

The students were consistent in the reasons for their involvement in the 'Adopt a School' service learning project. They commented that they had some service experience even though it may have involved collecting money for a charity group supported by the school, and that they wanted to extend that experience and do something to 'help others'. Overall, the culture, level of resources, pastoral support, student-teacher relationships, and past experiences appear to have had very positive influences on the students' motivation to participate in the 'Adopt a School' project.

Part B of the chapter presents the findings in light of the main research question. These have been synthesised into the major categories that emerged from the data.

## **Part B: The Outcomes for the Students**

### **Introduction**

As previously stated this study is an investigation of student outcomes from a service learning project. Because of the influence service learning has on participants, this part of the chapter presents the outcomes for the students, not the effects of the service learning project on the service community or the school community.

As stated above, the 'Adopt a School' service learning project was offered by PLC to the participants in this study. The 'Adopt a School' project jointly constructed by executive teachers in PLC and three of the directors of the educational institutions in Galle Sri Lanka was designed to: build direct relationships, develop an intercultural understanding and enhance the learning experiences that resulted from participation.

The project organisers referred to these as the ‘principles’ of this the ‘Adopt a School’ project. Throughout their involvement, participants within the ‘Adopt a School’ project gained an understanding of the value of these principles and the place each of these principles had in their service, self development and their future endeavours with others. The following identifies how participation in the ‘Adopt a School’ project affected the participants.

The findings will be discussed through conceptual categories that represent the grounded theory that emerged from analysis of the data. By attaching ‘common language labels’ (Mason & Waywood, 1996) to identify these categories, the hope, is to ensure consistency in the discussion, provide a broad foundation for the investigation and increase the clarity of reporting. These categories are identified in Figure 4:1 and presented with accompanying quotes from the transcripts in the text below.

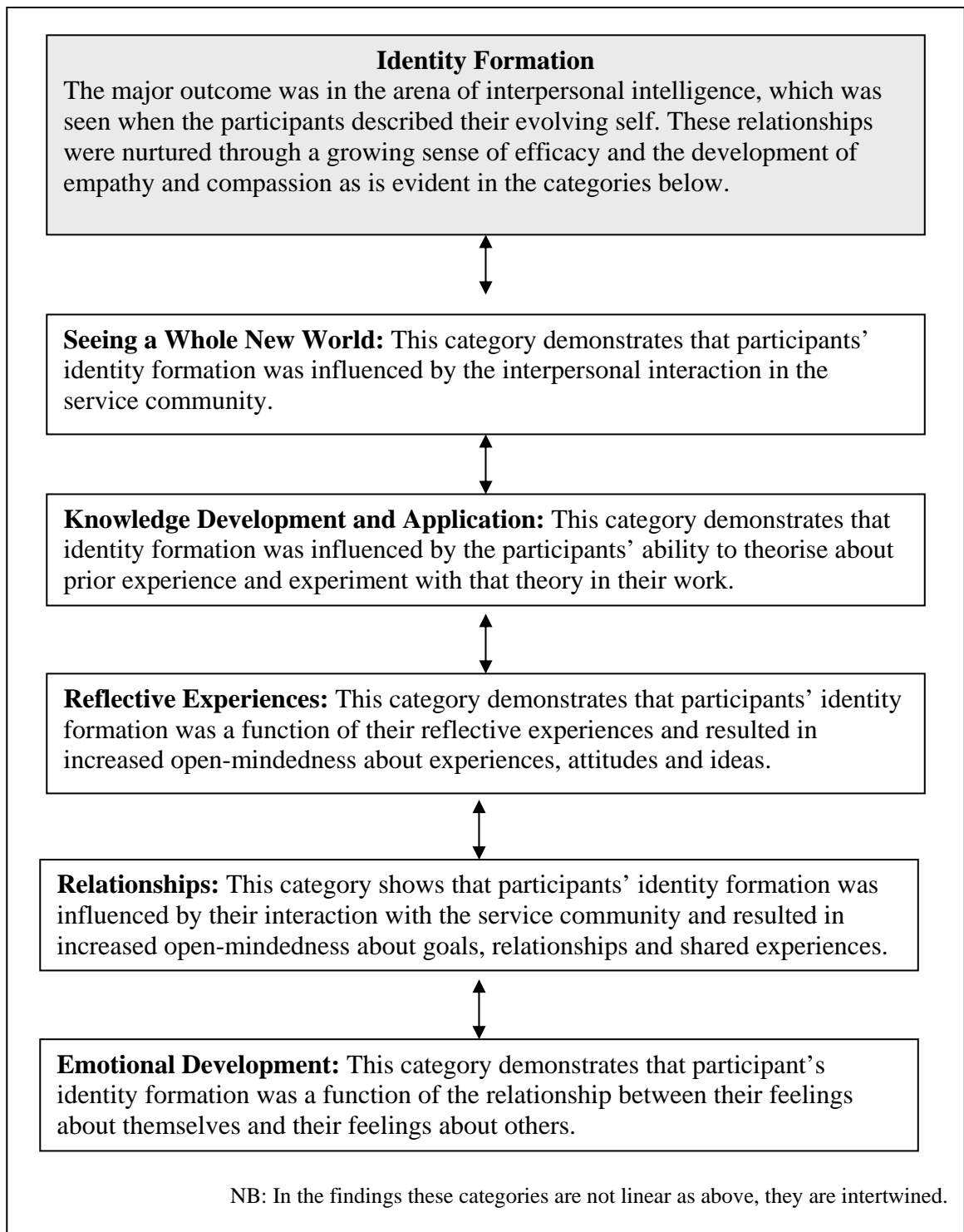


Figure 4:1 Concept Map of the Grounded Theory Categories

## **The Core Category - Identity Formation**

The nature and characteristics of this service learning project involved the participants in experiential learning activities that illustrated growth in identity. The major outcome was in the arena of interpersonal intelligence, which was seen when the participants turned ‘outward’ rather than remaining focusing ‘inward’ on themselves. All participants in this study identified some of the ways by which they were personally affected by their service participation.

Prior to the project, the participants freely admitted that this phase of their life was a ‘me’ time, during which their biggest fears were personal and included their relationships, their social lives, fashion trends and their final school marks.

At this time in my life there is a lot of personal and external pressure on me. I have to identify who I am now and what I want to be in the future. The general talk is on HSC marks, boys, clothes and my social activities. I often ask myself ‘What do I want?’

(Helen)

Every single teenager thinks life is for and about them and I am no different.

(Sandy)

Nonetheless, all the participants began the service learning project with a stated interest in ‘helping others’. They suggested that they turned from their personal ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ to consider the needs of others and suggested it would be immoral not to support the tsunami-affected people in Sri Lanka. They suggested that ‘even as teenagers’ (Sam) they would be able to ‘give them something’ (Rach) and that as a result of having done some service before, they knew ‘even a small amount of work was helpful’ (Meg). There was agreement in each of the respondent’s comments that ‘doing something practical’ for others in ‘a caring encounter’ and ‘sticking at it’ would help them ‘see themselves differently’ and as a result they ‘may become new improved people’ (Ikka).



The participants clearly saw ‘the transformation towards a focus on others’ as an important aspect of their identity. All participants spoke about how their service learning experiences caused them to reflect on their values, beliefs and attitudes in ways that very few other activities had encouraged. They suggested that they ‘thought about the consequences of things’ (Sam) and ‘considered the effects of their actions’ (Meg). Some (n = 6) said they ‘even tried to listen to their secret thoughts’ (Sandy). As a result they remarked that they ‘grew a little inside’ (Ivy) and they came away ‘knowing more about myself’ (Rach) and ‘who I am’ (Ivy):

In Sri Lanka my identity was generic. I didn’t have an individual position to fill. I was simply one of those girls from PLC Sydney. (Laura, Journal)

My clothes weren’t important to me and my ‘make up’ stayed in my bag. They didn’t matter there. I thought about how shallow it would be to focus on my appearance rather than their needs. (Rach)

I felt uncomfortable being ‘Miss White Girl’ in the bus having people wave at me, so I turned off the bravado so I could get on with why I was there. After all it wasn’t about me. It was about them and their needs. (Ikka)

Their experiences of working at the service sites enabled the participants to consider their upbringing and what, as a result that had come to be taken for granted in their lives. Some (n = 5) spoke about ‘social class’, while others (n = 4) spoke about their ‘economic privilege’. The majority (n = 10) said they were uncomfortable about being in this position and ‘even felt guilty’ (Ash). Others (n = 5) spoke about recognising the influence and advantage economic privilege provided them in enabling them to have ‘choices’ (Meg), ‘buying power’ (Chris) and a ‘variety of disposable resources’ (Laura). For Lee, ‘the service experience opened my eyes to the existence of different social classes and how different life opportunities are because of it’. Other comments included:

When I returned to Australia and was surrounded with all the luxuries of a house with four walls and a carpet and technology, I felt very confronted by the fact that I have so much and people over there had barely enough to give their family one meal.

(Jess)

I see I was quite self-centred and focused on material things. I learnt a lot about myself and now place a different value on my family life.

(Sandy)

I had no idea that I lived in such wealth and luxury until I saw where and how they lived.

(Ivy)

The developed understanding of their individual identity began a type of ‘ripple’ effect into their broader lives. For example, they spoke of change in their ‘ability to deal with new and different situations’ (Meg) and of better understanding their responsibility to their own community. Sam mentioned that ‘this trip helped me adjust my ego and plan how I should approach my new [leadership] position’, while Ash suggested ‘I see the wider world around me more clearly now, I have grown in understanding of myself and where I fit from this experience’.

The participants generally (n = 10) commented that this development in attitude was not ‘immediately obvious’ (Meg), ‘nor were there many awakening moments’ (Ikka). They did notice that they re-developed their attitudes over the course of the project and afterwards. They identified influential service learning activities as ‘seeing things first hand’, participating in ‘reflective sessions’, ‘evaluating emotions’, ‘experiencing the learning’ and the negotiations related to the ‘service relationships’.

The teachers commented on the growth in ‘identity awareness’ (Ian). They suggested that developing interactions and involvement in demanding service experience helped the participants to see themselves more clearly. They spoke about participant’s self-image being ‘enhanced’ and that ‘it was apparent that service involvement positively impacted on their ability to deal with new things, new people and their outlook on the future’ (Nan). As a result, ‘the girls seem to be more self reliant and self assured’ (Kathy). Additional teacher comments included:

The girls have come away with a different, 'more mature value and worth' attached to their abilities. (Jo)

As we evaluated the girls, it was obvious that there had been a development of a 'sense of self'. It was evident that they did think of themselves as individuals, but they also considered their place in the context of the service project too. (Kathy)

Participants repeatedly stated that their growth in 'seeing who they are' (Sandy) had an impact on their levels of self confidence in many areas. For instance, one participant commented '...I realised I had nothing to lose, so I began taking opportunities in doing things I normally wouldn't have considered' (Meg). Another pointed out that 'When you know you have to do something, then you magically have the confidence to do it' (Ikka). Other participants said:

I had confidence in what I was doing. While I was there, I was able to interact with these people. I was able to ask questions of them, well those who spoke English. You see it was important to be able to refer to things the way they did. This confidence helped me associate more easily with them and learn from them, but it also gave me a sort of personal strength... (Lee)

There were plenty of times when it got too hard. In those times I believed in myself and did what I was there to do. Help them and not think about me. (Ikka)

I suppose I became more confident in learning new things. It is easy and safe to accept what you are told or taught. I have learned to trust my own opinions and knowledge. (Ash)

Developing self confidence through their service experiences helped participants see their actions as more integral to their evolving sense of self. Meg explained, 'once you deal with people, you actually build relationships and communicate and see how their lives work'. Two teachers commented:

Since Sri Lanka, it is evident in each of the girls' attitudes to issues discussed in class that they have a greater and positive awareness of national and global issues, which is a result of the 'aid work' involvement. It would be said that 'there is a quantum leap in development after their involvement in a project that challenges their personal values'. (Ian)

The girls' personal development as a result of the Sri Lanka experience has been demonstrated in many of their activities in the school. Some are generally more supportive of their peers, others seem to be advocates of service and service projects. They all appear to have a greater confidence in how they approach things. (Justine)

And two parents commented:

Since the Sri Lanka trip, my daughter's interactions have improved. She seems more willing to give of herself. In many ways, she is more tolerant of other people and how they interplay with her. (Carmen)

My daughter seems to have placed a different value on herself. She says she appreciates her life and all she has. (Steve)

The teachers also mentioned that the participants 'began to consider and evaluate what effect their actions had on others' (Ian). They said that the participants now used phrases such as 'questioned change', 'thought about what happened', 'realised the impact' and 'wondered how things would continue to develop'. One teacher commented that, 'to help with their considerations, the girls sought out like-minded peers to evaluate the responses to their actions' (Nan), while another commented that 'they engaged in lengthy reflective conversations' (Jo).

As noted in the results of the service experience, most participants (n = 10) commented that they ended the service project on a 'sort of high' (Sandy) and expressed 'how good it felt to do something for others' (Meg). Some mentioned 'it

was good to see they appreciated our efforts' (Helen), and 'to see them smile was the best thank you' (Ikka). Two other participants commented:

I feel good because being with the people in Sri Lanka probably did more for me than I did for them. (Chris)

For this trip I didn't really know how good it felt to help others less fortunate than myself. I like, I went thinking I could give someone a hand. But, in reality I actually gave a lot of people a hand and I altered a little part of their lives. (Ivy)

Commenting on the influence of the service experience in the Phase Three interviews two years after the service trip, participants spoke about their self-awareness and identity formation. All participants mentioned how aspects of their involvement in the 'Adopt a School' project impacted on their relationships, attitudes, values and beliefs. Additionally they all described their 'evolving self', 'having a growing sense of self', 'having a sense of place in the world' and 'of developing a self empathy'. Examples included:

I look back on what we did. I see how important it was to go into another culture to learn about life there and life here; as a result, I have strengthened my beliefs in my abilities. I listened and acted on statements about giving to others, valuing each day and not taking anything for granted. (Belle, Email)

It is hard to believe that I went to Sri Lanka two years ago. The images and smells are so strong in my mind. From this distance in time, I see how the trip impacted on me. I can see how selfish a person I was before I went. I expected people to give in to me and my wants and needs. I have changed that attitude. I work towards the things I have and the things I aim to have in the future. (Lee, Email)

I remember when I returned to Australia and was again surrounded by all the luxuries of my homes' four walls and a carpet and technologies like a computer and TV, I felt so confronted and closed off from the rest of the world, guilty almost, as I had so much and people over there, barely had enough to give their family one meal.

(Jess, Email)

Further, with consideration of their identity came a reported interest in ‘new endeavours’ and a community involvement beyond school projects. Participants reported participating in service that assisted people in their ‘church community’ (Ash) and ‘seeing how they could help out around the place’ (Ikka). One said she had ‘community minded values’ (Ash), while another said she was more interested in ‘human rights’ (Rach). Sandy commented that:

It helped me see beyond myself and become more secure in who I am. I realised I wanted to do more to help others and it actually inspired me to apply for a job helping others in need. It also helped me to understand that the past can’t be changed and that the future is unknown so it is important to enjoy now. (Sandy, Email)

In this category, the results demonstrated the influence of service learning on participants’ identity formation. The following category demonstrates that one aspect of the participants’ identity formation was a function of their interaction with the service community.

### **Seeing a Whole New World**

It was clear that there was a connection between the participants’ identity formation as a result of their immersion into this community. The participants’ immersion into the service community and the subsequent interactions enabled them to live in this different culture and feel the effects this had on them.

In the pre-trip interviews, participants said they were ‘prepared’ for what was ahead of them in Sri Lanka. More than half ( $n = 9$ ) agreed that they understood what they would be experiencing in the service environment.

