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Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

Cho See Chong
The University of Notre Dame Australia

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Submitted by
Cho See Chong
Bachelor of Arts (The National University of Singapore)
Diploma in Education (Singapore Institute of Education)
Master of Education (The University of Notre Dame Australia)

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ABSTRACT

Two phenomena are of interest in this study. One is youth service, in particular, the acts of volunteering by young adults. The second concerns the learning of service, with specific reference to mandatory school service. The aim of the study is to explore to what extent and in what ways young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve was influenced by their experience of service at school. To achieve this aim, a qualitative study was conducted on a group of post-school youth in Singapore who had participated in mandatory community service while at school, and had continued to serve beyond school.

A phenomenological approach was adopted to capture the essence of these young people's perceptions of their service experience at school and how they interpreted the relationship between their past school service experience and subsequent adult volunteering. Data for this study were collected from interviews and participants' reflective journals then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Several key insights emerged from the data, the most significant of which was that students in hindsight believed that there was value in having required service. The majority felt that their school service experience introduced them to the idea of serving and provided them a platform for subsequent volunteering. Although most participants endorsed the principle of mandating service, they believed ultimately, it was the quality of the service programmes and their implementation that mattered. While school service might have played a role in shaping their sense of service, the participants pointed out there were many reasons why they volunteer apart from their past service experience as students.

The findings can potentially be significant to educators in Singapore where very little is known about how mandatory school service can contribute to the development of the ethic of care and commitment to service. A more comprehensive picture of the role and relevance of service experience in the lives of students can help educators be more insightful and reflective of their own professional practice. In addition, the

study may shed light on how students' sense of civic responsibility develops over time. Information on the longer-term impacts of school service experience on students may provide educators with a better sense of its value and effectiveness as an approach to inculcate civic consciousness.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis is the work of the candidate and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Candidate's Name

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Date

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

This study is about youth who serve. The research aims to examine to what extent and in what ways young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve was influenced by their past experience with service at school. To achieve this aim, the study has directed its focus exclusively on a group of post-school young adult volunteers in Singapore who were required to perform community service while at school and have continued to serve beyond this requirement. The strategy to base the study on these youth is premised upon the belief that they are the "epistemological subject" since they have experienced service both at school and beyond (Levering, 2007, p. 215). In participating in this research, these youth were given a platform to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience with service in the past and present, as well as their hopes, aspirations and concerns for volunteering in the future. The temporal nature of human experience makes it fitting for the study to incorporate strategies that allow the participants to share their insights about the "past, present, and future" (Levering, 2007, p. 217).

At its core, this study is an attempt to portray how some students in Singapore make sense of their experience of service at school, in particular, those who have left school and have the benefit of hindsight to look back upon their past experiences. It is about the personal stories this group of students have narrated to illustrate their educational experiences; the context around their learning, the meanings they attach to those experiences, and the reasons for their subsequent involvement in service. By moving learners "back to the centre of the picture" (Bridges & Smith, 2007, p. 5), it is hoped that the study can potentially capture "what is real" (Smeyers, 2007b, p. 348) for those with the experience.

The idea of conducting a study on youth service is motivated by the researcher's vision of education of which Dewey's philosophy has played an influencing role. According to Dewey (1966/1916), education worthy of its name depends on the extent to which it fulfils its "social function" (p. 10). For Dewey, it is imperative that schools create conditions to nurture in students the "capacity to live as social members" of the society by contributing to others (Dewey, 1966/1916, p. 359). The primacy of the social imperative of education was reiterated by Fairfield (2009) when he said, "The transition that education brings about is the rising up to humanity, a cultivation of self as an intellectual and active participant in the life of its society" (p. 8). It is this vision of education that the study tries to uphold and is the *raison d'etre* for choosing to undertake a research on the topic of serving and learning to serve.

1.1   Research Problem

As reflected in the title of the thesis, two phenomena are of interest in this inquiry. Firstly, it is the phenomenon of youth service, namely, the acts of volunteering by young people for their community. Wuthnow (1995) sees volunteering as "an important link between having good intentions and being able to put them into practice" (p. 38). Having the intentions to serve, in other words, do not necessarily translate into actual service. As Minichiello and Kottler (2010b) observed, "…people say lots of things that are not actually related to their actions" (p. 15). Hence, this study is about youth who serve, not about those who said they might serve or that they had the intentions to serve. Congruently, for this study, the term civic responsibility has an "operative" connotation (Lickona 1991, p. 51). Young people's sense of civic responsibility is demonstrated by how they behave in the world and what they do in bettering the lives of others in the community. In a sense, civic responsibility is concrete, observable and tangible. A person's act of service is also a reflection of his or her moral beliefs and the valuing of a wider social life beyond oneself (Coles, 1993; Fishman, 1998a). This study is interested to know what young people value, specifically, what makes them value the ethic of service and prioritise it through proactive agency beyond their school days. Above all, the research aims to explore from the perspectives of youth who serve to what

extent and in what ways they believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve was influenced by their prior experience with service at school.

The second phenomenon central to this study is mandatory community service in school. Although increasingly common, the principle of forcing students to volunteer remains a controversial topic that is widely debated (Bennett, 2009; Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010; Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014). Critics believe that compelling students to serve may create resentment, hence mitigating the potential gains associated with service (Bennett, 2009; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Warburton & Smith, 2003). On the other hand, those who advocate mandating service argue that when students are habitually put into situations where they reach out for others, pro-social behaviour and dispositions would ensue (Henderson et al., 2014; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Wuthnow, 1995). The controversy surrounding mandatory service gave the researcher the impetus to find out from participating students who had been through the experience of compulsory service and hear from them how they feel about the concept. Specifically, the study is interested to understand more about the role and relevance of mandatory service later in their lives as young adult volunteers.

Despite the contradicting views of mandating service, a rising number of schools around the world have formulated policies to make service part of their graduation requirement (Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Keilsmeier, Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Neal, 2004; Wuthnow, 1995). For example, studies have revealed that nearly 26% of high schools in the United States implemented compulsory community service programmes for students (Keilsmeier et al., 2004; Metz & Youniss, 2005). In Canada, it was reported that in the year 2000, about a third of high schools mandated community service (Gallant et al., 2010). However, while mandatory community service continues to grow in popularity in many parts of the world, there is a scarcity of research undertaken on the topic except for the United States and Canada (Arenas, Bosworth, & Kwandayi, 2006; Neely, 2007). According to Arenas et al. (2006), "despite doing a bibliographic search in four different languages, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French, we found relatively

few research studies focusing outside of North America" (p. 25). To address the gap in the literature, this study was undertaken in Singapore, one of the countries that adopted the approach of mandating service since the year 1998 (Ministry of Education (MOE), National University of Singapore (NUS), & Nanyang Technological University (NTU), 2005; National Library Board Singapore (NLB), 2018; Wong, 2000).

1.2   Background Context of School Service in Singapore

Schools in Singapore strive to give students a well-rounded education with a strong emphasis on knowledge and skills acquisition and character development (Wee, 1997). While academic excellence remains a priority on the education agenda, at the core of the curriculum across all levels is to nurture students to become "concerned citizens" with a strong sense of social responsibility and capable of contributing to the community in meaningful ways (Sim, Alviar, & Ho, 2011, p. 10). As reflected in the following quotation by Mr. Heng Swee Keat, former Minister for Education, education has a key function of fostering in young people sound moral values and responsibility for others in the society:

> Ultimately, education is not what we do to our children. Rather, it
> is what we do with them, and for them, to bring out the best in
> each of them, so that they grow up to embrace the best of the
> human spirit – to strive to be better, to build deeper wells of
> character, and to contribute to society.
> (Heng, 2013, "Thinking About The Future", para.11)

The importance of civic responsibility as an educational goal in Singapore schools is spelt out by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in one of its desired outcomes of education as, "He is a concerned citizen who is rooted to Singapore, has a strong civic consciousness, is informed, and takes an active role in bettering the lives of others around him" (MOE, 2017, p. 1). To develop civic responsibility and help students learn the value of service, the MOE established the 'Community Involvement Programme' (CIP) and made it mandatory for all primary and secondary school students to perform community service (Koh, Liu, Chye, &

Divaharan, 2013; Maidin, 2000; NLB, 2018; Wong, 2000). Besides developing civic responsibility, the mission of the CIP is also to help students "understand that every Singaporean has a role in enhancing the wellbeing of the community and the country…" (MOE et al., 2005, p. 3). All students are required to perform at least six hours of community service in a year (Maidin, 2000; NLB, 2018; Wong, 2000). The total number of CIP hours, as well as the nature of a student's involvement, are graded and could contribute towards his or her level of Co-Curricular attainment upon graduation. Since its first launch in October 1997, the CIP continued to act as a platform to encourage long-term engagement in community service (MOE et al., 2005; Maidin, 2000; NLB, 2018; Wong, 2000). It is noteworthy that from March 2012, the CIP was renamed Values in Action (VIA) to further emphasise the importance of values acquisition in the process of learning to meet community needs (Heng, 2015; National Youth Council (NYC) & MOE, 2012).

While the primary objective of the CIP is to encourage long-term commitment to community service, little is known about how effective the programme has been in achieving its goal and in what ways it has been significant for students who have participated in it. Outcomes have not been very clear in real life as to how the programme contributes to the longer-term development of the ethic of care and commitment to service. Although the CIP was implemented in 1998 and mandatory service has been institutionalised nationwide since then, there have been few studies on its impacts or what the experience means in the lives of students (Koh et al., 2013; MOE et al., 2005). The longer-term outcomes of the CIP on students' sense of civic responsibility merit further investigation given its importance as an educational goal and mandatory status.

1.3   Purpose of the Research

The subject of this research is post-school youth who serve. The objective of the inquiry is to examine in what ways their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve was influenced by their prior experience with service participation at school. At its core, this study wants to explore how students, specifically those who have graduated and continued to serve beyond school, make

sense of their experience with service at school. However, it is not within the scope of the study to evaluate service programmes. It is primarily concerned about listening to student perspectives on what matters concerned them and what had been significant in their service experiences. That experience is central to learning makes it imperative to distil the essence of the experience from those individuals who were involved (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1996; Dewey, 1969/1938).

In addition, the study is interested in examining the reasons these young volunteers give for their commitment to serve in their adult years and understand how they interpret the connection between their past and subsequent experiences with service. It must be pointed out that the study does not make any attempt to establish a causal relationship between school service and adult volunteering. Besides exploring the past and present service experience of young adult volunteers, the study is also curious to learn more about their longer-term plans to continue serving. At the same time, it aims to find out from these volunteers how their efforts could be sustained and what could undermine their capacity to serve in the future.

1.4   Research Questions

This study is driven by a general question and four sub-questions. An important ontological assumption of the study is that "reality is socially constructed" and 'truth' may mean different things to different people (Mertens, 2005; p. 14). In line with this assumption, the research strategy focuses on framing questions that use hermeneutics or the theory of interpretation, a concept that grew out of phenomenology (Mertens, 2005; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Hence, the general question and sub-questions are all interpretative and perspectival in that they seek to understand experiences from the points of view of the participants who have had the experience (Mertens, 2005).

General question:

To what extent and in what ways do young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve has been influenced by their school service experience?

Sub-questions:

- How do young people who are currently involved in voluntary service perceive their prior experience with service while at school?
- How do young people feel they might have been affected by their service experience at school?
- What do young people believe are their reasons and motivations to continue with service in their adult lives?
- What do young people believe are their longer-term plans to continue serving?

1.5   Research Design

The aim of the study is to examine in what ways young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve has been influenced by their school service experience. To achieve this aim, a phenomenological approach was adopted with the belief that it is best suited for a research on how people make sense of their lived experience (Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Based on its founder, Husserl's philosophy of "going back to the things themselves", phenomenologists believe that to understand human experience, the only way is through personal accounts of people who have had the experience (Farber, 1966, p. 45; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). It was with this understanding that the study directed its inquiry to individuals who have experienced both the phenomena of adult volunteering and school service. Hence, the sample of this study comprised a group of young adult volunteers who had participated in mandatory community service while at school. In total, there are 16 participants in the sample. The small sample size has enabled the researcher to obtain thick, detailed, and rich data.

The method of data collection encompassed the use of interviews and written reflections. Firstly, one-to-one interviews were carried out over two phases. The interviews were considered semi-structured in that interview schedules with open-ended questions were used to guide the conversations. During the second phase of interviews, artefacts were used to facilitate the discussions. These were the mementos that the participants were requested to bring along, such as photographs,

letters, documents, journals, anecdotal notes and other keepsakes related to their service experience. These memorabilia and objects of interest turned out to be useful stimulus for recollecting experiential details and generating rich and meaningful discussions (Creswell, 2007, Hancock, 1998).

In addition to interviews, another source of data was the participants' reflection journals. After each interview, the participants were requested to write reflections. Although guided questions were used, the participants were given the option to write what they felt was relevant to them. There were several reasons for choosing this method of data collection. Firstly, it was to promote self-reflection and encourage the participants to think more deeply about their experiences (Cone & Harris, 1996; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). Secondly, the writing of reflections offered participants another chance to recall details that they might have forgotten to share or points of interest that the interviewer failed to enquire. Finally, it was hoped that the reflections, written in the participants' own space, would make it easier for them to reveal their thoughts that might appear critical or cynical.

The data collected were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Typically, the analysis could be described as an iterative and inductive circle (Kervin et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Although the study had tried to present the data analysis in a series of steps, the actual process was far from linear or regular. Often, the researcher had worked recursively by shuttling back and forth between the various steps (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Kervin et al., 2006). As Smith et al. (2009) fittingly described, IPA was a very complex process in the sense the researcher never really knew the direction the process could take her. The process was considered 'fixed' only upon the completion of the findings report (Smith et al., 2009, p. 81).

1.6   Significance of the Research

As an educational endeavour, the study has leaned on theories for their cognitive support, specifically in relation to the phenomenon of learning. For

instance, the visions and insights of Dewey, Gagné, Vygotsky, and Kolb have provided valuable background information on the concept of learning. While their theories served as powerful lens to view learning, this study could further expand knowledge about learning, specifically, learning to serve, by seeking the perspectives of learners themselves. As Levering (2007) emphasised, "In education, we want the pupils' voices to be heard" (p. 225) believing that learners, in their own rights, are the epistemological experts. Constructing knowledge by adopting multiple perspectives, both from the various theorists and the learners, is also consistent with the qualitative worldview adopted by this study.

By focusing its attention on students, albeit post-school, the study served as a platform for them to narrate their experiences, express their opinions, and explain the choices they made with regards to service. As a commitment to have their voices heard, this study has elected to incorporate regular quotations of the participants in the thesis to provide readers with a more direct access to their realities. According to Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011), a quotation "can expose emotions, expressions and language that can reflect more vividly the perspectives of the study population" (p. 279). By using quotations of the participants, the study affords its readers the opportunity to judge for themselves the types of conclusions and interpretations they wish to draw.

Besides giving students an opportunity to narrate their side of the story, the greatest significance of this study is its contribution to the pedagogy of service and policies associated with its practice. The detailed descriptions and rich data derived from this phenomenological study could potentially benefit educators in Singapore where very little is known about how students perceive their experience with mandatory service. In presenting the views of learners, the study could give educators in Singapore a clearer picture of the role and relevance of school service in their lives as students and beyond. Based on what the findings revealed, the study could be useful to educators in several ways.

First and foremost, the results of the study can inform educators how some students feel about the policy of making service compulsory. Considering the contentious nature of mandatory service, schools and policy-makers may find it useful to hear what students say about the principle of mandating service, especially for those who had personally been through the experience. That nearly all (15 out of 16) the participants endorsed making service compulsory and that they had reasons to support their views, may send a clear mandate to schools that they saw value in the approach.

Secondly, the findings could advance understanding of how some participating students responded to their schools' service programme and the various activities associated with it. In getting the participants to reflect upon their past involvement with service at school and reappraise those experiences, the study reveals matters that are important to them as learners. The participants, comprising of young adult volunteers, can be considered experts in the field considering they have an average of four years of volunteering experience beyond school. Without this added experience, there would be no basis for them to compare their school service experience with. The feedback from the participants could give educators access to their insights not only on how they felt about their experiences but also what counted as quality or otherwise, in those experiences. With deeper knowledge of the educational issues of learners, teachers and policy-makers would be able to design programmes and create experiences that are meaningful and relevant to them. Hence, in this way, educators can leverage on the experience of students. As in Vygotsky's vision, teachers, in other words, can become learners, and learners, their teachers (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 13).

Thirdly, the findings could endow educators with insights of the perceived impacts of mandatory service from the perspective of students who had been through the experience. While the central aim of most service programmes is to develop civic responsibility and commitment to one's community, outcomes may not be very clear in real life especially when it pertains to their longer-term effects (Astin & Sax, 1998; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). Civic responsibility, as a learning outcome, can be

subjective and difficult to assess or evaluate. This study has elected to focus on young people's sense of civic responsibility as it is demonstrated, namely through their acts of service that are tangible and observable. As Dewey (1966/1916) pointed out, behaviour is the "sole measure of morality" (p. 349). What is significant about the study is that it offers educators a chance to find out what some students are doing for the community after they have left school. More importantly, it allows them to hear what students themselves say about the different reasons for volunteering in their adult years and how their experience of learning to serve might have played a role. According to Dewey (1969/1938), "The educator by the very nature of his work is obliged to see his present work in terms of what it accomplishes, or fails to accomplish…" (p. 76). To give educators a sense of its value and see the potential of service as a tool to develop civic habits, there is a need to know how students describe the outcomes and the conditions under which they are achieved.

To cultivate a lifelong commitment to service, educators need to have a clearer understanding of the longer-term impacts of service participation. As Dewey (1966/1916) pointed out, "It's only when we [educators] have the outcomes of the process in mind, we speak of education as a shaping, forming, moulding activity" (p. 10). This study not only focuses on the participants' past and present service experience, it also explores their plans for serving in the future. To understand more fully the potential of their instruction, educators, according to Dewey (1969/1938), need to take "a long look ahead" (p. 87). Without trying to predict the future, understanding the hopes and aspirations of students for the future could give educators a better indication of possible long-term outcomes of service participation.

1.7   Limitations of the Research

Three limitations of this research are considered. The first limitation concerns the nature of the study that relied on participants' retrospections of their past experience with service at school. Knowledge obtained through the memory of an individual has its limitations when it pertains to reliability and completeness (Levering, 2007). It must also be noted that the participants in this study are young adults who have graduated from secondary school between two to eleven years ago

at the point of data collection in 2014. The descriptions of their past CIP experiences may not be representative of what current students are experiencing. As the literature shows, the mandatory service programme has undergone changes over the years. For example, the CIP has since 2012 been reframed as Values In Action (VIA) to further emphasise the learning of values (NYC & MOE, 2012). Hence, the findings and conclusions of this study are probably limited to the CIP and not generalisable to VIA. In saying that, what the participants shared about mandatory service could still be relevant as both the CIP and VIA are compulsory programmes.

Secondly, the study also takes into consideration that the research was carried out in Singapore and the participants' accounts will be specific to its unique socio-cultural setting. Consequently, findings from the study may not be transferrable to youth of a different cultural framework even if they have some common experience with service (Smith et al., 2009). As Brew (1996) remarked, "knowledge is always contingent", hence it is possible that the beliefs of Singaporean youth may not be representative of the views of individuals in another country (p. 92). Readers can, however, make comparisons and assess the relevance of the findings in terms of their similarities and differences (Sarantakos, 2005).

Thirdly, this study is about post-school youth who serve. The narratives of these youth may be fragments of the broader picture. Although school experiences can be studied from a "variety of angles", the focus of this study is on the students (Fishman, 1998a, p. 16). Hence, the thoughts and feelings of this group of students do not necessarily reflect the sentiments of all those involved in the service programmes. Nevertheless, their stories could give educators a glimpse of the lived experience of those learning to serve. In addition, the researcher acknowledges that the views of these youth may have an element of bias because they might be predisposed to service. She also took note of what Wuthnow (1995) pointed out in his own study on young volunteers. According to him, young people who "had the clearest sense of civic responsibility were, in fact, somewhat more inclined to view community service requirement more favourably" (Wuthnow, 1995, p. 236). For this

reason, the interpretations of this group of youth who serve are not generalisable to all youth in Singapore or other parts of the world.

1.8   Organisation of the Thesis

There are six chapters in this thesis. The following highlights each of the chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter One introduces the subject and the phenomena of interest of this study. It also provides a brief description of the background and purpose for undertaking the research. In addition, the research design, in terms of its overall methodology, approach, and methods adopted for data collection and analysis is highlighted. This chapter also addresses the significance of the study and its limitations. Finally, it outlines the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. This chapter has four main sections. In the first section, various learning theories are examined and their implications on the study are discussed. The following section includes a review of research on volunteering trends and mandatory service in Singapore. The next section explains the major concepts crucial to this study to give readers a better idea of how the study interprets them (For further explanations of the key terms used in this study, refer to the Glossary of Terms). The final section presents the conceptual framework of the research. Besides showing the overall structure of the study, this framework also situates the literature review in relation to other key components of the research.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Chapter Three details the research design focusing on the overall assumptions, the over-riding paradigm, methodology, and the methods adopted by the study. To begin, the chapter presents the Theoretical Framework of the study. This framework is used to map out the research process and provides an overview of the various

research elements. To illustrate how the research was conducted, this chapter also gives a detailed account of the strategies used for data collection and the procedures for data analysis. Next, the chapter describes the steps taken to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. Finally, the chapter addresses the ethical considerations of the study that concern the rights of the researched, the researcher, and the granting institution.

Chapter Four: Findings

Chapter Four reports on the findings of the research. This chapter is presented to address the research question and is structured in tandem with the four sub-questions. There are four sections in this chapter. Section One is about the participants' perceptions of their CIP experience while Section Two reports on the impacts of their experience. Section Three is predominantly about the participants' present volunteering experience, in particular, the reasons they gave for their involvement. Finally, Section Four presents how the participants foresaw their plans for future involvement.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In Chapter Five, the findings are discussed in the light of the theories that informed the study as well as what other researchers have found. In line with the overall aim of this investigation, the discussion focuses on the volunteers' past experience with service at school, their present involvement with service, and their future plans to continue serving. As in the Findings chapter, the four sub-research questions serve as a framework for this discussion.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

As a concluding chapter, Chapter Six draws together all the key elements of the study. To begin, it traces back the aims of the study and recapitulates the research questions that drive the study. Next, it reviews the design of the study by looking at the paradigm that frames the study, the approach adopted, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. In addition, the chapter summarises the key findings

before discussing the meanings of these findings in relation to their possible implications. These implications are discussed in relation to recommendations made on the policy and practice of mandatory community service. Next, this chapter proposes the use of a model for future research on community service. Finally, the limitations of the study are highlighted.

1.9   Conclusion

So far, this introductory chapter has established an overview of the study and discussed some of its significance and limitations. As readers continue to interact and participate with what has been written in the remaining chapters, they are invited to follow their own interpretations and form their own conclusions. It is hoped that the study has accomplished what it sets out to achieve, namely, to enhance knowledge of the phenomena of serving and learning to serve. Of primary importance in this study, is to capture what some students have to say about their school service experience, and to hear their reasons and motivations for continuing to serve even after they have left school. By listening to their narratives, it is hoped that readers can discover the influences, factors, and building blocks that shape a young person's sense of civic responsibility, and whether or to what extent school service might have played a role.

CHAPTER TWO – THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter reviews a selection of literature relevant to the phenomena of interest in this study; namely, serving, and learning to serve. For the researcher, an important objective of the literature review is to heighten her "theoretical sensitivity" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 41). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define the term "theoretical sensitivity" (p. 41) as "the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (p. 42). There are different ways to achieve sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study has relied on theoretical, empirical, and conceptual literature.

Different theories related to the research topic are examined and their implications on the study are discussed. To have a clearer idea how this current inquiry can contribute to the literature or complement what others have found, existing studies that were undertaken on the research topic are evaluated. Finally, key themes important to this study are clarified to give a better idea of how the study interprets them and where it stands in the presence of conflicting views. This chapter has four main sections. The first section examines the learning theories of Dewey, Gagné, Kolb, Vygotsky, and Furco. The second section reviews some of the current research on volunteering and mandatory service in Singapore. The third section explains the major concepts crucial to this study. Where relevant, these concepts are explored further in relation to what practitioners have found or what experts in the field have said. Supplementing this section is the Glossary of Terms that provides a list of explanations of key words and ideas used in this thesis. The final section presents the conceptual framework of the study using a schematic diagram to show the key components of the research and how they are linked to the literature.

2.1 Theories on Learning

A pertinent question to ask of any educational endeavour is what students learned and how the learning took place. This study is interested in a particular type of learning, namely, learning to serve. To understand the concept of learning, the study has relied on Dewey, Gagné, Kolb, Vygotsky, and Furco with the belief that their theories are important for developing and refining the research agenda. The use of multiple lenses from which to view learning is also in recognition of the complexity of the concept.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), theories provide the "rich background of information" that sensitises one to the phenomenon under study (p. 42). Furthermore, theories can serve as useful "cognitive and linguistic templates" that give the research direction, a boundary that makes the research more manageable, while at the same time achieving for it some internal coherence (Billig & Eyler, 2003, p. 5). For the researcher, theories are indispensable, for without them, it would be impossible to begin conceiving the research. Bringle (2003) explained that "theories ask and answer *why* questions" (p. 5) and as a result, challenge the researcher to question, to reflect, and to theorise. Perhaps Lewin's (as cited in Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 193) remark, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory" captures the important role theories play in this study.

2.1.1 Dewey's Theory of Learning.

This study has relied on Dewey's insights and visions to provide the rationale, frame the research questions and guide its methodology. While Dewey's work is immense, this study will concentrate primarily on two of his educational theories, namely, "The Theory of Experience" and "The Theory of Morals" (Dewey, 1966/1916, 1969/1938).

2.1.1.1 Theory of Experience.

In his book, *Experience and Education,* Dewey (1969/1938) explained that the educational process is inextricably connected to the human experience. Dewey (1969/1938) however, cautioned that not all experiences were educative. Experience, in other words, cannot be "directly equated" with learning (Dewey, 1969/1938, p. 25). According to Dewey (1969/1938):

> The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative…some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. (p. 25)

Dewey's statement has important implications especially for research on education. It poses fundamental questions that this study attempts to answer, namely, has the school service experience been educative and if so, what did students learn? However, knowledge about what students learnt would be incomplete without a more detailed understanding of the nature of the learning experience itself. As Dewey (1969/1938) emphasised, experience is central to learning. Consequently, for this study, an important initial task was to find out how from the participants how they described the contexts of their learning and how they perceived their school service experience.

In specifying how a student's experience at school is "educative" or "mis-educative", Dewey (1969/1938) identified two key principles: the Principle of Interaction (p. 43) and the Principle of Continuity (p. 33). Using the Principle of Interaction, Dewey (1969/1938) explained learning as an interaction or "transaction" between the learner and the learning environment (p. 43). Dewey (1966/1916) noted that learners are never passive and reminded educators that ideas cannot be handed down to learners as if they were "bricks", or "shared like a pie" (p. 4). The Principle of Interaction has important implications on the study, one of which concerns the choice of methodology. If the learning process is conceived as a transaction between the learner and the learning milieu, it is necessary to put learners in the picture to

find out what learning has taken place and how it happens (Bridges & Smith, 2007; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Powney & Watts, 1987). Thus, the study has opted to use a phenomenological approach because of its primary concern for the human experience and its endeavour to capture the essence of human phenomenon as experienced directly by individuals themselves (Denscombe, 2010; Moustakas, 1994; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Another of Dewey's philosophies is the Principle of Continuity or the "experiential continuum" (Dewey, 1969/1938, p. 33). Dewey (1966/1916) was emphatic that education should not end even though formal schooling was over. As he highlighted, "The learning in school should be continuous with that out of school" (p. 358). From Dewey's (1969/1938) point of view, every experience is built upon past experiences and has the capacity to alter the quality of subsequent experiences. Dewey (1969/1938) viewed every experience as analogous to a "moving force" (p. 38) and its value can only be gauged by "what it moves toward and into" (p. 38). Based on Dewey's (1969/1938) "experiential continuum" (p. 33), a fundamental question to ask is in what direction and to what extent school service experience moved the participating learners. Additionally, it is also important to find out whether in reality there is indeed evidence of a developmental continuum that can be attributed to school service. Dewey's definition of what makes an experience educative prompted the study to ask if the acts of service by post-school youth are indeed indications that their prior experience with service involvement was educative, and indicative of continuity. As Polin and Keene (2010) asked simply, "How do we know if students are learning?" (p. 22). To look for the answer, the study gives itself the task of finding out from the participants themselves what they believe they had learnt, and from their perspectives, whether the learning had continued into their adult lives.

2.1.1.2 Theory of Morals.

This study looks to Dewey for his ideology and vision of what successful education looks like and what education should aim for. For Dewey, an implicit goal of education is the development of "moral traits of character" (Fishman, 1998c, p.

46). Dewey's concern for moral values is similarly reflected in his exemplification of the Principle of Continuity, stating that the educative process should be identified with not just intellectual but also moral growth (Dewey, 1969/1938). However, for Dewey (1966/1916), morality is "not what a person is inside of his own consciousness, but what he does" (p. 349). For him, a person's moral "conduct" is what matters (Dewey, 1966/1916, p. 358). In other words, as Dewey (1966/1916) stressed, "it is not enough for a man (or woman) to be good; he (or she) must be good for something" (p. 359). He further elaborated that students need to learn to "live as social members" (Dewey, 1966/1916, p. 359) of their community by participating cooperatively in social life and find meaning in advancing the lives of others. Dewey's (1966/1916) vision of linking schools to the society as reflected in his saying, "Education, in its broadest sense, is a means of this social continuity of life" (p. 2) has been a springboard for citizenship learning.

Dewey's insights on the moral and social functions of education have special prominence to the study. It is the reason why the study has chosen young people who are demonstrating their values through their acts of helping others in the community. In borrowing Dewey's lens, the study wants to know whether their acts of service are in any way connected to their school experiences. Most of all, Dewey's philosophy provides a way of looking at the phenomenon of learning, in particular, from a moral perspective. Hence, it is not only essential to find out if students learned but whether, in the process of learning, values, such as civic responsibility, were acquired.

2.1.2 Gagné's Theory of Learning (1977/1916).

Gagné (1977/1916) defined learning as "a change in human disposition or capability which persists over a period of time" (p. 3). Learning can lead to an increase in a person's capacity to carry out certain tasks or it can result in a change in a person's attitude and behaviour. According to Gagné (1977/1916), a person's learning is influenced by the events in his or her environment. He believed that people do not learn things 'from scratch' (Gagné, 1977/1916, p. 20) in that their previously acquired capabilities come into play in the learning process. Gagné (1977/1916) identified five categories of learning outcomes: "intellectual skills,

cognitive strategies, verbal information, motor skills, and attitude" (p. iv). Among the various outcomes, the most relevant to the study of service and the learning of service is attitude. In concordance with Dewey, Gagné (1977/1916) stressed that schools have a role to establish in young people "attitudes useful for social living" one of which is "citizenship responsibilities" (p. 254). The kind of learning that constitutes attitude suggests perseverance, rather than something short-lived or transitory (Gagné, 1977/1916).

2.1.2.1 Attitude.

Gagné (1977/1916) described an attitude as, "a disposition or readiness for some kind of action", or an internal condition that affects how a person is likely to respond or act (p. 236). Some researchers refer to attitudes as values and use the two terms interchangeably (Gagné, 1977/1916, p. 240). While a person's attitude "influences the choices of personal action", there is no direct co-relationship between attitudes and behaviours (Gagné, 1977/1916, p. 44). In other words, attitude cannot be equated with behaviour (Gagné, 1977/1916). To illustrate, an attitude of respect for others may influence a person to behave courteously, but it cannot be assumed that a person who behaves in a courteous manner indicates that he or she has an attitude of respect. According to Gagné, the relationship between attitude and action is far from clear-cut, thus, making it difficult to assess. Firstly, not all attitudes have corresponding overt behaviours that are observable. Besides, studying behaviour often requires time and access to people in all their circumstances (Gagné, 1977/1916). Based on Gagné's explanation, educators may be constrained both temporally and spatially in their assessment of learning outcomes associated with service. Assessing the civic attitudes of students can be challenging when their involvement occurs outside school or after they have left school. Hence, to find out if students learned the attitude of civic responsibility from school, this study has adopted a strategy of choosing a sample that is comprised of post-school, young adults.

2.1.2.2 Conditions of learning attitudes.

Just like other forms of capabilities, people learn attitudes from their environment. According to Gagné (1977/1916), sometimes an attitude is acquired through an experience, or it can develop over time through an accumulation of experiences. Gagné (1977/1916) explained that there are conditions that are conducive to the learning of favourable attitudes. He believed that an experience that was associated with personal fulfilment and a sense of achievement was more likely to engender positive attitudes (Gagné, 1977/1916). This belief would suggest that, to help students develop the right attitudes, schools need to arrange for opportunities for students to experience success. Another way in which students learn positive attitudes is through "human modelling" (Gagné, 1977/1916, p. 46). From Gagné's (1977/1916) perspectives, human models are people who are "respected or admired" and whose behaviour a young person may emulate (p. 46). These models might be people in a young person's life, or people he or she came across in biographies or historical texts (Gagné, 1977/1916). However, models need not be real, it is possible for them to be "fictional characters" from stories (Gagné, 1977/1916, p. 252).

The relevance of Gagné's concept of attitude for this study is two-fold. Firstly, it challenges the researcher to probe at a deeper level how school service might have affected the students' attitude towards service. There is also a necessity to find out the conditions under which students learn such attitudes. Next, it is important to find out from the participants what other factors, apart from school, had influenced their sense of service and propensity to serve.

2.1.3 Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning.

Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning (Figure 2.1), a variation of the theories of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, provides another framework for understanding how learning occurs and what it involves (Kolb, 1984; Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). What is significant in his model is the "central role experience plays in the learning process" (Kolb, 1984, p. 20). Kolb (1984) conceptualises learning as a cycle involving four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Based

on the model, the "learning cycle" (Kolb et al., 2001, p. 3; Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 198) begins with an immediate or concrete experience that students engage in. From these experiences, learners begin to observe and reflect (Kolb et al., 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The process of reflection and observation brings the learning to another stage when students attempt to form abstract concepts from which implications for future actions can be drawn (Kolb et al., 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). These concepts and hypotheses are then tested out in the community through the process known as active experimentation (Kolb et al., 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Active experimentation creates further concrete experiences and the learning cycle continues (Kolb et al., 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Hence, the learning process, being continuously modified by new experiences, does not cease.
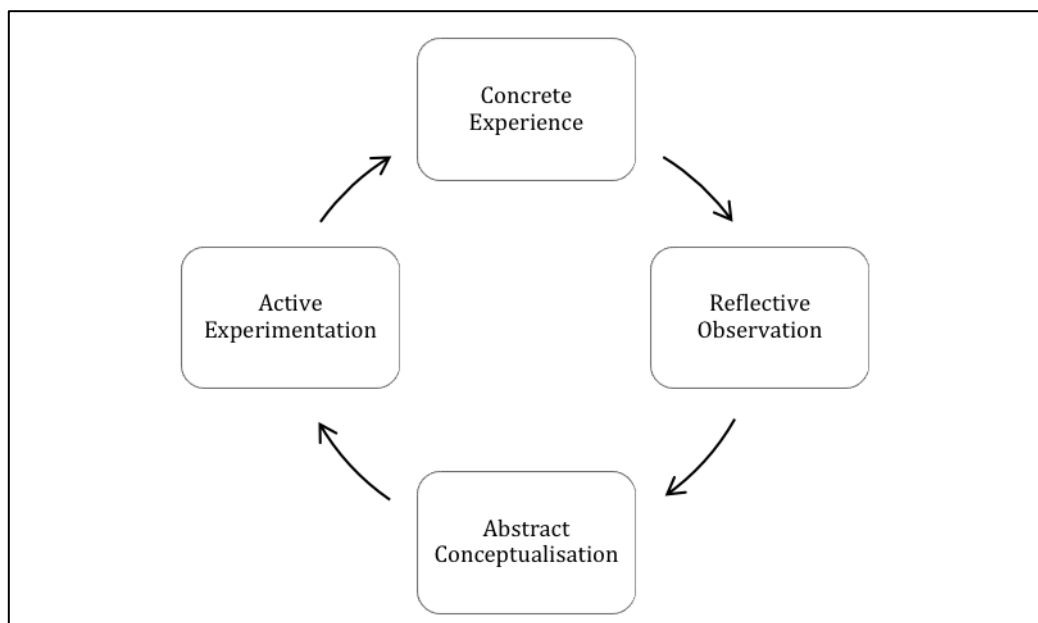
Figure 2.1. The Experiential Learning Cycle
From "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education," by A. Kolb and D. Kolb, 2005, *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 4* (2), p. 198.

This inquiry can benefit from using Kolb's lens to view the phenomenon of mandatory community service, a form of experiential learning. If learning is a

cyclical process involving the stages as shown in the model, it is important that the study incorporates strategies to find out what the process of learning was for the students or what the different stages were in their own experience with the CIP. For instance, in Kolb's Model, reflection is a key element of the learning process. It is useful to know if there were opportunities for students to reflect on their service experience, and if so, how these were facilitated.

Another insight suggested by Kolb's (1984) model is that learning is a holistic process that integrates the functioning of the total person, such as "experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour" (p. 21). As Eyler and Giles (1999) summed up in their explanation of Kolb's learning cycle, "one moves from feeling, to observing, to thinking, to doing" in a recursive manner (p. 195). What is significant about Kolb's model is that it reinforces the epistemological assumption behind this study; namely, the importance of understanding learning from learners who had the experience (Levering, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

2.1.4 A Vygotskian perspective on learning.

The theories of Vygotsky, an educationalist and psychologist from Russia, remain relevant to contemporary education even after his death decades ago (Mishra, 2013, Wink & Putney, 2002). In the words of Wink and Putney (2002), "the past has a way of coming back to teach us if we will listen" (p. xxx). This section of the literature review will discuss Vygotsky's theory and visions of learning and reflect on what can be learnt from the visionary teacher.