Having watched the scenes on the television, I know there will scenes of destruction. I imagined this to include ruined houses and vegetation. (Sam)

I know I will be entering a culture very different from the one I know. I have been told there is military presence. I suppose this means there will be soldiers helping people get organised. (Lee)

Nonetheless, they each identified that they were ‘totally shocked’ by what they saw. Participants said that as they travelled from Colombo into the tsunami-affected regions of Galle, they saw ‘shocking images of ruin’ (Lee) and the ‘impact the tsunami had on the landscape’ (Ivy). Each said that seeing these things first hand was totally different to what they had expected to see. They spoke about the first-hand experience of seeing the ‘rubble’, ‘uprooted trees’, ‘ruined houses’, ‘mangled fences’ ‘devastation around the train’ , ‘smashed up boats’ and ‘watermarked buildings’. As one participant said:

It was totally different from my expectation of what it would be like. I went with the images I saw in the media. The media didn’t show the level of destruction. So when I arrived, I went, ‘So this is what it is really like’. Dirt smell, pushed over trees, rubble and rubbish mixed together. The most astonishing image was the belongings of the people involved in the tsunami had been respectfully left untouched on the ground in the rubble on the beach. (Rach)

One teacher commented:

The girls on the trip actually drove from Colombo to Galle through the tsunami path. It was apparent that there had been a big clean up. Nonetheless, the tent city and the temporary accommodation were just unbelievable. I mentioned to the girls that because there had been so much coverage on TV in January, we had become hardened to the images. It was when we actually saw it first hand (paused...sat in a reflective pose) that we realised we weren’t hardened.

In Peraliya we walked across an open space and we saw wallets, shoes, thongs (flip flops), personal items were lying on the ground. And we all questioned what had happened to the people who owned these things. One of the girls said to me; ‘Where are the people now?’ All I could answer was; ‘We don’t know! They could be alive and injured and unable to contact their families or they could be dead’. At that point some girls struggled with the reality of what was around them and what they were doing.

Although shocked by the situation they were dignified and respectful. I noticed they stopped at various sites and bowed their heads as a sign of respect... (Kathy)

Other scenes that impacted participants' impressions included 'thin people half asleep leaning against the walls' (Ikka) 'beggars asking for food' (Ivy) and 'soldiers walked the streets with guns' (Lee).

Around half of the participants (n = 8) commented that they were 'surrounded' by the environment and were therefore, shocked by the reality of 'poverty' (Meg). Some participants remarked on poverty in this way:

I had painted a face of apathy on poverty. I was wrong and I have never been more wrong about anything in my entire life. It should be mentioned that almost all the people I encountered in the Sri Lanka worked or wanted work. I mentally kicked myself for being so stupid and prejudiced. (Laura)

I was shocked at myself for being shocked at some of the things I saw. I privately thought I should just accept things and not make judgements, but it was unexpected to see that even the animals were poverty stricken. There were cows and dogs wandering the streets, I suppose looking for food, as they were scavenging through garbage bins. This was extreme for me as I grew up on a farm in the country. Cows to me don't scavenge through bins, they graze on grasses. I have thought about this and all I can really conclude is this is a different world for each of us. (Ikka)

Teachers commented that the participants saw these elements of Sri Lanka in terms of their Australian privilege. They reported that the participants' commented on 'physical appearances', 'abilities', 'religious values', and 'having and not having things'. As a result, they said the participants expressed a sudden awareness 'of a whole new world' and that this world did not consist of 'economically privileged people'.



The difference between their home community and those they entered through their community service captured their attention and caused questioning of social class for the first time. Chris said:

As I looked around I was aware of a whole new world that mixed pain and suffering with life hopes, hard work and dreams. For this part of my life I was a part of this. You see, I really evaluated my social class. I came from a very affluent suburb and I have always been aware of that, but you know, it's not until you see how others live that you really consider what that means. So, going and being in Sri Lanka definitely put that in perspective. (Chris)

Every participant introduced statements about their community service involvement by placing these experiences in relation to their home environment. Phrases such as 'white girl', 'privilege of being white Australian teenagers', 'protected' where 'everyone was relatively equal' were given in their descriptions of where they were raised. They also commented on the 'freedoms and choices given to modern Western women' (Lee). As Lee and Belle explained:

...we went into the playground to play volleyball. None of the girls joined in. It seemed they weren't allowed. The boys were very dominating and each time one of us girls tried to go for the ball, the boys would jump in front and take the ball away. I normally would have challenged them and stood my ground. I saw that male dominance wasn't chauvinism. It was more of this social pecking order or social structure that they conformed to. I accepted that. (Lee)

We were told the girls in the home were considered unclean, and because of their past they were unfit to live in society. We saw that they were girls like us. They were girls who liked to laugh, have fun and wear pretty clothes. I learned a huge lesson. (Belle)

The participants agreed that the experience showed them the 'value of living in a safe progressive environment' (Ivy), which was conveyed in the extracts that follow:

I now see that women over here [in Australia] have so much freedom and hope. The Sri Lankan girls don't have a lot of hope for the future and they have little hope of making their own mark on the world. It was astounding for me to see, that they don't have the same opportunities that we have. I have decided to do all I can with my life. I won't let the voices of other people who say, 'You can't do that' affect my thoughts and actions, because I do have opportunities and I see now that it is up to me to take them. (Laura)

It embarrasses me to think that it took a trip to Sri Lanka for me to see difference in people and countries. I suppose I naïvely accepted what I see each day of my life was what the world was like. I stupidly expected my life situation to be common among people in other countries. I know now that what I experience is unique and privileged. I have changed my selfish and naïve attitude. (Meg)

Awareness of their own social backgrounds was the most prevalent identity influence among participants and caused the most scrutiny of how this dimension of their identities influenced their commitment to serving others. Participants commented that they stopped 'watching' and 'looking on' and became 'insiders' in this community. The majority (n = 11) said they 'looked beyond' what they were seeing to 'consider the circumstance of the service project'. They said they began to 'experience, like they [the Sri Lankan people] had, the situation and events of their lives' (Belle). Meg commented:

We woke up each morning in their environment, following the traditions of their culture. In some ways we lived like them. We certainly weren't living like Australian teenagers out for a good time. (Meg)

While others said:

I stopped looking at the scenery that contrasted between a beautiful tropical island and the rubble created by a natural disaster. In doing this I saw these people and who they were. I noticed that the people I was with moved slowly and calmly. I realised that

they took and valued the time to do and achieve things. They definitely weren't driven by the pace of life we live in Australia. (Ash)

Being there, helped me see what it would be like for them. The temperature was oppressive, so working in the heat each day would be difficult. I think back on the images of them working on their building sites. They did everything by hand. They didn't have tools or even supplies. (Laura)

It really hit me on the trip how hard their life is. I imagined what it would be like waking up feeling unwell and knowing you have to get up and get on with it and there is no ready access to medicine or help. Just this concept totally shocked me... I suppose I looked at them with respect as well as empathy from that point on. (Sam)

Similarly, teachers remarked that as the influence of the environment was considered and then evaluated by the girls they tended to 'made personal assessments' (Ian) about who they were and what they were doing. Ian further commented, 'they realised what they were seeing was not surface deep'. The girls were consciously and subconsciously evaluating what they now saw and the difference between race and culture. These comments indicate that the girls did begin this experience with preconceived ideas and that these were being reconstructed and given new meaning.

Ikka wrote in her journal, '...it was obvious that because I was here, I needed to better understand these amazing people. I needed to feel with them...so I stood on the beach and experienced the tsunami water and sand on my body'. She continued to describe her experience thus:

... I visualised the jaws of the tsunami, as the sand ran between my toes and the water pushed against my legs with the tidal flows. As I stood there, I pushed down into the sand in the attempt to anchor myself to that place.

Deep within the sand of the Indian Ocean, I bent over, to feel the salty water that was filled with small amounts of debris and the mothers and families of the orphans.

I stayed there bent over until my legs and back felt uncomfortable. I imagined as I did this that my hands were linked to theirs. I cupped my hands together to capture some of this water and splash it in my face in memory of the people who lost their lives. This stained water cleansed my tears. It was at this moment I repeated silently that ANZAC ode, – Lest we forget... (Ikka, Journal)

Participants commented that in a short period of time they began to understanding a part of the host culture from the perspective of an ‘insider living within’ which was very different from that of an ‘outsider looking in’. They said as ‘the new kids on the block’, they learned the meaning of some of the ‘ways they [the Sri Lankan people] did things’ (Jess) and the ‘purpose and particular function things had’ (Helen). The majority of the participants (n = 11) commented that this enabled them to see things through a ‘very different perspective’ (Jess) and that this helped them ‘see how they fitted in’ (Ash).

The majority (n = 11) of participants believed that the experience of ‘being there’ and ‘seeing and feeling the difference’ influenced their ‘stereotyped views of what life and people should be like’. More than half (n = 9) commented that being in the service community ‘challenged their understanding’ (Meg), that they ‘looked very closely at what previously was important’ (Sandy) and that they ‘compared and evaluated’ their thoughts. One participant commented; ‘When I got there, I felt I was better than them. I would walk around and silently think, “lucky me”. Thank goodness this very quickly changed’ (Lee). One participant said, ‘I had this moment when I realised that although there are so many differences between us, there were many things we shared’ (Meg). Sam remarked:

I realised that those people who died in the tsunami had dreams and plans for their lives. For them those dreams and plans went with them. On the other hand, the people who didn’t die have dreams for their future. For some reason, I thought that when you live in such hard conditions, you just live and think day-to-day. I learned otherwise. (Sam)

While Chris remarked:

I realised that they have no choice but to get up and go off to their physical jobs and work in the heat. I realised how hard that must be. They had no tools to assist with the building. They had to do everything by hand. I realised that life must be so hard for the people over there. (Chris)

These comments capture the tension between the initial understandings and the now more familiar understandings. It implies that the participants were taking more in depth participant observations as ‘insider’.

Participants also acknowledged that ‘taken for granted things’ and ‘elements’ of their own life had been dismissed or unseen until now. Lee, as a result of her experience in this new world, recognised some of the difficulties her brother’s disabilities presented. In one account she said:

We talked before we went about perceptions. I have been thinking about this. I remember in Sri Lanka sitting around and thinking about the people that were around me and how people in general are grouped generally by a physical feature. I have a disabled brother and to me he is just my brother. But I see now that the people that don’t know him group him with all the other people who look different. Since going to Sri Lanka, I am more sensitive to other people, who they are and where they have come from in their lives. And, I am more sensitive to my brother’s needs. (Lee)

Teachers agreed that the interactions and immersion experienced by the participants in Sri Lanka challenged their preconceived views. One teacher said:

In the girls’ early service talk, they had stereotyped views of the people and the culture. They talked about the woman or girls being ‘less’, and ‘there was an occasional slip that they had labelled some of the people as ‘unclean’. However, as the trip progressed and their interactions increased these became less obvious in their talk. (Agnes)

In the 'Phase Three' interviews, the comments (n = 13) demonstrated a complex understanding of difference. Expiring life as an insider continued the participants' evaluations. For example:

...I recall waking up and seeing the ruin around me. I remember considering how difficult it was for them to rebuild their lives knowing there were few people and few government structures to help... I still can not really comprehend what it would like, to live there all the time. (Chris, Email)

Not only do I know that I am blessed, I understand what that really means. (Ash)

The following category demonstrates that identity formation was influenced by the participants' ability to theorise about prior experience and knowledge and experiment with that theory during their service work.

## **Knowledge Development and Application**

There was a clear connection between the participants' identity formation and their knowledge development and knowledge application. The participants repeatedly commented on seeing the 'relevance' of the learning situation as it 'opened their minds'. In this way, in this experience of service learning, the students controlled, to a large extent, their learning.

Participants identified that they first went through a 'passive' in-school learning experience in holding discussions, doing readings, and hearing speakers on the community issues with which they would work. Participants commented:

Because our [Year 11 International Studies Subject] lessons were just getting started, we talked about the tsunami and its impact, not just on those people immediately affected, but its impact on the rest of the world. (Ash)

I had heard the word 'tsunami' in past Geography lessons, but it wasn't until this event happened that it was given a meaning... We spoke at length in class about how

tsunamis are formed, developed and dissipate... We spoke about what happened in Sri Lanka. (Laura)

Much of our time at the beginning of the year was given to considering how we could help the people affected by the tsunami. A former student spoke to us about what she experienced in Sri Lanka when the tsunami hit. We spoke about what it must have been like for the Sri Lankan people to turn around and see everything washed away or changed by the surge of the water. (Sandy)

As a result of the lessons, the participants commented that they went into the actual experience with some ideas of 'what they would be seeing' (Meg) and 'who they would be working with' (Sam), 'of some of the communities issues' (Ivy), and 'of how they could create positive change within the service communities' (Lee). Their comments included:

I felt prepared. I learnt about the people with whom we were going to be with, what had happened to them and a little bit about how the tsunami impacted on their lives. I didn't feel I was going in cold and unknowing. (Lee)

I learnt not only about a country and its history but also the attitudes and opinions of the people of this country. This preparation was therefore worthwhile. (Jess)

Although, there was general ( $n = 10$ ) agreement that they felt 'prepared', some ( $n = 3$ ) of the participants talked about the inadequacies in their preparation and said there was an 'imbalance between the amount of time the girls in International Studies had to learn things to those of us not in that class' (Lee). Ikka explained:

I know the Sri Lanka lessons are part of a subject area, but it seems to us on the outside that this is much more than 'part of' a subject. It seems that their total focus is on Sri Lanka, the tsunami and all the effects the tsunami had on the country. This meant those of us not in that class are at a disadvantage when we get together in the extra lessons. (Ikka)

Similarly, Belle questioned the content and function of these pre-trip lessons:

We have been speaking in our lessons on Sri Lanka about the culture, the geography and how the tsunami was formed by an underwater earthquake. I was thinking, I suppose it is good to have this background knowledge, but, what parts of these lessons will help me when I am there? I don't know how this knowledge will assist me in dealing with what is ahead. I don't know how to teach people how to speak English or do Science experiments. I don't know how to change a nappy or respond to a child who has lost its family. I suppose we will soon see what knowledge was needed.

(Belle)

Teachers clearly saw their role throughout the service learning project as facilitators. They commented that as facilitators they 'guided rather than controlled the learning or learning activities' (Nan), and they regularly 'checked on how they were going' (Justine) and 'discussed issues in context' (Ian) as they arose. One teacher commented:

As their teacher, I took on the role of facilitator rather than teacher. In this way we talked about the issues that concerned the girls. I wanted the girls to develop as much knowledge as they could for themselves. As a result, we talked about the Tamils' control over various aspects of the political situation, the dominant religious groups and their influence on day-to-day Sri Lankan activities.

(Agnes)

The teachers said they placed emphasis on the role of supporting the participants' service learning and 'emphasised the need for the girls to work collaboratively as a service group' (Jo). They also felt that it was necessary for the participants to 'feel comfortable' about gaining access to the information they needed and that the facilitators' relationships allowed this. Therefore, they 'didn't give explicit instructions' (Agnes); instead they made 'proposals' and 'suggestions'.