2.1.4.1 Vygotsky's Social Constructionist Theory.

Vygotsky's Social Constructionist Theory posited that children learn through interaction and collaboration with others in their social, cultural, historical, and political environment (Vygotsky,1986). In other words, a person's learning is mediated by people and influenced by his or her life experiences (Vygotsky,1986). From the standpoint of the constructionist theory, learners learn through appropriating knowledge and values from their environment (Vygotsky,1986). Since

students come from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, it cannot be expected that they are similar. Vygotsky (1997) reminded educators that, "the goal of the school is not at all a matter of reducing everyone to the same level..." (p. 79). What Vygotsky emphasised has implications on pedagogy; namely, that student diversity needs be respected and taken into consideration for learning to be effective.

Although Vygotsky (1997) viewed learning as social, it is also individual. For Vygotsky (1997), learners are "active" participants in the learning process, rather than impassive recipients of knowledge that others contribute to them (p. 54). In this respect, Vygotsky shared Dewey's concept of the agency of learners. While learners are actors and agents in their learning, the teachers' role is to mediate learning rather than to transmit knowledge. As "mediators", and "mentors", teachers arrange for opportunities to engage students in meaningful learning activities through interaction and cooperation with others (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 33). Thus, Vygotsky (1997) considered learning as an activity where teacher and learner co-produce and construct meaning together.

2.1.4.2 Vygotsky's Metaphor of Water.
The concept of dialectics was central to Vygotsky's philosophy of learning. The term, dialectics, is defined by Wink and Putney (2002) as, "the combination of two seemingly opposite elements into one distinct entity" (p. xi). Vygotsky (1986) preferred to see learning in its entirety rather than breaking it up into separate, disconnected entities. To illustrate the dialectical nature of learning, Vygotsky (1986) used the Metaphor of Water as shown in Figure 2.2. Water, a liquid, is neither hydrogen nor oxygen but a compound formed from a combination of these gases. To understand the property of water, namely, that it can extinguish fire, one cannot do so by studying each of its individual elements separately, for in contrast to water, hydrogen (H) is a flammable gas and oxygen (O_2) supports combustion (Vygotsky, 1986).
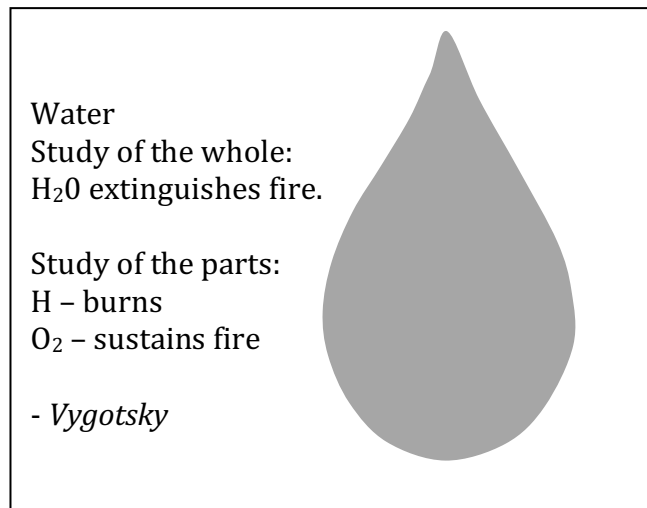
Figure 2.2. The Vygotskian Metaphor of Water.

From *A Vision of Vygotsky* (p. xii), by J. Wink and L. G. Putney, 2002,

Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Vygotsky's metaphor is a useful analogy for learning. Just like the property of water, learning can only be conceived in its totality. In other words, the learning process cannot be understood by looking at each of its elements in isolation. For example, learners cannot be separated from their learning milieu, or the sociocultural environment in which learning occurs. Similarly, as Wink and Putney (2002) interpreted, pedagogy is not "two separate processes of a teacher, teaching or a learner, learning" (p. xii). Instead, learning and teaching interact, creating a symbiotic relationship that needs to be understood holistically.

2.1.4.3 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was conceptualised by Vygotsky (1978) to describe how students learn, how they progress, and how they achieve their future potentials. Vygotsky (1978) defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as:

> the distance between the actual developmental level as
> determined by independent problem solving and the level of
> potential development as determined through problem solving
> under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.
> (p. 86)

For Vygotsky (1978), a student's potential development extends to the future and does not have a preset limit. The concept of potential development is complex and how people advance towards their potentials does not have a regular progression or a fixed sequence (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) explained that the notion of development takes into consideration individual differences and varying social, cultural factors that mediate the learning. It follows that students traverse their zones in different ways in that their speed, direction and levels of future development are not the same. Hence the challenge for educators is to identify the ZPD of their students and think of strategies that could lead them and help them reach their different potentials.

According to Vygotsky (1978), the function of schools is to equip students with skills and knowledge so that they can continue to learn beyond school and into the future. Besides helping students learn, Vygotsky believed that schools have the responsibility of educating students to be "social members" (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 35). Vygotsky's outlook shares many similarities with Dewey's philosophy.

2.1.4.4 Implications of Vygotsky's visions on the current research.

A Vygotskian perspective on pedagogy contributes to this study in three significant ways. Firstly, Vygotsky's (1986) Metaphor of Water is an important reminder to view the learning process in a more holistic way. Hence, to understand the outcomes of learning, it was imperative that the researcher included in the research agenda, strategies that gave the participants opportunities to recollect the context in which learning occurred. For instance, before establishing the impacts of school service on students, it was necessary to have an overall understanding of the students' experience in terms of how schools implemented their programmes and the nature of the service activities in which students participated.

Secondly, Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) provides a framework to view learning. Of particular importance, the concept of ZPD prompts the study to explore the possible relationship between the learning of service and

subsequent volunteering in adult life. Embedded in the notion of ZPD is also the idea that learning is developmental and continues into the future. Hence, this study creates space for the participants to contemplate the direction their volunteering journey could take them in future.

Thirdly, from Vygotsky's social constructionist viewpoint, students are perceived as "co-constructor" and "active social participants" in the learning process (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 33). For this reason, the study seeks to understand learning from students' perspectives. At the same time, students were also asked for their opinions on aspects of their learning that worked or did not work for them and areas that could be improved. In this study, the participating students are not only the "thinkers, interpreters, and inquirers" as Wink and Putney (2002, p. 33) described, but also, the experts in the field of volunteering. Their experience with service, both at school and in their adult lives, could give them the capacity to better assess their schools' service programmes.

2.1.5 Furco's Experiential Learning Continuum.

Unlike the different learning theories discussed so far, Furco's theory concerns a particular type of learning experience; namely, learning through service participation. In recognition of the multiplicity of service programmes and the range of possible ways students may experience service at school, the study turned to Furco for his explanation of the different types of service activities and how they can be distinguished. According to Furco (1996a), various types of service programmes such as service-learning, volunteerism, and community service can be presented as parts of a continuum. Where each programme lies on the continuum depends on two primary factors; namely, whom the service benefits and upon what it focuses (Furco, 1996a).

To illustrate how to distinguish the different types of service pedagogies, Furco (1996a) used a diagram as shown in Figure 2.3. With reference to the diagram, a service programme can be understood in relation to its intended beneficiary and

focus. For example, the intended beneficiary for community service is primarily the recipients rather than the providers, and its focus is more on the service than learning. In comparison, for service-learning, there is a greater balance in terms of benefits to both the recipients and the providers. At the same time, it has equal emphasis on service as well as learning. Volunteerism, on the other hand, is characterised by its emphasis on the service activity rather than the learning and the primary intended beneficiary is the recipient of the service rendered. It is significant to note that all the types of programmes lie on a continuum and overlap each other rather than being on a single point (Figure 2.3). For example, a community service programme may move closer to the centre of the continuum to become more like service-learning depending on the way it is carried out. Similarly, volunteerism may incorporate some of the characteristics of service-learning and community service.
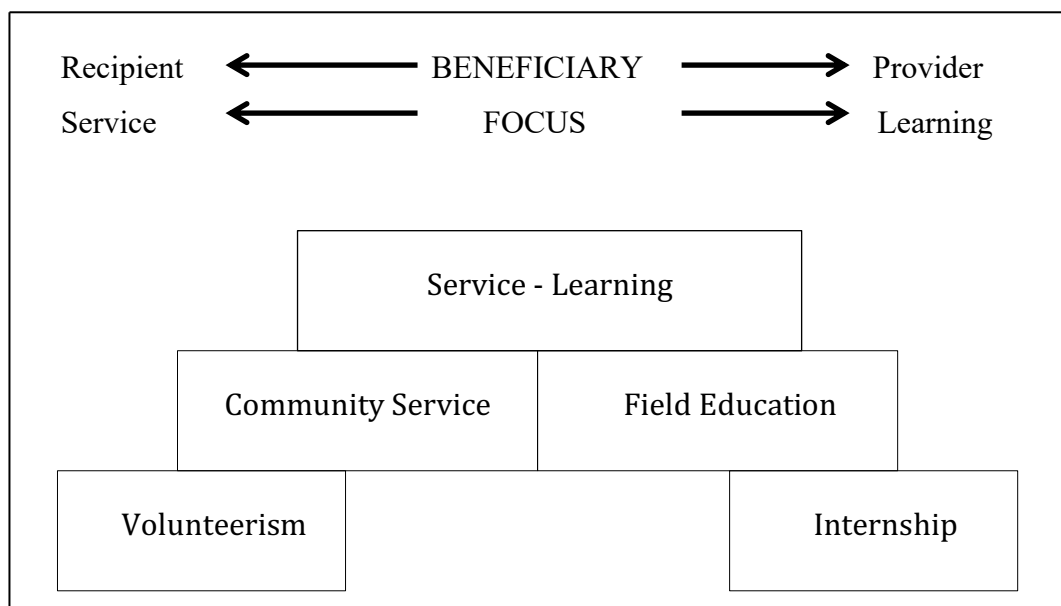
Figure 2.3. Distinctions among Service Programmes

From "Service-Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education", by A. Furco, 1996a, *Service Learning, General, 128*, p. 12.

Furco's (1996a) theory is significant in that it helps clear some of the confusion surrounding the different types of service programmes. More importantly, the theory serves as a reminder to see service in its diversity rather than something that is fixed

and predictable (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). On this basis, communicating with the participants to establish the nature of service programmes they had participated in was vital to the study.

2.2 Research on Volunteering and Mandatory Community Service in Singapore

This research is about youth who serve. Conducted in Singapore, it aims to explore to what extent and in what ways these young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility was influenced by their past experience with community service participation at school. In the context of Singapore, all students in primary and secondary schools must do compulsory community service through the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) (Koh, Liu, Chye, & Divaharan, 2013; National Youth Council (NYC) & Ministry of Education (MOE), 2012; Wee, 1997; Wong, 2000). To have a clearer idea how this study can contribute to the literature or complement what other researchers have found, some background studies on volunteering and community service in Singapore were reviewed. However, before looking at these studies, it is also important to explain how the CIP fits in with the overall educational scheme.

2.2.1 The CIP and its place in citizenship education.

Developing attributes of good citizenship has always been an important agenda in Singapore's educational system (Lee, 2012; Shumer, Lam, & Laabs, 2012; Sim & Print, 2005). The importance of citizenship education is reflected in the Desired Outcomes of Education as, "He is a concerned citizen who is rooted to Singapore, has a strong civic consciousness, is informed, and takes an active role in bettering the lives of others around him" (MOE, 2017, p. 1). Citizenship as a concept has been variously interpreted (Lee, Sim, & Koh, 2012; Sim & Low, 2012). For Sim, "Citizenship is really about who you are, your sense of belonging, and your place in the relationship. It's a relationship between yourself and the state, the community, and fellow citizens" (as cited in Lee et al., 2012, p. 8). According to Sim and Low (2012), the provision of "formal citizenship education" in Singapore falls on schools (p. 386). The Ministry of Education's pursuit to groom students to be good citizens is

described as "unceasing" and is evident in the number of educational programmes concerning citizenship that were launched (Lee, 2012, p. 502). For instance, citizenship was taught through Ethics initially (Lee, 2012; Sim & Print, 2005), and subsequently, programmes such as National Education and Character and Citizenship Education were established (Lee, 2012).

Educating for citizenship could take the form of formal classroom subjects, such as "Social Studies" combined with other learnings, one example being the compulsory Community Involvement Programme (CIP) (Koh et al., 2013, p. 428; Sim & Low, 2012, p. 386). Sim, Alviar, and Ho (2011) believe that the CIP, in allowing students to participate in community life, has the potential to prepare them for "active citizenship" and develop their "sense of civic responsibility" (p. 10). Since its first launch in October 1997, the Community Involvement Programme was seen as a key strategy for citizenship learning and has continued to be an important aspect of school life for students in Singapore (Ministry of Education (MOE), National University of Singapore (NUS), & Nanyang Technological Institute (NTU), 2005; Maidin, 2000; National Library Board (NLB), 2018; Wong, 2000).

2.2.2 Research on volunteering.

Despite the importance of community service as an educational endeavour in Singapore, there is scarce evidence of how it contributes to the development of the social ethic of caring and commitment to service. Nevertheless, several studies conducted by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) have provided useful information about volunteering in Singapore.

For instance, in their latest biennial survey on Individual Giving conducted in 2016, the NVPC found that the volunteering rate had nearly doubled from 18% in 2014 to 35% in 2016 and that the rate of volunteerism had tripled over the last ten years (NVPC, Singapore, 2017, p. 1). This growth in the volunteering rate could be attributed to the increase in informal volunteering, or volunteering that was not through any organisation (NVPC, 2017, p. 1).

Of greater interest and relevance to this research on school service was the NVPC's 2010 survey. In that study, it was found that 85% of the volunteers with previous experience in community service in school, indicated that "they are satisfied or very satisfied" with their experience although the reasons were not explored (NYPC, 2011, p. 27). It would have been beneficial though if there had been more detail on the participants' response, such as, the specific qualities of their experience with which they were satisfied. This study aims to build upon the NVPC's findings by asking participants for their perspectives on aspects of their service experience that worked or did not work. In addition, participants were asked for suggestions for further improvements.

The results of the NVPC's 2010 survey also indicated that those respondents aged 15-29 years who had been through required service at school had a much higher rate of volunteerism compared to those who had not (35% for the former and 15% for the latter) (NVPC, 2011). The survey demonstrated that school service could be an important avenue for young people to contribute to their communities. As the NVPC's Chief Executive Officer, Laurence Lien, commented:

> The good intentions of CIP when coupled with good execution, is a gateway to volunteerism. CIP connects our students to social concerns, and this exposure is more likely to spark continued volunteerism throughout their lives.
> (NVPC, 2011, p. 1)

Another survey by the NVPC that is of significance to this research concerns young people's reasons for volunteering. This survey found that most young people started volunteering because they were influenced by their schools (NVPC, 2014). These findings confirmed the results of the 2010 study by the NVPC that also reported that respondents regarded the CIP as giving them their first experience with community service (NVPC, 2011). While the studies by the NVPC may suggest evidence of a link between school and volunteering, more needs to be known about the various ways in which school service can influence young people's decisions to volunteer. The current study hopes to expand upon the NVPC's findings by asking a

group of post-school, young adult volunteers for their perspectives on their school service experience and find out from them in what ways and to what extent school service had influenced their sense of service.

2.2.3 Research on community service at school.

While the various studies carried out by the NVPC suggests that the CIP might have positive effects on young people's volunteering behaviour, its execution is not without challenges. According to Sim et al. (2011), their study on citizenship education revealed that, "CIP projects often take a backseat in the larger scheme of learning in schools" (p. 10). As such, students often failed to understand the purpose of service or the roles they could play to participate in community life (Sim et al., 2011). However, they acknowledged that although schools were tasked to prepare students for active citizenship, it was not easy, as the concept of active participation was still relatively new in Singapore's social context (Sim et al., 2011).

Also relevant to this research on school service was a study conducted by Lee et al. (2012) that investigated citizenship education from the perspectives of teachers. As Professor Lee Wing On, Dean of Education Research at the National Institute of Education (NIE) explained, "Very little attention has been put on teachers," and, "…we assume that they will do a good job" (Lee et al., 2012, p. 8). Their investigation on teacher perceptions on citizenship showed that values such as "behaving morally and ethically, tolerating diversity, and being responsible to the family" were important to teachers (p. 8). The same study also indicated that when it came to active citizenship, there were inconsistencies between what teachers did and what they expected students to do (Lee et al., 2012). This finding matches the results of their survey on teachers from other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, China, and Russia (Lee et al., 2012, p. 8). Similarly, Koh et al. (2013) found that student teachers showed only a "moderate inclination" to engage in community service (p. 440). According to Lee et al. (2012), the learning of service could be compromised if teachers had to teach their students to serve, when they themselves were not involved in service.

2.3   Examination of Key Concepts

This section attempts to examine the key concepts that are relevant to this study. These concepts include: school service experience, volunteering, mandatory service, and civic responsibility. A search on the literature suggests that these terms are variously interpreted and can be ambiguous and confusing. It is important that the researcher indicates her interpretations and the stance the study takes. Where relevant, these concepts are explored further in relation to what practitioners have found or what experts in the field said.

2.3.1 School service experience.

The term, school service experience, is a broad term reflecting the diverse ways in which service programmes are implemented and the varied experiences of different students. Within the context of Singapore, 'school service experience' may be related to the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) or Values in Action (VIA) depending on which years the participants were at school. While both programmes were part of the citizenship education curriculum, VIA was modelled more closely to service-learning sharing with it key features such as student autonomy in identifying community issues, meaningful activities and opportunities for reflection (Heng, 2015; NYC & MOE, 2012). It was imperative that the researcher understood what phenomena it was, that she was studying. Clarifying with the participants to find out the nature and type of service programme they were involved in was crucial. Not making a clear distinction could jeopardise the accuracy of reporting the findings. Although the term, service-learning, can sometimes be confused with community service (Ma, Chan, Liu, & Mak, 2018), they are different in that unlike service-learning, community service is not characterised by an intentional learning agenda (Ma, 2018; Steinke & Fitch, 2007; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). As Furco (1996b) explained, at the heart of community service is the service itself and the benefits it brings to those being served.

From a pedagogical perspective, community service is "service that students provide to the school or community in which there is no prescribed learning agenda related to the academic curriculum" (Arenas, Bosworth, and Kwandayi, 2006, p. 24).

On the other hand, the emphasis for service-learning is not only on service but also on academic content and critical reflection (Ma, 2018). Ma (2018) elaborated:

> Schools cooperate with the community to provide students with a variety of service opportunities through which students are encouraged to apply classroom knowledge in practice, think independently, and reflect critically. (p. 3)

While many service-learning programmes do incorporate the key elements described by Ma, how the programmes are implemented and operationalised may differ in terms of its content, quality, intensity, duration, goals and objectives (Billig, 2002; Cipolle, 2010). As Xing and Ma (2010) pointed out, "service-learning is not culture-nuetral" (p. 4), and its "meaning, understanding and practices vary from society to society" (p. 4). Similarly, there can be differences in community service programmes. In some instances, community service programmes may closely resemble service-learning especially when they incorporate elements of service-learning (Furco, 1996a; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005). In consideration of the potential variations in programme characteristics, institutional differences, and student diversity, it is reasonable to envisage that the service experience for each participant could turn out to be unique and personal (Cone & Harris, 1996; Polin & Keene, 2010). For this reason, the study is committed to delve deeply into a particular individual's experience with service at school to understand the actual context of his or her learning.

2.3.2 Volunteering.

This study will adopt the definition of 'volunteering' used by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), Singapore. By their definition, volunteering refers to "activities done out of your own free will without expecting financial payment to help others outside your household, family or relatives" (NVPC, 2013, p. 3). Put succinctly, volunteering activities are undertaken:

- with the primary intent of benefitting others;
- without coercion; and,
- without remunerations (NVPC, 2013, p. 3).

Many countries have similarly based their definition of volunteering on the above criteria. For instance, the official definition of 'formal volunteering' used by Australia is, "an activity which takes place through not-for-profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and,
- in designated volunteer positions only" (Volunteering Australia, 2012, p. 7).

Based on the second criteria, namely, that volunteering is done without coercion, it implies that community service carried out by students as part of a school requirement is not considered volunteering because of the compulsory element, unless it exceeds the number of hours stipulated in the CIP (NVPC, 2013, p. 3). In other words, students could be involved in volunteering activities as part of a school requirement, yet they are not actually volunteering because it was not carried out of their own free will. Niemi, Hepburn, and Chapman (2000) referred to community service as, "voluntary work in the community that is not linked to the school curriculum, although it may be encouraged by or even arranged by the school" (p. 48). Conversely, the work done by volunteers has also been described as service or community service because it essentially benefits the community. As Graff lamented, "We believe the continuing efforts to lump all forms of citizenship engagement under a single generic term such as "service" confuses the public and profession" (cited in Volunteer Canada, 2006, p. 30). The terms 'volunteering', 'service', and 'community-service' can be confounding and should be read and used with extra caution.

Generally, volunteering can be classified as "formal" or "informal", the main difference being that "formal" volunteering is carried out through organisations while those that are "informal" are not (NVPC, 2013 p. 3). Based on a survey conducted by the NVPC in 2010, the most common types of volunteering work in Singapore are those that are related to human services, fundraising, and general services and administration (NVPC, 2011, p. 9). While the term "types" of

volunteering refers to the work or activities performed, "sector" refers to "the organisation ultimately receiving the service of the volunteers" (NVPC, 2011, p. 24). The NVPC (2011) illustrated these distinctions with an example: "If a volunteer is with a religious organisation and is involved with serving the children of an orphanage, the sector is 'social service', not 'religious organisations'" (p. 24). The top four sectors for volunteering in Singapore were: religious organisations, education, social service, and community or grassroots organisations (NVPC, 2011).

2.3.2.1 A functional approach to understanding motivations to volunteer (Clary and Synder, 1999).

Volunteering is a phenomenon that deeply interests psychologists (Clary & Synder, 1999). As Clary and Synder (1999) emphasised, volunteering is "effortful, sustained, and non-remunerative" (p. 156). Before volunteers render help to those in need, they are required to actively seek out service opportunities, plan, and make decisions. In other words, volunteering involves time and commitment. A significant question that needs to be raised about volunteering is, "Why do young people decide to serve in the first place and what makes them continue serving?"

Clary and Synder (1999) theorised using a "functional approach" (p. 156) to explain what prompts people to volunteer and continue to persevere with their efforts. There are several basic tenets associated with a functional approach. Firstly, underlying the approach is the premise that people choose particular actions and behaviour to satisfy their personal aims and motivations. Hence, a volunteering activity may achieve for the volunteer his or her own goals. Another assumption is that people can have different motivations even though they are doing the same activities. For instance, a group of volunteers participating in a service event may have different reasons for their involvement. Finally, behind the functional approach is the belief that when the activities people engage in are able to meet their personal goals and purposes, there is a greater chance of fulfilment and ultimately, continuity. Hence, volunteers who feel that the service they performed matched their motivations for serving are more likely to be able to sustain their commitment.

Based on the concepts of the functional approach, Clary and Synder (1999) produced the "Volunteering Functions Inventory" (VFI) (p. 157) to assess the different functions of volunteering (Table 2.1). Altogether, six functions were identified. These functions are "*Values, Understanding, Enhancement, Career, Social, and Protective*" (Clary & Synder, 1999, p. 157). To illustrate, volunteering may have a *Values* function for some people. For these volunteers, their decision to serve may be motivated by their personal values, such as altruism. Clary and Synder (1999) explained that in some instances, volunteering has a *Career* function. For example, to enhance their career prospects, young people may participate in service activities. Alternatively, people may volunteer to get away from their personal troubles. Thus, volunteering for them has a *Protective* function (Clary & Synder, 1999).

In their study using the VFI, Clary and Synder (1999) found that volunteering has multiple functions. To explain, Clary and Synder (1999) clarified that goals differ between volunteers, and sometimes, a single individual can have several goals. They concluded that volunteerism is "multifaceted" (Clary & Synder, 1999, p. 157) and people's motivations to volunteer can be complex. Clary and Synder's (1999) inventory serves as an important reminder for this study to explore in greater detail the reasons and motivations behind each volunteer's acts of service.

Table 2.1

Functions Served by Volunteering and their assessment on the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)

Function	Conceptual definition	Sample VFI item
Values	The individual volunteers in order to express or act on important values like humanitarianism.	I feel it is important to help others.
Understanding	The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or exercise skills that are often unused.	Volunteering lets me learn through direct, hands-on experience.

Enhancement	One can grow and develop psychologically through volunteer activities.	Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.
Career	The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.	Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.
Social	Volunteering allows an individual to strengthen his or her social relationships.	People I know share an interest in community service.
Protective	The individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.	Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.

From "The Motivations to Volunteer: Theoretical and Practical Considerations," by E. G. Clary & M. Synder, 1999, *Current Directions in Psychological Science 8*(5), p. 157.

2.3.2.2 Further perspectives on why youth serve.

This study has a special interest in youth who serve. Throughout this study, the term, youth who serve, refers to young adult volunteers. Hence, for these youth, service is performed voluntarily for public benefit for which no payment is received (Jones & Hill, 2003; McBride, Pritzker, Daftary & Tang, 2006). When young people on their own volition choose to serve their community, it may have something to say about the priorities they set and the sorts of moral character they have (Fishman, 1998c). According to Dewey (1966/1916), there is a close association between a person's outer conduct and his or her inner moral character. Many share Dewey's philosophy. For example, Coles (1993) reflected, "I had begun to see how complicated this notion of service is, how it is a function not only of what we do but of who we are" (p. xxvi). Similarly, Lickona (1991), an advocate for character education, viewed service as a reflection of one's moral beliefs and the valuing of a wider society beyond oneself. In the discussion on moral values, this study also looks to Hill (2008) for his ideas on the subject. Hill (2008) defined values as "the priorities that help people decide how they shall live and what they treasure" (p. 1).

Another point raised by Hill (2008) is that people's priorities are dependent on their prior learning.

The importance of these various perspectives on service and its association with moral values is that they contribute to the questions asked by the study. Firstly, if people's priorities depend on their prior learning, as Hill (2008) explained, it would be useful to know if young people's prior learning of service had in any way influenced their values and priorities in regard to their role in the community. Secondly, the study aimed to ask what makes young people value the ethic of service and live according to their values through proactive social actions. Noddings (2003) suggested that civic service has a direct contribution to people's happiness. According to Noddings (2003), serving the community can help develop more meaningful relationships. Besides, some people have what "Reinhold Niebuhr described as an uneasy conscience" or a sense of commitment to relieve the sufferings of others (Noddings, 2003, p. 237). For these people, happiness is achieved through helping alleviate misery (Noddings, 2003). What Noddings had suggested may potentially be true for the participants. Nevertheless, the intent of the study is to capture what the participants believe to be true and allow their personal reasons to emerge from those interpretations.

2.3.3 Mandatory service.

Graff defines mandatory community service as service that involves "compulsion from a source of power outside of a person required to perform the work. Punishment and/or the denial of important rights and/or benefits are the consequence for those who fail to meet the service requirements" (Volunteer Canada, 2006, p. iv). Literature indicates that mandatory service programmes have become a rising trend amongst schools and is often seen as a tool to encourage young people to be more aware of their roles to others in the society (Harrison, 2012; Pancer, Brown, Henderson, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Planty & Regnier, 2003).

As mentioned, one of the countries that followed the trend for mandatory service is Singapore where students in both primary and secondary schools are required to participate in service (Koh et al., 2013; NYC & MOE, 2012; Wong, 2000). Congruently, a growing number of schools in different parts of the world have programmes that make it obligatory for their students to perform community service for a stipulated number of hours (Harrison, 2012; Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Planty & Regnier, 2003; Volunteer Canada, 2006). For example, in 1999, the province of Ontario, Canada, introduced a 40-hour mandatory service programme for all high schools as part of the government's effort to encourage young people to participate more actively in their communities (Farahmandpour, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Pancer et al., 2007). Subsequently, other provinces, such as Newfoundland and British Colombia, followed the precedence set by Ontario and established their own mandatory programmes (Farahmandpour, 2011). Similarly, in the United States of America (USA), many states adopted policies that mandate students to fulfil a number of service hours in order to graduate (Bennett, 2009; McLellan & Youniss, 2003). In Maryland, for instance, as a condition for graduation, students were obliged to complete at least 75 hours of service (Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010). It has been reported that a third of public high schools in various districts in the USA require their students to perform community service (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014).

Likewise, in Australia, as part of citizenship education, some States have introduced policies that require students to undertake community service (Warburton & Smith, 2003). For example, in Western Australia, "The Community Service Program" established in 2007 requires students from Year 10 onwards to fulfil at least 20 hours of community service in order to graduate (Government of Western Australia, School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2016).

Despite its growing popularity as a means to encourage students to be more aware of their social responsibilities, mandatory service remains a subject of controversy (Bennett, 2009; Harrison, 2012; Henderson et al., 2014; Reinders & Youniss, 2006). Proponents believed that community service, even if it is mandatory,

could cultivate habits of volunteering in young people (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Henderson et al., 2014; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998). Those who advocate for mandatory programmes also argued that it is the only way to ensure that people who would not have volunteered on their own accord to be given the initial opportunity to experience service (Anderson, 1999; Harrison, 2012; Marks & Jones, 2004). For instance, Janoski et al. (1998) explained using the "social practice" theory that "pro-social attitudes" might follow once people start to volunteer (p. 515).

Conversely, some researchers questioned the benefit of forcing students to volunteer, arguing that there is not enough compelling evidence to substantiate the claim that programmes had been effective (Bennett, 2009). Some critics even go as far as asserting that coercing students to volunteer undermines the meaning of service and could deter them from future involvement (Gallant et al., 2010; Hart et al., 2007; Jones & Hill, 2003). A further reason why people are against the idea of mandating service was that they believe it could create resentment, especially when it interferes with the other demands of a student's life, such as, studies, co-curricular activities, and part-time work (Anderson, 1999; Bennett, 2009).

The many contradicting views suggest the necessity for further investigations, in particular, to understand how young people who have experienced compulsory community service perceive the idea and how they feel about their experience. Besides, it is also important to hear young people explain why they support or disagree with the principle of mandated service.

2.3.3.1 Impact of mandatory service participation.

A review of the literature on mandatory service shows that while there are numerous studies on its effectiveness as an educational endeavour, results were inconclusive and lacking in consensus in terms of its real impacts (Bennett, 2009; Reinders & Youniss, 2006; Volunteer Canada, 2006). As Reinders and Youniss (2006) remarked, "As to the evidence, for almost each study in which positive effects of voluntary and required service had been reported, there is another study in which

null or mixed findings were obtained" (p. 2). For example, there are empirical studies that linked positive outcomes on civic disposition, life skills and sense of efficacy with mandated community service (Henderson et al., 2014; McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Neely, 2007). In their study of mandatory service in Ontario, Pancer et al. (2007) concluded that a significant number of students reported feeling positive about volunteering and that their experience could have an impact on future civic engagement. A longitudinal study on the impacts of required service on high school students in the United States, reported that the requirement was most beneficial to students who had little inclinations to serve (Metz & Youniss, 2005). According to the same report, the requirement, in providing these students an opportunity to experience for themselves what it was like to behave in socially responsible ways, could have increased their awareness that they can be agents of change (Metz & Youniss, 2005).

In contrast to the findings by Metz and Youniss (2005), Stukas, Synder, and Clary's study (1999) showed that students who had no initial intentions to volunteer reported a significant decline in their interest to participate once the mandate was over. Similarly, there have been reports of negative findings, suggesting that forcing students to volunteer might be "counter-productive" (Warburton & Smith, 2003, p. 783). Warburton and Smith's (2003) study on compulsory community service in Australia explained that young people who were compelled to volunteer felt negatively about their experience mainly because they did not regard it as real volunteering. As a consequence, many respondents reported feeling "exploited" and "resentful" (Warburton & Smith, 2003, p. 783). Their study concluded that required service failed to develop in young people positive civic dispositions or engender long-term commitments to service (Warburton & Smith, 2003).

While the review of empirical evidence suggests variations in the efficacy of service participation in promoting civic engagement, what was consistent was the relationship between the quality and meaningfulness of service and civic outcomes (Farahmandpour, 2011; Henderson et al., 2014; Reinders & Youniss, 2006). For example, Reinders and Youniss (2006) concluded in their research that students who

were engaged in activities with "direct interaction" with people they were helping reported increased self-awareness (p. 2). A similar study by Farahmandpour (2011) found positive co-relations between mandatory service and subsequent volunteering when the service activities were meaningful.

Although it may seem apparent that the potential impact of service programmes on civic engagement has a strong co-relation with the quality and meaningfulness of service, it is less evident what the terms 'quality' and 'meaningfulness' imply (Lyngstad, 2009). As students are those who went through the experience of compulsory service at school, they may serve as insightful informants on what these terms mean. Hence, an important task of this study was to communicate with these participating students and learn from them their definitions and interpretations of a meaningful service experience and what quality means to them.

2.3.4 Civic responsibility.

Gottlieb and Robinson (2002) defined civic responsibility as "active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good" (p. 16). Civic responsibility, in other words, can be regarded as an act of virtue. According to Lickona (1991), the word, responsibility, has an "operative value" (p. 51). As Eyler (2009) explained, a responsible attitude alone is insufficient; it has to be translated to effective community engagement. Therefore, young people's sense of civic responsibility is demonstrated by how they behave in the world and what they do in bettering the lives of others in the community. In a sense, civic responsibility is concrete, observable and tangible, or as Dewey (1966/1916) emphasised, what is significant is a person's conduct. It was for this reason that the study has elected to focus on youth who serve.

2.4   The Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework (Figure 2.4) is a schematic map to highlight the general structure and scope of the study. Within this framework is an overview of the key areas of focus in the literature and their implications on the research. As reflected in the figure, the direction in which the study takes is presented; beginning from the overall philosophy and vision of the researcher, to the choice of topic, the title, the aim, and finally, leading to the methodology. Furthermore, the framework helps to situate the literature in relation to these important elements of this study.

Overall Philosophy
Vision of Education

Choice of Topic
Learning to Serve

Title
Youth who serve:
Mandatory school
service experience and
consequent civic
responsibility

Concepts
Concept of voluntary
service
Concept of school
service
Concept of civic
responsibility

Aim
To examine in what
ways young adult
volunteers believe that
their sense of civic
responsibility had been
influenced by their
school service
experience

Research Question
To what extent and in
what ways do young
people believe that their
sense of civic
responsibility and
propensity to serve had
been influenced by their
school service?

Methodology
Qualitative Paradigm
Phenomenology
IPA
Methods using
interviews and
reflections

The Literature Review	
Theories	Implications on research
Dewey *1. Theory of Experience* *2.Theory of Morals*	• What did students learn? • Was there continuity in their learning? • Did students acquire moral values? • Are young people's ethics of service related to their school service experience?
Gagné *Conditions of Learning*	• Are young people's attitudes towards service related to their learning of service? • Under what conditions do students learn the attitude of care and concern for others?
Kolb *Experiential Learning Cycle*	• How do students describe the learning process? • Were there opportunities for reflections?
Vygotsky *1.Social Constructionist Theory* *2.The Zone of Proximal Development*	• How do students describe their learning environment? • What are the social, cultural factors that influence their learning? • How do students interpret the link between their sense of civic responsibility and their CIP experience? • What are their plans for service in the future?
Furco *Distinction among Service Programmes*	• What are the characteristics of the school service programmes? • What type of service programme is the CIP?

Studies in Singapore	Implications on research
1.Background of the CIP *2.Volunteering trends* *3.Studies on community service at school*	• How do students describe and perceive their CIP experience? • What do young people believe are their motivations to volunteer? • Did young people believe school service had an influence on their sense of service?

Key Concepts	Implications on studies
School Service Experience	• How do students describe their school service experience? • What is the nature and type of programme they participated in?
Volunteering	• What reasons do young people give for volunteering?
Mandatory Service	• How do students perceive their experience with mandatory service? • What are their views on mandatory service?
Civic Responsibility	• What influenced young people's sense of civic responsibility? • Is it related to their learning of service at school?

Figure 2.4. The Conceptual Framework

2.5   Conclusion

This literature review has focused on three areas. Firstly, the different learning theories related to the research are examined and their implications on the study discussed. As this research was carried out in Singapore, it is important that the review includes findings of studies on the topic of youth service. Also significant was to examine the pedagogy of mandatory service in the overall educational system within Singapore. Finally, the key concepts important for this study are explained and where relevant, explored further in light of what practitioners and experts in the field said. To summarise, a conceptual framework was drawn up to provide readers with an overview of the general structure and scope of the study in relation to the literature review. Overall, the literature review has benefitted the research process by enhancing the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher and by giving the study a framework that helps direct and inform its methodology.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore to what extent and in what ways young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility was influenced by their school service experience. The purpose and phenomena of interest in this study suggest that qualitative evidence is apposite. This study has also leaned towards a qualitative paradigm because of the underlying philosophical assumptions the researcher has adopted, one of which is a constructivist epistemology. The philosophy behind the study as well as its over-riding qualitative paradigm dictates the choice of methodology, the methods used for data collection, and its subsequent analysis.

There are four sections in this chapter. Section One presents the study's Theoretical Framework (Figure 3.1). This framework maps out the research processes and provides an overview of how the various elements of the study fit in with one another. Section Two provides a detailed account of the strategies used in conducting the research by describing the role of the researcher, the sampling procedures, the data gathering methods, and the data analysis processes. Section Three clarifies the steps taken by the researcher to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. Finally, the last section considers the ethical aspects of the study. Table 3.1 gives a summary of how the chapter is organised.

Table 3.1

Chapter Format

Introduction	
Section One:	Philosophical assumptions.
The Theoretical Framework	Over-riding paradigm.
	Methodology.
	Methods.
Section Two:	Role of the researcher.
Design and Strategy	Sampling procedures.
	Data collection methods.
	Data analysis processes.
Section Three:	Triangulation.
Credibility and Trustworthiness	Member-checking.
	Use of artefacts.
Section Four:	Ethical clearance.
Ethical Considerations	Research protocols.
	Storage of research data.
Conclusion	

3.1 Section One

The Theoretical Framework

The purpose of the theoretical framework (Figure 3.1) is to provide an overview of the research design and its key components. The arrows in the figure give an indication of the research sequence, and how the various elements are interconnected. According to Crotty (1998), in social research, it is important to know the "direction" of the research process (p. 2). While it is crucial to understand

how the research scaffolds, it must also be pointed out that the various components of the research "overlap and reinforce" one another (Creswell, 2007, p. 16).

As reflected in the theoretical framework of this study, the research process begins with the purpose and phenomena of focus of the inquiry (Crotty, 1998). In other words, the overall research is planned and designed to address the research questions and illuminate the phenomena (Figure 3.1). With the research purpose and question as the starting point, a decision was made by the researcher on the philosophical stance to embrace pertaining to assumptions about knowledge, meaning, and reality. To elaborate, behind this study is the epistemological assumption that meaning is "constructed" by people in their interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). This constructivist assumption suggests that each individual's unique experience and interpretation of reality is "valid and worthy of respect" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Constructivism is often linked with interpretivism, a theoretical perspective concerned with understanding how people make sense of the world (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007). These underlying assumptions and perspectives provided the rationale for adopting a qualitative paradigm that, in turn, dictates the choice of methodology and methods for gathering data. As Crotty (1998) pointed out, "Different ways of seeing the world shape different ways of researching the world" (p. 66). To understand how the research was conducted, the study's overall assumptions, over-riding paradigm, and methodology warrant closer attention and will be examined in this section. The methods used for the conduct of the research will be elaborated in Section Two.

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│  ┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────┐  51  │
│  │              **Research Topic**                    │      │
│  │            Phenomenon in focus                     │      │
│  │                  Aims                              │      │
│  │            Research Questions                      │      │
│  └───────────────────────────────────────────────────┘      │
│                        ▼                                     │
│  ┌───────────────────────────────────────────┐              │
│  │       **Philosophical assumptions**        │              │
│  │      Ontology: Reality is subjective.      │              │
│  │     Axiology: Research is value-laden.     │              │
│  │     Epistemology: Reality is constructed.  │              │
│  └───────────────────────────────────────────┘              │
│                     ▼                                        │
│        ┌───────────────────────────────────────┐            │
│        │              **Paradigm**              │            │
│        │   Qualitative: Examines and interprets │            │
│        │  a phenomenon based on the meanings    │            │
│        │   people ascribe to their experiences. │            │
│        └───────────────────────────────────────┘            │
│                        ▼                                     │
│         ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐            │
│         │            **Methodology**            │            │
│         │    Phenomenology: Describes the       │            │
│         │  essential characteristics of the lived│           │
│         │  experiences of a group of individuals.│           │
│         │   Researcher applies the principle of  │            │
│         │              *epoche.*                 │            │
│         └──────────────────────────────────────┘            │
│                        ▼                                     │
│           ┌──────────────────────────────────┐              │
│           │             **Method**            │              │
│           │  Sampling: Purposive sampling.    │              │
│           │  Data Collection: Interviews and  │              │
│           │            Reflections.           │              │
│           │  Data Analysis: Interpretative    │              │
│           │  Phenomenological Analysis.       │              │
│           └──────────────────────────────────┘              │
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Figure 3.1. The Theoretical Framework of the Study

3.1.1 Overall philosophy.

One way of understanding the overall philosophy of this study is by examining its assumptions (Table 3.2). Firstly, this study has adopted the ontological assumption that "reality is subjective", implying there can be "multiple realities" (Creswell, 2007, p. 17). Compatible with this belief, the study also embraces the epistemological assumption that reality is "constructed" by people in their experience of the world (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Hence, knowledge of human phenomena needs to be understood from the points of view of people with the experience (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). For this reason, the study can be described as "*emic*" (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 14) in that the primary concern is to let those with the experience "speak for themselves" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 5). Furthermore, this study is characterised by the axiological assumption that qualitative studies are "value-laden" in that researchers bring their values and personal worldviews to their inquiries (Creswell, 2007, p. 18; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8).

3.1.1.1 Implications on the study.

The three assumptions mentioned have implications on the study and are behind its overall paradigm and methodology as reflected in Table 3.2. For instance, based on the ontological assumption, the study focuses on portraying the subjective experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). The multiple realities of the participants are reported in the findings that often include direct quotations of different individuals (Creswell, 2007). The epistemological assumption based on constructivism means that the researcher views her participants as experts of their own experiences. To understand how individuals make sense of their experiences, the researcher employs methods of data collection that allow her to mine deep into their life worlds. The researcher also acknowledged that her personal worldviews would have a bearing on the study and made a conscious effort to be reflexive. These implications validate the choice of a qualitative approach for the study.

Table 3.2

The Philosophical Assumptions of the Study

Assumptions	Characteristics	Implications on this study
Ontological	"Reality is subjective and multiple" (Creswell, 2007, p. 17).	Study focuses on portraying experiences of the participants instead of establishing facts. Study reports on the different perspectives of individuals.
Epistemological	Reality is "constructed" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9).	Study leans towards a qualitative paradigm. Study relies on the interpretations of the participants who are considered experts of their own experience. Data collection was through one-to-one, in-depth interviews and written reflections. Study uses a small sample so that the researcher has a chance to gather rich and detailed data. Report frequently incorporates quotations of participants to give readers access to their voices.
Axiological	"Research is value-laden" in that the researcher's worldviews may potentially influence the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 17).	Researcher attempts to be reflexive, and acknowledges her potential biases. Researcher keeps a journal to record her perceptions, understandings, and presumptions. After each interview, the researcher makes it a point to reflect on her impressions and experiences. Researcher adopts the rule of *epoche* throughout the research process and comes up with some practical steps to activate it.

From *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2nd ed.) (p. 17), by J. W. Creswell, 2007, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

3.1.2 Qualitative paradigm.

A qualitative study is an in-depth and up-close examination of a human phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Sarantakos, 2005).

Generally, a qualitative paradigm stems from a "set of beliefs" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 7). One such belief is that "reality is socially constructed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8; Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 36; Mertens, 2005, p. 14). Associated with the constructivist stance is the interpretivist school of thought (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Assuming this epistemological view of reality, this qualitative study has concentrated its efforts on portraying how individuals make sense of their lived experience (Smeyers, 2007b; Moustakas, 1994; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Its intent is to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people ascribe to them (Creswell, 2007; Giarielli & Chambliss, 1988; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). As Winch insists, what matters is "what is real" for those involved (as cited in Smeyers, 2007b, p. 347). For qualitative researchers, the only reality is the reality perceived by the participants involved in the research (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Moustakas, 1994).

In this study, the researcher views her research participants as experts in their own experience and has endeavoured to understand things from their perspectives (Levering, 2007; Minichiello & Kottler, 2010a; Moustakas, 1994). Knowledge produced is seen as a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participants (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). A qualitative inquiry is appropriate in this study to explore the beliefs of youth who serve and how they perceive their experiences with service.

3.1.3 Phenomenology.

The term, 'phenomenology' comes from the Greek word, *phainomenon* that can be translated as, "appearance" (Spinelli, 2005, p. 6). Based on its founder, Husserl's philosophy of "back to the things themselves", phenomenologists believe that to understand human experience, the only way is through personal accounts of individuals who have had the experience (Farber, 1966, p. 45; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Hence, the epistemology that defines phenomenology is often described as, "grounded in constructivism" (Alexander, 2007, p. 117). As a phenomenological study, the researcher took what people said seriously, believing that they had the "first person authority" over their own perceptions (Levering, 2007, p. 222). Thus,

the participants in this study were considered as "co-researchers" for without their insights, no knowledge could be generated (Spinelli, 2005, p. 142).

3.1.3.1 The phenomenological method.

In a phenomenological study, the researcher focused on getting "inside the other person's mind, heart, and soul…" (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010b, p. 20). Husserl proposed that the primary mission of a phenomenologist was to look for ways to "strip away, as far as possible, the plethora of interpretational layers added to the unknown stimuli to our experience in order to arrive at a more adequate, if still approximate and incomplete, knowledge of the 'the things themselves'" (as cited in Spinelli, 2005, p. 19). The ability to allow information, that may be otherwise hidden, to surface is what makes a phenomenological study very powerful (Johnson, 2000). However, to mine for information, the researcher has to be in a state of readiness to receive. A common strategy that phenomenologists use to enhance receptiveness is by filtering out their own preconceptions through "the rule of *epoche*" (Spinelli, 2005, p. 21).

3.1.3.1.1 The rule of epoche.

The most important principle of a phenomenological research is to remain faithful to the phenomenon studied (Mortari & Tarozzi, 2010). *Epoche,* a Greek word meaning, "refrain from judgement" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33) is a means to achieve "faithfulness" (Mortari & Tarozzi, 2010, p. 19) to the phenomenon. The rule of *epoche* prompts researchers to view a phenomenon from the perspectives of their participants and get into their world by bracketing their own personal worldviews (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Spinelli, 2005). The act of bracketing or suspending one's initial biases and expectations temporarily will enable the researcher to take on a position of openness, thus enabling him or her to learn to listen and look at people's reality in an authentic manner (Creswell, 2007; Mortari & Tarozzi, 2010; Moustakas, 1994; Spinelli, 2005).

Most phenomenologists, however, concur that bracketing is not easy and that it is not possible to suspend one's pre-existing beliefs completely (Creswell, 2007; Hamill & Sinclair, 2010; Mortari & Tarozzi, 2010; Spinelli, 2005). Exacerbating the problem is the absence of uniformity in the way *epoche* is defined or operationalised (Bednall, 2006). According to Bednall (2006), "the literature is not forthcoming in describing the activation of bracketing or *epoche*" (p. 3). While bracketing one's thoughts may be challenging, it is a necessary process (Bednall, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). As Moustakas (1994) noted, "Although *epoche* is rarely perfectly achieved, the energy, intention that lies behind, the attitude, significantly reduce the influence of preconceived thoughts" (p. 90). Spinelli (2005), in echoing Moustakas, pointed out, "the very recognition of biases lessens its impacts" (p. 20).

In this study, the researcher's stance on bracketing is to see it as an attempt to be reflexive, to consider her own position, and to acknowledge her personal background that could shape the way she engages with the data (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009). For the researcher, bracketing is an on-going attitude, a constant preoccupation throughout the research, even up to the point of reporting on the findings. This habit of mind is not reserved solely for interviewing and analysis (Bednall, 2006; Hamill & Sinclair, 2010).

3.1.3.1.2 Epoche on the ground.

Although the researcher had limited experience with community service, the phenomenon of service was not totally unfamiliar. Before embarking on this study, the researcher had carried out some background reading on the literature. As a result, the researcher made a conscious effort to acknowledge and distance herself from her pre-existing knowledge and understanding that could interfere with the participants' realities. Prior to interviewing the participants, the researcher wrote in her reflective journal a list of her thoughts, beliefs, and preconceptions that she needed to bracket.

At the same time, she recorded in her reflections her apprehensions about her ability to carry out *epoche* effectively. It was noted that there could be further

presumptions that she was not aware of that could create bias. She felt that it was necessary to self-examine, and be self-critical to raise her awareness of the potential challenges of the principle of *epoche* in actual practice. In bringing her personal assumptions and feelings to the forefront, the researcher believed that she had a greater chance of succeeding.

In addition, prior to the interview, the researcher wrote in her journal a series of practical steps she would take to facilitate the bracketing process (Appendix 12). It was hoped that by going through the list, she would avail herself to listen impartially (Denscombe, 2010; Martori & Tarozzi, 2010). Similarly, before the researcher began the analysis, she revisited her journal and read through her thoughts on bracketing to re-evaluate the potential biases in data interpretation. However, the process of bracketing kept evolving as the research progressed. It was not possible to list down in advance all her assumptions as more knowledge and understandings developed with every encounter with the participant's narrations. Besides, as Hamill and Sinclair (2010) pointed out, there would always be presuppositions that one might not even be conscious about.

Believing in the value of *epoche*, the researcher endeavoured to do her best by choosing a deliberate, determined, and disciplined approach to bracketing. Despite the initial trepidation, the act of bracketing turned out to be an achievable process, although it was never perfect. There would always be certain habits of thinking that were so deep-seated that the researcher might not even be aware of. However, adequate preparation, together with the right attitude had made a difference to how the researcher listened. There were moments too, when *epoche* felt quite effortless as the participants' stories could be so compelling that the researcher forgot about herself and became engrossed in their world.

3.1.3.1.3 Ethnographic sensitivity.
Doing a phenomenological research requires the researcher to vicariously feel the experience of another person, and to have "empathetic understanding" of what

the experience is like for him or her (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 36). While the application of *epoche* heightened the researcher's awareness of her own biases, and enabled her to achieve a deeper level of understanding of the phenomenon of service, the method has its limitations (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). To complement the practice of *epoche*, and to further enhance her own sensitivity to the phenomenon under study, the researcher incorporated an ethnographic strategy to bring herself closer to the volunteers' life worlds.

Ethnography, a methodology often linked to anthropology, is a study about people and events in their natural settings (Creswell, 2007; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). Although phenomenology was the mainstay of this study, ethnography had a minor part in it. An ethnographic approach was not part of the original plan of the researcher. The researcher chanced upon the idea when she was first invited by one of the key gatekeepers to attend a family day event organised by youth volunteers. Even though the researcher was just a casual observer, the experience in the field gave her a more authentic understanding of the reality of volunteers. As a result, the researcher explored other opportunities to give the study an ethnographic orientation and sensitivity. True to what Kottler and Minichiello (2010) pointed out, the methodology of the study could "evolve" during the research process (p. 281). The various ethnographic activities included:

1. Communicating with the key gatekeepers (five) to understand the different welfare organisations;
2. Accompanying a participant to volunteer at a soup kitchen;
3. Attending a family day activity for families in transition;
4. Taking part in two community events carried out in the Community Club that a participant volunteers in; and,
5. Attending a fund-raising event involving one of the participants.

The above activities helped sensitised the researcher, enabling her to gain some familiarity with the world of a volunteer (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009). Although ethnography involves the gathering of data through prolonged observations of participants and non-participants, it should be emphasised that the ethnographic

approach taken in this study was not for data collection (Creswell, 2007). Hence the researcher did not record any conversations with the participants or non-participants while she was at site. Neither did she take any field notes. With no tasks at hand, the researcher was able to immerse more fully into the world of volunteers.

3.1.3.1.4 Visual ethnography.

"Visual ethnography" was a term used by Schwartz (1989) to describe the use of photographs in qualitative research (p. 119). In this study, the participants were requested to bring along artefacts related to their service experience for the second round of interviews. Of the various objects that were used, photographs were the most common (see Table 3.3). These photographs turned out to be a valuable ethnographic 'lens' for the researcher to witness service in situ. In viewing the photographs, the researcher was momentarily transported to the actual sites where the participants volunteered, an opportunity that was unavailable to her. As Harper (2002) commented, "Photographs appear to capture the impossible: a person gone; an event past. That extraordinary sense of seeming to retrieve something that has disappeared belongs alone to the photograph, and it leads to deep and interesting talk" (pp. 22-23). Through the photographs, the participants' descriptions of their reality made more sense to the researcher. For example, when Olivia related how she was involved in a project to construct a water tank for villagers in Thailand, it was hard for the researcher to visualise the extent of the work carried out. However, when Olivia showed the researcher a photograph of her water tank project, the researcher realised she had imagined the water tank very differently. According to Hurworth (2004), the use of photographs provides a means for the researcher to get "inside a program and its context" (p. 77). Olivia's photographs also gave the researcher a sense of the magnitude of the project and the harsh physical environment she worked in. Without these images, it would have been impossible for the researcher to know that she had been mistaken. This discovery reinforced her philosophical belief that research could never be totally value-free. During the process of listening and interpreting, the researcher would inevitably rely on her prior knowledge and assumptions. The realisation that one could misinterpret further validated the significance of *epoche.*

3.2   Section Two

Design and Strategy

This section aims to provide readers with a detailed account of how the research was conducted. The description of the methods applied and the steps taken include the role of the researcher, the sampling procedures, the data gathering instruments, and the data analysis processes.

3.2.1 Role of the researcher.

In this study, the researcher was the only instrument for data collection in that she asked the questions, gathered the data, and transcribed them for analysis (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Sarantakos, 2005). Adopting a phenomenological approach, the researcher was committed to see reality as constructed by the people being studied and endeavoured to describe those realities (Bednall, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). However, as discussed earlier, the axiological assumption of this study was that research is "value-laden" (Creswell, 2007; p. 18). For this reason, the researcher maintained on-going reflection by keeping a "research journal", a strategy to enhance mindfulness and awareness of her presuppositions (Leary, Minichiello, & Kottler, 2010, p. 61).

3.2.1.1 Researcher's journal.

Roulston (2010) described a research journal as "a series of written entries that record the researcher's reflections, ideas, commentaries, and memos throughout the research process" (p. 121). In this study, journalling began before the research commenced and continued throughout the research process. Acknowledging and listing out her thoughts and feelings explicitly through journalling served to remind the researcher to be reflexive or self-aware (Clancy, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Leary et al., 2010; Moustakas, 1994). Apart from being a tool to manage personal biases, the journal was also used to keep records of observations, impressions, and even emotions that emerged during the interview process (Bednall, 2006). Following Bednall's example, what the researcher did after each interview was to find a quiet spot to take down notes of her own thoughts and perceptions as well as matters of significance that occurred during the interview (Bednall, 2006).

Like Bednall, journalling was a self-correcting process that helped the researcher critically review and evaluate an interview's success or failures. (Appendix 13 provides two samples of the researcher's reflections). While the journal did not contribute to the data of this study, parts of its contents are shared with readers to give them access to the researcher's reflective journey.

In addition, the researcher felt the need to model the reflection she had asked the participants to carry out. According to Minichiello and Kottler (2010a), "Qualitative methods embrace and honour subjective experience, not only of the informants and participants, but also of the investigator" (p. 8). It was for this reason that the researcher incorporated excerpts of her reflections in the report to share with readers how the study was conducted as well as her experiences, thoughts, and feelings during the research process. Now, in retrospect, as the researcher reads through her reflections, some of which were written a couple of years ago, she feels grateful that she had not neglected this rewarding process.

3.2.1.2 Research persona.

One of the first things the researcher contemplated on and wrote in her reflections was what kind of a researcher she wanted to be. Smith et al. (2009) reminded researchers to find a "comfortable research persona" for themselves (p. 67). Having a clearer idea of where the researcher situated herself and what her roles were had helped set the tone for the whole data gathering process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Below is an extract of the researcher's reflections on the research persona she had strived for and the notes she wrote about what worked for her:

> I believe trust needs to be earned from the very beginning. I see it
> as the overall philosophical stance I take towards my research. It
> is about the attitude I choose. I have to be clear what kind of
> researcher I want to be before I embark on this long journey. It is
> only with this clarity that I can sustain myself, find meaning in the
> effort and do justice to everyone who in their own ways have
> invested their time, money, and energy to support my study…

What worked for me?

1. Be clear about what kind of a researcher I endeavour to be.

2. Be well prepared. Do everything possible to ensure that the interview runs smoothly. I always refer to my interview plan to make sure I remember to bring all the necessary equipment or documents (refer to Appendix 5).

3. Be respectful. Part of a researcher's etiquette is to respect the time and effort participants have to sacrifice to support her study. I always arrive at the venue early to familiarise myself with the environment and to explore alternative quiet spots for the interview. Being early gives me time to settle myself and get myself psychologically and mentally ready.

4. Be sincere in my effort. I write to each participant to ensure they know what my research is about and what his or her participation involves. I always acknowledge their support. I make sure that I call them at least once before the interview to give us a chance to introduce ourselves and for me to thank them personally.

5. Be appreciative. After each interview, I will send a message or text to thank the participants for their support.

6. Be empathetic. I try to imagine how participants would feel. I want them to feel that connection with me and that I have not forgotten them once the interview is over. For example, before I left Singapore, I wrote to all the participants and potential participants to inform them that I would be away and to encourage them to stay in touch with me through email.

In her attempt to be clear and sure of her research persona, the researcher would read her journal on a regular basis. For instance, before each interview, the researcher made it a point to go through her reflections on research persona.

3.2.2 Sampling criteria.

There were five criteria used for the selection of participants. The primary concern of this study was to produce in-depth and detailed understandings of the phenomenon of service from the perspectives of the youth who had experienced it (Creswell, 2007). The most important predisposing factor was whether the participants were currently or recently involved in some form of voluntary service to their community. Another factor to include was experience with community involvement at school. To avoid gender bias, the researcher attempted to recruit an even number of male and female participants. According to Gilligan, the moral reasoning between men and women is different (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008; Wuthnow, 1995). The final sample ended up with ten female and six male participants.

The next criterion was that the participants had graduated from secondary schools. Based on the estimated age students graduated from secondary school, this study selected participants who are between 19 to 29 years of age. The total number of participants was 16. Creswell (2007) recommended sample sizes of 5 to 25 for phenomenological studies (p. 61). The reason was that a smaller sample size would enable the researcher to obtain thick and rich data (Creswell, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). At the same time, the researcher had to be careful about the amount of data generated considering there were two phases of interviews and reflections. Smith et al (2009) cautioned that a large dataset might impede analysis. Finally, it was equally important to locate participants who were willing to take part in the two interviews, and write reflections after each interview. They also had to be open to the idea of having the interviews audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis and eventual publication.

3.2.2.1 Methods of identifying participants.

This study used "purposive sampling" to identify the participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 18; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, p. 79). Participants were selected deliberately on the basis that they fit the inclusion criteria that allowed them to provide insights into the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2009). To help identify potential participants, key gatekeepers

from welfare organisations were selected either through personal contacts or through referrals. These gatekeepers helped advertise the opportunity to participate as well as identified and referred potential participants to the researcher (Appendix 1). Some participants were peer-selected through "snowballing" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 239). This method of sampling involved the researcher asking the participants to "identify" other participants who meet the selection criteria and who were willing to take part in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 239). Furthermore, the researcher also relied on her "personal networks"; namely, friends and acquaintances to introduce people who might be interested in participating in the research (Roulston, 2010, p. 98).

3.2.3 Data collection.

This study relied on two data collection methods, namely, interviews and participant reflections. Each participant was interviewed twice and the interviews were scheduled approximately three months apart. After each round of interview, every participant was asked to write reflective journals. In total, the data collected comprised two sets of interview transcripts and two sets of journals from each participant. However, the process of gathering data involved a "series of interrelated activities" that preceded and extended beyond conducting the interviews (Creswell, 2007, p. 118). As shown in Figure 3.2, the three main phases of data collection were the preparation stage, the interview stage, and the post-interview stage. Considering there were 16 participants and two phases of interviews, the different stages often overlapped. For instance, the researcher could concurrently be carrying out the activities for the second stage as well as the third stage depending on how the interviews were scheduled.

The diagram shows three sequential stages:

Preparation stage
- Finalise sampling criteria
- Recruit participants
- Prepare interview protocols
- Practise interviewing
- Piloting interviews and revise interview questions
- Prepare documents for proper conduct of research as part of ethical requirements
- Prepare reflection questions

Interviewing stage
- Schedule interviews
- Remind participants of interview a day before
- Send interview schedules to participants
- Arrange venues
- Record interviews
- Give participants reflection questions and schedule to collect their reflections
- Researcher reflects on the interview

Post-Interview stage
- Save, backup, and store recordings in a safe place
- Trancribe interviews
- Send transcriptions to participants for checking
- Prepare and organise transcribed data for analysis
- Collect reflections from participants

Figure 3.2. Phases of Data Collection

3.2.3.1 Interviews.

The research questions, philosophical assumptions, and theoretical perspectives that underpinned the study determined the methods of data collection. Interviews, the most common method of data collection for phenomenological studies, are considered as one of the best means to access in-depth, first person accounts (Creswell, 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). Powney and Watts (1987)

described an interview as a "conversation" initiated by the researcher with "explicit intentions" to obtain information of a phenomenon under investigation (p. 6). The type of interview used in this research is known as an "informant interview" (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 18). Following the definition by Powney and Watts (1987), the focus of this style of interviewing is to "gain insight into the perceptions of a particular person (or persons) within a situation" (p. 18).

3.2.3.1.1 Key characteristics of the interview.

The researcher elected to use one-to-one, semi-structured, interviews. The interviews, that usually lasted one to two hours, were scheduled over two phases. A one-to-one interview had many advantages. First and foremost, it was easier for the researcher to build rapport with the participants (Smith et al., 2009). It also helped facilitate the elicitation of a deeper discussion as it gave the participants more time and space to reflect, recollect and find the language to express their thoughts (Smith et al., 2009; Stringer, 2004). In addition, the researcher had a greater chance to engage deeply, listen attentively, probe and clarify (Smith et al., 2009). In collecting data for this phenomenological study, the researcher aimed to have an "empathetic understanding", to try to see things from other people's viewpoints (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009, p. 7). The participants were the experiential experts on the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009; Stringer, 2004). For this reason, Roulston (2010) had used the term "pedagogical" to describe the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (p. 17).

3.2.3.1.2 Interview schedules.

An effective interview helps to generate the rich and relevant data needed in a phenomenological research (Smith et al., 2009). One way to achieve success is to have an interview schedule (Smith et al., 2009). Besides being a "memory aide", (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 112) this schedule functioned as a virtual map that the researcher could draw upon during the interview to ensure that questions asked were relevant and consistent (Powney & Watts, 1987; Smith et al., 2009).

For this study, interview schedules (Appendix 7 & Appendix 9) were used for both rounds of interviews. Comprising of open-ended questions that reflected the main topics that the study aimed to cover, the schedule helped generate deep and personal discussions. The preparation of a schedule, together with the possible prompts, enabled the researcher to plan what the interview was expected to cover. At the same time, it helped her anticipate potential difficulties that might arise during the interview (Smith et al., 2009). As a result, the researcher felt more at ease, and was able to facilitate a more comfortable interaction with the participants. The interview schedules were distributed to the participants prior to the interviews to initiate the recall process as well as to give them time to reflect and think about the various topics that would be raised.

However, the interview schedules served only as a guide. As Creswell (2007) cautioned, researchers should not assume that they have the "best" questions because questions evolve with increasing understanding of the topic as the research progresses (p. 43). Besides, the interview process may lead to unexpected turns as it progresses, hence there must always be some degree of flexibility (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). The flexible use of the interview schedule explains why the interview was considered semi-structured.

3.2.3.1.3 Stages of the interview process.

Powney and Watts (1987) preferred to describe interviewing as a "process" that began even before the actual interview and extended beyond it (p. vii). In this research, the interview process operated in three stages: the preparation stage, the interview stage, and the post-interview stage (Figure 3.2).

1. The preparation stage.

Powney and Watts (1987) cautioned that interviews required meticulous preparation. Feeling prepared was important for the researcher who had never carried out a research interview before. Being mentally ready, the researcher would be in a better frame of mind to handle the unpredictability of interviewing. Preparation was

not only crucial for an effective interview. The process was personally significant to the researcher in recognition of the participants' goodwill and the time and effort they put in (Powney & Watts, 1987). While there was far more to prepare and organise for the initial interview, preparation was equally necessary for the second round. The following describes some of the procedures in the preparation stage.

Coming up with a clear plan.

As part of the preparation, the researcher designed a plan outlining the practical aspects of data collection. To come up with a research plan, the researcher thought through the whole process of the interview for each stage, such as things she had to organise as part of the ethical requirements of social research. For instance, she considered consent forms, items she needed to purchase, people whom she must contact, and so forth. To ensure she remembered, detailed lists of her interview plans for both phases of the interview were written out and given serious mental rehearsal (Appendix 5).

For the initial interview, an interview protocol was also produced (Appendix 6). The protocol, consisting of some practical procedures, served as a quick reference for the researcher before each interview. For instance, in the protocol was the standard "opening statement" that would be read to the participant before each interview commenced (Moustakas, 1998, p. 108). This introductory statement aimed to encourage the participants and remind them of the purpose of the interview (Moustakas, 1998). Besides, having a consistent way to begin the interview meant that there was no need for the researcher to think of what to say, and allowed her to focus on her task.

The protocol was also a reminder for the researcher to be mindful of how she conducted herself. Proper etiquette was critical to set the scene for the interview and to create rapport between essentially two strangers (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010a). Of equal importance, the researcher wanted the participants to leave the scene knowing that their efforts were appreciated and feeling a sense that they had

contributed to the study. Having a clear plan gave the researcher a greater chance of succeeding.

Preparing the participants.

Like the researcher, the participants also had to prepare for the interview. They needed to be informed from the very beginning about the nature of their participation and what the research was about so that they felt ready for their roles as co-researchers. To help with preparation, the researcher called the participants personally and talked to them about the nature and purpose of the research and the part they would play. Besides establishing rapport, the initial interaction allowed the researcher to address the participants' questions or concerns. Following this conversation, the participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and consent form (Appendix 3) were sent to each participant via email. A copy of the interview schedule was also attached to give them an opportunity to prepare and reflect on the various topics to be discussed.

The researcher made observations about how different participants prepared for the interviews. Many of them appeared to have arrived prepared. As the research involved them recalling past service experience, many of them did some background research of their service experiences by looking through old records such as journals and certificates. Some had the questions in their laptops or notebooks with a list of points they wanted to raise, while some had scribbled notes on the interview schedules that they printed out.

Piloting the interview.

The interview schedule was pilot-tested three times before the interviews commenced. The first trial run of the interview was with a person who had many years of service experience locally in Australia, and as a missionary nurse in Thailand, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea. Through the first round of piloting, the researcher had a better sense of where the areas of weakness were and the

improvements needed. For instance, some of the interview questions were changed or rephrased.

Subsequently, two rounds of pilot interviews were scheduled. One was with a twenty-three-year old female dentist from Melbourne with multiple experiences of service. About a week before the interview, she was performing voluntary service organised by the Kimberley Dental Team to provide dental treatment to indigenous Australians in Halls Creek and the Kimberley Region. While at school, she participated in fundraising events and other events initiated by the World Vision Programme such as the "40-Hour Famine Programme'. She also volunteered with the Red Cross while she was an undergraduate. Another trial interview was with a twenty-three-year old male undergraduate from Singapore who was an active volunteer in the university he was studying in. Recently, he had led a team of volunteers to Chiang Mai, Thailand, to help with a school building project. He was also helping schools as a soccer coach. In his school days, he participated in community service through a mandatory community service programme. Feedback was obtained from the trial interviewees immediately after and noted down. The researcher wrote reflections for all the pilot interviews. From the feedback and self-reflections, the researcher re-edited the interview schedules.

There were several functions of running pilot interviews. Firstly, they offered the researcher some preliminary practice before the real interview and allowed her to check if things would work and what needed further modification (Powney & Watts, 1987). Another purpose was that the researcher could test out the practical organisation such as timing and pacing, assembling of equipment such as the audio-recorder, the arrangement of seats, and making initial introductions (Powney & Watts, 1987). The piloting processes were video-recorded but the recordings were only of the researcher. The interviewees remained anonymous. The sole purpose of the video recordings was to offer the researcher an opportunity for self-evaluation. As the effectiveness of an interview depends greatly on how the researcher presented herself, it was important that she had a chance to critique her own interview

techniques and style that not only included questioning and listening skills but also paralinguistic and extra linguistic expressions such as her body language.

2. The interviewing stage.

The two rounds of interviews were scheduled approximately three months apart. For every interview, the researcher concentrated her effort on establishing rapport and creating a comfortable atmosphere. A successful interview is dependent on the ability of the researcher to earn the trust and confidence of the participants so that they feel at ease, relaxed, and can talk openly and honestly (O'Leary, 2010; Powney & Watts, 1987; Legard et al., 2003). As Minichiello and Kottler (2010b) said, "relationships are everything in qualitative research" (p. 20).

According to Legard et al. (2003), an "opening question" that is related to a topic that is recent and familiar will make it easier for the participants (p. 145). Hence, the initial question of the interview was, "Can you describe the nature of the service project or activity you are currently or recently involved in?" The researcher also encouraged the participants to ask questions and clarify their doubts. The accuracy of the data depended on whether the questions were clear to the participants. Above all, it was hoped that through the initial interview, the participants had a better sense of their roles and how much they could contribute to the research (Powney & Watts, 1987).

The second round of interviews were scheduled approximately three months later. As with the first interview, the interview schedules for the second phase were sent to the participants two weeks before the interview to give them sufficient time to prepare and reflect on the topics to be discussed. Both interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Some of the strategies adopted by the researcher in the interviewing stage included the use of verbal and non-verbal interview techniques. Additionally, the researcher also incorporated the use of artefacts.

Interview strategies.

Powney and Watts (1987) emphasised that interviewing required vigilance and active listening on the part of the researcher (Powney & Watts, 1987; Legard et al., 2003; Roulston, 2010). To be in the moment with each participant and to listen "closely, carefully, and attentively", the researcher had to monitor her own biases (Kottler & Minichiello, 2010, p. 290). As a phenomenological study, the principle of *epoche* was a useful starting point from which to approach the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Careful listening is crucial to capture information accurately and to avoid missing out on important data. The researcher had relied on verbal techniques to enhance her listening capacity such as probing, prompting, and clarifying (Appendix 15 provides samples of interview techniques used during interviews). However, the researcher felt that it was not only crucial to listen with attention, she had to also convey to the participant that she was listening. While the verbal techniques described above were beneficial, non-verbal strategies were of equal importance. Throughout the interviews, the researcher was mindful about her body language (Legard et al., 2003, Roulston, 2010). For example, in her interview schedule, she drew symbols on each page to remind herself to smile, maintain eye contact, or nod to indicate that she was listening and following what had been expressed. In addition, the researcher was watchful about the paralinguistic quality of her speech, such as the pace of talking, and the tone, volume, and pitch of her voice (Legard et al., 2003). Speaking with a slower pace and gentler voice could convey patience and create a more relaxed atmosphere. According to Legard et al. (2003), interviewees are more likely to "respond positively when the interviewer displays a sense of tranquillity" (p. 143). Patience also meant allowing time for the participants to reflect, recall, and articulate their thoughts. Similarly, the tonal quality of speech can be a powerful indicator of emotions (Legard et al., 2003). Through the tone of her voice, the researcher could communicate to the participant that she was not only listening, but she was listening with empathy and understanding.

Through verbal and non-verbal strategies, the researcher tried to convey to the participants that she was not only attentive but also genuinely interested in their lives and what they shared. Perhaps, the term, "respectful listening" captured the attitude the researcher needed to adopt while conducting the interviews (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010a, p. 5).

The use of artefacts during interviews.

Another interview strategy adopted by the researcher was the integration of artefacts in interviews. Based on Hancock's (1998) definition, artefacts are objects that "inform us about the phenomenon under study because of their significance to the phenomena" (p. 13). After the first interviews, the participants were each given a zipped, plastic folder to encourage them to bring for the second interview self-selected artefacts related to their service experience that they might have collected. These could be memorabilia, photographs, diary entries, letters, documents, school journals, anecdotal notes, or souvenirs, and other mementos. The participants surprised the researcher with the variety of objects they wanted to show her. Although photographs were the most common item, the artefacts that were brought were not limited to them. They included other mementos, journals, cards, and gifts (Table 3.3). For example, one of the participants brought a wooden carving of an elephant made by a child in an orphanage in Thailand where she volunteered. None of the photographs were published to protect the privacy of the participants, the organisations they volunteered with, or the people they served.

How the artefacts were used.

There was no fixed approach in the use of artefacts. All the time, the researcher allowed the participants to take her through, at the moments they felt appropriate. Some participants had preferred to begin by showing the objects they had, while for others, the objects were shown only after the interview. In some instances, artefacts were introduced during the interviews. These objects of interest turned out to be a useful stimulus for recollecting experiential details and generating rich and meaningful discussions during the next interview (Creswell, 2007; Prosser & Loxley,

2010). (Appendix 14 provides excerpts of the researcher's reflection journal that described how photographs were used for her interviews).

Table 3.3

Artefacts brought by Participants

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Artefacts brought by the participants
Alison	Photographs, a hand-made and framed card, a letter written by the organiser, reflections, drawings by children whom she taught, a CD of her community service trip to Cambodia.
Beatrice	Photographs, Community service portfolio,
Dean	Photographs, a 'TED Talk' video.
Evan	Photographs, hand-made cards.
Francis	Photographs, a community emergency membership card.
Gwen	Photographs, school CCA certificate showing her participation in community service.
Hayley	Photographs, hand-made cards, thank-you notes, a certificate of appreciation, reflection journals, a book written by a doctor who volunteered in China, drawings by the children she teaches, a handbook by the organiser for her overseas expedition in the Philippines.
Ian	Photographs.
Josephine	Photographs, drawings by the children she served.
Katie	Photographs.
Lynn	Photographs, cards, letters, a hand-carved wooden elephant.
Michael	Photographs.
Nicole	Photographs, Certificate of achievement as a youth leader, drawings by the children she served, brochures, camp programmes, application forms.
Olivia	Photographs, cards, letters, brochures.
Priscilla	Photographs.
Roger	Photographs.

Benefits of using artefacts for interviews.

Artefacts turned out to be very useful in that they helped prepare participants to talk, generate conversation, and stimulate recall. Using the participants' self-selected artefacts also meant that their discussions were more personal. Firstly, the researcher assumed that the participants would have spent some time looking through those artefacts as they were gathering them. The process seemed to have helped prepare them mentally to share their personal stories. The researcher sensed their enthusiasm when the objects were brought out.

Secondly, the artefacts also helped evoke information and feelings (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Much of the time, the participants needed little leading. With pictures and objects in hand, they appeared eager to retrospect, sometimes, happy to be given the occasion to recall an encounter, a poignant moment, or read a touching note someone once penned. As Prosser and Loxley (2010) described, artefacts serve as "versatile elicitation media" that generates discussion. (p. 202). Rich, thick descriptions ensued as the participants weaved in vivid details of their experiences.