Participants commented on the role of the teachers as facilitators and suggested they 'were there, but not as teachers' (Meg). They said, 'We still referred to them as Mrs A, or Mr B, but we were less formal in all our other approaches' (Sandy). They additionally remarked that they 'appreciated' and 'valued' the opportunities 'to be less formal' with the teachers. They also commented that the teachers 'took a back seat' (Laura) 'so we began to explore our own potential' (Sam). Belle suggested that 'she



enjoyed the independence' while Rach said 'she found it hard taking the steps to communicate and interact without the teacher immediately by her side'. According to the participants, this less formal interaction caused them to become 'more open to experience' (Sam) and to 'ideas they had not previously considered' (Chris). Another commented:

Because we were learning from our efforts, we had to really concentrate on what was happening. This involved being a keen observer, an attentive listener and clear communicator. (Lee)

With independence from formal instruction, participants said that they began to 'do little things' to become familiar with the environment and the service institutions. They said they began 'to see how their skills and knowledge should be best used' (Helen) and that this helped them 'determine what skills and knowledge were appropriate to the situation' (Meg). Other comments included:

Day one was big. I was introduced to this new environment, and its culture. I had to assess what I needed to do to fit in and how to use some of the knowledge I had learned. (Rach)

I found I drew on everything I had learned of their culture when I was in the school. They didn't speak English and we didn't speak Sinhalese. Body language, body percussion were very useful communication aides. Knowing that boys have more prominence in this culture I tended to do things with them first. I thought hard and on my feet about what I had to do and what I couldn't do in case I offended them. (Sam)

Participants did suggest that the 'deliberate first hand application' of their skills and knowledge was important as it 'motivated them' and their 'curiosity'. Belle commented:

I felt so naïve and ignorant. I realised I was doing a massive amount of learning. I was thinking on my feet and then responded straight away to things around me. (Belle)

By exploring their abilities and the service community, participants' experience increased. They said they became willing to 'look more closely and question' (Lee) and 'take more chances in doing things' (Meg). Ikka spoke about experiencing things that would have previously been unfamiliar:

I had heard and been taught a lot about social standards. I was able to relate some of that learning to this trip. I saw the female students in the high school had less opportunity because of their social position. I had an 'ah ha' moment that linked what I saw with what I learned about social class, religion and heritage. (Ikka)

The participants said that during this active learning they 'looked back' (Rach) and connected with what they had learned prior to the trip and what they were learning in the community. For example:

Just being about to spend time with the children, I was like, "Oh yeah!" I learned in PDHPE class that babies did things in stages. I was watching what I had learned. It was good to make a connection like that, and see that what I learned was actually real. Since I have come back I have made similar connection with other subjects and applying what I have learned in many different areas. (Sandy)

A lot of stuff I learned in class I try to connect with because it wasn't easy walking into someone else's world and trying to relate and work with them. (Ikka)

The teachers commented that 'the experience of active learning' helped the participants to 'build understandings', and 'make connections' between prior experiences and practice. The teachers also suggested that 'the girls appeared to think with more complexity' (Ian) and that they began to 'confidently discuss' (Agnes) what they now knew about 'culture and social stigma' (Agnes) and 'specific and peculiar aspects of their pre-trip learning' (Kathy). Nan said the recurrent topic was related to 'the social position of woman'. Other comments included:

In this way, the experience became the source of the academic and affective learning. As a result, the 'Adopt a School' project created continuity in participants' learning,

opening new experiences from those of the past, and in so doing involved participants and continued to grow. (Justine)

The girls questioned, not out of general curiosity, but out of a need to know. They questioned the amount of care and comfort they should offer the orphaned children, knowing their visit was short and the attention would be short term. (Ian)

As the girls became more involved in the service communities they tended to employ strategies that demanded more effort. (Nan)

There was agreement with all the participants that practical work and learning throughout the service experience was a ‘challenge’ that required ‘effort’. One participant pointed out that ‘everything we did was a challenge’ (Laura). Others (n = 6) commented that this was a ‘totally new experience’ (Meg) and that at times they ‘needed coaxing to join in some of the activities’ (Ikka). As an example one participant commented:

One of the challenges we faced was communication. When we were in the classroom we had to try and communicate with the students. They didn’t speak English and we didn’t speak Sinhalese. But through ‘having a go’ and lots of body language we got through the lessons. This was so much harder than I expected. Personally I benefited from this because I felt stronger in myself and less awkward. (Chris)

Most teachers (n = 3) commented that the participants accepted the challenges by ‘tackling new things head on’ (Ian) and that this was ‘made evident as they became more courageous in their actions’ (Agnes). The teachers also said that as the service experience progressed, the participants identified that they overcame some of the perceived inadequacies and they began to ‘seize more opportunities to learn, serve and help’ (Nan). Other comments included:

It was obvious they became more confident in their actions and thoughts. (Kathy)

I know this is a cliché, but they did seize the moment more and more as the trip progressed. (Agnes)

According to the participants the ‘challenging service learning situations’ (Ivy) ‘opened their minds’ (Helen) to things different to what they knew. By being exposed to this practical and experiential style of learning, the participants questioned their previous learning experiences. The majority (n = 10) commented that they began to compare service learning to classroom learning. In service learning they had the ‘experience of living the learning’ (Ash). They remarked that they thought that with classroom learning there was a ‘distance’ between the subject and the knowledge. Jess commented:

You do feel a distance from what you learn in the classroom. Like, I am here sitting comfortably and safely with my friends, hearing about the tsunami, the Sri Lankan country and stuff. Then on the trip you live it together. It was much more intense and I got a totally different perspective ‘being it’ rather than just ‘hearing it’ or ‘reading it’. I mean you learn a totally different lesson when you ‘breathe it’, ‘smell it’ and ‘move around in it’.

(Jess)

Another participant suggested that ‘service learning was a different learning experience, because schooling tended to divide knowledge into subject areas rather than make obvious and visible connections’ (Belle). Underlying this comparison between their learning was an interest in critical thinking and viewing their situation from different perspectives. All the participants commented that with service learning they were ‘learning from others’, and ‘learning by doing’ which meant it was ‘physical’ (Sandy) and required them ‘using senses and emotions’ (Jess). They also acknowledged, that they ‘became more involved with the subject’ (Ash) because ‘it required so much attention’ (Sandy). Meg commented that ‘when you are experiencing the learning you are “in the thick of it” and thus are able to make the most of opportunities’. Another participant commented:

In the classroom you sit quietly and passively. In the field you use your whole body in your learning. You see, hear and feel what you are taking in. Therefore, it becomes part of you and your being.

(Sam)

Participants also mentioned that service learning was ‘real’, ‘meaningful’ and considered an ‘enriching experience’. They suggested that this played a big part in

identity formation. One participant said, ‘I didn’t really believe all I had learned about Sri Lanka until I saw some of the things first hand’ (Ivy). Others remarked ‘my eyes provided the proof’ (Sandy), ‘it opened me up’ (Sandy) and ‘I was a little more open to experiences and challenges (Meg), whilst another commented:

You see! We talked about the Sri Lankan people being poor and living in poverty. It wasn’t until you come and saw thin people sleeping, well, living in the street, that you understand what poverty is. That was a moment of learning that was real. You see, I could see and then understand how poverty really affected them. (Ikka)

The majority (n = 9) suggested that the practical experience of learning gave them ‘some control’ of aspects of their knowledge and personal growth and that they had ‘choices’ in what they did to ‘expand’ and ‘support’ themselves. This they believed made the learning more ‘personal’ and ‘valuable’. Participants’ comments compared to this one of Meg’s:

Most of our everyday school learning is like sitting in the classroom and hearing the teacher casually say, ‘Turn the page to “so and so” we will be looking at this significant world event.’ We then read about the particular world event discussed on that page and listen to the teacher talk about it. Unless you really know what is happening and get involved in it, like we did in Sri Lanka, it is just like the tsunami was one of those events that happened in world history written about in our textbooks. (Meg)

Teachers commented that the participants were ‘motivated by their real world experience to do more than they believed they could’ (Kathy) and that ‘through peer support, collaboration and site challenges, they developed new forms of knowledge engagement and management’ (Ian), for example:

I saw the girls draw on each other for support. They confided in each other generally before they took chances. The questions and responsive answers that were exchanged were complex and demanding. (Ian)

These girls came from a protected learning environment in PLC that places a lot on academic success. It was a different experience for them to have to take learning risks

with immediate implications, and seek answers for questions in ways that weren't necessarily academic. (Nan)

I saw the girls pay close attention to what was happening around them. In some cases they stopped asking 'what' and 'why' and really observed 'how'. (Agnes)

It was also evident that participants' growing commitment to serving others caused them to consider 'some of their weaknesses' (Jess). Sam explained:

It just kind of opened my eyes to so many other opportunities and got me involved in new experiences, meeting new people, new cultures, and new ways of doing things. I felt troubled at times and saw areas in my thinking and acting that held me back. (Sam)

Teachers (n = 5) additionally commented that 'Not all the activities were positive experiences for them' (Jo), and that the participants 'Found that the best type of learning was the confronting things that happened to the girls and how they worked through them' (Kathy). They further suggested:

There were many demanding experiences faced by the girls on the trip to Sri Lanka. It was evident that although demanding and difficult, the results of their efforts were rewarding. It took a lot of understanding and personal assessment to work through aspects of poverty, the destruction, the loss of life and such. (Agnes)

The girls often ended the day commenting how difficult the day had been because they had given so much of themselves to understand what was going on. (Nan)

Teachers also commented on the 'obvious growth' achieved by the participants. One teacher referred to this as a 'quantum leap' in development. Another commented:

Because of the nature of the learning the girls began to reflect on themselves and their position in the world. They were placed into challenging situations, such that they could begin to think and find for themselves how strong they were and what their weaknesses were and just who they were as individuals. This was a valuable learning process for them to take away with them. (Agnes)

Another teacher commented on the application of knowledge, saying:

There is no doubt that what they learned from this trip brought home to the students how fortunate we are to be living in such a country as Australia and enjoying the privileges of an education such as PLC. Service in its real sense, as this was, might well be something which they look at once they have completed their tertiary studies but it is undoubtedly an option that is going to be at the back of their minds over the next few years. (Jo)

There was an agreement with the participants that since Sri Lanka they had a great sense of ‘accomplishment’ and they were more focused on the ‘big picture’. Some (n = 5) commented on ‘understanding their place in society’ (Meg) and ‘in the school community’ (Sam). Ikka commented:

I know who I am. I am one person put into this world to enjoy what I have and to make sure what I do is productive and meaningful to me and others. (Ikka)

Teachers additionally commented that the participants’ learning did not stop in Sri Lanka. They said the participants ‘shared’ their experiences through assembly presentations, small group discussion and by writing articles for various school publications. This they said ‘highlighted what they learned as they had to talk about their experiences to an audience who didn’t have the same semantic knowledge’ (Justine). Another teacher said that ‘this “sharing” did more for their learning than they realised’ (Agnes). She said they had to ‘plan their presentation, their time, and topics, in addition to taking that step to talk in public to an interested yet critical audience’ (Agnes). Another teacher commented:

The girls had to prepare some form of school presentation. Some of them spoke to the school council, some to the whole school during assembly. They each wrote reflective journals and others pieces for school publications. In doing this, they had to really draw on what they had learned and present their findings in a manner that everyone could understand. It was obvious they reflected deeply, as all their presentations were personal and powerful accounts of what they achieved. And in each account I witnessed, they drew the audience in. (Ian)

The participants commented that as a result of ‘open in-school sharing’, they saw that they ‘were the most privileged people’ because so many people heard about the tsunami but they got the first hand experience of seeing it, then talking about what had happened as a result of it’ (Ivy).

Participants also stated that they unintentionally used this experience to think about their future plans. They spoke about the service learning experience having a ‘social responsibility’ (Chris) and the experience ‘influencing openness to new ideas and future commitments’ (Ash). Describing her plans, Sam said, ‘last week I spoke to the school Careers’ Councillor about jobs in aid organisations’, while Belle mentioned she wanted to work full time with an organisation that gives to others:

I experienced a lot of practical ‘hands-on’ learning while in Sri Lanka. I learned how hard it is to get in there and help people. I also learned how wonderful that was too. I am more passionate about working towards a career where I can give practical help to people.

Belle)

In ‘Phase Three’ interviews the majority (n = 10) of the participants said the knowledge they gained while in Sri Lanka included ‘personal knowledge’, ‘a knowledge of the world they live in’ and ‘knowledge that enabled them to move forward as adults’. They additionally said their ‘eyes had been opened’ and they had ‘grown as citizens’. Of these participants, the majority have gone onto university to undertake humanitarian courses, while a few (n = 4) have continued to further their service experience by working temporarily for local and international aid organisations. One participant commented:

Sure I’d like to ‘make poverty history’ and for there to be ‘world peace’, but I know I have to start by training in a service career as it is ‘from little things that big things grow’. I will look into how to train in serving others. I then plan to investigate a service agency, such as World Vision because I want to do good for someone else in real need.

(Ikka, Email)

There was general agreement in their comments that past experience and trip preparation gave the participants background knowledge to understand Sri Lanka, however, the actual experience of learning by doing connected the participants to their



learning and enabled a growth in knowledge and in personal understanding. One of the teachers used the following phrase as a concluding comment to one of his interviews: ‘they learned, they did and they conquered – themselves, their fears and their inexperience’ (Ian).

One outcome of service involvement on participants’ identity formation was that it was influenced by reflection about the self in relation to others. The following category demonstrates that participants’ identity formation was a function of their reflective experiences.

### **Reflective Experiences**

Reflection activities such as class preparation, small group discussions, writing tasks, and class presentations were heavily emphasised as a vital part of the ‘Adopt a School’ service learning project. It was evident these opportunities tended to promote self-reflection, personal awareness, and scrutiny of their understandings.

Each of the participants mentioned that they were involved in reflective discussion with the teachers and their peers prior to the trip to Sri Lanka. They said these sessions provided opportunity for them to ‘really think about themselves’ without the emotion of the trip attached to their learning.

Participants identified that during pre-trip reflection they thought about ‘what they could personally offer to the service project’ (Sam), ‘how they could use some of their skills’ (Lee), ‘what project involvement meant to them’ (Meg), ‘what they knew about Sri Lanka’ (Ikka) and ‘what they knew about each other in the group’ (Belle). Participants’ comments included:

During the school lessons we were asked to think about and consider different aspects of our visit, ourselves and our service. We discussed these and developed a common understanding of what was ahead. (Jess)

I was thinking about the lessons and discussions that we had before the trip to Sri Lanka. Each time we got together we learned a little more about Sri Lanka. I would often go away and think about these things. I often went home and talked to my parents about what we had discussed. (Belle)

I often saw things differently away from the group. I suppose I had more time to put my thoughts into what we had learned or talked about, when I was away from the others and their thoughts. (Laura)

As a result, participants' understanding of themselves and their motives for involvement in the project were strengthened through pre-trip reflection. The participants saw this transformation in understanding as an important aspect of their identity and personal understanding. In fact, when asked, they said that pre-trip reflection enabled them to overlay 'their thoughts' (Laura), and 'the thoughts of others' (Ivy) with the project's plan. Helen commented:

I discussed the pros and cons of this trip with teachers here at school and with my family at home. I understood that I didn't know what was ahead. My goal, therefore, was to go and just do what I could in that short time. I wanted to learn from them, so my mind will be open to what I would see. (Helen)

The majority ( $n = 10$ ) of participants commented that they 'valued' the opportunities during pre-trip reflection to 'improve basic understanding' (Ash), 'share personally' (Lee) and 'build group unity' (Jess) before they travelled to Sri Lanka, while a number ( $n = 5$ ) of the participants identified being 'stimulated' and 'engaged' by the information shared during pre-trip reflection. One participant indicated that she became 'stuck on something' (Ikka) during pre-trip reflection. She said:

There were times during those sessions that I thought; 'Have I missed something, because I am not sure what they are talking about?' Then I'd realise that my mind was stuck on something we'd spoken about earlier. I suppose I'd been lost in my thoughts and reasons. It was in these moments I didn't enjoy the deep and meaningful discussions. (Ikka)

Participants described the 'planned reflective session' conducted each evening in Sri Lanka as important. They suggested that these sessions gave them opportunity to 'talk about what had just happened' (Lee) and gave them time to 'mull over' (Sandy) what would happen next, and that reflection caused them to reconsider their values, beliefs

and attitudes in a way very few other activities had considered before. Participant comments included:

The reflective session meant we could talk about things and relate to each other. We could all sit around one table and have a good conversation about what we had seen and done and talk about what we were about to do. (Rach)

The experience affects you so much, so if there were no time to reflect and talk openly as a group I would have cried so much more than I did. (Jess)

In some ways we had to rely on ourselves and our own understandings and when you spend all day wondering about things, they grow out of control in your head. Talking to the others at night during our reflective sessions helped me see I wasn't totally alone in my thoughts. (Sam)

Participants indicated that their 'reflective peers' (Ivy) became 'sounding boards' (Laura) for their thoughts and decisions and that they 'felt confident sharing with such friends' (Meg) in an 'open forum' (Belle). Participants said they 'listened to the feedback' (Lee) 'responded to it' (Helen) and 'took on board others' thoughts and feelings' (Jess):

You see, some of the things we had done during the day had been so challenging it was necessary to talk to get them out and to get it out and into an open forum. (Belle)

Most of what we were experiencing wasn't private. Being vulnerable to the situations that surrounded us was shared by us all. It was necessary to talk about as a group and reflect on the many situations we encountered together. (Sam)

More than half ( $n = 8$ ) of the participants stated that they had a 'shift in their thinking' (Chris) and found they had a more 'genuine interest in hearing from the others' (Rach). Sam suggested:

It was good for me to compare some of my thoughts. I learned my peers are just like me – only they suffer inside on a level I am coming to understand. (Sam)

Commenting on the reflective sessions held during the evenings teachers said that they ‘enabled the participants to share trusted information’ (Ian) and ‘explore in context their personal understandings of new issues’ (Jo). Another teacher commented:

There were wonderful supportive reflective discussions between the girls in the evenings. They sat in a large dining area, isolated. The conversation of course was generated by, ‘What did you think about?’ questions. During those times it was wonderful to hear them share and open up to each other. These reflective sessions provided a means of rationalising their experience. (Kathy)

The teachers suggested that reflective sharing provided ‘reference points’ through which the participants became aware of their own achievements. They suggested that this helped them ‘combine their own thoughts and those of others’ (Agnes) and ‘see where they belonged in the service activities’ (Ian). This, they said, enabled them to take ‘risks in their actions’ (Jo) and ‘recognise that those subconscious thoughts have meanings’ (Kathy). This suggestion is supported by a comment made by Lee when she said ‘the things I think are so underlying that I don’t even recognise them until you hear people say the same sort of thing’.

Participants generally (n = 11) reported that, after reflecting on their experiences, they determined that many of their feelings were ‘common between their peers’ (Ivy) and therefore ‘what was felt was normal’ (Meg):

Some days I would think the things that were happening to me can’t be normal, but when I’d talk to the others in the evening, they knew exactly what I was talking about. This normalised my thoughts and me. (Helen)

We often talked about the same things when we sat together at night. It was good to come away knowing we all had the same experience. (Meg)

I found it interesting to hear what the others were saying as we sat together at night. It was always easy to admit that you struggled with something during the day. But

hearing someone else say 'I found this hard' often 'broke the ice' so to speak and the personal sharing would flow. (Belle)

Participants suggested that as a result of 'reflective talking' (Ivy) they increased their 'interest' and 'engagement' in giving to others. They said initially that they saw giving as practical service but now they see it as 'giving of your self'. They also suggested that it allowed them to demonstrate 'their true self' (Ivy) and 'who they really were' (Lee). Participant comments included:

Knowing that what I was doing and seeing was shared by the others, helped me want to do and see more. (Chris)

Being about to share all of me, you know the good and the bad took the pressure off being there. (Sandy)

During reflection I realised how much this service experience was contributing to my own learning and own sense of self. (Meg)

In addition to reflective discussion, each of the participants used journals to record personal thoughts. The teachers suggested that they became 'biographers' (Kathy) and this helped them 'step back and take time to come to conclusions about themselves' (Kathy). Ian commented that 'the girls were engaged in a uniquely personal and private dialogue without the thought of confrontation or the need to mediate their writings against anyone else's views'.

The majority of the participants (n = 10) described their journal as 'private spaces'. As one participant stated, 'I didn't write it for public viewing, I wrote it for me' (Belle). Participants suggested that in their reflective journals they recorded rich descriptive notes:

I'm in Sri Lanka miles from Australia. I am in a world so different to mine. I smell dirt and mould mixed together. I tasted dirt and mould as I breathe in (yuk). I see people with empty looks painted on their faces. (I wonder what they are thinking about as they sit beside the road. Are they thinking about yesterday or tomorrow? ) I

see the colours in this country are different to Australia. It is still green and brown but they are a different green and brown....  
(Sam, Journal)

Participants commented that journal entries enabled them to ‘confront personal issues’ (Helen), ‘gain a grasp of things’ (Belle) and learn in a ‘private and remote way’ (Chris), for example the participants’ journals comments included:

... I could have kicked myself. Seeing things ‘From a Distance’ as Bette Midler sang makes you see things differently. Being away from my normal life I looked at it differently. I see my mistakes and lack of understanding of others. This was time for me to grow. I didn’t think I came to grow, I thought I came to give and serve...In some ways it worries me that as a server I am taking away from this.

(Meg, Journal)

To me...So what did I learn today? Many things actually!

Hearing what the other said helped so much. It was good to discover new connection between what was happening and what I knew...It is so good to know I am not learning alone, nor that I am unique in what I am seeing.

(Ash, Journal)

Additional comments on ‘journaling’ identified the ‘strength’ and ‘personal importance’ of the reflective writing. As an example Ikka wrote:

There are times when you can’t talk openly about things because the words you speak don’t represent what you think. My journal was written for me, it is in my words. When I wrote it I didn’t feel I had to explain anything, or write down what I thought someone else may want to hear. I wrote down things for me to look back on, things that will remind me why I was there. I flick through it now and just seeing a doodle on the page takes me back to where I was when I wrote it - the smells, the sounds, the feelings all come back. If you saw the doodle you wouldn’t see what I do. Therefore my journal is for me.

(Ikka)

After the trip, reflection took a more formal structure as each of the participants were asked to ‘share’ (Agnes) at a range of school functions. This sharing required a deep analytical reflection of their experiences. Teachers (n = 2) suggested that this reflective practice was introduced to ‘challenge the girls to theorise about their service

experience' (Kathy) and it would help them 'integrate their service learning experiences into their lives' (Agnes).

Teachers commented that during this 'open sharing of experiences' judgements were made about the participants' growth and the value they placed on their service. They suggested that they look at a range of things such as 'their stated understandings of what they did to help others' (Agnes), 'whether they determined what they valued in the service recipients' (Jo) and 'how they saw their own growth and development' (Kathy). The teachers also made it clear that they were making 'judgements not formal assessments, as experiential learning was a uniquely personal and subjective learning experience' (Agnes).

Participants commented that this 'sharing' of their experiences to the wider school community caused them to become 'more critical' (Ikka) of their experiences and their achievements. They spoke about 'collaborating with their peers' (Mandy), 'taking time to consider what they would say' (Sam) and 'consider the potential impact of what they would say on other peoples' attitudes' (Lee). Other participants' comments included:

Before I shared with the whole school, I shared with my [service] friends first. I asked them to review what I was going to say, because I wanted to know if what I was going to say was our private learning or whether it was community knowledge.

(Belle)

Having to prepare something for assembly allowed me to really think about why I went and the importance of what I did. I saw another meaning in the project. First it was about going to help others. Now it is about telling other people of their needs and motivating others to help.

(Meg)

During these times of sharing with the school body, I was able to talk about the things that were important to me about the trip. At no time did I just get up and talk, I thought about what I would say and I considered what they would be hearing in my words. It was important that I combined both facts and emotions, so that they got a true account of the experience. It was also important that they experienced the experience if that makes sense to you?

(Chris)

An extract from Sam's assembly presentations is included below as an example of what was shared:

I enjoyed the entire experience of going to Sri Lanka, however I felt that I had the potential to contribute more positively to the orphanage and did not necessarily take advantage of all the possibilities presented to me in helping the children.

In the orphanage we took on the temporary care of children. This was partly so that our teachers could meet with the Sri Lanka carers and discuss continued aid and so we could give love and attention to these little children.

During these times it was our responsibility to feed, toilet and play with the children. All very challenging and daunting experiences [as] if this was my first child care experience.

Sitting with a dependent child on your knee as you slowly feed them was very moving. I often struggled to hold back my tears, knowing that this one-to-one contact was limited and very saddening. We instinctively knew we had to speak to the children as much as we could. (Sam, Assembly)

In addition to causing the participants to become more critical of their experiences and their achievements, 'sharing' provided a platform for acknowledgement and recognition. Agnes commented, 'knowledge and evidence of learning are good causes for celebration and a capstone event and important for closure'. Few participants (n = 3) mentioned this aspect of their learning, but those who did said:

This sharing moved me to a self-recognition, in that I received feedback that I did something that matters and used my skills and knowledge to accomplish something. (Sam)

It was nice to hear the others' comments and to be recognised as someone who did something that matters. (Ash)



In some ways the talk I had to do wound up my involvement in the service project.

(Meg)

It was also evident in participant comments in the phase three interviews that these generated ongoing reflection about themselves in relation to others, for example:

I remember I had given a lot of thought to what I had to say to the school. I tried to turn the pictures in my head into words so they could see what I did. Afterwards a lot of girls questioned me. Asking things like; ‘How did you cope seeing the ruins? Are they rebuilding their houses in safe areas? Having people ask me questions about the things that were every day sights while I was there, made me think more about these things. I realised, I had come to terms with the effects of the tsunami and they were still questioning it. This made me see that unless people reflect on what they do, you experiences don’t come forward and become part of your actions.

(Belle, Email)

... I used reflection to self evaluate who I was and what I achieved. I would think deeply about what I did on the trip and how it impacted on me. I would also think about how I presented myself and my experiences to the others.

(Sam, Email)

The sharing we did at the end of the service, where we spoke to different school groups about our experience was a valuable affirmation of what I had come away with. I appreciated getting feed-back and seeing people were interested in the ‘Adopt a School’ project.

(Chris, Email)

It was apparent that reflection formed the link to tie the participants’ experiences to their learning and their life. Participants were encouraged to look back on their ‘accomplishments’, ‘lives’ and ‘experiences’ which help develop their identities.

The following category headed ‘relationships’ demonstrates how participants’ identity formation was influenced by their interpersonal interactions in the service community.

## Relationships

Consistent with the results of other studies (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Eyler, Giles & Schmeide 1996; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999) this study found that student's involvement in service engaged the participants in that they shared and constructed views and values collaboratively and that their interactions were influenced by the people around them.

Each participant stated that they felt 'valued' and 'appreciated' being a part of the service learning project because the focus was on 'unified' actions. In fact when asked during the interviews to describe what influenced them as people, all described themselves as people who value working together to help and serve others. For example, Ash said, 'as a result of this school's culture of community service it is sort of natural to want to get involved' (Ash). Participants commented that the service learning project gave them a sense of 'belonging' (Ivy) and 'group identity' (Sam). Some ( $n = 7$ ) suggested that this sense of belonging was because they had 'common desires' (Sandy) and 'shared purpose in wanting to help others' (Ikka). Other comments included:

Being in the group supported my intentions to help out. Right from the beginning of the project there was a genuine interest in each other. (Meg)

Together we worked out how we would work effectively with the people in Sri Lanka. (Ivy)

They additionally commented that in the service group they could express their feelings in ways that were accepted by the others. They said they could 'freely talk, cry or sing' (Lee) or they could 'sit silently' (Sandy). Another commented:

In the evening when we came together as a group we took the opportunity to listen and question each other. This wasn't done in a nasty way. It was done primarily because we all did the same thing during the day, but had a different story to tell about it when we got together. (Ash)

Sandy was straightforward when she said:

We thought it was perfectly okay to laugh and cheer the girls' success in the cricket, the dancing and the other games we played. If we didn't freely respond to their success who else would? (Sandy)

With respect to their identity in the group, participants went so far as to say they felt 'comfortable' (Meg) drawing on the group, because 'obviously they shared a respect for each other and their learning situation' (Chris). Ivy commented, 'it was easy, going to a foreign country knowing the people standing next to me agreed with what I was doing'. They additionally commented that getting immediate feedback from the group members provided further recognition of their 'actions' and 'spoken thoughts'. For example:

There were times I struggled with what I had to comprehend. There were ways I thought things should be being done. During these times I'd ask my friends questions and as a result they answered my questions and commented on my ideas. (Ikka)

The group bond and responses to your comments demonstrated that they cared. (Laura)

They suggested that feedback could be as simple as a 'nod', 'a look' or 'a change in body language' and that it was important to see these gestures as they 'immediately confirmed what was being said' (Laura):

You know you'd done the right thing if your friends smiled or nodded as you talked about the experiences. During these times I remember feeling a wave of confidence. (Ash)

Teachers commented on the group's relationship saying 'there was obviously a bonding and strength in their shared activities' (Nan). They spoke about the 'expressions of care', 'co-operation', 'shared moments', and the 'interest in working alongside each other'. Other teacher comments included Ian's when he said, 'The value of the group relationship was captured in how they all became involved in and shared the activities and tasks' and Nan's, that 'their actions as a group reflected the attitude of the school to be respectful and inclusive'.

Participants suggested that ‘collaboration and group co-operation’ (Belle), demonstrated their ‘maturity’ (Sam), ‘integrity’ (Rach), ‘Christian value of respect’ (Ash) and illustrated growth in identity. They suggested that as a result of using their ‘combined intelligence’ (Chris) they developed a ‘positive group dynamic, which enabled them to achieve their service goals’ (Jess).

Nearly all participants (n = 11) spoke about how their group involvement helped them to confront personal issues. Their experiences of feeling ‘uncomfortable’ and ‘weird’ during aspects of the service enabled them to draw on members of the group to help ‘pull them through’ (Jess) and ‘overcome their issues’ (Chris). As a result of this support and trust there was growth in their identity formation and personal understandings. For example:

Prior to this experience I didn’t know much about myself. But, the sharing and support of the group has taught me a lot about me and my identity as a person.

(Sandy)

There were many times I felt weird. But knowing I wasn’t alone and that I was a part of a group helped me cope and see how to overcome these times of awkwardness.

(Laura)

My friend commented that because it was so confronting, she was glad I was there living this with her. She said “It would have been hard coming back and having to share this without me knowing what she was talking about”.

(Rach)

Each of the respondent’s accounts of the service experience indicated a shift in the participants’ attention towards wanting to form relationships with the service recipients. Teachers commented that the ‘shared attitude’ within the group ‘fostered the development of positive relationships with the service recipients’ (Kathy). One teacher suggested that a ‘vibe rippled out to others’ (Jo). In this respect, teachers commented that the developed understanding in group identity enabled the participants to see that they worked ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ each other and the service

community. Some (n = 6) participants suggested the relationship shared with the service community was 'mutual' and 'natural'. Others suggested:

Even though we could not speak Singhalese and they could not really speak English, we found our own way to communicate through body language, eye contact and movements. (Lee)

It was obvious they were in an emotional pain we did not know. But they let us in and we really shared ourselves with each other. (Jess)

The developed 'two-way' relationships with the others through service activities, helped participants to see their service as more integral to the evolving sense of self and their developing personal understanding. Meg explained, 'Once you deal with people, you actually build relationships and communicate'. Others suggested:

The cricket helped. We played cricket with them on this grassed area. They laughed and clapped as we mis-hit most of the balls. They were so good. We were so hopeless. In some ways this balanced us socially. (Sandy)

As I got to know them I felt like I was their sister. There was this one night, the girls in the girls' home come to the hotel to perform a traditional dance. They were late arriving as it had taken them so long to get ready. This was a big deal – they didn't get out very often as they were considered social outcasts...They arrived in traditional costumes... Their dance was traditional. Slow movements with lots of meaning in each move. It was beautiful. I was so proud of them. At the end I hugged them and together we cried. (Belle)

Relationships took time. My second day was better than the first - I was not as focused on the water marks on the walls - I paid more attention to them and listened to them sing "Oh My Darling Clementine" all eight verses for us – all the way through. [She rolled her eyes and smiled] It was so terrible that it was lovely. This was when I connected with them as a group of people. (Ikka)

I could identify this experience as the moment I bonded with them. After a few visits to the school they learned all our names. It was really special having them use my name as we joined in the activities together. (Sam)

It was evident that the service learning project caused the participants to continue to reflect on the importance of committing to someone beyond themselves. Powerful examples have been drawn from Ikka's journal accounts of the trip:

Day 5... The Moment I Was

It was my turn to feed a 3 month old baby girl. I was going well until...this whole thing got me thinking that helping little orphans was a really good idea. It is something I can do to help. At that moment a mother and her daughter walked past the window opening, they pointed and smiled at me. I smiled back, and thought about what they were looking at, a white girl feeding a little dark-skinned baby. It was then that I realised that I was enjoying what this baby's mother could never enjoy and if she was watching me from 'heaven', I hoped she would be pleased to see her baby being loved in this moment by me. (Ikka)

Another account from the same student:

Day 7... Who Am I?