Thirdly, artefacts assisted with the recall process (Prosser & Loxley, 2010). Some participants had admitted that they had forgotten part of the experience but looking at the artefacts again rekindled many memories. For instance, photographs were particularly useful for retrieving information that would otherwise be lost (Bahn & Barratt-Pugh, 2011). As Harper (2002) commented, "remembering is enlarged by photographs" (p. 23). In Appendix 14, the researcher reflected on how photographs had served as tools to evoke memories of events in the past.

Finally, through the artefacts, the participants were in some ways inviting the researcher to share their personal journeys with them. There were moments when the photographs reconnected the participants with the emotional components of their experience. As Harper (2002) pointed out, a photograph does not simply elicit information, it "evokes a different kind of information" (p. 13). These artefacts helped draw the researcher closer to their world. Resultantly, the researcher felt a

more intimate connection and rapport with the participants. As Prosser and Loxley (2010) highlighted, artefacts help "build bridges" between the researcher and the participants (p. 202). The stories that were generated through the artefacts were compelling and added depth to the researcher's understanding of their realities.

3. Post-interview stage.

The last stage of the interview, or the "exit stage" was as important as the earlier stages, and warranted proper planning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 91). As Legard et al. (2003) remarked, "what happens after the tape recorder is switched off", is also crucial (p. 146). The completion of the final interview and saying goodbye could be emotional considering the rapport that had been slowly built over the two phases of the interview. Most of all, the researcher felt a deep sense of gratitude to the participants who had given her access to parts of their lives and worldviews. To express this gratitude, the researcher had prepared a small token of appreciation and written each participant a personal thank-you card to acknowledge his or her time that was invested in the research (Legard et al., 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For the researcher, it was important that the participants walked away knowing how much their contribution had been valued and that their experience was meaningful.

3.2.3.2 Participants' reflective journals.

Reflective journals were the other source of data for the researcher to learn more about the life worlds of the participants. Participants were asked to write reflections after each round of interview. These reflections were written in the participants' own space and time and sent to the researcher by e-mail approximately one to two months after each interview. A few participants requested for more time to write their reflections because of their study commitments. While open-ended questions were used to guide them in their reflections (Appendix 8 & Appendix 10), participants were given the option to write what was most relevant to their experience with service. Offering participants this flexibility meant that there were variations in what and how much each participant wrote.

There were several purposes for asking the participants to reflect after the interviews. Firstly, they aimed to promote self-reflection and encourage the participants to think more deeply about their experience (Cone & Harris, 1996; Kervin et al., 2006). As much of the strategy employed throughout the interview involved participants having to retrospect on past events, it could be expected that some important data might be missed out. These journals offered participants a chance to recall details that they might have forgotten to share or points of interest that the interviewer failed to pick up. Besides, the process of data collection took several months and during this process, participants might find that their own understandings had evolved. Journalling was a useful facility for participants to reflect on these changes.

Apart from the problem of recall, some participants could have found it awkward to express their negative feelings, especially face-to-face. Eyler and Giles (1999) noted that there were instances when students held back views from them to avoid causing offence to the researchers. Not all students were comfortable expressing unpopular thoughts about their experience (Eyler & Giles 1999, p. 202). Hence, the researcher hoped that the reflection journals, written in the participants' own space, would make it easier for them to reveal their thoughts even though they might appear critical or cynical. Another use of the journal was for triangulation purposes. This will be discussed in the next section.

3.2.4 Data analysis.

Data analysis is a complex process involving a variety of activities that include data collection, analysis, and report writing (Creswell, 2007). Often it is hard to be specific as to which stage the researcher is in as these are very often indistinct (Creswell, 2007). Challenged with these complexities, the researcher sought to establish a 'road map' to traverse through the different stages of data analysis while recognising that the journey would involve many stops, change of directions, and even 'getting lost'. The next part of this section describes the method of analysis and the phases of the analytic process.

3.2.4.1 Method of analysis.

The method of data analysis adopted by this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to exploring how people make sense of their life experiences. It is phenomenological in that the focus is on examining people's perspectives of their life worlds (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). Despite its nomenclature, IPA is not merely a strategy for analysing data. When researchers choose to use IPA, they are choosing an attitude and "sensibility", a way of thinking, seeing and doing that shapes and influences the various research processes (Smith et al., 2009, p. 81).

As a method for data analysis, IPA is invariably complex, and it comes with a level of uncertainty (Smith et al., 2009). According to Smith et al. (2009), there is no right or wrong way of conducting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, and researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the ways they navigate it. Typically, the analysis can be described as an iterative and inductive circle (Kervin et al., 2006; Sarantakos, 2005). This resembles the idea expounded by Creswell (2007) in his "data analysis spiral" that depicts the different processes of a research project as moving in analytic circles rather than following a fixed linear pattern (p. 140). As a result, the researcher, in carrying out an IPA study, worked recursively by shuttling back and forth between processes (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Kervin et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2009). The complexity of IPA means that the researcher needed to be flexible, open-minded and creative. As a rule, the analytic process could be described as constantly evolving and dynamic (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The process was 'fixed' only during the final act of writing up (Smith et al., 2009, p. 81). The following sections describe the phases of data analysis.

3.2.4.2 Phases of analysis.

In this study, the analytic process comprised three phases. They are firstly, the pre-analysis phase, secondly, the analysis phase, and thirdly, the post-analysis phase. Although the following traces the stages of data analysis as a series of phases and steps, it does not imply that it was unidirectional.

1. The Pre-analysis Phase.

Before analysis commenced, there were tasks that needed careful attention because they could have impacts on the outcome of the analysis. The most important tasks during the pre-analysis phase was transcribing the recorded interviews, sending the transcriptions to the participants for checking, and typing them out in a format that the researcher deemed appropriate for analysis. Hard copies of the different sets of data were filed and organised.

Transcribing the data.

The researcher personally and manually transcribed the interviews. It was a deliberate choice that she made to help her immerse into the data (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010b). Transcribing involved repeated listening due to the difficulty of capturing speech and writing it out in proper text (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Typically, the spoken language comes with pauses, fillers, continuers, and sometimes, colloquial expressions (Roulston, 2010). Furthermore, speech, unlike written texts, does not have the usual punctuations and sentence structure (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In other words, as Denscombe (2010) pointed out, "people do not speak in nice finite sentences" (p. 278). To improve readability and intelligibility, the researcher had to "tidy up" the speech, a task that required judgement (Denscombe, 2010, p. 278). When the transcription was completed, the researcher checked her transcript line by line while she re-listened to the recording (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The repeated listening of the audio recording and the eventual completion of the transcription was a step towards familiarising with each participant's world. Once the transcripts were typed, they were sent to the participants for checking. To make sure she understood the changes they made, the researcher read the edited copy of the participant's transcripts once more.

Organising the data.

In this study, data comprised two interview transcripts and two sets of reflections from each of the sixteen participants. In other words, for each participant there are four sets of data:

1. Interview transcripts Phase One,

2. Participant reflections Phase One,

3. Interview transcripts Phase Two, and

4. Participant reflections Phase Two.

With a substantial amount of data to interpret and report, it was important that the data were systematically organised. All data were typed and stored in computer files with backup copies. Both the interview transcripts and reflections of the participants had wide margins on the right. The margin was subdivided into two columns, one for the researcher's exploratory notes and comments and another for emerging themes (Table 3.4). In this study, the researcher used only hard copies for the analysis as she felt they were more accessible and manageable. Working on hard copies also made it easier for referencing across the different sets of data.

2. The Analysis Phase.

IPA is always interpretative, and analysis involves different levels of reading and interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). Most of the time, the analysis can be described as a "multi-directional" process involving active engagement with the text and flexibility (Smith et al., 2009, p. 81). However, to provide the complex process some direction and order, Smith et al. (2009) proposed a series of steps for doing IPA. The following stages that depict how the researcher worked through the different levels of analysis are closely aligned with Smith et al.'s (2009) method.

Stage 1: Reading and re-reading.

As with most IPA studies, data analysis began very early, almost immediately after the first data were collected and transcribed (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The first stage of analysis involved the reading and re-reading of the entire

transcripts to gain familiarity with the data (Denscombe, 2010; Kervin et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2009; Spinelli, 2005). This stage of analysis was about "slowing down", allowing the stories to unfold, while resisting any temptation to speed read, and rush through the whole transcript (Smith et al., 2009, p. 82). Before reading, the researcher spent about ten minutes listening to the audio recording of the interview so that the voice behind, the participant who was talking, remained the focus (Smith et al., 2009, p. 82). This additional step, in drawing the researcher closer to the participants and their life worlds, complemented the rule of *epoche*.

Perusing the transcripts over and over again allowed the researcher to immerse into the participant's world and gave her a greater appreciation of his or her insights, feelings and perceptions (Kervin et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2009). The idea of repeated reading was to engage closely with the data and have an overall sense of what the participant was saying without being overly fixated with wanting to start analysing. For the researcher, this initial slow approach was most beneficial in that the participants' stories remained with her right up to the point of writing nearly two years later.

Stage 2: Noting or memoing.
At the next level of analysis, the researcher closely examined the transcript while underlining the text with the aim of exploring its semantic, conceptual, and linguistic content (Creswell, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). She then wrote preliminary notes or memos on the transcript, commenting mainly on the matters raised by the participant pertaining to the phenomenon of interest (Sarantakos, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). As a result, some of the memos consisted of words and phrases used by the participants (Creswell, 2007). Table 3.4, taken from a segment of a participant's transcript, shows how the researcher (Re) commented on a participant's (P) interview transcript through notes and memos.

In the process of writing these comments, the researcher was also putting the hermeneutic circle into practice by thinking of what the participants said in relation

to its context (Smith, et al., 2009). For example, a participant might have used the word 'meaningful' to describe a service activity. The researcher would then try to relate the participant's observation to what he or she said about the context of the activity in relation to its sites, beneficiaries, or nature of the service rendered. This stage of analysis involved forward and backward reading.

Another area the researcher commented on was "language use' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). The way participants conveyed meanings had not always been explicit. Functional aspects of language such as repetition, the use of metaphors, and other paralinguistic expressions were considered important components of the analysis (Smith et al., 2009). For instance, the researcher counted the number of times a participant had used the word, 'lucky', and felt that the repetition deserved further exploration. Often, the researcher had to look deeper to uncover hidden meanings by "reading between the lines" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 279).

An important goal to work towards at this stage was to produce an initial set of notes that were "comprehensive and detailed" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). It was also important to remember that the analysis was primarily about the participant and the phenomenon they were experiencing. The researcher tried to be reflexive by making it a habit to ask herself "Who says?" so that even as she tried to interpret, her interpretations reflected the participant's experience and sense-making, not her own.

Stage 3: Moving to the next sets of data.

When the initial noting and comments on the first interview transcript had been completed, the researcher moved to the next set of data from the same participant and analysed it using the same processes described so far. The analysis carried on till all the four sets of data were explored and commented upon.

Stage 4: Developing emergent themes.

At this stage, the four sets of data were expanded to include the additional exploratory comments written by the researcher. The researcher primarily focused on the preliminary notes as she began the next phase of the analysis (Smith et al., 2009). In developing emergent themes, the researcher looked for intra-relationships, connections and patterns (Creswell, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Themes are concise phrases or significant statements that bring together a range of understandings into meaningful units (Smith et al., 2009; Spinelli, 2005).

Increasingly, the researcher took a bigger role in that the resulting analysis was not just a product of the participants' interpretations of their experience, but it also reflected the researcher's constructions of them (Powney & Watts, 1987; Smith et al., 2009). This stage could be regarded as a joint effort of both the participant and researcher as the themes brought together a range of understandings relating directly to both participant and researcher. The emergent themes were recorded in the margin next to the exploratory notes and memos (refer to Table 3.4). At this point, the researcher had developed a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Table 3.4

A Sample of the Data Analysis at Stage 4

Extract from transcript	Notes and memos	Themes
Re: *How do you feel each time you serve, either, before, during, or after an activity?*		
P: To be honest, it's a very <u>mixed feeling</u>. Because during the holidays, it can be <u>fun, catching up with people, and to learn more about the</u>	Mixed feelings about service. <u>For St. John's Ambulance:</u> Service can be fun (only	**Participant profile** Full time teacher. **Nature of service**

organisation and the people. After leaving St Johns for so long, there are juniors there that I have not spoken to, that I have not known, and they are so much closer amongst themselves. And I'm not sure how to communicate with them. So these are the things I still need to learn. That's one concern. Nevertheless, after going, I feel at least that I have done this and that and spent time bonding with the people. Similarly, for Organisation X the activities that I go for, such as the charity lunch, the person who came up with the idea for charity lunch is actually my relative, whom I only knew through X. I enjoy what I'm doing there, but after that I feel bad too because I have other things that I should be doing, such as all the papers I have to mark, the lesson plans I need to prepare. Sometimes I question whether I have made the right choices, I'm still searching for the balance. And because school just started and there's so much work, and unfortunately, I had been tasked to do a lot more this term.	during holidays). She gets to meet people and learn something about the organisation. But there are concerns and apprehensions. Felt a sense of alienation, juniors closer amongst themselves, she may have difficulty relating to them. For Organisation X: She enjoyed the activities. She got to meet other volunteers. She feels bad to spend time volunteering when she had *other things she should be doing, all the papers I have to mark, the lesson plans I need to prepare.* She feels torn. Questions the choices she made in regard to spending time on volunteering when she had *so much work*, and *tasked to do a lot more.* (Note **Language,** sense she felt burdened?) Still searching for the balance.	She volunteers in two different organisations. **Perceptions of service** Conflicting perceptions. Feels good that she had done something worthwhile. Feels bad because she should be spending time doing her work. **Benefits of service** Fun. Enjoyable. Meet people. Learn new things. **Challenges** Time constraints. Work responsibilities. Finding the right balance.

Stage 5: Connecting the emergent themes.

Upon completing stage 4, a set of themes was established and listed out chronologically, or the way they appeared in the text. The next step involved drawing the themes together to form clusters of related themes by identifying patterns and connections between them (Smith et al., 2009). The research questions that drove this study and determined the topics discussed formed the basic framework for the various themes. For example, emergent themes were subsumed and clustered under higher themes reflecting the research questions, such as 'early school service experience', 'current volunteering', and 'future intentions to volunteer'. Each cluster, together with its related subordinate themes formed a nest of themes. These nests of themes were typed out with the accompanying quotations of the participants (Table 3.5). However, there was information that deviated from the research questions but remained significant (Creswell, 2007). In such situations, the researcher flagged the item as tentative and decided on its relevance after reading all the other transcripts. The primary focus was always on the participants' experiences and how they perceived them.

Table 3.5

A Sample of the Data Analysis at Stage 5

Themes	Quotations
Programme characteristics • compulsory. • hours to fulfil. • not given a choice. • little variety. • top-down approach. • no explanation.	I feel that we did CIP because it was a <u>requirement</u> and we had to <u>fulfil a certain number of hours doing service.</u> The <u>school made the decisions</u> and the students just had to carry out the activities. <u>We were not involved in the choice</u> of activities. <u>Most of the time, CIP was mainly newspaper collections and Flag days.</u> We <u>never really knew what were the purposes of these activities because teachers didn't explain to us</u>. It was just the hours to fulfil.

Comparing the CIP with current volunteering • different values.	After experiencing for myself what community service was like as a volunteer outside school, <u>I realised there were a lot of differences between CIP at school and those community service I did outside. Firstly, the values are different. In school, CIP was just something I had to do so that I don't need to go for detention. But for the community service outside school, it was completely voluntary. I</u> don't have to fulfil hours and it is up to me how I want to do.
Thoughts on mandating service • believe it is necessary. • the CIP is important. **Suggestions for improvement** • explain purpose and value of service to students. • give students more options.	<u>I still think it is necessary to have CIP and to make it compulsory</u> for students to do community service. But the school should <u>explain clearly the purpose</u> of doing CIP, <u>the values behind</u> it, rather than just assigning us an activity. I think the value of service should be explained to us. I also think that students should be given <u>more options</u> in the types of services they want to participate in. Students are creative, they have ideas. If they were given choices, they would be more willing to do it. <u>CIP is very important</u> but <u>students need to understand the value of service</u>. <u>Schools need to teach these values</u>, the value of giving to the community.

What worked	One of the things I felt impacted me more was a visit to
• close interaction with the recipients of service such as trip to old folks' home.	the old folks' home. In the old folk's home, I had the chance to interact with the elderly, which reminded me of my own grandparents. I found that I actually enjoyed communicating with them and spending time with them. To me that was meaningful. Besides as young students, we usually don't have much opportunity to interact with old people, so it was good to give us this exposure. I also felt good as the elderly seem happy to have us there. It
What did not work	was the trip to the old folk's home that **triggered** my interest to serve.
• activities that did not involve interactions with the recipients such as newspaper collection and Flag Days.	However, most of the CIP activities that my school organised had little such interactions. That was when I realised that I could look for such volunteering opportunities outside school on my own. For CIP activities such as Flag Days or newspaper collections, I hardly had any connection with the beneficiaries, so I don't remember much.
Impacts of the CIP	The CIP experience raised my curiosity. I wanted to find out more on community service. What the school had
• *triggered* interest in service.	organised was insufficient and I wanted to do more on my own. I have a cousin who is an active volunteer, so I asked her about opportunities.
• *raised her curiosity* in service.	
• gain exposure to service.	
• felt good to know she has helped someone.	

Stage 6: Moving to the next participant.

The next step of the analysis involved moving to another participant's data set and repeating the processes of the initial analysis (Sarantakos, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). In keeping with IPA's idiographic commitment, it was important to treat each case on its own terms (Smith et al., 2009). Adhering to the principle of *epoche*, the researcher, as in the earlier analysis, made a conscious effort to set aside her pre-existing assumptions. These preconceptions included those ideas that had emerged from the data of the earlier participant. Hence for this step, bracketing took on a different level in that the researcher had to bracket the ideas emerging from the analysis of the earlier participant over and above her own pre-existing understandings. The researcher had to maintain rigour for each subsequent participant to allow new themes to emerge with each case (Smith et al., 2009).

Stage 7: Searching for patterns across all data sets.

By stage 7, the researcher had already typed out the clusters of themes and the accompanying quotations for each participant. The next task involved looking for common patterns and interconnections across the emergent themes for all the participants. To organise the themes, this study adopted the following strategies proposed by Smith et al. (2009).

One method was using abstraction. "Abstraction" involved grouping similar themes and putting them under a super-ordinate theme (Smith et al., 2009, p. 96). Sometimes, an emergent theme was given a super-ordinate status as it helped bring together a series of related themes. This method of organising the themes was called "subsumption" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 97). To differentiate themes based on their oppositional relationships, "polarization" was used (Smith et al., 2009, p. 97). For example, themes reflecting student outcomes pertaining to the learning of service might be positive while others were negative. To fully comprehend the participants' experiences, it was important to attend to how they described the contexts of those experiences. "Contextualisation" was a method used to organise themes based on contextual elements that could be temporal, social, or environmental (Smith et al., 2009, p. 98). As an example, the types of community service could be classified

according to sectors such as the elderly or children with special needs. Quite often, theories were applied to help the researcher conceptualise the themes and encapsulate the categories (Denscombe, 2010).

Ideally, the completion of this step gave the researcher a sense of having captured and understood what the different participants had to tell (Smith et al., 2009). At this stage, nests of themes were grouped under categories or "umbrella terms" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 285). These super-ordinate themes and the lower level themes were tabulated and filed. An example of a table representing how themes were structured is in Appendix 17.

3. The Post-analysis Phase.

Organising the analysed data.

Before reporting on the findings, the analysed data had to be consolidated and organised. The research questions served as useful frameworks for organising and synthesising the data. In this study, group tables or matrices were used to represent the data (Sarantakos, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). Creating these matrices gave the researcher a clear overview of the study (Appendix 17). Through these "graphic representations", the researcher also gained a better sense of having captured the most important thing, the essence, of the participants' life worlds (Smith et al. 2009, p. 99).

Compiling quotations and transcript extracts.

The maxim, "back to things themselves" central to a phenomenological study required the researcher to concentrate on the *emic* perspectives of the participants (Levering, 2007, p. 221). Holloway and Wheeler (2009) described these perspectives as "the experiences, feelings, and perceptions of the participants" (p. 12). To remain faithful to the participants' portrayals of their experiences, the researcher created tables to compile direct quotations and verbatim extracts under key themes. For example, under the category, 'metaphors used to describe service experience', quotations from the various participants were listed out (Table 4.7). The compilation

of quotations and extracts proved to be valuable for the next stage of the study; namely, reporting the findings. During reporting, the researcher had easy access to these quotations that were often incorporated.

To conclude the discussion of data analysis, it must be highlighted that analysing data was not a distinct process separate from the different parts of the research. As Creswell (2007) pointed out, in qualitative studies, "data collection, analysing, and report writing are interrelated" (p. 43). The point Creswell (2007) raised was true for the researcher. It was not unusual during the process of reporting the findings that the researcher had to reread participants' interview transcripts and journals for clarification.

3.3   Section Three
Credibility and Trustworthiness

Phenomenologists do not believe that there is an "ultimate reality" that is completely certain (Spinelli, 2005, p. 8). As Levering (2007) stated, "phenomenological research does not hand us knowledge of factual human lives" (p. 226). For phenomenologists, what matters is what is real for their participants (Mortari & Tarozzi, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). As a result, this study was committed to describing and portraying experiences rather then establishing factual evidence (Giarelli & Chambliss, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Smeyers, 2007a; Smith et al., 2009). The primary objective was to understand the meanings people attach to their experiences and find a means to provide a rich, detailed, and accurate description of them. For the researcher, credibility in the entire research process is vital if the objective is to be met. Perspectives on credibility vary and even amongst investigators, there was a lack of agreement on how the term was operationalised (Creswell, 2007). In this study, credibility is seen as rigour in the conduct of the research, and explicitness in reporting the various stages and strategies used in the research process. Credibility was seen as integrity, in that the researcher acknowledged her study's axiological assumptions and endeavoured to be reflexive. However, for the research to be credible, the data generated through the research process need to be trustworthy. For the researcher, an important criterion for

trustworthiness is accuracy. To enhance trustworthiness, the study has relied on the following strategies.

3.3.1 Triangulation.

Qualitative researchers often make use of the principle of triangulation that involves using multiple types or sources of data to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Kervin et al., 2006). For this study, triangulation was achieved by corroborating data derived from two sources, interviews and the participants' journals. Comparing findings from different methods of data collection helped "validate" (Ritchie, 2003, p. 43) data and gave a "fuller picture" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 348) of the phenomenon. Besides, each method of data collection was carried out in two phases. In having two rounds of interviews that lasted one to two hours each, there is a better chance to cover adequate ground. Having a second interview gave the researcher another means to verify with the participants any uncertainties or to follow up on topics discussed in the first interview. After each interview, participants were asked to write reflective journals. These journals complemented the interviews in that they gave the researcher another chance to capture what she had missed out or what the participants had forgotten to say. Furthermore, the two phases of data collection extended over a period of about three months. It was hoped that giving participants time between two interviews would allow them to contemplate more deeply on the phenomena.

3.3.2 Member-checking.

Individual interview transcripts were shared with the participants concerned so that they had a chance to verify if the researcher had captured their responses accurately (Creswell, 2007; Jones & Abes, 2004). Member or participant-checking was useful as a strategy to reduce errors that could occur during transcription (Denscombe, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the process of member-checking also helped to make the data more complete. To illustrate, during the interview, Hayley mentioned a quotation that was of significance to her, but she forgot the exact wordings. When the transcript was sent

to her for checking, she included the full quotation (Appendix 16 shows a sample of member-checking).

3.3.3 The use of artefacts.

For the second interview, the participants brought artefacts related to their service experiences. Besides facilitating the interview process, these objects also helped enhance the credibility of the data. Photographs, particularly those that depicted the different volunteering activities the participants described, provided concrete details of their experience such as the sites, events, and to those they were rendering help (Schwartz, 1989). To quote Musello (1980), photographs are like "documents of natural events" (as cited in Schwartz, 1989, p. 121). While the photographs were not used as data, they provided further verification of what was happening in the lives of those youth who serve (Kervin et al., 2006). As discussed earlier, some of the participants admitted that reviewing the photographs had triggered the recollection of events in the past and in the process, knowledge that would have been missed out were discovered. For the researcher, photographs had also enhanced the accuracy of her interpretations. Viewing the photographs gave the researcher a more vivid understanding of the participants' descriptions.

Apart from photographs, other artefacts such as documents, letters, and personal memorabilia belonging to the participants offered further validation of the data. Overall, the use of artefacts had increased the trustworthiness of the verbal interview and consequently, enhanced the credibility of the research (Creswell, 2007; Harper, 2002; Hurworth, 2003).

3.4   Section Four
Ethical Considerations

Central to the integrity of a research are its ethical principles (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; O'Leary, 2010). As Mortari and Tarozzi (2010) remarked, "Research always need ethics, the ethics of phenomenology finds expression in two

ethical virtues, respect and humility" (p. 46). For the researcher, ethics is best seen as an attitude and commitment on her part throughout the research process.

Even before undertaking the study, the researcher had examined all aspects of the study for ethical implications and obtained approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at The University of Notre Dame Australia. Care and due consideration were given to this process to safeguard the rights of the researched, the researcher, and the granting institution (Creswell, 2007; O'Leary, 2010). To ensure high integrity and to maintain ethical standards, the researcher adhered strictly to the following protocols.

In accordance with the ethical requirements of HREC, the researcher provided potential participants with information of the study and the nature of their involvement so that they could make a reasoned decision about whether to participate or not (Denscombe, 2010; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). A participation information sheet (Appendix 4) that gave a detailed description of the purpose of the research and the nature of the data to be collected was made available to potential participants or anyone with interest in the research (Kervin et al., 2006; Moustakas, 1994; O'Leary, 2010). The participants were also informed that their involvement in the research was completely voluntary and they were under no obligation to continue if they wished to withdraw at any stage of the data collection process (Creswell, 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Kervin et al., 2006; O'Leary, 2010).

Informed consent was obtained from each participant (Creswell, 2007; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Kervin et al., 2006). The researcher explained each item in the consent form (Appendix 3) before it was signed by both the participant and the researcher (Denscombe, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). The researcher also sought the permission of every participant to audio-record the interviews (Kervin et al., 2006).

To protect the identities of the participants, all participants were assigned pseudonyms. Transcriptions, participant reflections, verbatim extracts, and any data for publication were edited to ensure anonymity (Creswell, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Any identifying information, such the institutions where the participants studied were not named.

The researcher is responsible for safeguarding the data collected by storing them in a private and secure place that has limited and restricted access in the School of Education (O' Leary, 2010). These data comprised the audio recordings of interviews, transcriptions of interviews, and participants' reflective journals. As recommended by the institution's HREC, these data would be kept for five years. After this period, the researcher is also responsible for the proper destruction of the data (O' Leary, 2010).

3.5   Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain the research design. The Theoretical Framework presents an overview of the research process that begins from the topic of the study, to its assumptions, over-riding paradigm, methodology and methods. To clarify how the research was conducted, a detailed account of the procedures used for data collection and data analysis was provided. The research design shapes the way the researcher reports the findings as seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

4.0   Introduction

This study aims to find out from a group of young adult volunteers what they think and feel about service participation at school and whether the experience played any part in influencing their sense of civic responsibility as adults. To achieve this aim, a phenomenological approach was adopted with the belief that it is best suited for research on how people make sense of their lived experience (Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Data for this study were collected from interviews and participants' reflective journals and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). While hermeneutics is a defining characteristic of IPA and access to the participants' life experiences is essentially interpretative, the researcher has elected to rely on frequent and direct quotations from the participants to let their stories do the talking (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The intent is to give readers a chance to listen to the voices of the researched and judge for themselves how they want to make sense of their narrations. As Richardson (1994) cautioned, "desires to speak for others are suspect" (cited in Clough, 2002, p. 6).

In essence, the findings revealed that all the participants underwent the same community service programme while they were at school, namely, Community Involvement Programme (CIP). However, variations in programme implementations existed between schools. Results were mixed when it comes to how the participants perceived their school service experience. While not all found their school's programmes satisfactory, most believed that there were benefits when they looked back upon those experiences. What was also significant in the participants' narrations was that their CIP experience did expose them to the idea of community service. When asked why they continued to volunteer beyond school, multiple reasons were cited. In relation to their future plans for service, all the participants invariably expressed their desire to persevere with their volunteering efforts albeit the potential challenges they could face in their adult lives.

The rest of this chapter details the findings and is presented to address the general research question and is structured in tandem with the four sub-questions. As reflected in Table 4.1, the first two sections focus primarily on the past school service experience of the participants. Section One is about the participants' perceptions of their CIP experience while Section Two reports on the impacts of their experience. Section Three is predominantly about the participants' present volunteering experience, in particular, the reasons they gave for service. Finally, Section Four concentrates on the participants' plans for future involvement.

Table 4.1

Chapter Format in Relation to the Research Questions

General question

In what ways and to what extent do young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve has been influenced by their school service experience?

Sections	Focus	Sub-questions
Introduction	Aims of the study. Participants of the study.	
Section One	Perceptions of past school service experience.	1. How do young people who are currently involved in voluntary service perceive their prior experience with mandatory service while at school?
Section Two	Impacts of past school service experience.	2. How do young people feel they might have been affected by their service experience at school?
Section Three	Reasons for adult volunteering.	3. What do young people believe are their reasons and motivations to continue with service in their adult lives?

| Section Four | Future plans to continue volunteering. | 4. What do young people believe are their longer-term plans to continue serving? |
| Conclusion | | |

4.0.1 Participants of this study.

Before reporting on the findings, it is apposite to feature the participants of the study. Altogether 16 young adult volunteers consented to participate in this study as "co-researchers" (Moustakas, 1998, p. 108) in their capacity as "informants" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 181) and contributors to the data. Table 4.2 identifies the profile of the participants and the number of years they had been volunteering beyond secondary school.

Table 4.2

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Religion	Occupation	Highest qualification	Years of service after secondary school.
Ian	M	27	Chinese	Christian	Teacher	Degree Postgraduate Diploma	7
Michael	M	19	Chinese	Christian	Student	'O' Levels	2
Roger	M	23	Chinese	Buddhist	Student	'A' Levels	1
Lynn	F	21	Chinese	Buddhist	Student	'A' Levels	3
Hayley	F	19	Chinese	Christian	Student	Polytechnic Diploma	2
Katie	F	21	Chinese	Nil	Student	'A' Levels	3
Nicole	F	21	Malay	Muslim	Student Gym instructor	Higher Nitec*	6
Gwen	F	24	Chinese	Nil	Student	Polytechnic Diploma	8

Beatrice	F	21	Chinese	Buddhist	Student	'A' Levels	4
Dean	M	22	Chinese	Buddhist	Student	'A' Levels	2
Francis	M	20	Chinese	Buddhist	Student	Higher Nitec*	2
Olivia	F	19	Malay	Muslim	Student	Polytechnic Diploma	2
Josephine	F	20	Eurasian	Muslim	Student	'O' Levels	3
Alison	F	25	Chinese	Buddhist	Teacher	Degree Postgraduate Diploma	8
Priscilla	F	24	Indian	Catholic	Teacher	Degree Postgraduate Diploma	3
Evan	M	23	Indian	Hindu	Student	Polytechnic Diploma	6

* Higher National Institute of Technical Education Certificate, a post-secondary (non-tertiary) qualification (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2015, p. 3)

The sample included post-school youth who not only participated in mandatory community service while at school, but had also continued to volunteer beyond their school years. The participants were primarily studying either for their degrees or diplomas with the exception of three who were working full-time. Coincidentally, it turned out that those who were working were all teachers even though they were not acquainted with each other. All three teachers felt that a career in teaching, a profession of service, offered them a chance to help young people. For instance, Alison, a twenty-five year-old teacher, explained why she chose to teach:

> Part of the reason why I want to be a teacher is because I feel
> education helps pull people up, balance the playing field a
> bit…help students reach their potential, reach for greater things.

In terms of the highest educational level attained, two of the participants had obtained their 'O' Levels (Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level), five had 'A' Levels, (Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level), two had Higher Nitec (National Institute of Technical Education Certificate), four held Polytechnic Diplomas or equivalent and three had completed University

Degrees or Higher. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 27 in 2014 and their average age was 22 years. Of this sample, 10 were females and six were males. The ethnic composition of the participants reflected the multiracial and multi-religious demographics of Singapore (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2017). From the sample, 11 were identified as Chinese, two as Malays, two as Indians, and one as a Eurasian. All the 16 participants were known by their pseudonyms. In regard to their religious backgrounds, six people were Buddhists, three were Christians, three were Muslims, one was a Hindu, one was a Catholic, and two were not affiliated with any religion. The length of post-secondary school volunteering service ranged from one to eight years.

4.0.1.1 Adult volunteering.

Beyond secondary school, the participants volunteered their service within Singapore and internationally, through various organisations. The nature of service activities varied and often correlated with the sites and sectors. Table 4.3 summarises the nature and characteristics of the volunteering service the participants were involved in.

Table 4.3

Nature and Characteristics of Adult Volunteering

Locations	Local: *Singapore.*
	International: *Cambodia, China, Hungary, Indonesia, India, The Philippines, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Vietnam.*
Organisations	Arts Organisations, Charitable Organisations, Disaster Relief Agency, Humanitarian Organisations, Make-A-Wish Foundation, National Library Board, Religious Organisations, Sports Organisations, Tertiary and non-tertiary institutions, Voluntary Welfare Organisations, Youth Organisations.
Sites	Animal shelters, Areas affected by natural disasters, Churches, Community

	Clubs, Elderly care centres, Family centres, Grassroots Organisations, Library for the visually impaired, Orphanages, Schools, Shelters, Soup kitchen, Sports venues, Villages, Welfare homes for children with disabilities or special needs, Youth Organisations.
Sectors	Animals, Arts, Children, Elderly, Education, Environmental, Families in crisis, Health, Natural disasters, People living in poverty, People with disabilities or special needs, Religion, Sports, Youth.
Nature of service activities	Administrative work, Befriending the elderly, youth at risk, children with disabilities, Blood donation drives, Cleaning, Collecting and distributing donations, Delivering meals, Fund raising, Gardening, Helping in animal shelters, Helping out at alma maters, Helping with sports and community events, Helping victims of natural disasters, Mentoring, Mission work, Organising events for families in crisis, Preparing food in soup kitchen, Raising awareness on First-Aid, health issues, fire hazards, water conservation, Reading for people with visual impairment, Rebuilding and infrastructure work, Teaching, Tutoring, Visiting the homes of the elderly who were without family support.

4.0.1.1.1 Location of service.

During the first phase of the interviews, the participants were asked to describe the service activities that they were involved in either currently or recently. From their accounts, the volunteering work fell under two broad categories, namely local or international. Thirteen participants indicated that they had volunteered both locally and overseas. Three participants served only in Singapore. Those who volunteered overseas focused their efforts in Asian countries, namely, China, India, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines. Only one participant reported that she did community service outside Asia, namely, in

Hungary. Overall, the 13 participants with overseas volunteering experience had made a total of 32 such trips at the time of the initial interview.

4.0.1.1.2 Organisations.

Whether locally or overseas, the participants mainly volunteered through non-profit organisations such as Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWO), Youth Organisations, Humanitarian Organisations, Religious Organisations, Sports Organisations, and Community or Grassroots Organisations. Based on the participants' accounts, the nature of their volunteering involvement can be described as formal. By the definition spelt out by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC, 2011), formal volunteers are those who "volunteer through organisations" (p. 9) while informal volunteers are involved in activities that are not through organisations. Some of the organisations the participants volunteered with under the VWOs were Sree Nayarana Mission, Rotary Club of Singapore, Salvation Army, Jamiyah Children's Home, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Lions Befriender Service Association, Lakeside Family Centre, the Kidney Dialysis Foundation, Touch Home Care, Habitat for Humanity, Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped and Special Olympics Singapore.

In addition, Youth Organisations, mainly Uniformed Groups like Saint John Ambulance Brigade, the Singapore Scout Association, The Boys' Brigade, Singapore Red Cross Society, and The Girls' Brigade also offered avenues for these youth to volunteer their service. For six participants, another pathway for them to engage in community service was through the higher institutions they were studying in. For example, some of the participants reported that they volunteered through University-YMCA (Uni-Y), a "university service club" (p. 1) between YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association [YMCA] of Singapore, 2018) and the tertiary institution they were in.

Three of the participants mentioned that they had returned to serve in their alma maters, helping with administrative work and the running of co-curricular

activities. Another participant, who had been on three overseas community service trips while he was at school, volunteered to accompany students on their overseas service expedition as an alumnus. Three participants went overseas for community service organised by religious organisations, namely, churches. Six participants continued to seek service opportunities when they were in junior colleges. According to them these service activities were optional. One participant found her experience with sports volunteering so meaningful and fulfilling that she ended up accumulating over three hundred hours of service in her two years at Junior College (JC). Although community service remained a key feature in Junior Colleges, the compulsory element had been removed with effect from 2005 (MOE, National University of Singapore, & Nanyang Technological University, 2005).

4.0.1.1.3 *Nature of service.*

Within Singapore, the participants volunteered in a diverse range of activities and in various sectors and sites. Offering direct service appeared to be most predominant in the local scene. All participants reported being involved in direct service such as tutoring children with disabilities, teaching children from low-income homes, preparing food and serving at a soup kitchen, cleaning homes of the elderly and the sick, painting homes of the poor, teaching residents in the community about fire safety and water conservation, recording for the visually impaired, entertaining seniors at elderly care centres, running camps and activities for youth at risk, gardening, delivering meals to homebound elderly folks, mentoring and befriending youth, assisting in school alumni, and helping old people with their rehabilitation.

Some participants were also involved in indirect service activities initiated by the organisations they volunteered with, such as fund raising, road shows, and blood donation drives. Some helped with organising events through neighbourhood grassroots community clubs and through uniformed groups. One participant had been facilitating arts carnivals while another helped out with photography at charity events, and several said they were in the committee in charge of organising various events that ranged from dance competitions to first-aid awareness.