As I was watching the girls dance, I felt a tug on my fob chain necklace, which had my luggage keys attached. I looked down to find an innocent little face staring into my eyes. She didn't know how to speak English so we mimed everything. The innocent little girl pointed to my necklace with the keys and gestured that she wanted to look at one of my luggage keys hanging off it. So I took off a key (I didn't need) and gave it to her. She ran around showing everyone. She then returned and gestured to me she wanted to give it back. I found a piece of blue string on the ground outside. I threaded the key onto the string, made a necklace and tied it around her neck. We were now twins...in a sense...locked together. We created a sisterhood between the two cultures. (Ikka)

The participants clearly saw that the transformation towards a focus on others as an important aspect of their identity. Participants commented that the reciprocal relationships encouraged them to become more open to experiences and to evaluate

some of their own feelings and attitudes. Nearly all ( $n = 10$ ) participants said they began to look at themselves from another perspective, and commented on 'seeing things differently' (Sandy). Other comments included:

It is easy to keep waking up and accepting who you are to be alright. But when you get the chance to be with different people, some of the things you do and think are challenged and you see they aren't alright. (Jess)

I watched a mother and child walk by hand in hand. I saw them attached to each other. I recalled how good it felt to hold my mum's hand. It made me think how similar we are. We both need to be bonded to our family and friends and to touch and hold them. (Ikka)

The teachers also commented on the growth in 'identity awareness' as a result of developed relationships. They suggested that participant's self-image was 'enhanced' and it was apparent that service involvement positively impacted on their ability to deal with new relationships. The teacher commented that participants 'went beyond themselves' and demonstrated in their relationships an 'ethic of care'. Kathy said she heard the participants say that they 'placed themselves in their shoes'. Similarly Jo said:

I heard the girls comment on being better able to understand the Sri Lankan people and their situation and towards the end of the project they were able to respond easily to the service recipients. (Jo)

Another teacher remarked that this 'ethic of care' grew gradually over the course of the project (Justine):

We saw the girls' emotions at the beginning of this project. However, as they experienced the many and varied situations they grew inner personal strength. They were reasoning, and demonstrating a true sense of care for the people they were with. It was heart warming being with them. (Kathy)

Participants suggested that personal growth and self understanding provided a 'platform for the ethic of care' (Chris). One participant commented that 'we could see

that our actions were having a positive impact on these people' (Jess). Another said; 'Seeing them respond to us motivated us to care more for each other, our new friends in Sri Lanka and the wider community' (Sandy).

Further, with reflection on their participation, the participants commented on an increased positive feeling towards their teachers. Helen said, 'In the formal world of the classroom teachers hold a position of power' and that 'this expectation of the teachers had been formed by their interactions at school'. Their service experiences influenced the relationship they developed with the teachers. They suggested that the teachers 'encouraged' them and 'spontaneously acknowledged our achievements' (Meg). As a result of the 'immediate unbiased comments' (Sam) the 'relationships were more relaxed' (Ivy). This they said helped them to 'recognise' and 'appreciate' the teachers' involvement in the project. Belle commented, 'I liked the immediate and friendly support from the teachers who were seeing what we were seeing and feeling what we were feeling', while Laura commented:

It was reassuring, maybe even uniting, knowing they cried and suffered as we did in serving and helping the Sri Lankan people. (Laura)

The relationships developed with the teachers through the service experiences helped the participants to identify greater satisfaction in being a part of the PLC's community. Participants described some of the school's traditions, aspects of the customs and general daily activities. Others suggested that as a result of the service experience and coming to better understand the teachers, they recognised parts of the school's culture:

I came to notice that PLC is not just the students and the staff. It's not the buildings either. It is a whole package. In it is about life and being, which brings in to account students, staff, ex-students, parents, the general public and the interplay between them. (Ash)

I was telling someone out of school, that in PLC the charity work isn't about raising money, it is about giving to others... I actually think that just giving money is



ineffective service. And for a school like ours that is giving nothing really. For PLC service is giving time, energy and heart. It is after all a church school. (Meg)

I suppose for years I have just got up in the morning, got ready and gone off to school. I have listened to the 'work hard' talk and the 'join in this' chatter but I have never really heard what was being said. Now I see it is more than books and words - it's a community meeting place, people, activities and friendships. (Sandy)

Participants also commented on relationships developed during service being influenced by PLC's cultural practice of 'giving to others'. One participant identified that 'the [PLC] school community provided opportunities for individuals to learn to see things from perspectives different from their own' (Ash). In one of the Phase Three interviews, Ikka commented:

You know I think about what PLC did and it has to be commended. In some ways stepping out and freely giving to others is a huge decision, maybe even a risk. I really appreciate the emphasis on coming together and giving to others. I see how I have benefited from this...I am sure there are many other people who have grown from this attitude. (Ikka)

When participants did speak about PLC, they commented that their relationships and actions were influenced by the Christian principles espoused by the school. Ash commented, 'PLC is after all a Christian school, there is value to giving and caring for and about others'. Another commented:

I really evaluated my place in this school. Because the school community is based on Christian principles, our actions and interactions are encouraged to be those based on Christian values of respect and care. I have always been aware of this, but you know, it's not until you take it on board that you understand what it means. (Jess)

Two participants did think differently about the school's influence and commented that this dimension of the school's culture 'did not matter' (Meg). Although they grew away from their self-focused identity, they were not relating this to any of the school principles and the emphasis on giving to others, for instance:

I am not into that stuff. I have my own philosophies about life and religion. I think it is good and important that as individuals that we are sympathetic and responsive to people in need. (Ivy)

Taking a different perspective on relationships, the participants (n = 10) raised issues concerning the saying 'good bye' and 'leaving their new friends behind' (Meg). Having developed strong relationships, participants spoke about 'not being prepared' for separation or the 'leaving'. They said they struggled with the concept of 'abandoning the new friends' (Rach) and 'leaving them without affection and support' (Jess). Others stated that:

Leaving there was so hard. You see, we all had our own babies to care for in the orphanage. This kind of thing meant we got close. The baby I had was about 8 weeks old. I referred to her as 'mine' and I felt very protective of her. Saying goodbye was so hard. I plan to go back and check on her. (Lee)

They cried when we left and they asked us to come back. I said, 'Yes I will', then it made me think, 'Can I really come back?' I thought about the reality of where I was and what I was doing. Then I felt like I was letting them down because I may never see them again. (Laura)

We gave them a party. It was nice to see their big brown eyes smile. That is what I focused on as I left. (Sandy)

Teachers also commented on the 'emptiness' separation caused. One said, 'We were all in the same situation; saying goodbye wasn't unique to the girls' experience' (Kathy). The teachers said they did recognise that 'the girls needed space' and 'special consideration' which they endeavoured to provide.

There was an instance on the last day where all of the girls were crying. In the bus as we drove away they all sat there in silence. At one point they all turned to look out of the bus window, sniffing and looking very reflective. It was heart breaking for them and a difficult transition to be making back to their normality. (Nan)

One of the students said to me at the end of the trip, 'My heart hurts because I have left those people behind and as I look towards my family for comfort, I hope I never ever again complain about anything'. (Kathy)

More than half ( $n = 9$ ) of the participants said they needed to be distracted so 'it wasn't so obvious I was leaving new friends' (Ikka) and they needed to 'think about other things as I moved away from these people who need so much more help' (Jess). Belle commented, 'I rang my mum and she talked me through the goodbye process', while Sam said she 'had to focus on the party we were going to give them and how much they would make them feel special' (Sam).

The teachers commented that 'during the departures they had to step back and allow the girls to experience the separation in their own terms' (Agnes). They commented on 'giving them space' (Jo) and 'keeping a distance but remaining in sight' (Kathy).

At that time I felt that my thoughts and advice may be intrusive. I decided that it may take away from their feelings and processing strategies. Sometimes it is necessary to let them feel those things individually and not to try and homogenise them into what I think. I wanted them to think what they wanted to think. (Agnes)

Participants acknowledged in the Phase three interviews that the relationships formed between the service group continued to cause them to think about their identity 'even if it made me stumble over various aspects of who I am' (Jess). They suggested 'we didn't just go our own way and go back to being teenage prats' (Sam), 'we continued to think about how they impacted on us' (Sandy) and 'how we were challenged to reconsider how we interact with other people in our lives' (Jess). Helen commented:

I take as many opportunities as I can to come together and share. I mean us PLC students come together when we can and we talk and compare happenings. We all went as different people, having experienced different lives prior. Yet this project brought us all together to get to know each other. As a result, I think I can say we value each other. (Helen)

Overall, this finding demonstrated that the development of relationships signified an increase in interpersonal intelligence. It was apparent participants took initiatives to be

involved in the project and friendships with service peers and a ‘sisterhood’ with the recipients because they knew that their actions could produce positive results. The following category shows that participant identity formation was a function of the relationship between their feelings about self and their feelings about others.

## **Emotional Development**

The final category is that of emotional development. The participants commented on behaviours and socio-emotional responses that demonstrated their feelings, attitudes and understandings towards the service recipients. They said they became aware of who they were in relation to ‘what was happening around them’.

Teachers pointed out that they ‘teach the whole person’ and in doing this they take into account each student’s unique abilities and personality’ (Kathy). This, they suggested, was an important consideration in the development of this service learning project. They commented that they ‘knew the girls in class and saw how they interacted in the school’s controlled environment’ (Agnes) and as a result they ‘had to consider how the girls would take advantage of the experiential learning practices’ (Agnes). They said they ‘knew how important it was for the participants to grow during service, therefore their emotional intelligences were considered in their planning’ (Kathy). Likewise, so were their ‘personal abilities and strengths when deciding on and allocating service tasks’ (Agnes). They additionally suggested:

Emotional development is often considered as being outside a teacher’s area of influence. However it is evident that when students enter a project such as the ‘Adopt a School’ projects it impacts dramatically on their emotional development. Jo)

The girls were great. They stepped forward to be involved in this project because of the images they saw on television. They grew as adults as a result. Taking an emotional journey forced them to stretch themselves in many directions. It was a challenge to take the ride with them. (Kathy)

Consideration of the emotional being was reflected in the participants' comments on their service experience. Every participant introduced comments about their community service participation by placing their experiences in relation to their feelings. Phrases such as 'it felt good', 'I felt saddened', 'I felt guilt' and 'it was heart warming' were common expressions in the accounts of their service experience. They acknowledged that they 'needed' to have a go and that it was 'deeply important' to help others as it would be 'immoral' not to. Ikka said 'I had the 'do unto others' mantra in my head the whole time'; while Chris said 'I knew it wouldn't be easy confronting hardship, but I felt strongly about responding to their [Sri Lankan people's] needs.

With a focus on others, participants said their emotions profoundly influenced their interactions. The majority ( $n = 11$ ) stated that they were aware of 'how other people were viewing them' (Ivy) and 'this didn't put them off' (Ikka). They said they were not 'frightened' or 'reticent', they 'actually felt competent' (Sam) in their actions. They suggested that 'we showed that we really cared about them' (Meg), and that 'we were sincere as we demonstrated that we felt for them and their situation' (Chris). Another stated she was able to 'demonstrate my passion' (Jess).

More than half ( $n = 8$ ) stated that as their service experience progressed, they 'chose to experience more feelings' (Meg) or that they 'stepped forward voluntarily to put themselves on the line' (Lee). Rach commented, 'I realised that the more I gave them, the more I got out of it'. Helen said, 'I had little to lose if I faltered', while two others stated:

I was aware of what I was doing. I was giving myself to these people. I was helping them in a little way for a short time. (Ash)

I could see people reacting to me. Some demonstrated through smiles that they were accepting. Others seemed less interested in my efforts to help. (Sam)

It was evident that group support enabled the participants to become stronger emotionally, 'see inside myself', 'grow in personal understanding' and 'be more aware'. Chris commented:

Being with the people in Sri Lanka probably did more for me than I did for them. It showed me I have a responsibility to others, who could be perceived as having less than me. (Chris)

They also commented on making conscious collaborative choices regarding whether they 'should' or 'should not' do things that would upset the service recipients. They commented that they decided that they 'should shop locally' to benefit the local economy and that they should 'respect their moral beliefs and dress modestly'. They also commented that they considered they 'should not' 'ask too many personal questions' or 'swim at the local beach as it was a sort of memorial'.

Participants indicated that a growing sense of efficacy, in particular in their developing understanding of the circumstance of the people whom they were serving and the issues of social involvement, caused them to look closely at how they 'felt about themselves'. They suggested that they 'draw on every part of their emotional being' (Helen) and 'went through many emotional states' (Sandy). They suggested that at times understanding their emotions was easy because you were either 'sad', 'happy', 'confused', 'uncomfortable' or simply 'overwhelmed'. They suggested these emotions were appropriate because 'everyone was in the same emotional place' (Meg) and 'there were many experiences in Sri Lanka that could have blown your mind' (Helen). Belle remarked that as 'we expressed our emotions we weren't flaunting ourselves, because being human was what it was about'. However, they said during the times of 'extreme emotion' (Ikka) they had to stop thinking about how they were feeling and refocus on why they were there. Ikka suggested:

I felt extremely uncomfortable being Miss White Girl in the bus having people wave at me, so I turned off the bravado so I could get on with why I was there. After all, it wasn't about me it was about them and their needs.

With a basic understanding of their emotions, participants suggested that during the service experience they noticed developing empathy towards the Sri Lankan people's attitude to life. They considered why they were so 'accepting' and 'tolerant' of their situation and that they all appeared 'calm'. One participant said that 'once you watch people and see that their passion doesn't deal with money it does something to your

approach to them' (Bell). As a result they remarked that they 'developed a respect for their [the Sri Lankan people's] attitude to move forward and not look back' (Jess) and 'acknowledge the value they placed on what they do have' (Ash). Ikka commented:

You know! You get involved in something like this thinking you will instantly 'save the world' and you will be frantically helping out in all sorts of situations. No! Not in Sri Lanka. Everything seems to happen slowly. This really frustrated me. I had to learn to trust their administration processes and I had to be tolerant of these official people who took their time to do things...I remember asking myself, 'Who is right? Am I right for wanting to jump in and help everyone all at once, or are they right to take their time to slowly and cautiously process the money, the resources we shipped over and our willing bodies?' (Ikka)

Teachers suggested that as a result of their 'ethic of care and their 'demonstrated empathy', there was an 'emotional harmony' between the groups. One teacher commented that 'it looked to be a good fit in personalities' (Ian), while another remarked that, 'the girls went to help with no expectation of recognition or reward, yet they formed an emotional bond and the obvious reward of friendship' (Kathy).

Each participant recognised that 'for a short time they were their (the children in the orphanage) care givers' (Laura) and that through this caring they 'provided some of their physical and emotional needs' (Lee). They said that as a result of their care giving, they 'emotionally bonded' with members of the service community and this had a 'powerful influence on their lives' (Sandy). Some (n = 4) said it made it easier to give 'love and attention' (Belle), while others (n = 4) suggested that it made them more aware of the responsibility of supporting others. They all (n = 13) said they felt guilty about leaving their friends and charges behind and returning to 'the privilege of living affluent, safe Australian lives' (Jess). They said their guilt was eventually transformed into a sense of responsibility as they came to consider their actions. They commented on wondering what impact they had on 'them [the girls in the girls' home] and their future dreams' (Sandy). They additionally commented that they 'hoped we didn't ruin them [the girls in the girls' home] being there and being us' (Ivy), and that 'I cannot help wonder how our actions and interactions and our displays of wealth tainted them all' (Jess). Others said:

I can not help but wonder what we did to them and their future dreams. We arrived and demonstrated that there is a big and comfortable world away from Sri Lanka. One I am glad I live in. These people saw what we have and the choices we have with our lives. I wonder if they are angry at us for having an easier life. I wonder also what negative effects we had on them and their future private lives. (Ikka)

When I left the girls home I felt as if I was abandoning the girls who needed us the most. I really didn't want to leave. I felt as though we were leaving them behind and going back to our 5 star hotels, sky rise buildings, plentiful foods and luxurious lifestyle. I was kind of angry at myself for leaving and at the same time angry I had ever gone. I know the girls appreciated us being there and loved us being there, but then I thought to myself that I had gone there showing them that I am more well off than they are. At the same, time my visit gave them hope that I will come back. I have no control over the future. I mean, sure I'd love to go right now. But I feel as though I've given them a false hope and they will hold on to it for the rest of their lives. (Sam)

I cannot help but compare who I am and what I have, to them and their lives. It saddened me to see them struggle and to think that I will leave here in a few days and return to my comforts. It hurts me to think that life circumstance is chance. I know in Australia I will move forward, but here they will move – sideways – not forward and not backwards. Not a happy or encouraging thought to leave on. (Lee, Journal)

The teachers talked about being 'surprised' by the girls questioning of their impact on the service recipients. One teacher commented that 'we had developed expectations on how the participants would behave and what relationships may develop but we didn't expect the girls to consider their impact on the recipients so greatly' (Kathy), while another remarked:

We were so proud of our girls and how well they performed their duties in Sri Lanka. They were courageous, confident and supportive. We recognised a growth in their personalities and academic aptitudes as a result. However, as a Christian myself I was most touched by their developed humanitarian stance and their approach to others. They were sincere in their relationships and true to their emotions. (Jo)



The final and summarising comment is from Ikka:

There would have to be something wrong with me if this didn't have a profound impact on how I relate to other people and the community. So much has happened to me since that trip. It impacted on how I think and how I approach other people. Each day I have at least one conscious thought on Sri Lanka and those people that the western world has forgotten...The tsunami, although it was horrible, brought some attention to those people and their need for aid. I don't plan to forget them and move on with my life without them. (Ikka, Email)

## **Chapter Summary**

The philosophy at PLC is to develop a personal moral and Christian faith in the students by offering a diverse range of opportunities, to strengthen the students' learning, and their connection with the global community, as well as to encourage the student's participation in actively shaping their own futures (PLC's Website). Those in the school feel there was evidence of this in the way the Year 11 students responded immediately to the needs of the people in Sri Lanka and volunteered to participate in the 'Adopt a School' project. The students repeatedly commented that they could do something to 'help others'. Retrospectively, none of them reported that they were participating with unrealistic ideals of what service was or of what lay ahead of them.

Overall, the nature and character of this service learning project involved the participants in experiential learning activities that illustrated growth in identity. Participants commented that immersion into this host community 'challenged their understandings' and encouraged them to not only evaluate their character, but their knowledge development and application. The participants identified that the 'deliberate first hand application of their skills and knowledge motivated them and their curiosity. In this way, in this experience of service learning, the students controlled, to a large extent, their learning.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of a group 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in a service learning project. What the research data revealed was that the nature and characteristics of this service learning project involved the participants in experiential learning activities that influenced growth in identity.

In the literature a number of writers draw attention to the importance of the process of action resulting not only in academic and cognitive development, but in personal and social development as well (Dewey, 1938; Kolb & Fry 1975; Jarvis, 1995; Eyler, & Giles, 1999). The literature emphasised that student outcomes come about as an individual changes their thinking, based on an experience and, most importantly, by reflecting on that experience. In this same way, Conner suggests that 'learners need to integrate what they sense and think, with what they feel and how they behave' (2007, p. 2).

Many connections are apparent in comparing the outcomes of this service learning experience with the outcomes discussed in the reviewed literature. The literature emphasised that, through service learning work, students break down barriers and stereotypes and feel more committed to spending time with people from varying backgrounds different from their own, are supported by this study (Astin, 1993; O'Brien, Sedlacek, & Kendall, 1994; Sheffield, 2003). Other connections with the literature included motivations such as: religiosity, being social, giving a high priority to the life goals of helping others in difficulty and participating in community action programs, coming from a higher socio-economic status, and being in a school with a strong altruistic culture (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Sax & Astin, 1998). Participants from the third phase of the study found this experience overall to be one of the most powerful learning experiences that they had had in school, which also supports much

of the literature reviewed by other researchers such as Giles and Eyler (1994), Sax and Astin (1998), Furco (2002), Billig and Eyler (2003); Billig and Klute (2003). The following discusses the emergent categories found in this study in relation to how service learning affected the participants.

## **Identity Formation**

The results of this study looked at how service learning affected the participants and found the strongest outcome in the arena of interpersonal intelligence, which was seen when the participants described their evolving self. The results suggested that when participants engaged with others in a service learning environment the opportunity for reflection on self and others was enhanced. Although students entered this service learning experience thinking they were going to serve and learn about the ‘other’ or those whose life situations were not at all similar to theirs, they reported that some of their greatest learning was about themselves. This is in agreement with the findings in the research literature that reported typical outcome areas of service learning to include interpersonal intelligence such as, changes in self-awareness, self-image, self-esteem, self-confidence, respect for diversity, value expression and collaborative skills (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Rhoades, 1997; Youniss and Yates, 1997; Jones & Abes, 2003; Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005). For example, research by Rhoads (1997) indicated that the service experience reshapes participants so they can re-establish their identity as they came into contact with other people.

Based on this study’s findings, it seems that as a result of their involvement in the ‘Adopt a School’ project, the participants developed their interpersonal intelligence incrementally over the course of the project as they turned ‘outward’, rather than looking ‘inward’ on themselves. The participants generally (n = 10) identified that this development in identity was not ‘immediately obvious’ (Meg), ‘nor were there many awakening moments’ (Ikka).

It was clear that the transformation towards a focus on others was an important aspect of their identity formation. All participants spoke about how considering others caused

them to reflect on their own values, beliefs, attitudes, up-bringing and privilege in ways very few other activities had encouraged. They suggested that they thought about the consequences of their actions. This showed that participants had grown in maturity and came away knowing more about themselves.

This study identified that the participants' capacity to consider others had a 'ripple effect' on their broader lives. It was evident that participants' interactions, particularly with their peers were considered 'different'. It was apparent that this change in attitude in how to deal with new and different situations became the motivation to commit to new endeavours.

Two years after their involvement in the service project, participants identified the project as a 'landmark' in the development of their identity. All participants mentioned how various aspects of their involvement, to a varying degree, impacted on their interactions, attitudes, values, social understandings and beliefs. As a result of the service learning project, the participants maintained that they were more open and inclusive of others, more accepting of what they had, more willing to give, and aware of their place in the world. This finding builds on Youniss and Yates' study, that found that several years after completing a high school service project, students maintained 'an empathetic outlook toward the other, reflectivity on the self's agency, and relating one's own agency to helping less fortunate individuals' (1997, p. 127).

This finding affirmed the evidence from earlier studies summarised in the literature, that service learning produces an array of positive impacts in areas of interpersonal development (Youniss & Yates, 1997; Sheffield, 2003). Service learning clearly helped the participants to develop aspects of their identity while working together to help others. The following looks at how immersion into the host community influenced participants.

## Seeing a Whole New World

Researchers (Noddings, 1984; Sigmon, 1979; Radest, 1993; Billig & Eyler, 2003; Sheffield, 2003; Yamauchi, Billig, Meyer & Hofschire, 2006) have found that service learning provides opportunities to sense the wholeness of a situation and to understand cultural perspectives on how other people live their lives. Sheffield (2003) described that by working with people different from themselves and in communities different from their own, participants better understand themselves. Radest suggested this occurs when students enter into a service encounter with a ‘generosity of perception’ and a ‘will to find the other unthreatening’ (1993, p. 185).

The findings of this study, demonstrated that immersion into the host community did influence the participants: attitudes, beliefs and interactions. It was evident that the service experience provided opportunities for the participants to develop their perspectives and understanding of others gradually over the course of the service project. This was highlighted when the participants said that although they were initially ‘totally shocked’ by the environment and seeing the reality of poverty, they chose instead to change their attitude to be ‘dignified and respectful’ (Kathy). It was evident that taking this stance manifested itself positively in the participants’ attitudes, as they indicated that they began ‘feeling with’ the others.

As a result of their immersion into the host community, and the change in their attitudes, it was clear that the participants placed the service experiences into a context in which they could understand and compare what they were seeing in terms of their upbringing in Australia. It was equally clear that, as a result of these comparisons, the participants expressed an awareness ‘of a whole new world’ and they felt the ‘privilege of being white Australian teenagers’. This change showed that by working with people different from themselves and accepting these differences, participants began to scrutinize their own lives.

It was clear that the participants’ ability to reason with the issues and speak about privilege as social difference caused them to evaluate what they understood about social class, poverty, gender and hardship, in relation to themselves. According to

Ikka's diary extract, understanding these people was a conscious aspect of their service learning and personal development. As a result of their willingness to assimilate into the host community, they changed to become more aware of their surrounds and as they stated for a short time they became 'insiders'.

It was clear from this study and the feedback from the participants that identity formation in this study was positively influenced by project context. Not only did all participants discuss how they thought about social difference, they developed a sense of responsibility to acknowledge the 'taken for granted things' in their lives. An example offered by Lee was her brother's disability. It was apparent that the heightened awareness of who they were and what they valued continued to influence participants' actions, interactions, discussions and their outlook.

### **Knowledge Development and Application**

Another influence of the service learning experience on the participants' construction of identity was that it provided a context that facilitated knowledge development and application. In this instance, identity development occurred through the processes of action, interaction and reasoning, resulting not only in academic and cognitive development, but in personal and social development as well.

The literature indicated that service learning focuses on enhancing what is already known by stressing theory learned in the classroom that can be applied to field experiences, in helping the community outside the classroom, assisting learners with learning new skills and helping them to pursue what they know they don't know (Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Fiske, 2002; Billig & Eyler, 2003; Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005). Conner (2007) reported that service learning depends on the integration of what participants' sense and think, with what they feel and how they behave. She argues that, 'Without that integration, we're just passive participants and passive learning alone doesn't engage our higher brain functions or stimulate our senses to the point where we integrate our lessons into our existing schemas' (2007, p. 2).

It was found that the participants first went through a ‘passive’ in-school learning experience in holding discussions, doing readings, and hearing speakers on the community issues in Sri Lanka. As a result, they generally ( $n = 10$ ) commented that they went into the actual service experience feeling ‘prepared’.

The findings indicated that a feature of this study was that the teachers saw their role throughout the service learning project as project facilitators who guided rather than controlled the learning and learning activities. This meant that the participants needed to work collaboratively to develop their knowledge and skills. Participants commented that having the teacher take a ‘back seat’ in the learning encouraged them to grow and explore their potential. Participants indicated that they appreciated and valued the opportunity to be ‘less formal with the teachers’ and to have opportunities to ‘see’ and ‘do’ things for themselves. It was apparent that this was most significant in their learning, as participants commented that they began to connect what they had learned prior to, and during, the trip.

A finding of interest here is that the teachers thought it was necessary for the participants to ‘feel comfortable’ about gaining access to the information they needed and that the facilitator relationship adopted in this project allowed this. The participants’ comments supported this view as they pointed out that the facilitator relationship enabled them to explore their own potential, which resulted in them doing little things and seeing how their skills and knowledge should be best used.

It was evident that the participants became more open to experiences and ideas that they had not previously considered. In this instance, identity development occurred through the processes of action, interaction and reasoning, resulting in participants beginning to ‘do’ things to integrate new knowledge into their understandings, which in turn ‘motivated them’ and their ‘curiosity’.

Participants pointed out that their understandings took on new meaning in the ‘real-world’ setting of the service environment and that they were able to see the ‘relevance’ of the learning. In this way, they showed that by ‘seeing the relevance’ and ‘living the learning’ they were empowered by the experience and that this did in

fact influence their knowledge application. This is in agreement with the findings in the research literature which showed that when learning is seen as meaningful, learners make sense of their knowledge and build a deeper understanding of what they are doing (Dewey, 1938; Furco, 2002; Billig & Eyler, 2003; King, 2004). The results indicated that participants saw the relevance of the learning because they had first hand experience of implementing their skills and knowledge. Teachers commented that participants' increased adaptation of knowledge showed that they were acting upon insight, values, beliefs and ideas and thereby achieving a developed self-understanding. It was evident that, as a consequence, participants adopted new learning behaviours, such as using their 'senses and emotions' (Jess), to achieve their desired outcomes.

Most teachers ( $n = 3$ ) commented that the participants accepted the challenges of the experiential learning experiences by 'tackling new things head on' (Ian) and that this was 'made evident as they became more courageous in their actions' (Agnes). As an aspect of identity, the integration of this capacity into participants' sense of self was evident as they consistently discussed the importance of 'understanding' their place in the world so they could 'move forward'.

Dewey is noted as saying that 'every experience affects, for better or for worse, the attitudes which help decide the quality of future experiences' (Dewey, 1938). The results of this study showed that two years after their service learning experience, these participants were clearly affected, for better, by the service learning experience. Participants said the knowledge they gained while in Sri Lanka included 'personal knowledge', 'knowledge of the world they live in' and 'knowledge that enabled them to move forward as adults'. They additionally said their 'eyes had been opened' and they had 'grown as citizens'. It was identified that participants developed the ability to process multiple viewpoints and question the creation of knowledge or 'truth' about a particular issue. They weighed options, challenged previously held ideas, and ultimately relied on their own thinking to reach conclusions and take action.

It was apparent through the results of this study that the active process of integration of what participants' sense and think, with what they feel and how they behave (Connor, 2007) influenced their perceptions of their learning, along with perceptions



of themselves. Not only did the participants discuss how they continued to think differently from what they had prior to the service project, but they also developed a sense of responsibility to continue to use their knowledge to help others and themselves.

## **Reflective Experiences**

Reflection in service learning has been called the ‘link that ties student experiences in the community to academic learning’ (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 171). Substantial studies (Boud, Keough, & Walker, 1985; Toole & Toole, 1995; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler, & Giles, 1999; Bringle, & Hatcher, 1999; Bandura, 2002; Eyler, 2002) have pointed out that without this type of thinking, a service experience will not be as educationally beneficial to the learner and the learners will not be able to apply newly learned skills to different situations.

Findings from this study highlighted that reflective experiences were beneficial to the participants’ skill application and identity formation. It seems that, without exception, the participants put reflective experiences at the centre of their learning and in fact, used reflection, as Dewey (1938) proposed as ‘the steadying and guiding factor’ for their learning.

This study found that participants were provided with many opportunities to reflect on their experiences. They spoke about the opportunities to ‘think’, ‘overlay their thoughts’ (Laura), and join in ‘deep and meaningful discussions’ (Ikka) during reflective activities. It seemed that these reflective opportunities focused the participants’ attention so they could thoughtfully compare their ideas and observations with those of others.

More than half ( $n = 8$ ) stated that, as a result of reflection, they had a shift in their thinking and found they had a more genuine interest in hearing other thoughts. In this way, the participants’ peers became ‘sounding boards’ (Laura) for their thoughts and decisions. It was apparent that, as a consequence, participants developed the ability to listen to multiple viewpoints and to question the creation of shared knowledge.

A finding of interest here is that participants used the reflection journals as Dewey (1910) proposed as ‘the steadying and guiding factor’ for learning. It seemed that taking time to privately reconcile their thoughts in a journal helped them ‘step back’ or even ‘step out’ of the service environment and take time to come to conclusions about themselves. This was significant to participant identity formation because it provided greater time and space to think critically about their experiences and the relevance to their lives.

After the trip, participants were asked to share their experiences at a range of school functions. One of the teachers suggested that this reflective practice was designed to challenge the girls and that this helped them integrate what they were learning into their practice.

The findings indicated that in preparing for ‘sharing’, participants were asked to consider what they did, and how they saw their own growth and development. It was evident that in considering these questions, the participants were encouraged to think critically about the whole of their service experience and the relevance of the experience to their increased knowledge of the surrounding world. It was evident that knowledge and understanding was as Dewey (1938) and Schön (1983, 1987) had hoped for, reflected upon, considered, practised, honed and critiqued for success.

Overall, participants’ actions indicated that a service culture had been built during the project’s reflective activities. It was apparent that, as a result, the many forms of reflection introduced to the participants during their service developed their ability to listen to and evaluate multiple viewpoints. The evidence indicated that participants took opportunities during ‘sharing’ to consider perspectives different from their own. This finding builds on Kolb and Fry’s (1975) study which indicated that reflection involves focusing attention on certain experiences and thoughtfully comparing them to create new meaning from them.

## Relationships

Much of the research conducted to date has spoken of the degree to which service learning has a positive effect on students' personal development (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Eyler and Giles, 1999 found that students attributed the increased personal development in service learning courses to the relationships they formed in the process of community service, which allowed them to connect learning to personal experience. The results of this study support these findings and suggest that the service learning activities in this project contributed to the participants' desire to meet new people, and develop relationships with people different in many respects from themselves. It was evident that this caused participants to gain a greater self-understanding, a new awareness of social difference, and a sense of commonality with different people.

The practical value of service participation was further revealed in the positive outcome of the reciprocal relationship. This finding is consistent with Sigmon's study that reports service learning 'represents the coming together of many hearts and minds seeking to express compassion for others and to enable learning styles to grow out of service' (1979, p. 9), as well as the findings from Noddings' (1984) study that service learning generates the mutual interactive relationship between doer and done-to. In fact, in this sense service learning was reported to be a two-way process and thereby all the behaviours influence the interactions with others. Whilst Sigmon's (1979) and Noddings' (1984) studies establishes that two-way relationships are an expected outcome of service learning, the results of the study suggest that the shared relationships were not only important, but also integral to participants' personal development and signified an increase in identity formation, and possibly in moral reasoning.