The types of volunteering activities undertaken by the participants when they were overseas often included infrastructure projects. Twelve of the thirteen participants who went overseas to serve reported carrying out activities such as building and restoring homes and schools, building playgrounds for children, constructing water tanks, erecting fences and walls for schools, and painting classrooms. Many of those who volunteered overseas also offered human service such as, befriending children in welfare homes, teaching at the village schools, serving at elderly centres, or helping villagers at their farms. Usually, in their trips to welfare homes and villages, participants brought donations of clothes, books and groceries for the poor and destitute. One participant remembered that the team also donated computers to a village school. Two participants recalled doing mission work led by their church leaders. Such trips included serving the communities in need, such as organising carnivals at local orphanages and distributing donations the church had collected.

The majority (ten) of these participants mentioned that they received some subsidies from the Youth Expedition Project (YEP) for their first overseas community service trips. However, most participants conducted various forms of fund-raising activities to subsidise their projects. These activities ranged from selling cookies and handicrafts to performing at cafes and taking up ad-hoc jobs such as helping out with team-building activities.

4.0.1.1.4 Duration, frequency, and length of service.

As reflected in Table 4.2, the longevity of service varied. The number of years participants were involved in voluntary service ranged from one to eight years. On average, the longevity of service was four years. However, age did not account for the difference. There was no direct co-relation between length of service and the age of the participants. For example, Priscilla and Gwen were both 24 years of age, but their length of service was different, with Gwen serving for eight years, and Priscilla, three. Similarly, Nicole, who was 21, had served a total of six years while Roger who was two years older had only started volunteering a year ago.

In regard to frequency, service can be classified as "episodic, occasional or regular" (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006, p. 7). According to the definitions by the Corporation for National and Community Service, America, volunteering is termed "episodic when it is fewer than two weeks a year with a main organisation", "occasional volunteering is between three to twelve weeks per year with a main organisation" and "regular volunteering is 12 weeks or greater" (Dote et al, 2006, p. 7).

Based on these definitions, 75% of the participants can be said to be volunteering on a regular basis, many of which were almost weekly commitments in one main organisation. Evan reported that he tutored a child who has a hearing impairment for three years on a regular basis. Hayley had been conducting weekly English lessons for young children from low-income families for over a year. Another participant, Roger, decided to volunteer in an elderly centre throughout his three-month long university vacation by going to the centre nearly every weekday for four to six hours each time. However, most of these participants reported that they offered their help when they could on an 'ad hoc' basis to various other organisations over and above their regular commitments. The remaining participants described their involvement as mostly episodic.

It is noteworthy that the term 'episodic' is not to be confused with 'infrequent'. Many of the participants offered their service to different organisations, rather than a fixed organisation, and helped out with various activities frequently. For example, one of the participants mentioned that she volunteered in a soup kitchen, helped out with sporting events, cleaned the homes of kidney dialysis patients, was involved with blood donation drives, raised funds through gift wrapping during Christmas. In addition, she also assisted with her alma mater and reached out to those in need overseas.

Most participants reported that the duration and frequency of their involvement depended on the nature of the activity. According to them, the duration of each

activity could range from two hours to over 20 hours a week. This was how some participants described their involvement:

It varies, for gardening, usually four hours…some other things,
for example, Red Cross, when I am free, I would opt for the
whole day shift, from 10am to 8pm. Of course for the Habitat trip,
that was for as long as I was awake. So it actually depends.
(Gwen)

If you are talking about tutoring, it was 2 hours a week…for
Meals-on-Wheels, it can be every day for one particular week.
(Evan)

Most overseas community service lasted between one to three weeks, although several participants indicated that some of them spent up to six months preparing for the trips. Some examples of these pre-trip activities varied from fund-raising, to leadership training, team building and first-aid training. One participant who led a group from her university for an overseas community programme spoke of the duties of a leader that included administrative work, carrying out pre and post-service activities and fund-raising. All these activities stretched for over six months. Most overseas expeditions also included post-trip activities that might be some form of community service within Singapore. For example, Alison who did community service in Cambodia recalled, "The entire project lasted six months…going to Cambodia was just one part. We had to do pre-community and post-community service".

4.1 Section One
Past School Service Experience

The primary objective of this research was to examine to what extent and in what ways young people believed that their school service experience had influenced their sense of civic responsibility. However, to know how students might be affected, a more comprehensive understanding of the context of their service experience was

necessary. The research focused on listening to what participants revealed in terms of the context of their school service experiences. Two strategies were used to achieve this purpose. Firstly, the participants were encouraged to recall their service experiences in relation to the manner in which they were fulfilled. Interview and reflection questions prompted these individuals to recapture what their service programmes in school were like and how they had felt as students participating in the various activities associated with those programmes. The next strategy was to ask the participants to reflect upon their school service experiences and review their schools' service programmes in terms of the areas that had worked or failed to work, and things that could be improved. To conclude their discussion on their school service experience, the participants were asked for their thoughts and opinions on mandating community service.

4.1.1 Nature and characteristics of community service programmes.

This study relied solely on the ability of participants to recall and elaborate on the nature and characteristics of their schools' programmes. The name and type of programme, as well as its key characteristics are summarised in Table 4.4. From the participants' descriptions, there were similarities in some core areas. However, there were also many variations in regard to programme implementation and execution across and within schools.

Table 4.4

Nature and Characteristics of School Service Programmes

Programme	Nature and Characteristics
Name of programme	CIP (Community Involvement Programme)
Type of programme	Community service
Common features	Compulsory Group activity School-related Small scale

Location	Within Singapore (All participants)
	Overseas (6 participants)
Sectors	Abandoned animals
	Charities
	Children
	Environmental
	The elderly
	The poor
	The sick
Types of activities	Administrative work
	Befriending seniors
	Environmental projects
	Flag Days
	Food donations
	Helping at animal shelters
	Infrastructure projects (overseas community service)
	Newspaper collection
	Painting homes
	Performances (music and the arts)
	School duties
	Serving the elderly
	Teaching children
Service sites	Animal shelters
	Centres for children with disabilities
	Disaster-affected areas (overseas community service)
	Elderly centres
	Homes of low-income families
	Orphanages
	Public parks/beaches
	Schools
Frequency	Mostly infrequent (varies from once or twice a year to a few times a year)
	Usually one-off
Duration	Usually short duration (minimum six hours a year but most exceeded the minimum requirement)
	One to two weeks (only for overseas community service)

4.1.1.1 Name of service programme.

To ascertain that the focus of the discussion was on the same programme, the participants were asked at the first interview:

I'd like to take you back to your earlier experience with service while you were in secondary school. Can you remember what the service programme in your school was called?

All the participants stated that they knew their school service programmes as the CIP (Community Involvement Programme). For example, in response to the above question, Michael replied, "We called it CIP, it was a common term". One of the participants, Dean, when asked what the service programme in his school was known as, added as an afterthought, "It's funny, in CIP, there isn't the word 'volunteering' in it, it's only 'community involvement'".

4.1.1.2 Type of service programme.

Community service has often been confused with other forms of service, in particular, service-learning (Furco, Jones-White, Huesman, & Gorny, 2012; Ma, Chan, Liu, & Mak, 2018). Furco et al. (2012) cautioned that respondents in some studies might not be aware that there were distinctions between the various service programmes and could possibly mistake one for the other (Furco et al., 2012). Hence, it was imperative that the researcher cleared this confusion with the participants at the very beginning. To determine the type of programme, each participant was asked at the beginning of their discussion on school service, "Is the service programme in your school integrated with the regular curriculum"?

All participants confirmed that the CIP was not linked to any academic learning. As Alison described, "It's just on its own, a stand-alone thing…there was never a link to academics". It was on this basis that the researcher concluded that the programme was community service. As long as the researcher sensed some uncertainty, she made an attempt to further clarify. For instance, during the interview, Josephine was asked, "What kinds of activities do you usually do for the CIP"? She replied, "It's always newspaper collection or something to do with recycling. Sometimes we collect old clothes, toys or other items, it's always about recycling".

That prompted the researcher to ask again, "You mentioned 'recycling', is it because 'recycling' was taught in class"? Josephine's response to the question was, "No, it has nothing to do with the curriculum".

4.1.1.3 Programme characteristics.

To understand the context of their learning, the participants were asked to describe in detail, the characteristics of their schools' service programmes. Hecht (2003) defines the contextual characteristics of service programmes as those "characteristics that make them unique" (p. 27). As reflected in this study, 'contextual characteristics' could be a far-reaching concept with great variability. Service could take the form of different activities, occur in different sites, involve different individuals, or diverse sectors of the community. Nonetheless, similarities were found in the participants' descriptions of the key features of their school programmes. For example, the participants unanimously described the CIP as compulsory. They also recalled that most CIP activities were school-related, infrequent, small-scale, often carried out in groups. However, the number of hours of CIP service performed varied amongst the participants.

4.1.1.3.1 Compulsory.

One characteristic that stood out for all participants was that their school service programme was a requirement. Every participant recalled that it was compulsory for every student to fulfil a certain number of hours of community service each year:

> It was something we had to fulfil, something we are all forced
>
> to do.
>
> (Nicole)

> In secondary school, everyone just knows the CIP as something
>
> compulsory, something you have to do.
>
> (Katie)

Four participants remembered there were deterrents such as disciplinary actions to ensure that students complied with the requirement:

> The programmes were compulsory so students had to oblige even
> if they didn't like it. The discipline master ensured that we did
> our part.
> (Francis)

> If we didn't do CIP service, we would be punished…we had to go
> for detention classes.
> (Olivia)

While a few participants remembered that disciplinary measures were in place to make sure that they fulfilled their service requirement, most reported that their schools gave them incentives to volunteer by awarding credit points and grades for their involvement. Gwen, an active volunteer, described how the point system was an impetus to motivate students to start volunteering. Incidentally, Gwen brought along her Secondary School CCA (Co-curricular Activities) certificate to show the researcher how points were allocated for her involvement in community service. She added that eventually, she exceeded 180 hours and those were only for the service that was accounted for:

> They have grades for CIP. If by the end of Secondary Four and
> you attained an A, you would have accumulated a hundred hours
> and above and you get two points, kind of like CCA points. I think
> it's their way of motivating students.

4.1.1.3.2 School-related.

According to Arenas, Bosworth, and Kwandayi (2006), "school-related" service implies that the "service can take place inside or outside the school" (p. 24) and can be "organised by the school or by community agencies with the support and consent of the school" (p. 24). From the participants' accounts, the community activities they were involved in were school-related in that while the school arranged most of the service activities, some of the services they participated in involved

external welfare organisations such as the uniformed groups and residents' committees. For example, Michael, a nineteen-year-old volunteer, recalled an activity that involved students serving the elderly in the neighbourhood, "It was actually organised by the Resident Committee, they know the residents and planned beforehand who were going".

Many of the participants remembered performing service through their co-curricular activities (CCAs). Eleven participants mentioned that the service activities they participated in were related to the CCAs they joined:

> My school tends to leave CIP to the CCA. There wasn't, at least
> when I was there, a school-wide approach. But the Boys Brigade
> had a programme that was called, 'The Sharity Box'. Now it's
> called 'Share-a-Gift.' We would go out to collect donations,
> food mainly, and we would pack them and pass them to the needy.
> (Ian)

> Being a Girl Guide, we have a lot of activities that engage us with
> the community. We helped paint one-roomed flats, distributed
> food to the poor and things like that.
> (Hayley)

All the participants who took part in donation collections such as Flag Days remembered that they were organised in conjunction with Voluntary Welfare Organisations such as Red Cross Society and Singapore Children's Society.

4.1.1.3.3 Group activity.

The participants remembered their CIP activities as mostly group events involving several students, a whole class or level and on a few occasions, the entire school. For example, Roger recalled participating in community service with his classmates, "It is usually organised by the teacher and we go class by class…we do it with our classmates and not individually." Katie described school service as a time to bond with others:

In my school, CIP activities were expected to be performed with
our CCA group or class. It acted as a way for us to bond while
serving the community.

4.1.1.3.4 Small-scale and inconspicuous.

The majority (14) of the participants remembered their service programmes as
scaled down, quiet, and inconspicuous:

I remember it was quite low-key. My school just wanted us to
fulfil the hours because it was a requirement. Sometimes, my
principal would talk about it, for example, during Red Cross
Day. Otherwise, there's little talk on the CIP.
(Olivia)

I don't remember we had things like posters, I don't think the
principal talked about it.
(Beatrice)

The remaining two participants recalled that CIP activities were large-scale
events in their school. For example, Dean described how his school carried out their
community service projects:

Well, the school makes it big, a record-breaking event. It's of
some magnitude. The idea is novel, creative, interesting and the
teacher in charge of the CIP talked to students about it…there
definitely is a focus on CIP.

4.1.1.3.5 Variable duration.

Although the CIP had a "six-hour" yearly requirement (National Library Board
Singapore, 2018; Wong, 2000) there was a significant variation in terms of the
number of hours participants spent doing community service. Four participants
recalled doing only six hours of service a year while the rest indicated that they
exceeded the minimum number of hours they were obliged to fulfil. For participants

who went on overseas community service, the length of these trips ranged from one to two weeks. There was a participant who volunteered so many hours both in school and outside that she was not sure about how many hours she served over and above the 180 hours in the four years in secondary school. Another participant remembered doing about a hundred hours of service with just one organisation.

4.1.1.3.6 Infrequent.

Most of the participants described their service activities as infrequent and mostly one-off. For example, Evan recounted, "There were CIP activities every six months that we all had to comply". Josephine had the same comments, "We only do CIP twice a year…unfortunately the events were one-off". Three participants, however, volunteered their time on a more regular basis. For example, one participant went to the school for students with intellectual disability to teach music on a weekly basis. Another participant recounted assisting at the school for children with special needs, tutoring children weekly for a few months.

4.1.1.4 Activities, sites, and sectors.

Besides the key programme characteristics mentioned, there were other similarities in the participants' CIP experience. These similarities were reflected in the types of activities, in particular, those that were focused on fund-raising, offering direct services, environmental projects, and school duties.

4.1.1.4.1 Fund raising.

In terms of serving locally, fund raising was the most common service activity. Fourteen of the 16 participants stated that fundraising and donation collection were annual activities. For them, a popular fundraising activity was Flag Days. Half of the sample remembered selling flags every year. The participants recounted being stationed at public places such as busy streets and train stations to approach pedestrians for donations, mostly in the form of coins. Unfortunately, despite it being a popular choice of CIP activity, selling flags did not appeal to most of the participants who had the experience. Ian for instance expressed his thoughts about

the activity, "It seriously turned me off Flag Days. I've never gone for another Flag Day after that". Some schools raised funds by organising school carnivals. Two participants recalled that they had mass CIP events involving the whole school. On a smaller scale, two female participants recalled a class activity that involved selling cookies to help raise money for students with financial difficulties.

4.1.1.4.2 Direct service.

In terms of direct services, the most common sector was the elderly. Three quarters of the sample population recalled serving at old folks' homes or visiting the elderly who were living alone. Many recounted spending their time cleaning elderly centres, entertaining the seniors, serving them food, and interacting with them:

> We would sing, entertain the old folks or do art and craft.
> Sometimes we helped serve lunch or just talked to them and bond
> with them.
> (Nicole)

> Other small-scale projects I did included, going to one-roomed
> flats in our school's neighbourhood to distribute food items, and
> we were also given the opportunity to engage with the senior
> residents.
> (Hayley)

Besides serving the elderly, the next most common form of community service activity was teaching. Several students reported that they tutored either children with learning disabilities or those from low-income families. Priscilla, for example, said that she fulfilled the requirement by tutoring a child through her CCA, Interact Club. Another participant, Lynn, recalled a CIP activity that involved teaching music to children with learning disabilities, "So we went there for weekly sessions…we taught a few kids to play Er hu (a Chinese musical instrument)".

4.1.1.4.3 Environmental projects.

Some participants reported that they were involved in environmental projects, such as beach clean-ups. They remembered there was a scheme known as the "Adopt-a-Beach" project where students were assigned to maintain certain sections of the coast and given the tasks of picking up litter along beaches. Roger and Beatrice, for example, recounted CIP activities involving the above project:

> We have different programmes, like cleaning up the beach, picking
> up rubbish at the beach.
> (Roger)

> I remember going to clean up the beach.
> (Beatrice)

Three participants recollected that most of their CIP projects centred on recycling. Each year, students were sent to the neighbourhood to collect old newspapers. Olivia recounted how recycling activities were carried out:

> The main activity had always been newspaper collection.
> Usually it involves the whole level, like all the Sec [Secondary]
> Threes. We would go knocking on doors to collect newspapers.

On the other extreme there was a participant, Josephine, who lamented that newspaper collection was all they did for the CIP. She told the researcher she had always wished the school would let them volunteer in the elderly centres that she heard so much of from students in other schools.

4.1.1.4.4 School duties.

Among the most common type of service performed within the school was helping out in the school library. However, one participant recalled, somewhat amused, that at times performing menial tasks for teachers also counted as community service:

Some teachers even gave us CIP hours for helping them clean

their cubicles. And I thought, "Okay, CIP hours went towards

that you know"?

(Priscilla)

For Alison, being trained in first-aid by her CCA, St John Ambulance, she remembered being assigned first-aid duties for school functions such as the school's sports day. Another participant, Hayley, remembered being involved in painting and decorating the school's dustbins while in the case of Francis, community service could be classroom cleaning.

4.1.1.5 Overseas community service.

Typically, students performed service in the local community within Singapore. However, six participants reported that they were given the opportunity to go overseas for community work in countries such as Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, India, China, and Australia. It was common to hear them referring to overseas community service as "Overseas CIP" or "OCIP". For these participants, it was their first experience with volunteering in foreign lands. Most of their efforts focused on assisting with infrastructure projects, donating clothing in disaster-affected areas, teaching children in orphanages, serving at elderly centres, and distributing food and household items to those living in poverty. In one example, Dean, who had been on three overseas school trips for community service, spoke about his experience in a village in Cambodia for people suffering from AIDS, "We were at this AIDS village…we helped to build a foundation for a school and taught the kids English".

Two participants mentioned that community service was included in their overseas educational trips. For instance, Francis described a trip to India when he was in Secondary Two. He also remembered interacting with villagers who were affected by the tsunami and spending time talking with elderly people and children in welfare homes:

It's a study exchange, more like an educational trip. So usually for

such a trip, we had to include at least one CIP activity. There, we

volunteered in a tsunami-affected area and we donated clothes we

had collected for them.

Throughout her secondary school years, Hayley said she had the opportunity to go on four overseas trips. Even though those trips were educational in nature, some form of community service activities had always been incorporated. This was how she described the overseas experience:

Whenever we went overseas, there's community involvement. We

went to Melbourne in Secondary Three. We visited a retirement

village. It was during Chinese New Year, so we taught the senior

folks how to make lanterns out of red packets. There was another

trip to Wuhan, China, to an old folks' home, and we did a

performance.

4.1.1.6 Outside-school community service.

In addition to school-based community service, ten participants also sought volunteering opportunities outside school on their own. For example, Alison tutored children with special needs while she was in secondary school. She chanced upon the opportunity during a community service activity organised by her CCA, Interact Club, and decided to continue serving in the centre on her own:

I was with the Interact Club…basically we do service. But after

our visit to the welfare home for children, I just thought I'd give it

a try on my own. So, it's not a school-based programme, it's

something that I volunteered to do.

Beyond school, alternative venues for young people to volunteer were places of worship, which in the case of this study were churches. Hayley wrote in her reflections that over and above the service she took part at school, she was also volunteering at her church:

In Secondary Three, I started volunteering in my church's "Kids at Play" area, where children aged 12 and below will come and play in the bouncy castles and have fun, while their parents are busy serving in the other various ministries or attending service. These twice-monthly volunteer sessions were a joy to attend, and I served to the end, until it closed down in 2014.

4.1.2 Perceptions of school service experience.

After posing questions to find out the context of their service experience in secondary school, subsequent questions focused on participant perceptions of the service experience. Questions were asked to explore how the participants felt about their service experiences when they were students and the reasons for their views. What emerged from the data were variations in the participants' responses.

Over half of the participants recounted their experience doing service while at school and remembered their endeavour as fun and meaningful. The following highlights how some participants felt about their experience and the explanations they gave for their positive emotions:

I play the Er hu and Zhong hu (Chinese musical instruments). We performed in libraries, old folks homes, kids' centres. For the elderly, we played many old songs for them. They were very happy and would dance and clap. It was really heartwarming to watch.
(Lynn)

Through time spent with them [elderly], like this came after the activities, I started to think, to reflect, and I felt it was time well spent. It was more meaningful than me perhaps spending time at home playing computer games or lazing around. Yes, it was much better use of my time.
(Michael)

Several individuals perceived their service experience as a break from the monotony of classroom routines and an opportunity to do something different with friends and classmates. For instance, Nicole and Roger described how they felt:

It was fun doing things together with friends, also a way to bond with them while playing our part to do community service.
(Nicole)

It's more like having fun. Usually we do it in groups, and when kids do things in groups, they are always happy.
(Roger)

While over half of the students recalled feeling positive about their CIP experiences, the rest remembered either being nonchalant or at times, even resentful that they were compelled to do something they were reluctant to do. The following participants expressed how they felt when they were students:

I felt it was another school activity we were forced to do…. Since it was compulsory, we just did it, we didn't think much about it.
(Beatrice)

We saw the activity as a task we had to complete, so we just went along, and tried to complete the task as quickly as possible so that we could go home early.
(Francis)

4.1.3 Reappraising the CIP experience.

Besides having to recollect what their service programmes were like and how they felt as students, the participants were also asked to reappraise their schools' CIP experience from their current perspectives. What the study offered were opportunities for the participants to tease out aspects of their experiences that worked for them as well as those that did not. In addition, participants were asked for their suggestions on what they think could be improved. Not surprising, many made comparisons between their past school service experiences and their present

volunteering service. A summary of the participants' reappraisals is reflected in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Participants' Reappraisals of their School Service Experience

Areas that worked	Areas that did not work	Areas that could be improved
Knowing that service could make a difference	Lack of variety	Greater choice and variety
Shared experience	Not knowing the purpose	Incorporating reflections
Competent teachers	Lack of student input and choice	Experienced and competent teachers
Connection with recipients	Lack of connection with recipients	Meeting the needs of beneficiaries
Knowing the cause	One-off activities	Student voice
Having firsthand experience	Incompetent teachers	Preparation
Positive school culture	Immaturity of students	Sustained effort

4.1.3.1 Areas that worked.

When discussing aspects of the service programmes that worked for them, the participants usually evaluated their experience in relation to the quality of the programmes. For these students, meaningful programmes in particular, affected them positively and they gave specific examples of what they considered fulfilling. Nonetheless, what worked and what constituted as meaningful was open to different interpretations by different individuals.

4.1.3.1.1 Knowing that they could make a difference.

Almost all (13) of the participants felt that what made their service experience meaningful was the knowledge and belief that their acts of service had helped someone or made a difference to another person's life:

> I remember we visited the old folks home. We put up some
> shows for them and it was good to see them laughing and
> smiling and to know that we could have brightened up their day.
> (Olivia)

> We did a 'Wish Tree' charity project…it was impactful in the
> sense that it was real, it was tangible. It's not like putting money
> in a can and you don't know whom the money benefits. But for
> this, when we bought the gift that was wished for by someone, I
> knew the person would get what he [or she] had wished for,
> something he [or she] really needed.
> (Ian)

4.1.3.1.2 Shared experience.

Several individuals (nine) saw community activities as an opportunity to leave the boundaries of their classrooms and do something out of school routine with friends and classmates. For these individuals, being able to share the service experience with friends made it fun and meaningful:

> To think back, I actually enjoyed most of the CIP activities. Even
> for newspaper collections, it was fun doing things with friends,
> and interacting with friends and your teacher.
> (Olivia)

> The CIP that was conducted in my school was always carried
> out in groups, whether as a CCA, or as a class as a whole. I
> think doing things together as a group made it more meaningful
> as it created shared experiences for everyone.
> (Katie)

4.1.3.1.3 Competent teachers.

Four participants mentioned that teachers did make a great difference to their service experience when they were students. In their opinion, these teachers were good role models and were passionate about community service:

> My form teacher had always been passionate about community
> service. One of the things that he did was to help students from
> less privileged backgrounds and those who were slow in
> learning. I feel inspired by his dedication. As a teacher, I feel he
> is a good role model.
> (Francis)

> The teachers in charge were my role models and mentors, and it was
> their passion and teachings that helped connect the dots of what,
> how, and why exactly we were involved in the particular CIP
> projects. In working closely with the students, they helped us
> understand the meaning behind our actions, and guided us through
> our train of thoughts.
> (Gwen)

Dean, an undergraduate, spoke fondly of Mr. H, the teacher in charge of the CIP. The same teacher led them on an overseas community service trip to Khao Lak, Thailand, soon after the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. He described his teacher as, "…a very capable teacher who was able to organise it [the overseas community service trip] well". He elaborated on what the teacher did:

> Mr. H saw value in the CIP as a platform to develop the students and
> inculcate a sense of civic-mindedness. So, the school launched the
> first mass CIP, Balloon Day, in 2005. In essence, mass CIP was like
> Flag Day that the entire school participates, with a unique theme
> every year. In the same year, the first OCIP team aided in rebuilding
> efforts in Khao Lak, that was devastated by the tsunami. Similar to
> mass CIP, the school has continued its OCIP efforts up to this day. At
> a time when most schools are paying attention to other areas, my
> school had begun focusing on the community.

After graduating from school, Dean had returned to his alma mater to assist Mr. H with the school's OCIP and had accompanied students on their overseas service trip.

4.1.3.1.4 Connection.

For 12 participants, some of the activities were meaningful and worked for them because they felt a connection with their beneficiaries:

> We mingled with the old folks. I felt that was the best activity in secondary school because I felt the connection. You got to see the old folks and talk to them, and at least feel for them. As much as we students were naughty, we could really brighten up the atmosphere at the old folks' home. So, I felt the connection and it felt good, it felt right.
>
> (Priscilla)

> One of the things I felt impacted me more was a visit to the old folk's home. I had the chance to interact with the elderly, who reminded me of my own grandparents. I found that I actually enjoyed communicating with them and spending time with them. To me that was meaningful.
>
> (Olivia)

4.1.3.1.5 Knowing the cause.

Half of the participants found that knowing that they were contributing to a cause also made their experience meaningful. For example, Lynn described a donation collection event:

> I knew the cause because they had this labeled outline, like whom the money was going to. It was probably the UNACAS (Unaccompanied Children Association), that it was helping the kids in Indonesia. At least we had the knowledge and that we knew we were doing that for a cause. So, it was more engaging, compared to others like doing library duty, you know it doesn't

really help. There is also the element of spreading the word for

this cause.

Similarly, Francis remembered that during his school days, the school had a carnival to raise funds for the needy in his school. For him, it was a meaningful activity because he understood the objective and knew whom it would benefit:

Raising funds for the needy students in our school felt

meaningful. We had a carnival for that. It's really about the types

of activities, we need activities that attract us, but we also need to

understand the objective.

4.1.3.1.6 Firsthand experience.

Nearly half of the participants explained that having the firsthand experience with service was what created an impact on them. Gwen described her community service experience in a tsunami-affected area in Thailand:

I think the school got us to do things, got us out there to see things

for ourselves…I realised that reading something, watching

something on the screen, it's a really different experience. Being

there on site, feeling the dirt, the dust, really changed things.

Dean believed that the overseas trip to Thailand to visit an AIDS community in a village had a powerful effect on him because he was there to witness and experience for himself. According to him, "You get to feel, get to experience, get to see things happening… it's an eye-opener". He later wrote in his final reflections:

Overseas CIP is more meaningful because we get to learn and

help the communities personally, and see and feel for ourselves

what it was like to live in poverty. The experience itself made it

more real and impactful.

4.1.3.1.7 School culture.

In the opinion of five participants, their school culture and environment played a role in influencing their sense of service. Reflecting back on her school service

experience, Alison said that she would not single out the CIP as helping develop her ethic of care, but the overall school environment. She felt she had benefitted from the culture of care:

> My school has a very nurturing environment. It may not really be
> the CIP that shaped the students, I think it's just the whole string
> of events that we have and the school culture, the very positive
> school culture and the nurturing teachers that we had…most
> students would come out of the school with a sense of wanting to
> serve the community.

On a similar note, Ian believed that his sense of service was influenced to a greater extent by the school's culture rather than the CIP. He explained:

> Basically for us, there is the sense that every student is supposed to
> be a gentleman. And we are basically looking at, what is a
> gentleman? What do you look at? So, in a sense, this decision to
> serve is motivated more by my school, not so much by the CIP that
> they did.

4.1.3.1.8 Starting young.

According to a few participants, being exposed to doing community service from a young age helped develop the habit of serving:

> Yes, the school encouraged us to volunteer at a young age. When
> you start at a young age, it becomes part of your life, part of your
> growing up years.
> (Nicole)

As Gwen explained, it was befitting to get students to start volunteering when they were young, "At that age we are very impressionable, so it's a good time to instill upon us a culture of volunteerism". She also felt that even if students wanted to volunteer, they might not know how to do it:

> We may not have the resources to reach out. Like if I'm 13, and
> calling a big organisation and asking, "Can I help?" They may not

know what to do as well. I think the school really helps to bring
about that connection.

4.1.3.2 Areas that did not work.

While there were aspects of their experiences that worked for the participants,
there were areas that did not sit well with them. In some instances, the factors cited
for the success of the programmes were the same reasons given to explain why on
the contrary, their schools' programmes did not work.

4.1.3.2.1 Lack of variety.

Half of the participants commented that the service activities were repeated
every year and students felt really bored. One such activity was donation collection
on "Flag Days". For this reason, many began to associate the CIP with flag selling.
Ian's comment on "Flag Days" was, "If you keep doing it year in and year out,
people get jaded". Josephine had the same opinion:

> I think they should have more varieties in their programme, because
> it's always newspaper collections… And why do we need to keep
> repeating the same activity?

4.1.3.2.2 Not knowing the purpose.

Another common reason participants gave for feeling unhappy about their CIP
experience had to do with not knowing the purpose or not doing service for the
correct purpose. For example, Beatrice reflected, "The purpose was not there and I
felt that was the reason why it did not work". Similarly, for Ian, understanding the
purpose of the activity made a difference. He cited a donation collection event:

> So, for Sec [Secondary] One, it was in some building in Little India
> (a district in Singapore). For the whole day, we had one donation
> and that happened to be from an 'old boy' who knew we were there.
> But the Sec One experience stood out, because I didn't know why I
> was there. Nobody explained it to me. They just chucked us in a
> room, and we just basically slept, slept there the whole day. But on

the second day, we actually went to help renovate the headquarters,
they bussed us out, deployed us. They did have a short briefing and
told us why we were doing all this stuff. So you feel part of a bigger
whole.

4.1.3.2.3 Lack of student input or choice.

Another aspect of the service programmes that participants often objected to
was the lack of choice in the types of service sites or activities they were required to
do:

If they had asked us for our opinions, I think we would have
gladly done it. They should find out what students are interested
in doing, rather than force them to do something that they do not
find relevant.
(Josephine)

Sometimes I can't see the meaning behind the activity, but I
think a great challenge is that I don't have a choice. I can't
choose what I want to do. No options were given to students. I
don't think that is a good way to encourage volunteerism.
(Francis)

4.1.3.2.4 Lack of connection.

Being unable to connect with the beneficiaries featured as a factor for students'
negative feelings about serving. Seven participants recalled having difficulties
communicating with the elderly because of language barriers:

One thing I recall was a visit to the old folks' home. I remember
feeling very detached as my classmates and I didn't bother to
mingle with the elderly. Instead, we just clustered in our own
group and talked amongst ourselves. When it was time to say
goodbye, we waved to the old folks and they didn't respond. I
was wondering why they didn't even wave goodbye to us, but
well, we didn't do anything there. I felt that segregation, the

difficulty for us to connect with them and the difficulty for them

to connect with us…We were just another group of visitors for

two hours, and for us, it was just another CIP activity.

(Michael)

It was just going through the motion. The beneficiary was The

Straits Times pocket money fund. We didn't see the beneficiaries,

so there's a disconnection.

(Dean)

4.1.3.2.5 One-off activities.

With just a few exceptions, the participants reported that nearly all the activities were episodic or one-off, lasting just a few hours. They believed that activities with such short durations generally would not have lasting impacts. Olivia compared the duration of the service projects she was involved in as an adult volunteer to those that she participated in at school:

In secondary school, our volunteering activities lasted just a few

hours each time. Even when we were at the elderly centre, it was

just for a few hours. Two days later, we would forget about the

experience. But for the overseas trip (current volunteering), it was

a six-month ongoing project. And even after the six months, I

would still be doing post-community service activities with the

organisation. So I'm not stopping, I'm continuing to learn all the

way.

According to Josephine, it was difficult to get to know the people in the community because the newspaper collection activity she was doing had been a one-off event in the sense that they went to a location only once:

Unfortunately, it's a one-off event. Usually for the next CIP

activity, we would go to a different area. I also can't understand

why CIP is only carried out once or twice a year. It needs to be

more regular if it is to cultivate that sense of service in us.

Dean believed the two-week community service trip to Thailand had a greater effect on him. However, he felt that even for an activity with a longer duration, the impact could not be sustained because it was one-off. He captured his sentiments in these comments:

> I would say OCIP (Overseas CIP) is more impactful, but I
> wouldn't say there is a change in my values. Because although
> you go there and come back inspired and feel like you're going to
> change, but the true fact is that when you go back to Singapore,
> you adapt back to the Singapore way of life. Everything is back to
> normal and nothing much has changed.

4.1.3.2.6 Incompetent teachers.

Earlier in the section on 'areas that worked', four participants explained how teachers played an important role in instilling a sense of service in students. Nevertheless, very few participants remembered they had teachers like them. Some participants recalled that their teachers lacked experience and the enthusiasm. Almost half of the participants shared that they did not feel that their teachers were active advocates of service and were of the impression that their teachers regarded the CIP as another duty:

> I didn't really see them [the teachers] promoting the CIP, I think
> they are not as engaged. Except for that teacher who was helping
> the disabled kids, she would accompany us every session, and she
> actually went around and spent time with every kid, I can see that
> she is more involved. It is only one teacher. But other than that, I
> don't think there are others….
> (Lynn)

Likewise, Katie commented on some teachers' lack of interest. She gave an example of what a CIP activity could turn out to be, "We just went to the beach to pick rubbish. We kind of went on our own, it was not even supervised". She elaborated further:

I don't remember a teacher telling me, "Oh, you know, you guys can do this or that", things that students should know about. So, I guess teachers could help that way.

4.1.3.2.7 Immaturity of students.

In appraising their past experience with service at school, over a third of the participants pointed out their own immaturity as a possible contributing factor in their attitude towards the programme. For example, Roger admitted that even if teachers were to explain the purpose of serving, students might not have the maturity to understand it, "Even if they brief us, I don't think we have the maturity or the interest, we are still kids after all".

Beatrice was another participant who factored in student immaturity in her own assessment of the impact of her school's CIP. She felt that at that age students might not understand the purpose of service. As she reflected, "I feel that we were too young to think that it would matter much to us". Beatrice went on to explain how her own immaturity could have affected how she processed her service experience. She recalled how she felt when she was participating in a community service project that involved distributing rice to the poor:

> What I felt was just short-term sadness for them, but after that, I didn't really think much about it. But now, when I reflect back, I feel far sadder. It's only when I was older that I begin to process the experience. But at that point, I was just too young. Hence, I was not really impacted. I was too young to think things deeply.

Evan also reflected that sometimes student immaturity could mitigate the benefits of the CIP:

> The CIP is meant as a platform for students to do something for the community. But being young, we don't really know what CIP meant. I guess it's hard to explain these things to secondary school students.

4.1.3.3 Areas that could be improved.

While the participants were discussing their perceptions of their school service experience, they were prompted to share their thoughts on areas that could be improved. Unsurprisingly, many of them drew upon their experience from their current volunteering involvement and suggested what would have been better. The data indicated that the participants had a preference for programmes that offered students a wider choice of activities, opportunities for reflection, and better preparation. Other suggestions for improvement included having experienced teachers to execute the programmes and encouraging greater student inputs.

4.1.3.3.1 Greater choice and variety.

Eleven of the participants were of the opinion that their schools' service programmes lacked variety and were repetitive in terms of the types of activities and service sites. They recommended that schools give students more options or choice of activities or sectors they want to help:

> I feel that the CIP in school should cater to students' different
> interests. For example, in universities, we have different
> volunteering sectors, like the elderly, orphans, intellectually
> disabled. Plus we can choose to help in different ways, like
> befriending them or painting their houses.
> (Roger)

> Most CIP events are pretty much the same, such as visiting old
> folk's homes. We can do a survey to find out students' diverse
> interests, and try to match students' interests with different kinds
> of activities. We can perhaps make CIP more diversified and
> more relevant to them. There are so many different beneficiaries,
> so many types of organisations, so many different needs. We can
> give students more options on how they can contribute.
> (Evan)

4.1.3.3.2 Reflections.

Ten participants emphasised the importance of giving students occasions to contemplate on their service experiences and that teachers should create more avenues for reflections. As Gwen explained, "During reflection, people are reminded why they are doing what they are doing". Many of the participants believed that they had personally benefitted from the reflective activities incorporated in their current volunteering work. Priscilla was one of them:

> Reflection is very, very important…as long as I get to think and
> process my thoughts, it could be in the form of journal entries,
> like those reflections we did during mission trips. During our
> trips, we had this reflection called "The Processing". After our
> trips to different homes, we actually got together and shared what
> happened. And at the end of the trip, we came up with a reflection
> journal.

4.1.3.3.3 Teachers.

When citing reasons why their CIP did not work, some participants factored in teacher inexperience and felt that it could make a difference if teachers had some service experience:

> I think the fact is that nobody trained the teachers. Nobody
> taught the teachers how to do it. MOE (Ministry of Education)
> has just started doing that.
> (Ian)

Priscilla, a teacher, suggested that teachers should also be required to do mandatory service:

> For the teachers, "why not make it [community service]
> compulsory?' At the end of the day, they are the ones who are
> going to be advocates for the students. Even if they don't buy the
> whole idea, they get to pick up or know how a project is
> conducted, how it can be implemented or executed, and they
> know what is going on. At least they may have a bit more
> confidence.