The participants talked about bonding, and making new friends with the service recipients, when discussing the informal activities in Sri Lanka. Participants pointed out that one of the enduring influences of these informal activities, was the realisation that 'people are really all the same'. As a result of their informal activities, participants commented that a 'sisterhood' was formed between the two groups of

teenagers. It was clear from this comment that there was not an ‘us and them’ attitude, influenced by social and cultural backgrounds. In this respect, this showed that though the participants were able to empathise what it might be like to live in that other person’s shoes. This indicated that the relationships formed during the service experience were important, because the knowledge the participants gained about life issues was a much stronger outcome from their shared relationship with the service recipients. While relationships are not exclusive to service learning experiences, what was unique was that the participants admitted that they may not have otherwise initiated friendships with the people they encountered during the service project.

Participants acknowledged in the phase three interviews that the relationships developed during their service experience continued to cause them to think about who they were as people, and how they interacted with other people in their lives. It was evident that the effect of the relationships formed during service had been integrated into their evolving identities. As a result of these considerations, the participants commented on having an increasing involvement in the community and family activities and some spoke about giving more time to church.

Overall, this finding demonstrated that the development of relationships signified an increase in interpersonal intelligence. It was apparent that the initiatives to be involved in the service community were taken by the participants to be involved in a positive way with their peers and service recipients because they knew that their actions could produce positive results. This attitude was important as they did not enter this project with grand ideas, they acknowledged at the start that their efforts would be small in the scheme of the host nation’s situation, yet what they did to help was none the less important. As a result the participants each felt and expressive a sense of achievement.

## **Emotional Development**

In the literature Delve, Mintz, and Stewart, (1990) advocated that one goal of education is to move students through developmental stages so that they establish their own identity in the world. These researchers claimed that students’ development

influences their attitudes towards self, others, and the world, and their acquisition and application of knowledge.

The evidence from this study indicated that participants' identity development occurred through the processes of emotional reasoning which resulted as participants began to 'feel' empathy with people they encountered in Sri Lanka. Participants spoke about how it felt to serve others and to be a part of the host community and how these feelings influenced their actions and interactions. All participants spoke explicitly about how their service learning experiences caused them to reflect on their values, beliefs and attitudes in a way which very few other activities had encouraged. The integration of these capacities into participants' attitudes caused them to consider whether they 'should' or 'should not' do things that would impact on the service recipients.

However, when the participants went into the host culture, they carried their own 'cultural baggage' as well as some naiveté about others. It was apparent that after immersion in the host culture and reflection on the experiences, there was a progressive emotional maturation and their perspectives about others began to shift. The evidence from this study and the feedback from the participants indicated that a perception shift certainly occurred. It was apparent participants appeared to have gained greater self understanding, a new awareness of social difference and a sense of commonality with diverse individuals.

This study suggested that all participants considered the 'impact' of the service on the recipients. These participants commented on the possible lasting effects of their actions on the service community.

Each participant recognised that for a short time they were 'care givers' and that they were providing for the physical needs of the children in the orphanage. They commented on bonding with the service recipients. As a consequence, they said they felt guilty about leaving their friends and charges behind and returning to the privilege of living in Australia.

On the whole, this finding on emotional development is consistent with Billig's (2004) research that showed service learning to be a key strategy for accomplishing the social-emotional competency of self-awareness, as well as Baxter-Magolda's (2000) speculation that service learning provides opportunities to foster identity formation. The results of this study provided some evidence that participants' ability to define their feelings facilitated their ability to develop their perspectives, their interactions and encouraged greater complexity in their thinking.

## **Chapter Summary**

What the research revealed was that the nature and characteristics of this service learning project involved the participants in experiential learning activities that influenced growth in identity.

The literature on experiential education highlights the impact of 'learning from experience' and emphasises that student outcomes come about as an individual changes their thinking, based on an experience and, most importantly, by reflecting on that experience. In this same way, Conner (2007) suggested learners need to integrate what they sense and think, with what they feel and how they behave.

The results of this study demonstrated that service learning did in fact have an influence on the construction of identity. The project most significantly influenced several aspects of the participants' identity such as: their thoughts about social difference, 'taken for granted things' in their lives, and their openness to new ideas, experiences, knowing and people. The themes emerging from this discussion lead to a series of conclusions that are presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

This study was an investigation of student outcomes from a service learning project. It focused on the experiences embedded in the practical component of the ‘Adopt a School’ service learning project and found that service learning did in fact have an influence on several aspects of the participants’ personal growth and development. It was apparent that the nature and characteristic of the ‘Adopt a School’ project influenced the participants’ identity formation. This chapter summarises the study findings and draws final conclusions and implications from these findings. Recommendations for areas of possible further research are also explored.

The research literature reviewed for this study constantly reiterated that service learning reflects the belief that education must be linked to social responsibility and that learning must be meaningful and active (Kolb, 1984). The quotes and phrases that follow have been drawn from the review of literature to re-establish this as the premise of this study:

- Service learning extends participants’ learning beyond the physical confines of the classroom to put the learner’s learning into a real-world context (Billig & Eyler, 2003; Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005).
- Service learning puts participants’ experiences at the centre of the knowledge construct (Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005).
- Service learning provides an opportunity for participants to see the wholeness of a situation, to come to terms with personal values of others to understand cultural perspectives (Sigmon, 1979).

Whilst the meanings embedded in these selections from the review of relevant literature were reflected in the findings of this study, it was the responses from the participants which demonstrated the effects of service learning participation.

A major value of a study such as this is revealed by the richness of the texts which was constructed from the data which the participants generate. These data sources included a complex mixture of participants' recollections of past experiences, their perceptions of what these and their on-going personal experiences 'mean', the nature and content of their reflective discourse, and observations of their school behaviours before and after their service. The data captured the characteristics and the personalities behind the experiences and provided glimpses into these participants' hopes, beliefs, passions and preoccupations.

As a consequence of being able to develop a naturalistic research text that addressed the purpose of this study, the researcher was able to identify some outcomes associated with service learning, which might have remained hidden using quantitative data generation and analysis techniques. Furthermore, the epistemology was congruent with experiential learning teaching and learning, which as Dewey (1916, 1938) and others point out, draws on experiences, reflection and self-examination to motivate knowledge growth, all of which are prescribed characteristics of qualitative research.

### **Scrutiny of Aspects of Their Lives**

The results of this study revealed that as a community based pedagogy, this example of service learning placed participants in contact with people and a community very different from their own. During this time, not only did the participants develop academically, they also developed values, attitudes and practices that shaped their character. These included critical analytic skills, personal skills related to their own self-awareness and self-confidence and skills that enable them to successfully interact with others unlike themselves. Given this realisation, participants saw this transformation as an important aspect of their growth and development. This was largely because the participants were able to physically connect to the learning situation, where seeing and experiencing things first hand encouraged them to reframe and transform their thinking about what they knew about themselves before their service participation.



In fact, the findings of this study revealed that, as a result of the service learning experiences, participants were encouraged to think beyond themselves and to exhibit greater interpersonal maturity. In particular, the service experience encouraged an awareness of who they were in relation to ‘what was happening around them’. This understanding supports service learning advocates’ suggestions that, being intricately involved in constructing their own learning, learners develop a sense of responsibility and a personal commitment to what is being undertaken and how it impacts on them (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Jarvis, 1995; Sheffield, 2003; Billig, 2004).

A significant factor seems to be that this service opportunity facilitated scrutiny of aspects of their lives and the importance of committing to something beyond themselves. All the participants spoke about how the service learning experience caused them to reflect on their values and attitudes in a way very few other activities had encouraged. Their service learning experience enabled them to consider their life as Australia teenagers and what they had come to take for granted in their lives.

### **Implication**

Research supports the view that service learning experience reshapes participants so they can develop personal understanding as they perform service to other people (Delve, Mintz, & Stewart, 1990; Toole & Toole, 1995). This study indicated that, the integration of this capacity into participants’ sense of self manifested itself positively, as they mentioned having changed their perspectives and correspondingly realised that they had a responsibility to themselves and their life situation. The sense of responsibility that these participants integrated into their identities caused them to examine various aspects of their lives. Thus, a fundamental role of service learning is to get students to think about their own explicit and tacit thoughts. One way to accomplish this is to get students to articulate and discuss their understandings, beliefs and prior experiences. In this way students learn to develop habits to probe, challenge and regulate their own perceptions of themselves and their learning. This in essence, is what developing ‘reflective practitioner’ is all about (Schón, 1983, 1987).

## **Increased Acceptance of New People**

The findings provide generally consistent insights into the ways in which participants came to share personally with the service recipients and increase their acceptance of new people. It was apparent that service activities contributed to the participants becoming more open-minded about people different from themselves and caused them to gain a greater self-understanding, a new awareness of social difference, and a sense of commonality with different people. However, these findings also show that there is more to it than just the sharing of experiences in the host community. As these participants progressed through the various activities of their service project, they became immersed into the host community, they demonstrated an increased understanding of the host culture and more importantly they developed skills with respect to understanding people different from themselves.

Because of the direct day-to-day interactions, the stereotypes that the participants held prior to the trip were challenged. It was clear that, the service activities enabled the participants to extend themselves personally and in some way enabled them to become intimate with the service recipients. The hosts whom the students previously defined as ‘others’, became people who deserved compassion and a deeper consideration. There were statements in the findings that identified the relationship that developed as they worked together. Ikka, for example, considered that they formed a ‘sisterhood’ relationship. This was largely because the participants were able to physically and emotionally connect with their hosts. The connections encouraged them to increase their acceptance of these new people and what they understood as a new and different way of living. In other words, this study indicated that not only did participants begin to think differently about people from what they had prior to the project, but they also developed a sense of responsibility towards understanding others’ situations. Some participants then developed a commitment to social justice.

## **Implication**

These results demonstrated that service learning and immersion into the host community influenced the nature and intensity of the social interactions. Underlying

these interactions was the participants' belief that they were able to view things from other perspectives. A consideration is that facilitators design projects to promote meaningful interactions between the servers and the served. The interactions will encourage the participants to be open-minded about their service relationships and consider how the experiences in the host community will impact on their understandings. This should help their students think about the conclusions they may draw from their interactions and consider any bias they may keep.

### **Increased Acceptance of New Ideas and Experiences**

The results of this study revealed that, this example of service learning, placed participants in authentic learning settings. During their service, not only did the participants develop academically, they also developed values, attitudes and practices that shaped their character. It was clear that the experience promoted self-reflection, and personal awareness which increase acceptance of new ideas and experiences. This it appeared was largely because the participants were able to connect meaning to their learning. It was apparent that this prompted them to pursue additional, and in some cases challenging experiences, which in turn provided more opportunities for them to exploration on new ideas and experiences.

In fact the participants valued the learning experience offered by the 'Adopt a School' project. In particular, the service learning provided a basis for them to consider their understandings. This in turn contributed to the formation of the deeper understandings, added to the nature of their new experiences.

A significant factor seems to be that this service opportunity enabled them to identify with past experience. They acknowledged that based on their learning, were aspects of their personal lives, PLC's culture and their understanding of situations faced by the people in Sri Lanka. They demonstrated that they drew on these as they increased their acceptance of new ideas and experiences presented in the practical learning. All the participants spoke about how the service learning experience caused them to consider personal experiences and its impact that they have on their future actions.

## **Implication**

This study indicated that, the increased acceptance of new ideas manifested itself positively as the participants mentioned having changed their opinions and developed new attitudes and understandings. The sense of responsibility that these participants integrated into their increased acceptance of new ideas caused them to see things differently and evaluate their appreciation of life. It seems that an outcome such as this enables students consider life, knowledge and circumstances differently. An implication of this is that scrutiny of ideas and experiences is not an uncomplicated process of constructing and reconstructing knowledge. This suggests that there is a need to develop strategies that support this growth in knowledge and strategies that will assist in the evaluation of understandings, if only to enable participants to engage more effectively in service learning activities.

## **Open-Mindedness Extended Beyond the Project**

The ‘Adopt a School’ project offered the participants a chance to learn in a contextual situation and develop meaningful personal and academic relationships. The philosophy behind this project was that the participants’ engage in activities that take into account context, their prior knowledge and their goals for service. PLC’s expectation was that they would continue to process their learning from the service experience and apply it to their lives as citizens of the nation and the world.

This study offers evidence that the outcomes of service learning projects extend beyond completion of the project. The ‘service high’ described by one of the participants was more than a one-time good feeling. It was established that, participants came to appreciate the shift in their thinking, characterised by their intentions to put others’ needs ahead of their own. Participants’ incorporation of service to others was closely related to the influence service had on the understanding they had on themselves as caring individuals.

## **Implication**

The results of this study demonstrated that service learning motivated the participants to continue to construct understandings beyond the project. In fact, all participants spoke about how their service learning experience caused them to evaluate their actions and attitudes after their experience in the host community. However, evidence on the impact of service learning on the participants' long-term changes is inconclusive and further research is needed to reveal the specific impact these factors had on the participants well after they left PLC.

The aim of this study was to investigate students' outcomes from a service learning project. This aim has been met. It is important however, to briefly identify the teachers influence on the students achieving these outcomes.

## **Teachers as Facilitators**

The 'Adopt a School' project offered the participants a chance to learn, in a contextual situation. The project delivery in which knowledge and experiences are constructed comes through service and a process of community learning.

The findings showed that the teachers took the stance of facilitators and that their actions and interactions were underpinned by PLC's cultural value of respect for others. It was identified that as facilitators they supported and scaffolded the learning while the participants were undertaking their service in ways that in time, enabled the participants to work with less support. It was reported that during the exchanges the facilitators offered advice and information, rather than facts and data. As facilitators they responded positively to the learning situations and indicated that they valued the experience of being able to join with the participants as they 'shared trusted information' (Ian). As a result, a bond was created as the facilitators and participants developed the learning outcomes together.

## **Implication**

The findings showed that the teachers acted, not as the authoritarian leaders but rather as the facilitator. This implies that as facilitators they did not have control over what is being learned, they attended to the immediate and contextual concerns of the participants. In this style of learning, the teaching is responsive. The accounts demonstrated that there was no time to prepare or plan lessons and in many instances the teachers were drawing on knowledge that was not in their professional field of expertise. As a result, they interpreted the questions based on their own personal beliefs and understandings. This style of teaching, therefore, draws heavily on the expression of ideas rather than their professional teaching strengths and causes facilitator to 'teach on their feet' and re-evaluate their own knowledge and experiences which in a sense means they become co-learners with the participants.

An implication is that facilitators risk an enormous investment of self and must do so without expectation of reward. They in fact share ownership and responsibility for the learning. As a result, facilitators navigate a very delicate balance and must be sensitive to the needs of the individuals and respond specifically to those needs. The facilitators should therefore, frame service learning in such a way that students will have responsible, leadership roles. They must also ensure that the facilitators are able to provide the experiences needed for student learning.

## **Recommendations**

This study has extended the existing knowledge base in the area of service learning preparation and implementation. Findings from this study may be used to inform and guide major stakeholders as to how service learning may be incorporated into curriculum activities. The following recommendations are offered for consideration by various stakeholders.

The findings indicated that service learning projects are especially suited to supporting the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) and The National Framework for

Values Education for Australian Schools (Brown, 2004). This is because these frameworks are underpinned by core values, with an emphasis on learning in context that supports social involvement, good citizenship, and life-long learning, as well as encouraging participation in actively shaping students' futures. The first recommendation deriving from this study is that other schools explore ways of implementing service learning projects based in the social construction of knowledge and embed these within their school curriculum. Encouraging schools to create service learning projects to develop the stated core values and social interactions is recommended. It is realised that not all students can go overseas to perform service; therefore, more modest projects should be considered to extend these opportunities to students.

The results of this study indicated that participants valued the relationships formed during the service project. This finding suggests that schools need to become more aware of how service culture impacts on participants and should consider ways of formally creating structures which facilitate and support such a link. Therefore, encouraging students to create networks within their service learning, to utilise for support as they undertake service activities, is the second recommendation.

The third recommendation is that service learning be considered as a strategy for reinvigorating schooling for students who are at present disengaged from formal school activities or considered 'at risk'. It was evident that this style of learning influenced the participants to reach a deeper personal and cognitive understanding. It was also evident that this style of learning provided the impetus for the participants to step out of their current frame of reference to find solutions to problems and move to a higher level of understanding. As a result many participants felt that they had a greater involvement in their learning and achievements. Service learning could therefore be used to engage other students in contextual, experiential learning.

It was evident that the students that participated in the 'Adopt a School' project were relatively privileged and had access to resources many students lack. Therefore, the scale and scope of this project may exceed the ability of other schools. This should not be viewed as a deterrent to implementing service learning activities that will engage and benefit other students.

The fourth recommendation is that additional research be conducted on the relationship between service learning and identity formation. The findings of this study indicated that service learning promotes identity formation. This occurred, as participants in this study showed, because the context of service learning enabled participants to construct their identities in the challenging and unfamiliar environment of a community service setting. Longitudinal studies could better illuminate the longer term influence on service learning on participants' sense of self and their lives.

### **The Researcher's Final Reflections**

As this research began, certain presuppositions about learning were identified. These included the researcher's belief that:

- Knowledge is actively constructed on the basis of existing knowledge;
- Learning in its current setting is influenced by a range of environmental facets and social challenges; and
- Service learning projects play a pivotal role in creating learning environments that develop attitudes that embrace citizenship and enhance personal growth.

This study provided an opportunity not only to affirm these presuppositions, it also enabled opportunity to re-evaluate and develop them.

### **What have I learned?**

Without a doubt I have learnt to place great value on what Sigmon defined as service learning, 'the coming together of many hearts and minds seeking to express compassion for others and to enable a learning style to grow out of service' (1979, p. 9). Because of this, I saw my position as one of privilege, a stance rewarded by the richness and honesty of the participants' comments.

In addition I have also developed a more complex idea of how schools can develop their students' abilities, and how participants learn and manage their knowledge. I



have been able to see and hear what was important to these participants and their service learning experience.

My last instance of learning to be reported on is that of teenage wisdom. As I read through the transcripts, in particular those ‘private spaces’ in their journals, I would laugh with them and then cry with compassion. To optimally educate children to be responsible adults, we need to understand more fully what it takes to be a responsible, compassionate, sharing citizen. The young women in this study have shown me how to be more responsible.

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school participants who participated in a service learning project, referred to as the ‘Adopt a School’ project. This was done to understand what effect the ‘Adopt a School’ project had on the participants, and how it impacted on them as people.

This study offers persuasive evidence that the outcomes of this service learning project extend well beyond the notion of mere service. Instead, the results of this study demonstrated the potential of service learning to provide a context for knowledge application, reflection on one’s identity, relationships with others, and how an internally defined sense of self influence, openness to new ideas and commitments. Given this information, practitioners may be able to create meaningful service learning opportunities in educating participants to become citizens who can engage effectively with an increasingly complex world.

Despite the conclusion of the study its relevance to other schools is that this in a case study of a single school with an affluent background and a long standing history of service. The impact of service learning on students’ long term changes warrants further consideration to reveal the degree of the impacts of service learning on participants.

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## APPENDIX 1

### PRINCIPAL'S INFORMATION SHEET

**Research project titled - Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Wollongong. In my research, I intend to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who have nominated to participate in the 'Adopt a School' project. This will be done in order to understand what effect the project had on these students, and how it impacts on them as people. Primarily this study will focus on the experiences these students have during their field trip in Sri Lanka in September 2005.

I wish to request your participation in this research as Principal of this school.

In full appreciation of yours and your students' restricted time, the study has been designed to place as little pressure as possible on you.

It is my plan to conduct interviews prior to the trip, immediately after the trip and if possible after your students have completed their Higher School Certificate and have moved away from school.

It is also important that you are aware that it is my intention to tape-record the interviews. The tape-recordings will provide an opportunity to quote direct passages from the interviews, and provide an opportunity during the interview process to take notes, as supplementary data.

All information that I gather is confidential. Any information pertaining to you will not be accessed by a third party. The data will be used for the purpose of this research.

If you have any questions, please ring Professor Steve Dinham on 4221 5626.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Shona Gibson

## APPENDIX 2

### TEACHER'S INFORMATION SHEET

**Research project titled - Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Wollongong. In my research, I intend to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who have nominated to participate in the 'Adopt a School' project. This will be done in order to understand what effect the project had on these students, and how it impacts on them as people. Primarily this study will focus on the experiences these students have during their field trip in Sri Lanka in September 2005.

I wish to request your participation in this research as a teacher involved in the 'Adopt a School' project.

In full appreciation of your restricted time, the study has been designed to place as little pressure as possible on you.

It is my plan to conduct interviews prior to the trip and after the trip you make to Sri Lanka.

It is important that you are aware that it is my intention to tape-record the interviews. The tape-recordings will provide an opportunity to quote direct passages from the interviews, and provide an opportunity during the interview process to take notes, as supplementary data.

All information that I gather is confidential. Any information pertaining to you will not be accessed by a third party. The data will be used for the purpose of this research.

If you have any questions, please ring Professor Steve Dinham on 4221 5626.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Shona Gibson

### APPENDIX 3

#### STUDENT'S INFORMATION SHEET

**Research project titled - Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Wollongong. In my research, I intend to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who have nominated to participate in the 'Adopt a School' project. This will be done in order to understand what effect the project had on these students, and how it impacts on them as people. Primarily this study will focus on the experiences these students have during their field trip in Sri Lanka in September 2005.

I wish to request your participation in this research as a student directly involved in the 'Adopt a School' project.

In full appreciation of your restricted time, the study has been designed to place as little pressure as possible on you.

It is my plan to conduct interviews prior to the trip, immediately after the trip and if possible after you have completed their Higher School Certificate and have moved away from school.

It is also important that you are aware that it is my intention to tape-record the interviews. The tape-recordings will provide an opportunity to quote direct passages from the interviews, and provide an opportunity during the interview process to take notes, as supplementary data.

All information that I gather is confidential. Any information pertaining to you will not be accessed by a second party. The data will be used for the purpose of this research.

If you have any questions, please ring Professor Steve Dinham on 4221 5626.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Shona Gibson

## APPENDIX 4

### Parent's Information Sheet

#### **Research project titled - Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project**

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Wollongong. In my research, I intend to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who have nominated to participate in the 'Adopt a School' project. This will be done in order to understand what effect the project had on these students, and how it impacts on them as people. Primarily this study will focus on the experiences these students have during their field trip in Sri Lanka in September 2005.

I wish to request your participation in this research as parent of a participating student in the 'Adopt a School' project.

In full appreciation of yours and your daughter's restricted time, the study has been designed to place as little pressure as possible on you.

It is my plan to conduct interviews prior to the trip, immediately after the trip and if possible after your daughter has completed their Higher School Certificate and has moved away from school.

It is important that you are aware that it is my intention to tape-record the interviews. The tape-recordings will provide opportunity to quote direct passages from the interviews, and provide opportunity during the interview process to take notes, as supplementary data.

All information that I gather is confidential. Any information pertaining to you will not be accessed by a second party. The data will be used for the purpose of this research.

If you have any questions, please ring Professor Steve Dinham on 4221 5626.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Shona Gibson

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION PACKAGE**

#### **Student's Consent**

As a student participating in the Year 11 'Adopt a School' project, you are invited to participate in a study entitled - *Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project*. This study is being conducted as part of a PhD degree, that I (Mrs Shona Gibson) am undertaking through the University of Wollongong.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of a group of 15 and 16 year old school students who participated in a service learning project, referred to as the 'Adopt a School' project. This was done to understand what effect the project had on these students, and how it impacted on them as people. This study focused on the experiences these students had during their field trip in Sri Lanka in September 2005.

To achieve collect data will be collected through in-school interviews and informal observations of your school activities and interactions.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw their participation in the research at any time. Withdrawal of consent will not negatively impact on you or your relationship with the University of Wollongong.

I would like to encourage you to discuss this study with your parents, as it is a Human Ethics requirement that your parents are informed and consent to your participation.

If you would like to discuss this research further please contact Professor Steve Dinham 4221 5626 or Associate Professor Narattom Bhindi 4221 5477 in the Faculty of Education.

Yours Sincerely,

Shona Gibson

## APPENDIX 6

### Consent Form for Student

Research Project Title:

*Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project*

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to  
participate in the research conducted by S Gibson as it had been described to me in the  
information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used for the study's  
purpose only and I consent for the data to be used in that manner.

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7

### Consent Form for Parent of Student

Research Project Title:

*Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project*

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to my daughter's participate in the research conducted by S Gibson as it had been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used for the study's purpose only and I consent for the data to be used in that manner.

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 8

### Consent Form for Teacher

Research Project Title:

*Investigating Student Outcomes from a Service Learning Project*

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the research conducted by S Gibson as it had been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used for the study's purpose only and I consent for the data to be used in that manner.

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 9

### Profile Questions for Student Participants

Each student was asked to answer the following questions

What is your name?	
Would you like to nominate a pseudonym to be used as a guise in the thesis document?	
What is your age?	
What involvement do you have in the school community (school leader, sporting groups, etc)?	
Have you participated in any previous school service and/or charity activities?	
Why have you chosen to participate in this project?	
Can you provide a statement about your goals & expectations regarding your participation in this project?	
Are you in the 'International Studies' class?	

**APPENDIX 10****Profile Questions for Teachers**

Each teachers was asked to answer the following questions

What is your name and title?	
What subject area do you teach?	
What is your involvement in the school other than teaching – committees, groups, service?	
What is your involvement/role in this project?	
Knowing that you volunteered - why have you chosen to participate in this project?	
Can you give me a statement about your goals & expectation regarding your participation in this project?	

## **APPENDIX 11**

### **Example Research Questions Asked of Teachers**

#### **Before the Trip (April – August, 2005)**

- What is the ‘Adopt a School’ project? (history/background, significance)
- How was it developed within the school?
- How is it part of the (whole) school curriculum?
- How is it a part of the Year 11 curriculum?
- What motivational you to be involved in such a project?
- What was taught in the ‘Adopt a School’ lessons?
- What types of things do you think you prepared the students for?
- How has participation thus far impacted on the students (academically and socially)?
- Who are these students?

#### **Follow-up question immediately after the trip (September, 2005)**

- How has it impacted on your students’ growth and development?
- How is it impacting on the Year 11 curriculum?
- What are the typical learning experiences implemented to engage the students in this project?
- What do you see as outcomes of this project?
- Have you noticed any changes in the student’s behaviour, attitudes, and conversation since their involvement in the ‘Adopt a School’ project?
- What do you perceive the student’s have learned (socially and academically) as a result of their association in this project?
- What are your expectations of the students now?
- How will the students’ learning be assessed?

## **APPENDIX 12**

### **Example Research Questions Asked of Student**

**The questions common to the students' interviews included (July – August, 2005):**

- What is the 'Adopt a School' project and how did it come about?
- Why did you get involved in the 'Adopt a School' project?
- What was your involvement?
- What preparation (learning) did you have prior to the trip?
- What did you see in Sri Lanka?

**Probing questions – after the trip (September – December, 2005):**

- What did you do in Sri Lanka?
- How did your participation impact on your thoughts about other people?
- Can you identify if you are drawing on your experience and putting some of what you learned into practice in your daily life?
- Do you see things (people, events, situations) in your life differently since your participation?
- Can you identify how you will put what you learned into practice in the future?
- What are your poignant thoughts and memories?

**Follow-up questions:**

- How did you feel about seeing tsunami damage, poverty, and different racial groups?
- How did you feel in that environment?
- How did you adjust to the differences in life styles?
- Do you see yourself differently – since your participation?
- What are your poignant thoughts and memories?
- What is next for you?

## APPENDIX 13

## Comparison of Qualitative Strategies to Determine Their Fit to this Study

**Research**

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Fit to This Study</b>
ETHNOGRAPHY	The culture of groups	Observation, interviewing to describe a group's behaviour	No-aim is to discover affect of new experience on research group
HEURISTIC INQUIRY	Interacting personal experience + insight of researcher	Personal experience and interviewing to describe essence of a person in an experience	No- not directly adding researcher's perspective
ETHNOMETHODOLOGY	People's reasoning to make sense of the everyday routine of their social world	Observation and interviewing to find situations which prevent breakdowns in understanding	No- aim is to discover affect of new experience on group , not breakdown in routine
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM	Symbols that give meaning to people's interactions – social change between classes, groups, cultures	Observation, interviews, conversation to describe interpretation of interactions	Could fit, however not comparing interactions between servers and serviced or whether the participants put themselves in the place of others
NATURALISTIC	To take a philosophical view of a phenomena and meaning attributed to it	Observations and interviews in a natural setting to see a phenomena through the eyes of a subject	Yes closer fit – observations and interviews will be obtained in natural setting and phenomena through the eyes of the participants
PHENOMENOLOGY	Lived experience of a phenomena	Observation, interviewing to describe a essence of experience	Yes best fit - aim is to discover affect of new experience on group  (Charmaz, 2000, 2002; Kriflik, 2000)

**Analysis**

GROUNDED THEORY	Organising the ideas which emerge from analysis of data	Constant comparison of ideas to discover theoretical relationships in transcripts	Yes – aim to identify and explain relationships associated with participation in the 'Adopt a School' project – to bring reality light (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)
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# APPENDIX 14

## Combined Phase One and Two Codes

Phase One Codes			
Reasoning of project Knowing the students Forming project Respect for others Going & realising Care for others Christian values Empathy Privileged girls Having Background- personal –teenagers	Preparing (girls, school, lessons) Perception Growing up Character building Growing and helping Commonalities Images Having pride Encapsulated views	Conversations Teaching methods Reflection-in Mentoring students Diary writing Friendships Peer reviewing Comrades Going beyond (limits) Wanting to help	TV images Motivation Making the trip Seeing things Feeling Participating Host culture Interactions Shared with school Reflected-on (total 40)
Phase Two Codes			
Reason for project TV images Media reports Forming the project Need to give service Preparing (in-school) Formed a group Learning activities Self realisation Belonging to something Contributing to help Joined together Built relationships Feelings Give – smiles Going Over –the trip	New world Experiences- expected/unexpected Challenging prior beliefs Challenging attitudes Contrasted (new understandings) Perceptions altered Changing attitudes Changing values Seeing differences Seeing-feeling -tsunami Self esteem Accepting the situation Adjusting to events	Seeing feeling culture Differences Devastation Peers Interactions Compared lifestyles Conversations Stood back Immersed into setting Commonalities Images Motivated Accepted differences Hardened to parts of situation Emotions	Friendships Sisterhood Teaching and Learning methods Reflection-in Diary writing Shared with others Evaluated self Made some adjustments Considered identity Developed new understandings Developed new knowledge ( total 55)

## APPENDIX 15

## Combined Phase One and Two Codes Emergent Themes

Emergent Themes	
Doing something Growing and nurturing Learning to do Helping out Dared to share thoughts with peers Helping others Reflection Making the trip Going and Realising Shared consideration Seeing things differently – a new world Time to think Seeing the big picture New friends Used all senses Immersion into host culture Comparing classroom to on-site Sharing Drew on personal strengths Interpersonal skills	Knowledge development Value others Sisterhood Relationships Emotions Actions Learning empathy New languages / ritual/habits What have I done? Interactions – new people Interactions – peers Became an insider Teachers’ -strategies Diary writing Seeing different things Immersion – new culture Challenged prior learning Challenged –personal values Challenged – shared values



## APPENDIX 16

### **The Model Used to Explain the Developing Theory**

To assist me explain my progress in developing the grounded theory, this model was develop to demonstrate the relationships, between outcomes service learning, and the change in attitudes, beliefs, values and social understandings of the participation.

It was evident that:

Learning began with an experience which engaged the participants' energy, and emotions, and made conscious and explicit preconceived ideas, relevant personal experiences, prior knowledge, beliefs and values. Examples of trigger experiences would include television images, newspaper articles, school classroom learning, discussions and field visits.

The Adopt a School project guided the students' learning in terms of establishing learning needs, and in determining group and individual activities. The task of servicing others engaged the participants experientially as they prepared and presented their group task in accordance with a brief which established the activities and concluded with sharing and reflection with the school audience.

The complete data revealed that the nature and characteristics of this service learning project involved the participants in experiential learning activities that influenced growth in identity.

As a guide the emergent categories have been captured visually in the figure below.

### Model Theory of Service Learning