4.1.3.3.4 Needs of the beneficiaries.

A recurring theme in the participants' assessment of their school service experience was that they felt their contribution might not always benefit the recipients. Nearly all those who visited the elderly care centres felt that they could have done more than just cleaning and entertaining the old people. They questioned if those activities were what the seniors really needed and whether their beneficiaries felt the obligation to give their time to the students. Ian recalled doing a "Wish Tree Charity" project. In the end he too decided to buy a gift for someone. For him the project was meaningful because he knew how his contribution could actually meet the needs of someone. As he commented, "It's genuinely what the clients need. I honestly don't think they need you to go there and sing and dance for them. What do they need"?

Another participant who similarly raised the issue of addressing the needs of those they served was Hayley:

> I feel that it should serve the needs of the community. That would
> be the first priority. Many schools visit old folks' homes, but
> sometimes, I feel there isn't a need. We were just doing it because
> it's compulsory, not because the elderly really enjoyed it.

4.1.3.3.5 Student voice.

Some (ten) of the participants felt that schools needed to give students more say, encourage them to come up with ideas, and engage them to help with the planning of activities. A common complaint was that schools hardly involved students in the decision-making process. They just assigned them their community projects. Olivia and Lynn shared their thoughts:

> If the school trusts us to come up with our own ideas, it could
> make the activities more interesting as there is more ownership
> and excitement. If they allow more student voice, and let us come
> up with our own ideas, it would be more impactful.
> (Olivia)

Help us start student-initiated projects, like we can help kids, the

elderly or disabled or do environmental projects. It's fine. We just

need to have a sense of ownership. With a sense of ownership you

will feel that you are more inclined to do something more, go the

extra mile, put in more effort into it, rather than just doing

something that people tell you to do.

(Lynn)

4.1.3.3.6 Preparation.

Thirteen participants were of the opinion that if students were well prepared, there would be greater likelihood of them understanding the purpose of their involvement. One of their criticisms of the CIP was that they knew very little about the activities in regard to their purposes, the organisations they were serving, and the people they served. Many of the participants believed it would be beneficial if schools prepared students by giving them more information and explanation and helped them understand the value of service:

I think schools should really communicate to students the purpose

behind the service activities. If students understand the purpose,

they are more likely to want to participate in them. If not, it

becomes just another activity. The concept of the CIP needs to be

communicated clearly to students; if not, CIP becomes equated

with classroom cleaning.

(Francis)

If students have a clearer idea why the school has the programme

for them and why they are doing it, they would be more proactive.

(Evan)

4.1.3.3.7 Sustained effort.

Several participants found that to have an impact, there was a need for more sustained effort. They were of the opinion that when service was concerned, schools needed to look beyond 'one-off' activities. For example, Michael felt that the

problem with most of the CIP activities was that there was no follow-up after a trip to a service site. He felt that to have more connection, students should try to make more trips back to the sites:

> If there could be a follow-up to the CIP activity, it may be more
> meaningful, such as, visiting the same elderly home again. The
> people there just may recognise the students visiting them.

Lynn, who had led a group to Thailand for community service in her sophomore year at the university, believed that there should be continuity if community service is to have an impact. Opposed to one-off activities, she suggested, "Also not just a one-off thing, definitely, carry on". She gave the example of how another group of university students carried out their community service project at the same orphanage in Thailand the following year.

4.1.4 Thoughts on mandatory community service.

The literature on mandating service has revealed that it is a contentious topic, with disparate views on its potential to benefit students and the community. As it was pointed out, there was a "pervasive absence of agreement" (Volunteer Canada, 2006, p. 20) when it comes to mandatory service, and even amongst researchers, there was much dissonance. The widespread incongruity was similarly highlighted by Reinders and Youniss (2006) who commented, "As to the evidence, for almost each study in which positive effects of voluntary and required service have been reported, there is another study in which null or mixed findings were obtained" (p. 2). Clearly, there is a need to explore how students themselves think and feel about the notion of mandating service, particularly for those who have been through it and are in the position to look back and appraise it some years later from adult perspectives. In this study, the participants were offered the opportunity to comment on the principle of making service compulsory. Only one out of the 16 participants was not in favour of making service a requirement. Most however, felt that making service compulsory was necessary for a number of reasons.

4.1.4.1 No better alternative to get more students to serve.

When asked whether schools should make service participation compulsory, some participants felt that they could not think of a better alternative to get more students to be involved. They believed that if not for the initial exposure, there might be not be that many young volunteers today. Because of this, mandating service seemed to them the most logical thing to do:

> If they do away with the CIP, it could turn out that there will be
> far less people doing anything for the community. At least people
> could say and know that they have the experience. They can't say
> they don't know what it is all about. I think in a way, the
> compulsory thing is beneficial. At least, it gives students some
> exposure.
> (Katie)

4.1.4.2 Students' immaturity.

Some participants were of the opinion that service should continue to be enforced because they questioned the ability of students at that age to consider doing community service on their own. Lynn, for instance, felt that students needed to be forced to do service because at their age, they might not be capable of seeing the value of service. She cited herself as an example:

> Although it's [community service] compulsory, it is good because
> most of us are young and not mature enough. So I think if you
> don't make it compulsory, most people won't do it, which is sad.

4.1.4.3 Benefits of service.

Nearly all the participants stated that their service participation at school had some positive impacts on them although the extent of the impact varied. On one extreme, a participant saw no benefit in her service involvement apart from exposing her to the service sectors she would be interested in. However, the rest of the participants felt that their initial exposure to service as students did lay the foundation for subsequent volunteering. For instance, Hayley wrote in her reflections:

The CIP was a useful platform that helps youth get in touch with the community. The service experiences, although simple (food collection, door-to-door delivery, and visits to the old folks' home), were very memorable. CIP in my secondary school gave me a chance to work together with the community, and I felt that serving the elderly was extremely meaningful for me. The trips to the old folk's home and one-room apartments allowed us students to interact with the elderly.

It was also noted by a few participants that the benefits of service might not be felt until years after the service experience when a person is more mature. One example was Michael who wrote in his reflections that he realised the value of service only after leaving school:

I feel that the CIP is definitely a necessary experience that everyone should go through. Despite some being more active in serving and others not being so active, it nevertheless would help a person learn something. And that learning can actually affect the person's life. As for myself, it has positively affected me but I realised it only after a couple of years because of greater maturity and further life experiences.

Similarly, Roger reflected that mandatory service did actually have an impact on him although he admitted that he had not thought about it that way until the interview. One clear connection between his prior school service experience and the subsequent volunteering he did years after leaving school was the choice of site. Roger did community service in an elderly care centre when he was a student and returned to the same site to serve ten years later. He wrote:

The CIP in my school has been helpful in introducing me to the field of volunteering and by knowing that Organisation X existed. Making it compulsory to volunteer when we were in school is beneficial as we would never know that people might grow up

and have a chance to try volunteering again. If they are interested, at least there is already the experience of volunteering at an organisation before…. Those who have never done CIP may not know how and where to start even if they want to try volunteering unless they have friends or family who actively volunteer.

4.1.4.4 Scenario without service.

In reappraising their experience with service, participants often discussed the scenario where service had not been required. They saw the possibility that had it not been for their experience, they would not have ventured into volunteering:

During my secondary school years, I don't think I gave it much thought. But now, looking back, I felt it definitely did help us, in the sense that it helped to expose us to this kind of work. Without compulsory CIP, we may not have these exposures. These volunteering services also made us aware of people who are in need. If not for this, I don't think I would even know about volunteering.

(Beatrice)

I really in a sense, thank the school. Because without making it an obligation, and giving you the motivation through the grades, many of us would not have been exposed to doing community service, to be exposed to the idea and discovering ourselves and finding out how much more we can do. It helps especially when we are younger, it helps with developing our character, developing our person as a whole…. Once I started, it's like, "Wow! I can do more". So that's how it worked on me.

(Gwen)

4.1.4.5 Implementation.

A most striking finding was that the majority of the participants believed that what was crucial was how schools facilitated the learning of service. They explained

that if programmes were meaningful and fun, students would be more willing to give community service a try and not see it as an obligation:

> I think if the activities are relevant, interesting and fun, students
> would be willing to put in the effort, but if not, I guess, you need
> to make it compulsory.
> (Nicole)

> I still think it is necessary to have the CIP and to make it
> compulsory for students to do community service. But the school
> should explain clearly the purpose of doing CIP, the values
> behind it, rather than just assigning us an activity. I think the
> value of service should be explained to us…. Schools need to
> teach these values, the value of giving to the community.
> (Olivia)

4.1.4.6 Wrong motivation.

While the majority of the participants agreed on the importance of community service, they also raised their concerns about forcing students to serve. These participants were of the opinion that requiring students to volunteer risked diluting the meaning of service and acknowledged that ultimately, service had to be genuine and come from within a person, not due to some external motivation. Beatrice explained her views, "If you force people to do volunteering, it is no longer a voluntary activity". Yet there were those who perceived the idea on mandatory service as what Eyler and Giles (1999) characterised as a "contradiction in terms" (p. 181) and felt that it would always be a dilemma. As Dean argued, "You want people to do it, yet you want people to do it by themselves".

4.1.4.7 Student attitude.

As young adult volunteers, the participants acknowledged the difficulty of striking a balance between requiring service, and giving students the liberty to choose. They saw no clear answers to the question whether students should be forced

to volunteer their service and felt that ultimately, it would be up to the students how they choose to respond to their experience. Ian, a teacher, shared his insights:

> Forcing students to do CIP, you would have a proportion of students who would say they would never do it again. But there would also be a proportion of students who would say, "No, this is not how it should be done, I could do it better" and they would go off and do it themselves. Or there would be some who say, "Yes, there are people who need help, I'll go and do something about it". It really boils down to individuals. That's why I have boys, 15 year-olds, who come to me, "Sir, can you help key in this, 50 hours during Christmas holidays". I think he was spending his December holidays tutoring other children…It is less than ideal but I can't think of a better solution given the constraints of time.

4.2   Section Two

Impacts of School Service Experience

The aim of the study is to examine to what extent and in what ways young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility was influenced by their school service experience. Through both interviews and reflections, participants were encouraged to explore the link between their past school experience and their propensity to serve subsequently in their adult years. This section of the findings attempts to capture what the participants revealed in terms of how they perceived they might have been affected. In addition, it will share some insights on how they interpreted the relationship between their current acts of service and past school service experience.

4.2.1 Extent of impact.

The results were mixed when it comes to how students perceived the extent to which school service affected them. On one extreme, there was a participant who stated that her experience with school service had hardly any impact on her. For example, Priscilla was openly critical about her school service experience:

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> I think it [CIP] didn't contribute anything to me. I think they
> wasted my time…. At that time, I felt I was very indifferent. I
> wanted to help but I was also very judgmental, so I felt it didn't
> really help me to become a volunteer as an adult. But maybe, it
> gave me a little exposure to what my interests in volunteering
> were.

On a slightly more positive note, Beatrice wrote in her reflections:
> For me, the CIP was just a compulsory school activity. At that
> time, I was still young and couldn't understand the meaning
> behind doing CIP. However, I believe that I had my firsthand
> experience doing service through the CIP. The CIP allowed me to
> experience serving and helping people who are in need, but I
> think, at that time, it did not leave a deep impression in me or
> meant anything to me.

On the other end of the spectrum, there were students who were expressly grateful to their schools for their early service experience. One example was Lynn who saw service as an opportunity to contribute to those in need. She recalled doing community service at the school for children with learning disabilities. Spending time with the children over several months left a lasting impact on her. This was how she narrated her experience:
> I felt happy. I felt grateful to have this experience, to be given this
> opportunity. Not many people have the chance to be with these
> children. I see the experience as preparing me so that I can handle
> the next time when I'm in a similar situation. From the
> experience, I'd be in a better position to assist, to handle or to
> approach people with handicaps.

From Michael's point of view, the simple fact that he persisted with community service beyond school was a clear indication of how the CIP experience contributed to his sense of service:

I do believe it contributed. What we did for CIP had not been a

great deal, a few hours here and there, a few visits to the elderly

centre. They might not be very significant, but well, here I am.

I'm still doing it.

There were individuals, however, who believed that ultimately it would be students themselves who determined what they wanted to take away from the experience. Francis, for example, believed that eventually students had to decide for themselves the paths they choose:

When I was young, I had many opportunities to do community

service, both through the CC (Community Club) and through my

school. So what happened to me when I was young taught me to

take this route. But of course it is up to the person how he

perceives an experience. It's up to him whether he wants to learn

something from the experience and carry on or take a totally

different route.

4.2.2 Perceived benefits.

The majority of the participants felt that school service did affect them positively although in varying degrees as described earlier. Out of the whole sample, only one individual saw no value in her school service experience. While not all the participants found their school's programmes satisfactory, they saw benefits as they looked back upon those experiences. As Olivia described, "As an adult now, I perceive the earlier school service experience as a bittersweet experience".

Many described learning both about themselves and others when they left the comfort of their sheltered lives to help out in the community. For some, going out to the community and meeting people was an eye opener. Some service activities took students to distribute food to low-income older residents, many who lived in one-roomed rental, government flats. A few participants expressed feeling a "culture shock" and could not believe that such sites existed in Singapore. They realised that

their own lives had been very sheltered and gained a new perspective of their own privileges.

Nearly all the participants indicated that their school service experience provided them with the opportunities to learn about community agencies. Even for those who did not enjoy the service activities acknowledged that it was through the CIP, that they got to know about the various welfare organisations. Lynn's experience with school service captured the learning that took place:

> My knowledge definitely expanded in terms of the many ways of contributing back to society are…from door to door collections and donation drives to executing learning programmes for needy people and even going overseas to give aid. The possibilities are endless. Other than just purely contributing my service back to society, I believe we all learn from the different experiences in community service. I learnt so many things from these community projects that cannot be taught in the classroom, like how to communicate with children or the elderly and how projects were planned. As you develop different sets of thinking from all the different community service projects you experienced, you grow as an individual. These contributed a lot to my skills and self-efficacy. I gained confidence through the experiences in the programmes I participated in. With more knowledge and experiences, I can say confidently that I am more competent in the area of community service than when I first started.

Another participant, Hayley, believed that serving others through the CIP enlarged her social circle:

> I think if you have not participated in these programmes, your immediate exposure will be just your friends and the school. I don't think that was enough…sometimes, it's not just about helping, it's also about learning. You learn a lot more when you reach out…it opened up my perspectives.

So far, what both Lynn and Hayley had shared provide readers some broad perspectives of their school service experience. The rest of this section details the outcomes of school service that were commonly expressed by participants.

4.2.2.1 Gaining awareness of social issues.

Commonly, the participants observed that they learned from serving others. They reported that as a result of their experience with service at school, they came across people and contexts that they would otherwise never have encountered. As some students remarked, through these encounters, they became more aware of the social issues that existed in their community:

> It is also a constant learning experience where we as volunteers
> learn from the communities that we are serving. It definitely did
> expose me to other facets of life besides school. It showed us the
> hardship people faced, especially when most students in my school
> generally come from very fortunate backgrounds. Like now,
> thinking back, it is important because I cannot imagine if I didn't,
> and I didn't know the different sectors of the society, like how life
> would be in the old folks' home, or how, actually there is school for
> people with lower IQ…. I think this has made me more aware of
> people who are different from you and I in the society and how
> society is there to help them or maybe not help them…. I still see
> the value in that definitely.
> (Alison)

> I think I learned more about people, that there are such people
> existing in our community that I wasn't aware of. I also learned
> how others help them. I think I learned most when I was
> distributing the rice to people staying in one-roomed flats. It was
> the first time I had ever been to such a place in Singapore. When
> we walked along the corridor, there was a stench. And when they
> opened their doors, their homes were so small, yet they were
> filled with so many things, like waste-collectors. I could not
> believe that such places existed in Singapore especially when it is

so developed. And when I gave them the rice, they felt so happy,

even though it was just a small amount, maybe to last them for a

few days.

(Beatrice)

Michael reflected that the community service the school got them to do actually gave him a clearer perspective of what was happening in the real world:

Through the service experiences, I'm able to see a bit of what

really is going on in the world. It's like the Chinese story of the

frog in the well. I was that frog for the majority of my younger

days, but now I know that there really are people that are in need,

that people are struggling to live.

4.2.2.2 Learning about various welfare organisations.

Besides knowing more about social problems, many of the participants indicated that through community service, they became acquainted with various community agencies and welfare organisations:

It did expose me to the fact that there are such organisations and

that they do require help.

(Ian)

If CIP did not happen in my secondary school, I wouldn't have

known I could have done this, or I could have done that, I could

help in this organisation and that organisation.

(Gwen)

In the case of Alison, her community experiences through her CCA, St John Ambulance, created pathways for subsequent service:

Actually, St John was my CCA in secondary school. Then after

secondary school, I decided to go for the officer course and from

then on, I have been helping to organise events, preparing

students for competitions, organise camps as a camp facilitator

and instructor…Now as a teacher, I'm also in charge of St John. So it gives me more reasons to volunteer in other zones and bring along my students.

4.2.2.3 Learning values.

Twelve participants reported that their school service experience had taught them values such as civic responsibility, care, empathy, compassion and selflessness. Hayley, one of the participants, commented that service had made her a nicer person, "I think all these programs have helped. I think I wasn't as nice last time. It has helped me to be a lot more friendly, a lot more willing to give". In Josephine's case, despite the shortfalls of her school's CIP, she felt that it did expose her to the idea of serving and taught her some values, "I was exposed to what service is from my past school service experience, thus teaching me to have a sense of civic responsibility".

In her final reflection, Nicole wrote about how the exposure to the various social problems in the community helped her become more conscious of her responsibility to the community:

The CIP was useful in the sense it helped me gain experience and exposure to community problems like poverty and child abuse in our own country and also overseas. It makes me more consciously aware and somehow more compassionate towards others.

In the same way, Michael believed that the community service he performed had actually taught him values:

I feel that I've become more understanding and more empathetic. I find that reflection was very important. The experiences made me realise a lot of things. Let's say, I as an individual, like civic responsibility, I do have a part to play.

4.2.2.4 Gaining new perspectives.

For many participants, seeing with their own eyes the living conditions in some communities gave them new perspectives of their own privileges and made them more grateful of what they had. This was especially true for those students who went overseas for community service. Without any exception, all of them mentioned that they realised how fortunate they were to be living in Singapore. Nicole, who went on an OCIP school trip to India felt that witnessing the extent of poverty and seeing for herself how the children in an orphanage were deprived of even the basic necessities helped her appreciate her life back home in Singapore. To recapitulate what she said, "You realise how bad some conditions are in other countries, and you begin to be appreciative of what you have in Singapore".

In another instance, Gwen, who went on her first overseas community service trip to Thailand after the tsunami, recounted feeling overwhelmed by the sight of the devastation and the immense suffering the tsunami had caused. She narrated her experience and its effect on her, in particular, the realisation that she was so lucky. The repeated use of the word lucky is worth noting:

> In secondary school, I went to Khao Lak. It was post tsunami. We
> went to an orphanage. All the kids there had lost their parents
> because of the tsunami. Being my first trip overseas, it was a real
> eye-opener. We stopped by this very large food centre. As they
> cooked, all the flies went in, so inadvertently, what we ordered
> was fried with flies, every stall was like that. For me, that was the
> first step to realising how lucky I was. I just felt fortunate that in
> Singapore, we have proper kitchens that are ant free…. When we
> were driving through the area, we could still see the destruction
> left behind by the tsunami. We also saw people who were still
> lost, still scavenging. That really opened my eyes, it really made
> me realise how lucky we are to be free of all these natural
> disasters, really lucky.

Likewise, Francis, who went for the first time to an orphanage and elderly centre in India, felt that witnessing the conditions people lived made him realise how fortunate he had been:

For us, we visited the orphanage. We got to see the environment
they lived in, which was really an eye-opener. Their conditions
were horrible. I realised how fortunate Singaporeans are.

4.2.2.5 Learning about themselves and what they were capable of.

When the participants were asked to reflect on the possible changes that they
could attribute to their service experience, some gave examples of increasing self-
efficacy and confidence. Beatrice explained, "CIP gave me the initial exposure. Like
I know I'd done it before and hence know what to do". Similar sentiments were
expressed by others:

You learn new skills and become more equipped to help and more
responsible and more capable to help in that sense.
(Nicole)

It has given me the opportunity to take in more because I feel that
if I can handle this, I can handle a bit more, and I can deal with a
bit more. And if I've got to one level, if I've seen how things
work at this level, I want to venture more…. It has made me more
resilient, to take in challenges. I won't stop there.
(Hayley)

Besides gaining confidence, some participants believed that the initial exposure
to community service through the CIP sparked their interest in volunteering. Alison
wrote in her last reflection, "I feel that it (CIP) helped lay the foundation of the idea
of service to people, and I felt it was something that I enjoyed doing". For Olivia, her
involvement in CIP activities aroused her curiosity in the area of service, "The
experience raised my curiosity. I wanted to find out more about community service".

4.2.2.6 Overcoming stereotypical thinking.

For some, the service experience triggered their thinking process, enabling
them to challenge preconceived ideas and see things from a fresh perspective.

Participants talked about breaking down stereotypes, shared humanity, increasing connection, and the realisation that the people they were serving were no different from them. When asked how she felt about her experience tutoring a child with learning disabilities, Alison replied:

> I just felt that, "Hey, actually they are just like us". They have
> emotions and everything. They know what is happening around
> them. They probably just need more time.

Dean also felt that the relationship between servers and those being served was reciprocal. It was the recognition that his initial perception that service was about giving had not been correct, in reality, servers received as well:

> There will be a few realisations like, "you are very privileged".
> Another thing is, "What right do I have to say we are helping them,
> but actually they are the ones helping us to see the world in a
> different way"? It's a two-way thing.

4.2.3 Evolving perceptions of the CIP.

As the data gathering process progressed over the months, more insights were revealed, sometimes, fortuitously. One such insight was the change in the way the participants perceived their school service experience with the passage of time. For instance, they reflected on the difference between how they viewed their CIP experience when they were students at school and later, as adults. Examples of their perspectives are listed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Evolving Perceptions of School Service Experience

Participant	Quotations
Lynn	After doing a lot more service on my own beyond my secondary school days, I do view service differently, in that I see the significance of some of my school service experiences.
Hayley	As a student I might have felt that what I did for CIP had not been that

	significant because I never really know what the future could turn out to be. But now that I look back, if that seed had not been planted, I wouldn't be doing community work now.
Katie	As I was writing my reflections, I was thinking of my beach clearing experience. Those times, when I was picking up litter, I would have been thinking, "Why do I have to do it, or why do people litter in the first place?" But thinking about it now, in secondary school, at least they gave us the opportunity to experience. At least I knew what being involved in the community meant. I'm grateful for that, at least we gained some awareness.
Francis	As I grow older, I see the CIP activities differently, I don't just think of myself. I think of the bigger picture…whether the experience was good or bad, I still learnt something. CIP was good training. It taught me that sometimes in life, we might have to do things that we don't like…. CIP, in a way, teaches you adult thinking, to look past yourself and what you want or do not want, and you just do it to your best ability.
Beatrice	As I think back, it would have made me more willing to help others, because in secondary school, I was first introduced to volunteering, so it could have sparked off something. Like it was my initial acts of volunteering, and as I continued to volunteer at Junior College, then at university, it sort of progressed from there…It was definitely meaningful to me now when I think back about what I had done.
Michael	At that point of time, you know in my secondary school days, I always found that it was quite unnecessary. I didn't feel the need to actually help out.
Olivia	At that age, I thought of it [CIP] as a waste of my time. But now, if I were asked to do a CIP activity, I would commit to it. Now, if I were to do Flag Days, my reaction would be very different.

4.2.3.1 Reasons for shifting perceptions.

As reflected in Table 4.6, what appeared to be a common belief amongst some participants was that their school service experience had been valuable though they acknowledged that as students then, it was difficult to see clearly how the experience had helped them. As Katie observed, "When I started CIP, I just did it. It was quite hard to have a proper reflection because at that time, there was never anything to compare our experience with". Most of those who shared their insights cited time,

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greater maturity and further life experiences, in particular, increasing experience with service as reasons that could have altered their perceptions:

> After doing a lot more service on my own beyond secondary
>
> school, I do view service differently, in that I see the significance
>
> of some of my school service experiences.
>
> (Lynn)

> As a student I might have felt that what I did during my CIP had
>
> not been that significant because I never really know what the
>
> future could turn out to be. But now that I look back, if that seed
>
> had not been planted, I wouldn't be doing community work now.
>
> (Hayley)

4.2.4 Relationship between past CIP experience and subsequent adult volunteering.

Earlier, the impacts of school service had been examined. The next task of this research was to explore how participants interpreted the relationship between their past CIP experience and adult volunteering. During the interviews, the participants were asked, "How do you interpret the relationship between your past experience with CIP and your subsequent involvement in community service as an adult"? All but two participants expressed that there was a relationship between their prior service experience at school and their subsequent volunteering although the strength of this link varied.

Most of the participants described their school experience as mainly providing them a platform for subsequent service. It was observed that the participants had frequently used metaphors to describe the link between their past and present service. According to Maple and Edwards (2010), metaphors provide ways for individuals to "relate, compare and make meaning of new knowledge and lived experience" (p. 40). Commonly, to portray the connection, the participants resorted to using words and phrases like, "stepping stone, platform, spark, starting point, and planting a seed." Further examples are depicted in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Metaphors Used to Describe the Link between Past School Service
Experience and Subsequent Adult Volunteering

Participant	Metaphors used
Alison	It was like planting the seeds of doing service…
Beatrice	In secondary school, I was first introduced to volunteering, so it could have sparked off something…
Dean	They set the stage for me to start volunteering…
	It is a stepping-stone that I needed to start me volunteering.
Evan	I would say it was a stepping-stone…
Gwen	I'd say there is a strong relationship between my longer-term commitment and the experiences that I went through while in school. It has set a strong foundation for me, and I am really grateful for that.
Hayley	I think everything stems from my CIP experience…. Like I said, the seed of service that was planted when I was a young girl has to grow.
Josephine	I can say that my past experience with CIP did spark something in me to search on my own how I can do more for the society that led me to volunteering…
Katie	I guess it started like a platform for me that I can do it.
Lynn	We always need the first step, without the first step there wouldn't be subsequent action, a baby step, but definitely a step towards something…
	There is definitely a chain linking my past school service experience and my current sense of civic responsibility…
Michael	I do believe it actually sparked my interest in community service.
	I see it not only as a beginning but a moulding process…
Nicole	My past school experience was the platform that lay the foundation for me to be more consciously aware and to be more proactive in my civic responsibilities.
Olivia	The school exposed us to community service. That was the initial step to raise awareness that there was actually such a thing as community service.
Roger	I see the relationship as a stepping-stone. It opened the door for volunteering.

Roger felt that his CIP experience did not help him value service when he was a student. However, he recognised the possibility that he might never even consider volunteering if not for the initial exposure the school had given him. He explained why he returned to the same senior community home at Organisation X that he did community service at as a student:

> Without the school experience, I won't even…I don't know, maybe I wouldn't have volunteered. You need a starting point to volunteer. You need to know the existence of something. Because if you asked me to volunteer in some places I had never encountered before, I could have hesitated, and maybe, I wouldn't volunteer. Yeah, about Organisation X, I got to know about it, that's how I contacted them again after so many years. It opened the door for volunteering.

After the interview, Roger wrote in his reflections:

> I see the relationship as a stepping-stone. At least the CIP taught me that people of all ages, like young teenagers, can volunteer and it is not strange for me to go to an organisation to volunteer next time.

Similarly, Lynn had relied on metaphors to describe how she interpreted the link between her past school service experience and the subsequent community work she was involved in:

> There is definitely a chain linking my past school service experience and my current sense of civic responsibility…. You just have to go through it personally, that's how I see CIP.

When asked for her views on how she interpreted the connection between past service and adult volunteering, Katie reflected:

> I think there is a connection. You can't say that there isn't a connection at all. But once again, it's about having that experience and it just accumulates. Now that I think about it, I guess that is where it all started, that realisation that you are doing something for

the community…I guess it started like a platform for me that I could

do it. But when you are young, it's hard to know that the little you

do may have an impact.

On the contrary, two participants felt that their past school service experience had no link with their decisions to serve as adults. For example, Priscilla stated that CIP did not contribute to her sense of service. It only gave her a glimpse of what area she would be interested to volunteer in. This was how she explained her position:

I think it boils down to connection. There was no connection

between me and my service experience at school. That's why it

played no part.

In the case of Ian, both the culture at home and in school played a bigger role in influencing his decision to serve compared to the service experiences he participated in:

I would say my family did play a part, yes. At the same time, what

happened in school, the school culture…so, in that sense this

decision to serve is motivated by my school, not so much by the CIP

that they did.

While the responses of the majority of the participants (14) indicated that there was a connection between school service and adult volunteering, the relationship was not something measurable or straightforward. As Dean, one of the participants explained, he could not equate adult volunteering with his CIP experience alone as there were many other factors that could have contributed to his propensity to serve as an adult.

4.3   Section Three
Adult Volunteering

The earlier sections in this chapter explored how participants perceived their past experience with community service when they were students. In this section, the

focus is on volunteering in their adult years. Questions were asked both during the interviews and reflections to explore the reasons behind their acts of service. As these participants shared stories of their journeys as volunteers, their life experiences, things they valued and believed, people in their lives, it became more apparent what the reasons and motivations for serving were. Most significant in their narrations were a multitude of reasons why these young people serve and even for a single individual, there could be overlapping factors that shaped his or her propensity to serve.

While some participants gave reasons for volunteering, there were those who expressed that they saw no reason why they should not be helping others. From the discussions, these participants often asked, "why not"? As Dean stated, "We all have the power to give back, so why not give back?" or Gwen, who questioned, "If we can make others happy, why not?" Yet there were others who felt that most of the time, they neither contemplated on the reason nor felt the need for one when they rendered service. They just did it. Evan was one such example. In his words, "I don't have a specific model or motivation, I just help".

4.3.1 Reasons and motivations for volunteering.

While the circumstances and motivations for volunteering might be unique to each individual, there were, nevertheless, recurring themes that were common. For instance, what drove these young volunteers to render service might be related to their sense of altruism or personal beliefs and values. Their involvement in volunteering could also be influenced by the people in their lives who modelled service. Yet, for some of the participants, their motivations to serve might have something to do with their life experiences. What was also significant was the agreement amongst all the participants on the reciprocity of service; that helping others could be rewarding.

4.3.1.1 Altruistic reasons.

To have a clearer understanding of the motivations for service, the participants were asked what service meant to them. For example, each individual was posed with the question, "First of all, what does service mean to you? What matters to you when you serve?" Unequivocally, the responses from the participants reflected their altruistic values. According to Batson (1991), altruism can be defined as "a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare" (p. 6). For these young volunteers, what mattered most was that someone had benefitted from the service rendered. Phrases such as "giving back to the society", "contributing to those in need", "benefitting someone", "giving up your time for others", "reaching out for others and not expecting anything in return" were given mention constantly in their interpretations of service (Table 4.8). To illustrate, these were some of the ways participants viewed service:

> ...contributing to others, those who are in need, those who are less privileged than I am and expecting nothing in return. I always feel that there's something I could do to give back, no matter how small it is.
> (Evan)

> Service is about being selfless, giving something without asking anything in return and in the process, benefitting humanity and the world.
> (Roger)

> Serving is about giving up yourself, you give up your time, your effort, money and you don't expect anything back.
> (Ian)

4.3.1.2 Personal values and ethics.

In their discussions on what service meant to them, some participants expressed the value they saw in serving others, that acts of service were worthy of pursuit. Yet there were those who described a need, an inner passion or a call from within that drove them to do what they did:

I guess it's about helping people, I feel I have the need, a need to
give back to people, this is what I feel motivates me to serve.
(Dean)

I'm passionate about serving. Because of this, I go all out. I will
give my best and see that I complete what I'm supposed to do.
Without this passion, I may not be able to sustain it and I may not
want to serve again and again.
(Olivia)

As shown in Table 4.2 (Participant Profiles), every individual in the sample
population was working, studying, or both. However, each of them still found time to
volunteer. So what makes young people like Dean and Olivia value service when
there are so many competing demands in their life? Conversations with these young
volunteers through both phases of interviews often gave an indication of the values
they embodied, values such as responsibility, empathy, or a sense of gratitude that
moved them to reach out for those in need again and again. On occasions, there
would be participants who articulated that service was simply a reflection of their
identity. For example, Josephine said, "I can't really tell you what motivates me, it's
just me, it's in my blood". As reflected in Table 4.8 that shows what each participant
commented about service, personal values and ethics were behind their commitment
to help others.

Table 4.8

Participant Perceptions of Service

Participants	Perceptions of service
Alison	Service means helping people, making their day easier or happier. At a personal level, it's about what I can do; it's about humanity and community.
Beatrice	To me, it is to help people, knowing that what I do may be able to benefit someone.
Dean	I guess it's about helping people, I feel I have the need, a need to give

	back to people, this is what I feel motivates me to serve.
Evan	It is seeing yourself as part of a community, not isolated from the community. So it's like the idea of helping one another.
Francis	My passion is to help people.
Gwen	My initial thoughts and purposes in being involved with community service is to make full use of the blessed chance I have to give back to the society in the ways that I can.
Hayley	There's never a day that passes without me feeling empathy for others and thinking what I could do to help. If I don't do something, I am going against myself.
Ian	It's really putting others above yourself.
Josephine	I want to be a helpful person. I want to know that I can do something to make the world a better place, to know that I can make a difference to someone's life, no matter how small.
Katie	It's good not to forget about people with disabilities…. For me, I imagine myself in their position. If I can't read anything, I would appreciate it if someone else does it so that I can enjoy it.
Lynn	For myself, I have always been out there and willing to help anyone who needs it. I will feel super uncomfortable when I see an individual not giving help to someone who needs it.
Michael	…life would be much more meaningful if one were to help people.
Nicole	I feel passionate about helping…being able to do something and impact others in a good way and to help others improve their lives.
Olivia	I always believe I have the responsibility to give back because I have been receiving, and I always believe that if I can, and have the time, "why not make someone happy?"
Priscilla	I see service as a duty. I think it is everyone's duty. It's within us to help each other.
Roger	We can feel the pain for people we don't know and put ourselves in their shoes…. In order to lessen people's sufferings, you have to help them.

4.3.1.2.1 Responsibility.

For some, the sense of responsibility could be a powerful catalyst for service. As reflected in the following examples, there were those who volunteer because they felt it was a duty to help people in need. As Eyler and Giles (1999) described, some individuals served believing that they just "ought to do it" (p. 157).

I feel I must be responsible…to me, whenever I have some time

to help people in the society, I will do it and in this way, make

myself more valuable to the society, especially when I know that

so many welfare organisations are so short of manpower.

(Francis)

What motivates me to serve is that I see service as a duty. I think

it is everyone's duty. It's within us to help each other.

(Priscilla)

Once you are involved in it, you will be open to all types of social

problems or individual problems. Because you know about the

problems you tend to want to do something about them, you feel

responsible.

(Nicole)

4.3.1.2.2 Empathy.

Listening to the participants as they shared their experience, the sense of empathy and capacity to put themselves in other people's shoes, was shown almost consistently to be a great motivation for serving. As Roger summed up, "We can feel pain even for those we don't know" or as Beatrice reflected, "I try to put myself in another person's shoes". Katie, who volunteered at the library for people with visual impairments expressed similar sentiments:

For me, I imagine myself in their position. If I couldn't read

anything, I would really appreciate it if someone else did it so that

I can enjoy it. I think that is my main motivation and they really

do need help.

4.3.1.2.3 Conscience.

On the other hand, what spurred these participants to act in the interest of another or to attempt to relieve someone else's suffering might have something to do with their conscience. For instance it was common to hear in their narrations remarks such as:

I just feel that it comes so naturally. Every day, I think about
people who are less fortunate. There's never a day that passes
without me feeling empathy for others and thinking what I can do
to help. If I don't do something, I'm going against myself.
(Hayley)

If you don't help someone who needs help, you have to answer
that yourself "why are you not helping"?
(Evan)

4.3.1.2.4 Gratitude.

A few individuals shared their thoughts on why it was important for them to
help those in need especially when they had been on the receiving end themselves.
They expressed the need to reciprocate, to return a favour out of gratitude for all that
they had been given:

I feel grateful and touched by those who have helped me during
my darkest moments, in terms of them supporting me,
encouraging me, and motivating me. I felt the love of others apart
from my family. I don't think I would have learned this much.
You see, I want to be 'that' person who actually gave that light to
another person.
(Olivia)

I learned a lot from BB (Boys Brigade), and in a way, I want to
give back to the younger generation, to guide them along, to help
them avoid some of the mistakes that I've made, to grow, and in a
way, to be better.
(Ian)

When I was a youth participant in the youth centre, I went for two
overseas trips with them. I was given this opportunity that my
school couldn't give. From then, I felt a sense of indebtedness….

That's why I always felt that deep gratitude and that I need to give

something back.

(Josephine)

4.3.1.3 Knowing that they could make difference.

All the participants at various points during the interviews or in their

reflections mentioned that the knowledge that they could create a difference was a

motivation for them to serve. As Priscilla contemplated, "Maybe it's the belief that I

can do something to help someone". In the case of Nicole, it was the feeling of

having benefitted the young people she was mentoring that really mattered:

I see changes in people that I'd never thought possible. For

example, people who come from problem homes or who have

criminal backgrounds. I used to think that they would continue to

be like this, that there is little hope to reverse the situations, like in

a way, they are condemned. That was how I used to feel. But

through Organisation C, and through years of knowing how they

affect the youth, and seeing them changing, has really inspired

me… You will be very happy in the sense that you can help them,

help improve their lives. And you also feel surprised in that the

small things you do can have so much impact on them.

For Alison, witnessing how a small contribution could mean so much to others

made her reflect on her capacity to be an agent of change:

I remember there was this lady who came to meet us on our

arrival in Cambodia. The minute she saw X and Y (youth

leaders), she started tearing. We later learned that X and Y had

led a team earlier to build her a hut. I was touched to see how

thankful she was, even though to X and Y, it was just a small

gesture…. For us, we felt it was something we needed to do, but

for them, it was far more. So this feeling that even though we may

feel that what we are doing is just a little, but to the beneficiary, it

may be very significant. I will show you the picture, it is just a

very simple hut, but it brought her tremendous joy.

In Katie's case, she had her firsthand experience serving alongside her mother. Ten years later, she was still frequenting the library where she helped to read for people with visual impairment, sometimes with her mother and her three siblings:

I think it is just knowing that someone needs the specific help and

what you are doing will really make a difference. I think that's

what makes me want to go back, because for the reading, the

librarian who is blind, needs people to read. If there's no one, then

the people there won't have things to listen to, and she really

appreciates that I go, that I help, that's why I keep going.

4.3.1.4 Personal beliefs.

For many of the participants, what propelled them to do something for the community were their personal beliefs, one of which was the existence of a human connection with fellow human beings. In addition, an individual's act of service could also be an expression of his or her cultural and religious beliefs. Reading and rereading what young volunteers said about what they believed often showed a strong co-relationship between personal beliefs and their helping behaviour.

4.3.1.4.1 Sense of connectedness.

Often, in explaining the motivations for their acts of service, the participants revealed their philosophy of life. Take for example, Gwen and Dean who believed there was a commonality between those facing hardship and themselves. Using that framework, they explained that each person has a moral duty to alleviate the suffering of others:

I learned that "life's like that". Everyone should know life is not

fair. I'm lucky to be born in a very nice place. You can't control

how you are born, or where. But everyone can do a little better for

someone who isn't having it as good as you. And maybe, you can

make the world a little happier. It's important to know that we are sharing the world, we are sharing life, don't for a second forget that. Someone out there is a 100 times worse than you, with a little of your time and effort, you can make someone's life better or even happier.

(Gwen)

I see that in the end, we are all interconnected. We are in this society and this world for a reason. And if everyone plays his [or her] part in giving back, this world can be a much better place. This is my belief.

(Dean)

4.3.1.4.2 Cultural or religious beliefs.

Half of the total number of participants felt that their family background and upbringing influenced their ethic of care and sense of service. Some individuals conveyed the feeling that service was also an expression of their cultural or religious beliefs:

I think it is centred on the beliefs my family inculcated within me. Religion also plays a part…. I'm a Christian, a follower of Jesus. He was always with the poor, the rejected, the disadvantaged. Sometimes, I feel there's a bit of "Christness" when I relate to people like that. It gives me that feeling.

(Priscilla)

I think it is my family background and culture that makes me value service, that makes me want to serve the society, to benefit others and not harm others. I see the importance of making the society a better place. Somehow, your family background, your culture and beliefs influence the way you think and behave, but you may not even be aware of it because it had been there since you were born.

(Roger)

4.3.1.5 Role models.

The conversations with the participants revealed that significant adults in their lives who volunteered and modelled service often played a central role in shaping their own sense of service. All of the 16 participants described how they had been influenced or inspired by people such as family members, teachers, religious leaders, and mentors in the organisations they were volunteering with. For some, their inspiration to participate in community service also came from friends and peers. Yet there were a few who were prompted by books they read about extraordinary people who dedicated their lives to service.

4.3.1.5.1 Elders in the family.

Evident from the data, family members played a significant role in influencing the sense of service among the participants. Twelve participants shared how their parents, siblings, aunts, older cousins or other relatives had shaped their ethic of service. In Evan's case, his father who had passed away, remained a good example to emulate:

> When he was young, he led many volunteering groups but I only
> have vague knowledge of that. I saw only through pictures, when
> he was in his 20s and 30s what he did. He always had this belief
> that we should help others when we can. So, whenever I know of
> events that I feel I can contribute my time to, I would.

Similar examples of family influence on civic responsibility can be seen in the following:

> I got involved (recording at the library for the visually impaired)
> because my mom started it. I used to go with my brother and my
> mom. Recently, my sister was home for the holidays and both of us
> would go. So I guess the family is into it.
> (Katie)

> My aunt was a grassroots leader in a community club. I used to
> follow her there when I was young and since then, was exposed to

community service. I got to see her serving the elderly, getting to
know them better, finding out their problems. Maybe this is what
inspires me to volunteer.

(Francis)

4.3.1.5.2 Other significant adults.

For many participants, their role models were adults they encountered in their
lives such as teachers, religious leaders, mentors, and people who were working at
the welfare organisations they were serving. In Dean's case, his teacher and the
people working at the welfare organisation where he was volunteering were
instrumental in getting him involved. His thoughts on the people who had influenced
his sense of civic responsibility were captured in his written reflections:

When you are with them, you can see that they are very giving
people and that makes you want to be a better person. The first of
such a role model is Mr. H, my secondary school teacher. He is so
busy, but he gives so much to the students…. But in a voluntary
welfare organisation, you actually see people doing good. You see
them change the world in various ways that they can no matter
how small. That gives you a different mindset. You begin to see
what you do can make a difference, that what you do does matter.
You become more socially conscious and aware…. Through these
interactions and knowing these good people, makes me realise
that I want to be a good person too. Maybe one way to be a good
person is to give. All these thought process is only on hindsight,
that when I'm doing good or serving, I'm actually mirroring
someone.

Priscilla described her religious leader whom she felt played a critical role in
shaping her identity as a volunteer. She went on three mission trips organised by
him:

One person who has a great influence on me was Father S, who is
the priest in our church. He was the person who organised these

mission trips. He also formed youth groups. What I like about

him is his personality. He is one person who doesn't judge, he

understands and hears you up. He is willing to help and walks the

talk all the time…. He plays a very big role in moulding me to

become who I am today.

As a volunteer, Olivia had the opportunity to be mentored by a youth leader in a

charity organisation. From the detailed description of her mentor, it was apparent

how much she admired her and how she had been touched:

The most significant person I've met is X. She's responsible for

bringing me to the different volunteering activities organised by

her and that started my journey as a volunteer. If not for her, I

would not have experienced these huge, life-changing

experiences. Firstly, she brought me to join Organisation N.

Throughout she has supported me and taught me the right

values…. I'm touched by her sincerity and inspired by what she

has given up for the youth and others…. That's the reason why

I'm still with Organisation N. I feel belonged and comfortable.

No words can ever describe these feelings. So now, I try to do the

same for younger youth, to give them what I had experienced.

4.3.1.5.3 Friends and peers.

Besides family and other significant adults, over half of the participants also

factored their friends and peers as motivations for their service involvement. These

individuals described that working alongside friends on service projects could be fun

and meaningful. In the process, friendship was built and bonds strengthened. For

Beatrice, the influence of friends was brought up many times when she reflected on

her reasons for service:

Doing community service with my friends and learning together

motivates me. In JC (Junior College), I spent much of my time

volunteering with a group of friends. Today, we are still very

close, like a family, and we meet often. Even though we no

longer do volunteering as a group, we share our community

service experience and encourage each other. From my JC
experience, I realised that volunteering can be a time to bond
with people and form friendships.

Similarly, Francis believed that his group of friends who valued service gave him a
lot of support and constantly spurred him on to volunteer:

I find that as friends, we encourage each other…. We have this
group of friends who are all passionate about volunteering. So
whenever one knows of an opportunity to volunteer, everyone
gets to know it and we will do it together. So, friends can inspire
and motivate you especially when they share with you the same
passion about service.

According to Nicole, the selflessness of fellow volunteers she became
acquainted with during the various service activities served as a great inspiration:

What the volunteers do, they do it voluntarily without getting
anything back. They just give their time to help others. That
inspired me. They have their own commitments, like many of
them have families, job commitments, yet they would find time to
help others.

4.3.1.5.4 Books of inspiring people.

Apart from people in their lives, a few participants added they found
inspiration from books they read about extraordinary people and stories of courage,
and self-sacrifice. These "heroes of caring", a term used by Wuthnow (1995, p. 143),
presented to them as exemplars of service:

In the book by Nick Vujicic there are many quotes that inspired
me to help others. They also help me to see people with
disabilities differently, that we could actually learn from them.
(Beatrice)

I recall something that I'd like to share. I was reading those books
by this author known as Lurlene McDaniel. It's a series of
teenage books and it always has something about service. I felt
these books also played a role in me wanting to serve.
(Priscilla)

I look up to people like Mother Teresa. I watched a movie about
her life and since young I've been reading stories about her.
Seeing that she was so dedicated to the people has really impacted
me… I also brought a book by Dr. Tan Lai Yong. I've already
read his book and I'd like you to have it. This is my favourite
book. He is dubbed the "Saint of Singapore". He really inspired
me…. They have one trait that stands out, their selflessness to the
community. This trait inspires me to be like them, in every small
way I can, to touch the lives of other people.
(Hayley)

4.3.1.6 Educational experience.

In discussing the reasons and motivations for serving, some of the participants
mentioned that the schools, colleges and other tertiary institutions they were studying
in did set the tone in promoting civic responsibility. According to them, the culture
and mission of these institutions, together with some of their community service
programmes played a role in developing their moral and civic identities. For
example, Beatrice, a third-year undergraduate, explained how she exceeded the 80-
hour community service requirement in her university. At the time of the first
interview, she had done over 235 hours of community service for one sector alone.
Above that, Beatrice also did community service in Thailand. In her opinion, the
university has the right ethos to promote volunteerism:

Every student is involved in some form of community service,
either locally or overseas. So, community service has become a
culture in our university, a very common topic of discussion. The
university also involves us in their organising committees. So, it
always has this culture of helping out in any way we can. So, it is

the friends I have and the environment I'm in, especially the

university culture that inspires and motivates us to serve.

In the case of Michael, faculty efforts to create opportunities for students to volunteer also prompted him to be more actively involved:

I didn't mention before that in my current course of study,

"Diploma in Nutrition, Health, and Wellness", we actually have

several course events at different times of the year. And these

events involve serving the community, as part of what we learn is

applicable to helping others…. This makes me aware of the

responsibility that comes with the knowledge that we have.

4.3.1.7 Overseas service experience.

Out of the 16 participants, 13 had volunteered overseas for varying lengths of time and with varying frequencies ranging from five to twenty-one days and from one to six times after secondary school. Only three did not volunteer overseas as adults but out of these, one did community service in India as a student. Therefore, a great majority (14) of the participants had exposure to community involvement in foreign countries. Most of those who had overseas experience reported that seeing other ways of being and living spurred them to reassess their own values, beliefs and knowledge. Some recounted the interactions with those they served and felt a sense of connectedness despite the cultural and linguistic barriers. Many felt that the positive experience from serving overseas reinforced their commitment to continue volunteering.

Olivia recalled her very first trip to India with Organisation N, a self-funded, charity organisation. The experience, as she described, not only transformed her perspectives and took her to the road of self-discovery but also ignited her passion to serve:

Actually, my first trip overseas was to India nearly four years ago.

Initially, I wasn't really excited. I was 16 then. But in the two

weeks in India, I learned so much. One of the things I learned is

to be appreciative. We went to the mountains and saw the

children there. My heart broke when I saw the conditions they

lived in. It was so different from Singapore. Actually, from my

India trip, I discovered what my passion was, to be involved in

community service and become an active volunteer.

Hayley partook in an overseas community service trip to the Philippines with Mercy Relief when she was studying for her diploma. During her trip, she visited children in the slums who collected garbage in the dump for their daily living. Witnessing the sad reality for the thousands of families, and especially the sights of young children scavenging in the mountains of trash made her more determined to do something for those who struggle. Hayley reflected:

Ten days wasn't enough but it was really gratifying to see what's

outside Singapore. For example, I've never seen a slum, so it has

reinforced my belief that the world is really unfair. It makes me

feel very sad…. We also saw this rubbish dump where the

children collected plastics to sell, for a meagre sum of 30 cents a

kilo. The environment there made me extremely upset. But it has

also motivated me to be more involved in these kinds of

programmes.

In December 2013, Josephine took part in a service expedition to Timor-Leste. As she shared with the researcher the photographs she took, she recounted her initial culture shock seeing the conditions people lived in and the harsh realities of life that she never imagined. What she experienced in Timor-Leste provided opportunities for her to compare and reevaluate her life back home. Witnessing the hardship even young children had to endure has given Josephine the motivation to plan another trip back:

When I was in Timor-Leste, I was shocked by the state they were

in. I thought it would be somewhat similar to the places I visited

in Malaysia but it was very different. I saw little children selling

vegetables in their pushcarts, and it was very hot. It was such an

eye opener for me…. I am planning to go back with the Scouts'

group.

4.3.1.8 Experience with sponsoring organisations.

All the participants are "formal" volunteers in that they served through welfare organisations or agencies (NVPC, 2017, p. 6). While a few individuals described their involvement as 'ad hoc' and sporadic in that they were not part of any organisation, over three quarters of the sample reported that they were regular volunteers in at least one organisation. For these individuals, the organisational structures, cultures, philosophies and even the people there helped reinforce the value of service.

In describing his current service activities, Dean singled out the organisation he served with as helping him grow as a volunteer. He felt that his inspiration was largely from the people there:

It is an organisation I can identify with, their philosophy and

mission to make the society a better place. So, for me, I fall back

on Organisation K for it serves as my anchor. They are the kind of

people I admire, people I would gravitate towards, that hopefully

I would become. At Organisation K, my colleagues were inspiring

in the top-notch work and heart they put in daily. The

environment served as a catalyst to ignite my passion for

volunteering.

As for Josephine, it was the organisation's culture of care that created in her a sense of belonging. She had been with the youth centre since she was 13 as a youth participant. Seven years later, she still remained with the organisation to serve as a youth leader. The use of family-themed expressions to describe the youth centre could be indicative of her sense of belonging:

There, they have a culture of care. I was there initially as a youth

and received help myself. But more than that, it gave me the

opportunity to help others, to take part in events outside, to raise

that community awareness in me.... It makes me feel very happy

because I get to serve in the youth centre that in a way brought me

up. In a way, it's like giving back to the community. Not only

that, for some of the youth, I grew up with them...So when I go to

the centre and spend time with these youth, it felt like family, like

going home and spending time with my younger brothers and

sisters.

Olivia believed that the willingness of people in the organisation to train, mentor, and empower the youth had a great effect on her:

Being in Organisation N for four years, I have had a golden

experience and I will not trade that for anything. As a volunteer

with Organisation N, I have wonderful mentors who taught me a

lot of skills that I never would have learnt at school.

For Olivia, one of the organisation's practices that she found meaningful was the act of affirming one another. To illustrate, Olivia took out some memorabilia from a folder to show the researcher during the interview. These were the photographs, notes, gifts from the youth she had helped and befriended, and cards volunteers wrote to each other, usually after a service project. According to Olivia, these gestures affirmed her role as a youth leader:

Sometimes it's hard to see what kind of a person I am, but when I

read the notes that the youth or other volunteers wrote about me, I

felt affirmed that I have done something right and that people are

acknowledging me for doing a good job.

4.3.1.9 Reciprocity of service.

While there could be multiple reasons for service as discussed earlier, without any exception, every participant at some point in the interview would reminisce on the sense of fulfilment and the personal growth they attributed to their service experience. It was common to hear the participants acknowledging the reciprocity of service; that in giving, they too received.

4.3.1.9.1 Personal satisfaction.

According to many participants, it was the sense of satisfaction they felt that sustained their civic engagement. Some described the happiness they experienced while others felt it was hugely rewarding just knowing that someone's day had improved. Olivia, for instance, described feeling "such a sense of accomplishment" when she saw the smiles on the children's faces each time she helped them. There were also those who pointed out that working closely alongside other volunteers and seeing their sacrifices was itself a joy and an assurance that there was hope in humanity. Alison was one example:

> When I went for my Cambodian trip with A and B, it helped me
> realise that there were people who were like-minded. It's nice to
> know that there are people like A and B who give so much to
> others. And I know that apart from that trip, they have done much
> more for others. And that gives me hope in people, that there are
> people out there who are kind, people who give up things to help
> others.

During the second phase of the interview, Dean showed the researcher photographs of his community service experience both locally and in Cambodia. His joy was evident even as he was reminiscing those experiences:

> In the short term definitely I feel good, one thing is because you
> do what you enjoy. When you see the kids' response, read their
> feedback, it is heartwarming. Sometimes they may not write it
> down but I know they appreciate it. In the short run, I think
> there's this sense of satisfaction. In the longer term, it's like
> moments when I look through these photos, then I realised that
> I've been contributing my fair share. All these things, it happens
> on hindsight, these feelings.

For Hayley, spending her weekend teaching children to read could bring unexpected moments of joy, particularly when she realised that her contribution had been appreciated:

> Their parents were also grateful for the work that we were doing,

and celebrated Teacher's Day for us with a huge cake. One of my

most memorable moments is when a student came up, hugged me,

and exclaimed, "Happy Teacher's Day!"

4.3.1.9.2 Personal growth.

Apart from describing their sense of satisfaction as they spent time connecting with the recipients and other volunteers, the participants also talked about the learning that had taken place. Some individuals mentioned the positive transformation they saw in themselves and gave examples of the personal growth that occurred as a result of their service experience:

The experience I felt is really unique to me. Due to community

service I found a new me. I became more positive in life and more

talkative, especially good at cracking jokes. Most importantly I

can communicate well with others.

(Olivia)

I think I have become a more compassionate person. After

spending time with the old folks, I feel an increasing connection

with those who are disadvantaged. Having this direct firsthand

experience interacting with the elderly has changed the way I see

people who are old or disabled. Somehow, it made them more

human, that they are somebody. When you experience something

firsthand, it affects you directly. Your emotions are involved.

(Roger)

4.3.1.10 Critical life experiences.

In line with the phenomenological approach, the researcher often needed to probe and mine deep into an individual's past. As Moustakas (1994) explained, "memories and history" (p. 59) are essential elements of a phenomenological inquiry. Sometimes, these deep discussions opened up areas of a participant's life, revealing personal struggles, grief, past hurts and pains and at times personal triumphs. There were moments during the interview when participants broke down

as they re-confronted memories that were agonizing for them. Those poignant, sometimes, vulnerable moments left a lasting gratitude with the researcher who had been touched, and served, by the participants' willingness to bare their souls and entrust her with their stories. These stories were all written verbatim to allow the distinct voices behind to be heard. Some stories are still raw. It is this rawness that the researcher does not wish to interfere with.

What appeared evident as the participants took the researcher through their journey as volunteers and the critical events they encountered in life was the extent to which some of these painful pasts had shaped their sense of service. Gwen broke down and cried when she recalled her experience with childhood abuse and the death of her father eleven years ago. What happened when she was twelve shaped her perspectives and attitude towards life in all its complexities. Clearly, for Gwen, life's adversities became a compelling force that gave her the drive to reach out for others:

> When I was younger, there was a period when I was abused by my maid. I tried to tell my mom, but it didn't work. So that was one of the things I learned. When people don't help you, and you can't help yourself, and don't have the resources to, there's nothing you could do. So, I just want to think about this, like for those people who need help, they would be thinking, "If only we had someone to help us". These are my thoughts I would say. At any point of time, you may never know what people have been through…. Somewhere out there, there's always someone with a worse day than you. With that thought, I will say, it drives me to help....
>
> At the age of 12, my father had cancer. He suffered for one whole year before he passed on…. So that was 11 years ago. Now I'm cool. Whatever happens we should learn. I think the loss of a family member affects how a person thinks. And whenever I think of this, "Yeah, I was abused, I was without help, my dad died", when I think of that, "That's nothing". I'm lucky enough to be in Singapore, like those people who just had an earthquake, they lost everything, their family, they have nothing at all. I'm still very

very lucky, they are far worse, so we can do something for them. I
guess that's what motivates me.

In the case of Priscilla, there was a clear link between some of the sad
experiences she went through and her passion for service:

Actually for me, I know what it is like to feel very hurt. If you
know the feeling, the least you can do is to serve those who are
hurt. And this is my favourite saying, "you can't save someone
but you can love them, and you can support them" …It's like,
"I've been there before, let me come and help you. And maybe I
can't help you, but you don't need to go through it alone".

4.4   Section Four

Future Plans for Service

Besides posing questions about their past and present experience with
community service, the participants were also asked about their plans to continue
serving in the future. Invariably, all the participants expressed their desire to
persevere with their volunteering work. For instance, Gwen stated, "I see myself
continuing with it in the future, and have no intentions on stopping". Lynn had
similar plans, "I would definitely want to continue serving, whenever I have the time,
even if it's a small act, I will try to do it". As they contemplated on their longer-term
plans to continue with service, the participants also talked about how their efforts
could be sustained and what could potentially deter them from serving. A summary
of the key points that were raised in relation to their future plans, as well as their
potential challenges and supports are shown in Table 4.9. (Appendix 11 provides an
example of a participant's reflections of his plans to continue serving in the future).

Table 4.9

Future Plans for Service, Potential Challenges and Supports

Future plans for service	Potential challenges	Supports
Promote corporate social responsibility. Encourage others to volunteer. Be good role models of service. Continue with the same activities. Take up leadership roles. Volunteer overseas. Try different types of service. Explore serving in different organisations. Lead an overseas community project. Work in service-related fields. Make service a personal lifestyle.	Time. Personal commitments (family, friends, work, studies). Finance. Distance. Opportunity cost. Finding the right balance between volunteering and other commitments.	Personal values and ethics. Workplace support. Family support. Friends who volunteer. Personal experience with service over the years. Belief in a cause. Support from the organisations in which they volunteer. Seeing how organisations help others. Religious belief. Good mentors.

4.4.1 Longer-term plans to continue serving.

The participants not only foresaw themselves serving in later years, many were also able to articulate the approaches they would take to realise their goals (Table 4.9). Some of the recurrent ideas they shared include initiatives to promote corporate social responsibility and encouraging more people to volunteer. It was also common to hear participants talking about exploring other options for service and planning to work in service-related fields. In contemplating their future as volunteers, the

participants expressed the importance of seeing service as a daily lifestyle rather than reserving it for a volunteering activity.

4.4.1.1 Promoting corporate social responsibility.

At the point of data collection, some of the participants were completing their tertiary studies and would soon be joining the workforce while some were already working. From their viewpoints, a supportive workplace environment that encourages community engagement is important and should be promoted. For instance, Francis harboured plans to initiate corporate social responsibility in his future place of work:

> Hopefully too, even at work, we can form a committee to do
> something together for the community and link up with other
> welfare organisations to serve. We can also link up with schools
> and get students to take part. The students can give their time and
> maybe on our side, we can help out by raising funds, by looking
> for sponsors, or even to help raise awareness…. There are so
> many ways companies can help out in the community. I see
> myself as wanting not just to help the community but maybe
> encourage my colleagues to reach out to others.

4.4.1.2 Encouraging others to serve.

There were many like Francis who felt the need to be better exemplars of service. Conversations with these young adult volunteers gave the researcher some insights of how they perceived their roles. What appeared important to them was to help more people see the value of service. Nicole shared her views with the researcher:

> Apart from volunteering, I'd like to see myself as promoting
> volunteering. Some people may have the wrong attitude towards
> volunteering and some don't know much about volunteering, like
> they are not aware of the avenues to take even if they're
> interested. I like to inspire and encourage people to volunteer, to
> give them a platform to try.

Correspondingly, Gwen believed in the importance of encouraging more people to serve. She shared how she would seize different moments to tell others about volunteering. For example, over the years, she had been participating in a Christmas gift-wrapping charity event and would use the time with other new volunteers to promote volunteering:

> When I meet a new volunteer, I teach him or her how to wrap,
> and while doing that, I would share what the organisation does,
> why we are doing it, and how we can help. And from there, we
> kind of start to chat and also share about other volunteering
> opportunities.

4.4.1.3 Exploring new options.

Although most of the participants were happy to remain with their current organisations, some were eager to explore different roles, sectors, and new frontiers. In contemplating their future as volunteers, many participants voiced their aspirations to take up leadership roles or expand their service to communities beyond Singapore:

> I'm also considering whether I should do community service
> overseas. I see myself continuing to serve there [Organisation P]
> but I would also like to explore other areas. Youth Corp is one or
> I could expand my horizons to different forms of training.
> (Dean)

> My long-term plans to serve in future will be to one day lead an
> overseas expedition with my peers. I am also thinking of holding
> various workshops for youth as I want them to benefit like I did.
> (Olivia)

> I hope to be involved in a Habitat trip at least once every two
> years, as it is my understanding that there are so many places out
> there that need a lot of help in rebuilding their lives, for example,
> after earthquakes and floods.
> (Gwen)

4.4.1.4 Choosing service-related careers.

Besides planning to continue serving, nearly half (seven) of the participants considered career options that were service-related. Amongst them, social work was the preferred choice:

> I want to be a social worker. Serving is part of me and I want to
> make it my occupation and not just something I do during my free
> time. By being a social worker, I'll constantly be serving others.
> This is a way of sustaining my commitment to service.
> (Josephine)

Josephine attributed her career choice to one of the social workers in the youth centre where she volunteered. Similarly, several participants felt that their volunteering experience had influenced the career paths they would want to take:

> I think volunteering has made me open to the idea of making
> service part of my career. So far, I feel that's the biggest impact,
> because I don't know if I would have thought of working in a
> VWO [Voluntary Welfare Organisation] if not for this
> experience… I'm currently looking at an internship at a VWO
> this holiday and hoping to pursue it further after I graduate from
> university.
> (Katie)

> After I started volunteering in Organisation A, I felt passionate
> about helping others. I want to become a social worker… it will
> give me a sense of satisfaction and meaning, being able to do
> something and impact others in a good way and also to help
> people improve their lives.
> (Nicole)

4.4.1.5 Service in everyday life.

There were some who took volunteering to a different level and saw service as a personal lifestyle and felt that day-to-day acts of kindness were as important.

According to Coles (1993), it is these quiet moments of caring that can "give service an everyday life" (p. 51). As the following quotations show, some regard service as more than an activity, it was also about their conduct, and how they lived their daily lives:

> You can't be two sided, hypocritical, like on one hand, I set aside
> time to serve people and then, all the rest of the time is for myself.
> It doesn't work that way. Whenever the situation arises, I believe
> I want to serve. For service is a lifestyle, you never know where
> and when you are required to serve.
> (Michael)

> I think the next step for me would be to make volunteering a part
> of me, something that I can practise every day. It's about finding
> opportunities to help daily. It can be just sitting with someone,
> providing company, spreading compassion. It still benefits others.
> (Priscilla)

4.4.2 What can sustain commitment to service.

Notwithstanding the potential challenges ahead, all the participants hoped to continue to contribute to society (Table 4.9). There were those who believed that they would persist with service because of an inner desire, "I first started about 12 years ago, and my mindset regarding the need and my desire to give back to the society and volunteer has not changed since". Some cited examples of how their efforts could be sustained such as through the support of family, friends and the organisation they volunteered with. In addition, the participants mentioned that a supportive workplace that practised corporate social responsibility would definitely strengthen their commitment to service.

4.4.2.1 Family support.

From the participants' descriptions, service, even that performed locally, could take a few hours to half a day. For those who served overseas, their trips sometimes lasted for a couple of weeks. Service, in other words, could mean time away from

family. In discussing how their efforts could be sustained, some participants singled out the importance of having family support. According to two participants, family support could mean having family members volunteering together. Katie who often volunteered alongside her family at the library for people who have visual impairment, believed in the importance of family support:

> I guess if my family continues to serve and my mom keeps going,
> it will definitely help to sustain it. And now that I've considered
> the librarian as a friend, I just can't leave her or ignore her. I
> would want to continue to see her and help out.

Josephine who faced the predicament of not being able to spend enough time with her family found a solution:

> It's hard to manage my time between my studies, family,
> spending time with friends and volunteering. I decided to involve
> my family and friends in volunteering. This actually allowed me
> to spend time with them amidst volunteering, and enabled me to
> bond deeper with them through volunteering.

4.4.2.2 Support from friends.

The support from friends was often cited as an important reason for persevering with service. According to some participants, friends who share a common passion for helping those in need are a source of inspiration and encouragement. For Beatrice, serving alongside friends was seen as fun and meaningful. Sharing the experience and talking about it with friends also helped her examine how she should live her life:

> I feel supported by my friends in that we can share our
> experiences. Many of us have similar interests, like our love for
> children…. So we tend to want to do it (volunteer) together. If I
> were to do it alone, it won't be as much fun. Sharing the
> experience together, and talking about the experience helps me
> think about life, like how I should live. I believe that friends were
> one of the main reasons why I continue with service.

4.4.2.3 Workplace support.

Many participants expressed their concerns about the constraints imposed upon them by the demands of their career life. Dean for example felt that his life as a university undergraduate gave him the flexibility to pursue his own interest in community work. He felt it was expedient that the working environment promotes volunteerism to advance people's volunteering effort:

> The workplace needs to be also supportive. If we want to develop
> a culture or spirit of volunteerism, it must be more acceptable.
> People must accept that volunteering is something meaningful
> and give you time off to volunteer without you having to use up
> all your leave.

4.4.2.4 Organisational support.

A significant finding of this study was that nearly all the participants intended to remain with the organisations they were volunteering with. According to Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins (2007), in volunteering with an organisation, individuals "find themselves connected to the organisation and networks that afford them lasting resources for civic involvement" (p. 214). From what the participants had described, the help and support that they received as volunteers as well as the relationship that developed over time with those in the organisation contributed to their sense of belonging. What Hart et al. (2007) said could be true for Francis who had been serving in the same organisation for over ten years since he was a child:

> Because I actually grew up in the community centre, I know
> people there and they know me. I know how things work and any
> time I want to do voluntary work, it's very easy for me. So I
> would say that sustains me, having their support.

Roger, who volunteered in an aged-care facility at Organisation X throughout his university vacation spoke about the bond that was formed with the staff and the elderly folks. From his personal observation, if welfare organisations made it easy for volunteers to serve, such as by establishing a proper system for volunteering, there would be a greater likelihood that people would want to continue to offer their

help. As he analysed, "Maybe it was the ease of volunteering in the organisation, they made it easy in Organisation X, they have a structure in place".

In some instances, participants described their indebtedness to the organisations that afforded them the opportunities to learn and grow. Priscilla explained why she felt supported as a volunteer in one of the organisations she served:

> In Organisation N, they have a very good structure. That structure really helps us volunteers, to me it is a form of support. It is also their facilitation sessions, goal setting, team building, understanding your purpose in life, and what drives you.

For some participants, the philosophies, and values of the organisations they were connected with became the raison d'etre for serving. As Hart et al. (2007) pointed out, some people not only served with an organisation but see themselves as "representatives" of their "particular value tradition" (p. 214). Ian explained how the mission of the Boys Brigade that he embodied influenced his decision not only to continue serving with the Brigade but also his choice of career:

> I was a Boy (Brigade) myself, I believe in what the Brigade does, and I believe in its mission, the advancement of Christ's kingdom among boys, and the promotion of habits like obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness. I believe in that and still do. I think also, in a way, it affected my choice of career. I never considered teaching until I started with the Boys Brigade and the church.

4.4.3 What can undermine their commitment.

While the participants talked about their aspirations for service in the future, they acknowledged that they were not without their challenges (Table 4.9). Time limitation was identified by most of the participants as a potential obstacle to volunteering. As Beatrice highlighted, "I believe for me, time is the biggest

challenge, we have so many competing demands in our lives". Personal constraints related to work, studies, family, and financial commitments were real concerns of these young volunteers, many of whom were studying or just started working. Nicole, who was juggling full time studies, part-time jobs, and volunteering, acknowledged that finding time to volunteer was increasingly challenging:

> As I get older, I foresee myself having more commitments like
> work and school and I'm working to support my further studies.
> There's this never-ending chase to get more certificates.

Just like Nicole, Alison, a teacher, admitted struggling to find a balance between her responsibilities as a teacher and volunteering:

> I enjoy what I'm doing there [volunteering], but after that, I feel
> bad too because I have other things that I should be doing, such as
> all the papers I have to mark, the lessons I need to prepare.
> Sometimes I question whether I have made the right choices, I'm
> still searching for the balance.

Similarly, Dean mentioned the opportunity costs of volunteering such as time spent with family and time for rest as potential problems that would come in the way of volunteering. For Evan, finding the right equilibrium between work, volunteering, and personal commitments would be a challenge he would need to grapple with. Ian expressed similar quandaries. What had been most difficult for him was getting the support and understanding of family members who questioned his priorities:

> Sometimes I still feel that there's this conflict of interest, where
> people want me to focus more on work, studies, things like that.
> Sometimes I feel that my family doesn't really understand why
> I'm doing it. Sometimes they ask, "Why are you going on
> Saturdays, why are you spending so much time there, why do you
> need to do it?" I know they mean well but I don't really need that.

4.4.4 Connection between past, present, and future service.

Towards the end of the last phase of the interview, the participants were asked to track their service experiences and explore the connection between their past service participation at school, to their present volunteering involvement as young adults, and their future plans to continue serving. All, with the exception of two, felt that there was a connection. For a few, school CIP played a vital role in shaping them to be who they are as volunteers while there were those who view their school service as laying the foundation for subsequent and future service. The participants were most rhetorical at this final stage of the interview. Metaphors and analogies were used to capture their own perceptions of the link between past, present and the future. Roger, for instance shared his thoughts:

> My early CIP experience exposed me to the world of
> volunteering. However, there's a limit as to how much it impacted
> me. For example, it did not instill in me the moral value of
> service. I guess then, we were still young, still learning and
> growing. In having the CIP program, the school is giving you a
> parcel that you can decide to open next time. Using an analogy, it
> is just like learning basic Math that is compulsory in school. Not
> everybody will be a mathematician or an accountant next time but
> the knowledge and exposure you bring with you will form part of
> an essential skill that may be useful in your adulthood if you ever
> need it.

Just like Roger, Michael stated that the CIP experience he had was his first exposure with volunteering and believed that his past school service experience paved the way for subsequent service:

> Definitely the past experience with CIP has laid that foundation
> and built that platform for me, helping me see what I can do, what
> I need to do, and what I need to learn to do. Through the past CIP
> experience, it made me who I am today. Also, my experience with
> community service as an adult has opened my mind to the world,
> has given me a more mature view…. Through these changes from
> my younger days doing CIP as a student, to the various service

experiences I've had beyond school, it has helped me in my journey to serve. I believe years down the road, I would remember those times we shared and it will definitely spur me on to live my life for God, that on this journey, I want to serve, to encourage and to inspire others to experience it.

Gwen wrote this in her second reflections how she perceived her journey as a volunteer in relation to her past, present and future:

Without having been prompted to be involved in community services in my secondary school, I believe I wouldn't have had the guts to try out many things. Each experience from school shaped my subsequent decisions, and each involvement in subsequent community services helped developed my future decisions and me. Had I not had the chance to be involved in the Overseas CIP while I was in school, I might not have considered doing it again…. My secondary school played a vital role in my growth, and I think the school culture was right and the values were aligned closely to mine. I'd say there is a strong relationship between my longer-term commitment and the experiences that I went through while in school. It has set a strong foundation for me, and I am really grateful for that.

4.5   Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of the study that aims to examine to what extent and in what ways young people believed that their sense of civic responsibility was influenced by their school service experience. The participants' descriptions give readers clearer insights about the contexts in which they learned to serve while at school, and the impacts of those experiences. What the participants shared about their reasons for serving in their adult life and their plans for future service also give readers a sense of the complexity of service. In the next chapter, the findings will be further discussed and analysed in relation to the relevant literature, as well as other related research in the area of community service.

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are discussed and analysed in the light of the theories that informed the study as well as what other researchers have found. Aligned with the overall aim of this investigation, the discussion focuses on the volunteers' past experience with service at school, their present involvement with service, and their future plans to continue serving. As in the Findings chapter, the four sub-research questions serve as a framework for this discussion. Table 5.1 gives an overview of how the discussion is structured.

Table 5.1

Chapter Format

Section	Sub-Question	Discussion Topics
Introduction		
Section One	Sub-question 1 *How do young people who are currently involved in voluntary service perceive their prior experience with mandatory service while at school?*	1. Nature and characteristics of school service programme 2. Programme implementation 3. Early perceptions of school service experience 4. How students interpreted quality 5. Thoughts on mandatory service
Section Two	Sub-question 2 *How do young people feel they might have been affected by their service experience at school?*	1. Link between school service experience and adult volunteering 2. Understanding impacts using Cipolle's Social-Justice Model

Section Three	Sub-question 3 *What do young people believe are their reasons and motivations to continue with service in their adult lives?*	1. Various interpretations of service 2. Variety of reasons for service 3. The subjectivity of service
Section Four	Sub-question 4 *What do young people believe are their longer-term plans to continue serving?*	1. Longer-term plans for service 2. Link between the past, present, and future
Conclusion		

5.1 Section One

Sub-question 1:

How do young people who are currently involved in voluntary service perceive their prior experience with mandatory service while at school?

To make sense of how young people perceive their experiences with mandatory service while at school, the study has made it a prerequisite to understand the context of their learning. Reinders and Youniss (2006) proposed that the perspectives of participating students could give researchers access to the context in which service was fulfilled. This study required all the participants to recall in detail their school service experience, in particular, the nature and characteristics of the service programme in their individual school, and how it was implemented. Besides describing their experiences with service, the participants also shared some insights on what mattered to them as students learning to serve. In addition, they gave their viewpoints on mandatory school service. Section One in the Findings chapter presents a detailed report of what the participants narrated about their school service experience. In this section, the findings are explored further in relation to what practitioners, researchers, and experts in the field said.

5.1.1 Nature and characteristics of school service programme.

Briefly, in their descriptions, the participants stated that the community service programme they were in was known as Community Involvement Programme or CIP. From their descriptions, it can be ascertained that their school's programme was community service and not service-learning. The researcher arrived at this conclusion after the participants confirmed that the programme was not integrated within the academic curriculum. Having this clarification was a necessary precursor for this study on school service. Research has shown that confusion over the terms 'community service' and 'service-learning' is not uncommon despite them being different pedagogies with different objectives and approaches (Billig & Eyler, 2003; Burack, 2009; Furco, 1996b; Ma, Chan, Liu, & Mak, 2018). The misuse of terms was also highlighted by Eyler (2009) who found instances where mandatory community service had been inaccurately classified as service-learning. To aggravate the confusion, some practitioners referred to service-learning as community service learning (Astin et al., 2006; Eyler, 2009; Flecky, 2011). With so much inconsistency in classification and interpretation, it is understandable that the terms 'community service' and 'service-learning' are misunderstood and on occasions, used interchangeably (Billig & Eyler, 2003; Furco, 1996b; Howard, 2001; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). In this study, many participants sought clarification from the researcher and acknowledged that they were unaware of the distinction between community service and service-learning. Hence, to avoid confusion, the type of programme had to be established from the beginning.

Besides the type of programme, the participants were asked to describe the characteristics of the CIP in their respective schools. In their recollections, it was found that there were similarities in several key areas (refer to Table 4.4). One common characteristic that stood out clearly for all the participants, and was often the first to be mentioned, was that participation in community service was compulsory. Apart from the compulsory element, another common feature of the CIP was that it was school-related, that is, most of the activities were organised by the school or in collaboration with community agencies (Arenas, Bosworth, & Kwandayi, 2006). Almost uniformly, these activities were carried out in groups. In terms of the location and nature of service, typically, the students volunteered in the

local community, concentrating their efforts on various sectors of which the elderly was most common. Mostly, the service activities focused on fund-raising, direct services, environmental-related events and school duties. Another characteristic that was consistently mentioned concerned the frequency of participation and the duration of the activities. With a few exceptions, the participants described their involvement as infrequent, with several stating that they did service only once or twice a year. Most of the service events were 'one-off' and usually over a short duration. However, if students were only required to complete a minimum six hours of service a year, their low participation rate, together with the short duration of most of their activities was not unexpected (MOE, 2012; National Library Board Singapore, 2018; Wee, 1997; Wong, 2000). Finally, it was also pointed out that there had been little publicity when the CIP was concerned, with little mention of the service activities once they were over. Only two participants remembered their schools actively promoted the CIP by adopting a whole-school, large-scale approach in carrying out some of their events.

5.1.2 Programme implementation.

While having more detailed information of the background in which students learned to serve is necessary for a more accurate understanding of how they perceived their experience, describing any service programme can be a challenge. The findings in this study have indicated that even for the same programme that shared some common characteristics, there were inconsistencies in the way it had been carried out in different schools. Variations in approaches between schools were not unexpected, considering that schools had been given the autonomy to implement their own service programmes (Maidin, 2000; MOE, 2012).

To take one example, even though every participant stated that community service was compulsory, schools differed in the way they executed the compulsory element. While most of them said that grades were awarded as incentives for students to comply with the requirement, a few (four) recalled the use of disciplinary measures as deterrents for non-compliance. The various measures described concur with Graff's observation of mandatory service where "punishment and/or the denial

of important rights and/or benefits are the consequence for those who fail to meet the service requirements" (as cited in Volunteering Canada, 2006, p. iv).

Similarly, there were differences in relation to locations of service. While all the participants carried out service within Singapore, six reported that they also had the opportunity to do community service overseas. Several of these overseas trips involved nearby Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia, but three mentioned that they travelled as far as China, India, and Australia. Participants who served in foreign countries mentioned that their service expeditions were significant in that it was the first time they experienced volunteering in communities that were very different from Singapore. For some of these participants witnessing the abject poverty of those they served, or seeing for the first time the destruction of a natural disaster left lasting effects on them. Many of those with overseas service experience also pointed out that the longer duration of the service activities made a difference to their experience. One example was Dean who made a comparison between community service that was carried out locally and those in other countries:

> The local CIPs [CIP activities] are less impactful because they're mainly 'one-off' events that last a few hours. But for the overseas CIP, especially to Cambodia, that really helped me to understand the world a lot better.

Even though all the participants performed community service within Singapore, their service experience had turned out to be different. For example, service could occur in various sites and involve different groups of students and sectors. Furthermore, nearly three quarters of the sample (11) reported that they carried out service through different co-curricular activities (CCA) such as the Boys' Brigade, First-Aid, St. John Ambulance Brigade, Girl Guides, or Sports groups. These various CCA groups had their unique missions and value systems that might influence the nature and purpose of the service activities that were organised. For example, Ian felt that it was the values of the Boys' Brigade that kept him committed to serving with the Brigade:

I believe in what the Brigade does, and I believe in its mission,

the advancement of Christ's kingdom among boys, and the

promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-

respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness.

In addition, there were dissimilarities in the types of community service activities. Although fund-raising and direct services were common, the choice of activities varied. Collecting donations on Flag Days appeared to be the most prevalent fund-raising activity but there were students who were involved in other charity events such as school carnivals and the Share-a-Gift project. Even though the most common sector involved the elderly, there were different ways students offered their assistance. While some went to elderly care centres to befriend and entertain the senior residents, others helped with mealtime activities and menial tasks. As can be seen, depending on the types of activities, serving the elderly might or might not involve direct contact with them. Besides helping the elderly, three participants stated that they tutored children with special needs and two remembered cleaning animal shelters, while another did a performance for patients in a local hospital. Some recounted fulfilling their service requirement by doing school duties. These duties included providing first-aid assistance during school events, or performing "functionary" (p. 56) tasks as McLellan and Youniss (2003) described, such as shelving books in the libraries, and cleaning classrooms. As the findings suggest, service could be an array of activities quite distinct from each other.

While students usually volunteered in groups, there were differences in terms of group size and characteristics. According to the participants, service might involve a few members of a CCA group, or it could be a class activity. On a bigger scale, there were activities where students of the whole level would participate and in certain schools, mass community service activities involving the entire school were organised.

Another difference in programme implementation concerned the element of reflection. The data shows that in most schools, students did not participate in any form of reflection, which was typical of community service (Furco, 1996b). Even so, there were exceptions. For example, the participants who went on overseas community service recalled that structured reflection after the day's activities had been scheduled. In addition, for a few of the participants who served locally, there were reports of some form of reflective discussions. Nonetheless, even though reflection activities had not been included, it could not be assumed that reflection had not taken place. As Boud and Walker (1996) remarked, reflection could occur in the "midst of action", not necessarily only when prompted (p. 75). Some individuals may be naturally more contemplative and on their own ponder over their experiences and search for deeper meaning in their encounter with those who were suffering.

For many researchers and practitioners, reflection is a defining characteristic of service-learning that distinguishes it from other service programmes (Chambers & Lavery, 2012; Eylers & Giles, 1999; Ma, 2018; Shumer, Stanton, & Giles, 2017). Service-learning scholars even equate the hyphen in service-learning with the reflection element (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006). However, according to Furco (1996a), some of the principles that guide service-learning practice are not exclusive to service-learning and are often adopted by other forms of service-related programmes. From what the data shows, by including a reflection component, some of the community service activities might resemble service-learning.

Also, evident from the participants' descriptions was that the effort schools put in to drive the programme varied in quality. Dean described that in his school a CIP activity could be a "record-breaking event" involving all the students. On the other hand, in certain schools, the programme was hardly visible or publicised. As Roger recalled, "It is usually not well publicised… but in the university, it is different, we put up posters, and people will sign up." In extreme cases, as one participant revealed, as a last-minute rush to fill up the hours required, students were given some menial duties in their own library. Eyler and Giles (1999) observed that it was not

uncommon that service was marginalised in schools where academic learning was prioritised. The lack of time and resources were often cited as reasons why schools struggled with programme execution (Eyler & Giles, 1999). As Bennett (2009) reported, a recurrent feedback by educators was that in their quest for academic achievements, "there was no room in the curriculum and no resources available for anything" that is non-academic (p. 299). Ian gave his views on students who were under pressure to perform, "Unfortunately, a lot of students are very academic. They only look at studies and nothing else. They have CCAs, tuitions, extra classes… there's just no time left." Similar results were reported by Sim, Alviar, and Ho (2011), who found that in Singapore schools, "CIP projects often take a backseat in the larger scheme of learning…" (p. 10).

What can be concluded from the various descriptions of the participants was that even though all of them were involved in the same programme (CIP), their experiences could be vastly different. Evidently, from the participants' narrations, their school service experience had turned out to be a diverse and multifaceted phenomenon. According to Furco, Jones-White, Huesman, and Gorny (2012), service is a complex concept with multiple definitions. As reflected in the literature, reports on the lack of agreement among practitioners and researchers on how best to define the term 'service' and the various programmes associated with it was not uncommon (Furco, 1996a; Furco, 1996b; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000). For example, in their study, Brown, Pancer, Henderson, and Ellis-Hale (2007) found that schools in Canada have their distinctive approaches in terms of programme delivery. Similarly, in the United States, studies have indicated that community service was as diverse (Bennett, 2009; Metz & Youniss, 2005). To explain the distinctions amongst service-programmes, Furco (1996a) developed a pictorial (Figure 2.3) that distinguished programmes based on their "intended focus(es)" and beneficiary(ies)" (p. 14). However, even with these distinctions, Furco (1996a) conceded that, "many gray areas still exist" (p. 14). The problem highlighted by Furco (1996a) is a crucial reminder that it cannot be assumed that there is homogeneity in the participants' community service experience just because they were all from Singapore schools and had undergone the same programme. Put

alternatively, learning to serve is not a straightforward phenomenon that can be understood just by studying a particular programme and its features.

5.1.3 Early perceptions of school service experience.

In Singapore, a study conducted by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) found high levels of satisfaction concerning service participation in schools (NVPC, 2011). Among those who were surveyed, four in five indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their CIP experience (NVPC, 2011). This study aimed to find out from a group of young adult volunteers how they felt about their early experience with mandatory service back then when they were at school. From in-depth discussions with the participants, the study found that there were differing perceptions of their CIP experience. Some participants reported feeling positive and remembered their experience as fun and meaningful. Individuals who felt positive about their service experience also reflected that they were happy to assist others, especially those in need. Lynn was one example:

> For someone young, I've never had any chance to have a close
> interaction with children with handicaps. I think I was about 14
> then, I felt happy to help.

However, not all the participants described their early memories of school service with the same level of positivity. Some remembered feeling dispassionate about community service and perceived the activities as mundane and unexciting. There were instances when the CIP had been described as another school routine. Yet there were also those who mentioned that there were times when they resented being compelled to volunteer and correlated the activities with tasks to be completed. For example, Beatrice, in recalling how she felt about her experience with the CIP, commented that compulsory volunteering was "not really about serving."

In analysing the data, it was found that perceptions not only differed between participants, they could also vary for each individual, determined by the nature of the service activities. In other words, a participant might be satisfied with the

programme, yet found certain aspects of it unsatisfactory. Conversely, they might have disliked the programme but saw meaning in certain activities. Thus, for some participants, their responses toward the CIP were conditional and subjective. For instance, factors such as the type of activities or sectors could alter the way participants viewed their CIP experience. As Evan reflected:
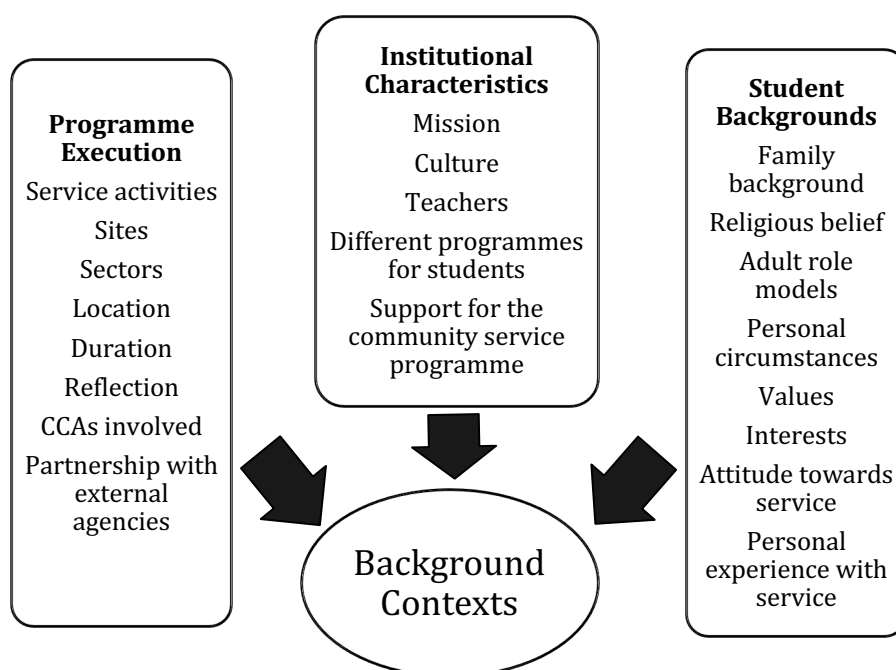
> Honestly, initially, in the early part of secondary school, I felt CIP
> was a chore, it happened to all of us. Then when I started visiting
> old folks' homes and helping in some of the events, I felt more
> interested and more able to help, that's when my attitude changed.

Mixed results were similarly reported in studies conducted on compulsory community service in America and Canada (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Padanyi, Baetz, Brown, & Henderson, 2009). Those studies revealed that some students objected to the principle of mandatory service on the grounds that forcing students to volunteer diminished the meaning behind service (Brown et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2014; Reinders & Youniss, 2006). On the other hand, it was also reported that there were students who found their experience to be positive and beneficial (Brown et al., 2007; Metz & Youniss, 2005).

5.1.3.1 Reasons for varying perceptions.

There could be many reasons why the participants had varying perceptions of their school service experience. The reasons will be explored with reference to Hecht's (2003) "Context Framework" (p. 29). According to Hecht (2003), to have a more comprehensive understanding of the service experiences of students, it is important to pay greater attention to the "background contexts" in which learning occurs (p. 31). These background contexts are defined as the "general environment" for learning, that includes elements such "students, teachers, school/programme" (p. 31). Hecht (2003) suggests that different service programmes may have their own contexts.

Based on the findings, three possible factors related to the background contexts of the participants' experience with community service at school could explain their uneven perceptions. As reflected in Figure 5.1, these factors are: programme execution, student backgrounds, and institutional characteristics. Variations in these three elements could translate to a unique school service experience for the individual.

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┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐
│   Programme     │    │  Institutional  │    │    Student      │
│   Execution     │    │  Characteristics│    │   Backgrounds   │
│                 │    │     Mission     │    │     Family      │
│ Service activities│   │     Culture     │    │   background    │
│     Sites       │    │    Teachers     │    │ Religious belief│
│    Sectors      │    │ Different programmes│ │  Adult role     │
│    Location     │    │  for students   │    │    models       │
│    Duration     │    │  Support for the│    │   Personal      │
│   Reflection    │    │ community service│   │ circumstances   │
│  CCAs involved  │    │   programme     │    │     Values      │
│ Partnership with│    │                 │    │   Interests     │
│   external      │    │                 │    │ Attitude towards│
│    agencies     │    │                 │    │    service      │
│                 │    │                 │    │   Personal      │
│                 │    │                 │    │ experience with │
│                 │    │                 │    │    service      │
└─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘
            ↘              ↓              ↙
              ┌─────────────────────┐
              │     Background      │
              │      Contexts       │
              └─────────────────────┘
```

Figure 5.1.

The Background Contexts of Students' School Service Experience

5.1.3.1.1 Programme execution.

As discussed earlier, there were inconsistencies in the way the CIP operated in different schools despite it being the same programme. In analysing the data, service could represent a wide array of activities that involved different sectors, occurred at various sites and locations for varying durations. What constituted community service could range from shelving books in the school library for a couple of hours to painting an orphanage and spending time with victims of a natural disaster for an entire week. Service not only varied between schools. Within a school, CIP activities could also differ. For example, according to 11 participants, some service activities

had been linked to the various CCAs and were aligned with their unique aims and mission. In the case of Alison whose CCA was St John Ambulance, community service could be in the form of first-aid duties during school events. The data also found that not every student in the same school did community service overseas. A close analysis of the participants' narrations revealed that their school service experience had turned out to be complex and subjective due to the wide-ranging ways in which the CIP had been implemented. The multifarious ways in which students fulfilled their CIP requirement concur with what McLellan and Youniss (2003) reported in their study. According to their observations, "within and between schools, service was not a unitary term because students did a variety of the kinds of activities that are hardly comparable" (McLellan & Youniss, 2003, p. 48). The diverse approaches taken by individual schools and the innumerable ways in which service could occur might account for the contrasting views of the participants about their CIP experience.

5.1.3.1.2 Student background.

Besides disparities in programme execution, the varying perceptions of the CIP amongst participants could be related to their different backgrounds and characteristics. Conversations with the participants revealed that each of them had their own identity, beliefs, family life, and distinctive experiences. In relation to student background, this study has identified two areas that could potentially affect their perceptions of the CIP. Family background, specifically, the presence of adult role models of service in the family, could be a contributing factor. Nine participants had brought up examples of how their parents became their earlier role models of service. One such example was Josephine who shared how her mother helped her understand the value of service:

> I think my mom has a great influence on me. Since young, I've
> seen her helping others and volunteering in the community centre.
> She's a very helpful person and I want to be that.

Many studies have shown that students with parents who volunteer indicated a greater inclination to serve compared to those whose parents do not volunteer (Marks

& Jones, 2004; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Seider, 2012; Wuthnow, 1995). Niemi et al. (2000) pointed out that the degree of parental involvement also had possible impacts on the extent of their children's voluntary work. One possible explanation is that parents who volunteer send a message to their children that it was important to help others (Cipolle, 2010). In addition, Metz and Youniss (2005) observed that parents, through their own involvement, could also provide their children with "indirect service experiences" through talking to them about their own experiences (p. 431).

Another explanation is that parents who are volunteers are willing to give their children the "resources" to support their involvement (Cheng & Khoo, 2011, p. 3). Support from parents could be in the form of monetary help or simply the provision of transport to the service sites (Cheng & Khoo, 2011). Some service sites can be far and the time spent on travelling could also cause resentment as in the case of Katie who had to journey on her own to an animal shelter. According to her, "I remember travelling and it was so inconvenient. It was really, really far, it took up a lot of time." In such as situation, parental support could make a difference to students' experience.

Besides parental influence, the participants' attitude towards service might also be related to their volunteering experiences outside school. From the data of this study, over and above the requirement, ten of the 16 participants also sought volunteering opportunities outside their time at school. According to Hollander and Burack (2009), to understand the outcomes of school service on students, it was important to know their "civic history" (p. 5). As shown in the findings, the civic history of some participants as school students also included the volunteering activities they were involved in that were not related to school. As Francis narrated:

> My aunt was a grassroots leader in a community club. I got to
> follow her most of the time when I was young and since then, was
> exposed to community service.

For Josephine, being a member of a youth centre since the age of 13, she had many opportunities to participate in service. Currently, after seven years, she still served at the centre that she said, "feels like home". Affiliations to organisations that "sponsored or encouraged service" could have a bearing on an individual's perception of service (McLellan & Youniss, 2003, p. 47). In addition, three participants who indicated that they were Christians volunteered in church-related activities outside school. According to Wuthnow (1995), there is strong evidence to suggest a link between "religious commitment" and service (p. 87). Bennett (2009) explained that the various service activities arranged by religious organisations could contribute to young people's civic attitude.

From what the participants revealed, schools were not the only avenues for community service involvement. The additional service experiences of the participants need to be taken into consideration in the overall understanding of their attitude towards service as they could potentially affect how they responded to their CIP experience. Notwithstanding, these experiences could also be an indication of their predisposition to serve. As the data show, the participants in this study came from different backgrounds, each with his or her personal life experiences. They could bring to the learning environment their different attitudes, beliefs, values, and identities that might influence the way they perceived their learning (Jones & Hill, 2003; Metz & Youniss, 2005). For example, Alison made the following observation when she was asked about her CIP experience, "I think it is the attitude you take towards what you have, like because the activity is one-off, you can cherish it, or you just get it over with." As Kahne (2009) pointed out, it cannot be assumed that students feel the same way about their experience even if they were involved in the same programme or event.

5.1.3.1.3 Institutional characteristics.

From the descriptions of the participants, schools not only differed in the ways they implemented programmes. They each had their distinct characteristics in terms of their culture, mission, tradition, policies, the types of co-curricular activities offered, the students, and teachers. Through conversations with the participants, the

researcher sometimes caught glimpses of what their school lives were like. It was moments like these that reminded the researcher of the subjectivity of experience. For example, one participant reflected that he learnt more about the ethic of service from the school's mission that he resonated with, than the service programmes they organised. Another commended the school's policy of giving everyone a chance to lead and attributed his sense of responsibility to its leadership programme. Yet for Alison, it was the school's caring and nurturing environment that taught her the value of service. As she reflected:

> The teachers did a good job in reinforcing the value of
> compassion and kindness. It was like, what would have been a
> nicer thing to do than to help another?

What some of the participants had shared showed that the institutional environments they were in might influence the way they learned service or perceived their experience. Furco et al. (2012) highlighted in their study on community engagement that institutional environments can "contribute to student learning, both real and perceived" (p. 10). Correspondingly, a study conducted in Singapore by Sim et al. (2012) concluded that "a school's ethos and culture" could have a bearing on students' civic attitude (p. 10). According to Plaut (2009), knowledge of young people's civic development would not be complete without having some idea of how their schools operate.

So far, the study has discussed how differences in the student backgrounds, programme implementations, and institutional environment could have accounted for variations in the learning experiences of the participants. With so many variables that could interplay to produce different possible effects, it is hardly surprising that there was little consistency in the way the participants responded to their school service experience.

5.1.4 How students interpreted quality.

The literature is replete with studies that link high quality programmes with increased civic involvement (Henderson et al., 2007; Jones & Hill, 2003; Levine, 2009). Levine (2009) pointed out that quality was necessary because even a "well-intentioned" (p. 66) program might not yield positive outcomes and could also have negative consequences. As Dewey (1969/1938) insisted, "Everything depends upon the quality of the experiences..." (p. 27). However, in actual practice, what 'quality' means is less clear and was often found to be interpreted differently by practitioners (Levine, 2009).

This study is concerned with how participants interpreted quality and what really mattered to them as students learning to serve while at school. In their appraisals, the participants offered their views on aspects of their experience that worked, those that did not, and what they felt could be improved. Frequently, comparisons were made between their past school experience and those post-school volunteering activities they were involved in. The feedback from the participants gave the researcher access to their insights on what counted as quality. Their recommendations focused on three areas: firstly, creating meaningful service; secondly, adopting a student-centred approach; and thirdly, having effective teachers to facilitate the programme.

5.1.4.1 Meaningful service.

In this study, one factor that was repeatedly singled out as a measure of how positive participants felt about their experience was how meaningful the activities were. What the findings reveal correspond with the results of a study by Farahmandpour (2011) who made the following observation, "It is evident from my own experience that young people can be inspired by the prospect of contributing meaningfully… " (p. 5). However, the participants indicated that not all CIP activities were meaningful. This study aimed to understand under what circumstances and contexts were their experiences meaningful or not. The following themes were consistently raised by the participants in their interpretations of what constituted as meaningful activities. For them, meaning was often associated with

feelings of self-efficacy, a sense of purpose, and connection with those they were helping. In addition, the participants argued that for service to be meaningful, their efforts had to be sustained and were concerned about the short duration and irregularity of visits to service sites. Finally, to enhance meaning, they believed that there must also be some opportunities for reflection, especially after an event.

5.1.4.1.1 Sense of efficacy.

Often, the participants associated meaningful activities with a perceived sense of self-efficacy. Astin et al. (2006) defined 'self-efficacy' as, "the belief that one has the power to make a difference" (p. 91). Thirteen participants singled out reasons such as "knowing that they could make a difference to someone's life" as significant in making a difference to their experience. As Nicole reflected, "If you spend your time thinking about how you can help others, it changes you." In the same way, Hayley felt that "having the capacity to serve" was what made an act of helping others meaningful. According to Gagné (1977/1916), a sense of personal achievement is one of the conditions for learning favourable attitudes. Many studies have reported that students who believed that their efforts had benefitted those they helped were more likely to feel positive about serving (Astin et al., 2006; Brown et al, 2007; Cipolle, 2010; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Reinders & Youniss, 2006). One explanation was that the realisation of one's capacity to help people in need enhances one's sense of competence (Reinders & Youniss, 2006; Wuthnow, 1995).

5.1.4.1.2 Sense of purpose.

The sense of purpose relates to the concept of efficacy. Knowing that one's action can benefit someone else entails understanding its objectives. For the participants in this study, understanding the purpose of the service activity and knowing that what they did could help address the needs of those they were serving would enhance the meaning of the experience. In their discussion on purpose, several participants questioned the relevance of the service to the recipients and felt there was a need to assess the real needs of those they served. Ian reflected:

> If you show them [students] something that has a real need that
> nobody else is addressing, then you get them to start thinking,
> "Maybe, I should do something. Maybe, I can do something".

The point raised by Ian on the importance for students at school to have a clearer understanding of the needs of those they serve confirmed the results of some studies. For instance, Eyler and Giles (1999) posited that students who knew they were doing something to meet the needs of the beneficiaries were likely to experience greater connectedness. However, from the accounts of some participants, quite often, service was performed to fulfil the mandatory requirement rather than to meet someone's needs. To illustrate, Josephine remarked, "I think the whole purpose of doing the activities for the teachers was so that we could clock in our hours." As in the case of Josephine, the compulsory nature of their service programme could dilute the real purpose of service.

For some participants, the problem of not understanding the purpose of doing service was in part attributable to inadequate explanations from teachers. In describing one of the limitations of the CIP in his school, Roger recalled, "We didn't have any explanation about what we were going to do… just the dos and don'ts." Consistently, participants stressed the need for greater preparation and clearer communication of the purpose of the programme and its various activities. As Priscilla proposed, "I believe in scaffolding. I believe when you actually prepare people well, they will accept it better." In the case of Michael, some advance preparation made a difference to his service experience. He remembered participating in a community service event conducted by a grassroots organisation:

> I do believe it was better run. They [organisers] knew the
> residents and had planned beforehand who were going. And they
> actually gave us a rough guideline of their schedule.

Research shows that students were more likely to respond positively when participating in programmes that included adequate preparation (Metz & Youniss,

2005; Niemi et al., 2000). However, preparation not only includes helping students understand the rationale of doing service but also equipping them with the necessary skills to carry out the activities (Arenas et al., 2006; Metz & Youniss, 2005).

5.1.4.1.3 Connection with the recipients.

From the perspectives of the participants, activities that offered students opportunities to interact with the beneficiaries were favoured over those where there was no such interaction. The absence of interaction could be a possible explanation for participants' negative reactions to Flag Day activities. Olivia was one participant who disliked Flag Days and preferred activities that had a direct connection with people in need:

> One of the things I felt impacted me was a visit to an old folks'
> home. I had the chance to interact with the elderly and actually
> enjoyed communicating with them and spending time with them.
> To me, that was meaningful…. It was the trip to the old folks'
> home that triggered my interest to serve. The other activities such
> as Flag Days and newspaper collections did not impact me.

For some, the idea of service took on new meaning when they gained firsthand experience serving, and when they could personally witness the livelihood and circumstances of people that were different from theirs. Being on site to interact with those who were suffering or in need helped the students feel their plight. As what Priscilla explained:

> We mingled with the old folks. I felt that was the best activity in
> secondary school because I felt the connection. You get to see the
> old folks and talk to them, and at least feel for them.

Unfortunately, being at the site with the beneficiaries was no assurance there would be interaction or connection. Roger recalled being emotionally detached even though he was doing service at the elderly care centre:

> I didn't really feel anything … when we went to the elderly care
> centre, we went there to clean, to have fun with friends. Others

might have different experiences, but for me, I didn't come into

contact with the elderly.

In a study by Reinder and Youniss (2006), it was shown that direct interaction with the beneficiaries resulted in greater self-awareness and increased propensity to help others. Saltmarsh (1996) explained that interaction with others "broadens the individuals' sense of self, connecting the 'I' to the 'we'…" (p. 16). From what students like Olivia and Priscilla shared, face-to-face communication with people they were serving could bring about emotions such as compassion and empathy that are essential to civic development (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Wuthnow, 1995). Farahmandpour (2011) explained that activities that gave students direct contact with those they serve have a bearing on their perception of how meaningful their experience was. On the other hand, research has shown that service that involved "abstract contact" or no direct contact, failed to have positive impacts (Reinders & Youniss, 2006, p. 3).

What this and other studies indicated agree with Dewey's views on education and community. Dewey asserted that schools have a social function, and for students to partake in community life, there must be face-to-face interaction and communication (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Saltmarsh, 1996). However, while direct interaction may give students a greater chance to connect with those they were serving, it is ultimately, up to the students whether they seize those opportunities. As in the example of Michael and his group of friends (Chapter Four, Section 4.1.3.2.4), students and beneficiaries could be together, yet segregated. Or in the case of Roger, the emotional connection was absent because of the nature of the activity. Again, these examples illustrated what Dewey (1969/1938) and Vygotsky (cited in Wink & Putney, 2002) said about students, that they are the actors who choose how they want to transact with the learning milieu.

5.1.4.1.4 Sustainability.

While analysing the reasons for the lack of connection with their beneficiaries, one of the factors mentioned by the participants was the duration and frequency of the service activities. However, with the six-hour minimum requirement for the CIP, it was not unexpected that service events were brief and infrequent. Although there were a few exceptions, especially for those who had a chance to perform service overseas, many participants reported that nearly all the activities were episodic or one-off, lasting just a few hours. One participant who objected to such activities was Ian:

> Also, it is the question of sustainability, is it worthwhile to spend
> all the time to go to the old folks' home for two or three hours,
> then go off and never return? What kind of message are we
> sending to the students? And to the beneficiaries, that they are a
> sideline distraction?

Like Ian, many participants believed that one-off events would not have enduring impacts on both students and the beneficiaries. They suggested that their efforts should be sustained, and recommended follow-up, more regular trips back to the same site. The participants' observations reflected the results of a study on high school community service requirement that reported positive student experiences when the volunteering effort was regular and sustained (Brown et al., 2007; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Niemi, et al., 2000). On the contrary, infrequent, one-off placements did not yield the same impacts (Brown et al., 2007; Hart et al., 2007; Mienhard & Foster, 1999; Niemi et al., 2000). Similarly, in their investigations, McBride, Pritzker, Daftary, and Tang (2006) concluded that the frequency of service moderated students' future intentions to volunteer.

What this and other studies have shown seem to indicate that longer-term, regular commitments to a single site are more effective than short, one-off events at different sites (Brown et al., 2007; Jones & Hill, 2003; Niemi, et al., 2000). As Roger rationalised, the short duration of the activities and low participation rate was hardly sufficient:

They [the school] will have one or two short activities… and it's just one-off. It is less than twenty-four hours a year, less than a day. It's really not a lot of volunteering.

The issue of inadequate time set aside for volunteering was likewise highlighted by some researchers who conducted studies on the forty-hour community service programme in Ontario (Brown et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2007).

5.1.4.1.5 Reflection.

Dewey (1910) described reflection as the kind of thinking that is "active, persistent, and careful…" (p. 6). Based on Dewey's philosophy, reflections are necessary for effective learning (Fishman, 1998c, Shumer et al., 2017). Many researchers believed that reflection, when incorporated in any service programme, could enhance the process of meaning making (Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson, 2005; Marks & Jones, 2004; Meinhard & Foster, 1999). As Shumer et al. (2017) explained, "Experience is digested or understood through reflection..." (p. 3).

While reflection is a key feature of service-learning and is recognised by practitioners and researchers as essential to good practice, it is not the norm for community service (Arenas et al., 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Felten et al., 2006). In their study of mandatory service in Toronto, Meinhard and Foster (1999) raised the issue that there was no provision for students to discuss their service experiences. Likewise, evident from the data in this study, reflection was rare. To quote Katie, "There's definitely no sharing, like, let's get together and talk about what you did. There was no such thing". For those who only participated in service within Singapore, only three recalled that reflection was a feature of their service experience and even for them, most of the time, it was carried out as a form of informal sharing. None of the participants recalled engaging in any form of written reflection although many of them (13) indicated that time for reflection had been scheduled for all post-school overseas community service. Most participants acknowledged that reflection had clear benefits as the process could help students appreciate the meaning of service. Ian for instance, believed that there should be opportunities for reflection to

help students contemplate more deeply on their experience, "It's good to talk through what you experience, what you feel, what your emotions are".

As shown in the findings, community service, could expose students to situations that were unfamiliar or, at times, challenging. According to Eyler and Giles (1999), these new encounters could turn out to be learning moments if there were opportunities for critical reflection. For example, the incident that Michael narrated about the segregation he felt during his visit to the elderly care centre could be a catalyst for reflection. In such a scenario, Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (refer to Figure 2.1) could be a useful strategy to engage students in some serious thinking. As an illustration on the use of Kolb's learning cycle, learning could commence with the volunteering experience itself, as in the case of Michael and his classmates' visit to the elderly facility. After the event, the students should be encouraged to look back upon their experience and reexamine what had happened, such as the behaviour of the elderly and how the students had acted. Through structured reflection, the teacher could prompt them to engage in deeper, more critical thinking that hopefully enable them to develop a more complex understanding of social issues and greater social and self-awareness. Eventually, subsequent volunteering activities could be test beds for students to apply their new insights and understandings. These new experiences again become the basis for further reflections and actions and the learning cycle would continue. Using Kolb's strategies, teachers can help students examine their service experience, and hopefully, learn something from it and use their new insights for future volunteering.

5.1.4.2 Student-centred approach.

Besides designing meaningful service programmes, the participants felt that schools should give greater attention to learners if they were to enhance the quality of their experience. Two shortfalls often regarded by the participants as deficit in their CIP experience were the lack of variety and insufficient student voice.

5.1.4.2.1 Variety.

Many of the participants (11) believed that if educators wanted students to be more enthusiastic about doing service, they had to consider their individual needs, abilities, and interests. Evan, for example, suggested, "do a survey to find out students' diverse interests and try to match the different service activities to their interests." The point Evan made concurs with Dewey's (1966/1916) reminder that "individuality has to be respected in education" (p. 302). A similar point was made by Vygotsky (1997) who specified, "The goal of school is not at all a matter of reducing everyone to the same level…" (p. 79).

In view of what the findings in this study show, to create meaningful and relevant service experiences, educators need to appreciate the unique characteristics of students. Designing programs that show sensitivity to student differences when translated to practice means greater variety and flexibility. However, in the context of the CIP, the lack of variety was a limitation that was often identified. Ian described how students felt about being asked to do the same activity repeatedly:

> Strangely, every year, we always have Flag Days… we felt that it
> was quite unnecessary. So, we kind of dreaded it, we didn't want
> to help out as much.

Certainly, the 'one-size-fits–all' approach often described by the participants did not agree with them. As Evan recommended, one area in which the CIP could be improved upon was to "have a wider variety of activities".

5.1.4.2.2 Student input.

Besides the lack of variety, another area the participants found to be unsatisfactory in their CIP experience was the lack of student input. In their discussion of how schools could make community service more relevant and interesting, the participants suggested giving students a chance to voice their opinions. Student voice implies that "the unique ideas, opinions and concerns of young people are respected and youth are free to express them within an organisation or programme" (Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2011, cited in Children and Youth in

Challenging Contexts [CYCC] Network, 2013, p. 10). In the opinion of Morgan and Streb (2001), "A project with a low level of student voice would be one where the teacher selects the specific service projects, plans the logistics, and then has the students involved in the actual performance of the service" (p. 158). Such an approach appeared to be the case for many of the participants in this study. A common complaint amongst them was the top-down method used by teachers. As Roger recalled, "It's kind of rigid… everything was organised for us, we had no say". Josephine, who was equally unhappy that they were often told what to do suggested, "Teachers should find out what students are interested in doing, rather than force them to do something that they do not find relevant".

Many (ten) like Josephine, expressed that there should be a greater partnership between students and teachers. Evan, for instance, offered his viewpoint, "I think it requires a whole school approach, not something top down, or another initiative from the ministry or the principal". Commonly, the participants expressed the opinion that schools should encourage students to have their say and allow them to play a more proactive role in the decision-making process. In a report by CYCC Network (2013), youth voice was seen as a key factor for youth engagement and recommended that there should be opportunities for young people to "speak, be heard and be listened to" (p. 10). Similarly, Cipolle (2010) stressed that when students believe that their views and opinions are valued, "their voice comes through loud and clear" (p. 73). Many studies provide evidence that students who were actively involved in the planning and execution of service projects reported positive attitudes towards the beneficiaries and increased civic responsibility (Cipolle, 2010; Farahmandpour, 2011; McBride et al., 2006). What the findings of this and other studies have shown reinforced Vygotsky's portrayal of learning; namely, that it should be a dialectical activity where teacher and learners co-create meaning together (Wink & Putney, 2002).

5.1.4.3 Effective teachers.

Finally, in their assessment of their service programme, the participants factored in effective teachers as central to successful outcomes. To recall what

Alison said earlier, the teachers in her school showed that they cared. A few others mentioned that some of their teachers had been good role models who demonstrated the value of service. What these individuals said tallied with Gagné's (1977/1916) perspectives on "human modelling" (p. 252). According to him, students learn from teachers they admire. Apparently, for two participants, the role modelling had not stopped even though school was long over. Gwen, for example, mentioned that she recently met up with the teacher in charge of the CIP to share her experience volunteering with Habitat for Humanity in Hungary. Dean assisted his CIP teacher by accompanying a group of students on an overseas community service trip several years after he left school. Incidentally, both these participants returned to their alma mater to volunteer in different areas. As pointed out by Professor Lee, "Citizenship also has a personal dimension… how the teacher demonstrates him or herself as a role model, someone the students would look up to so that they would feel convinced" (cited by Lee, Sim, & Koh, 2012, p. 8). What Professor Lee said reflected the sentiments of both Gwen and Dean who believed that students would be more receptive to the idea of serving if teachers could convince them through their own commitment to community life. As Dewey (1966/1916) insisted, for learners to learn, teachers had to teach with 'single-mindedness' or 'completeness of interest' (p. 176). Unfortunately, from the observations of some participants in this study, not many teachers showed much interest in community service.

Some participants remembered that their schools placed little emphasis on community service and that was reflected in the attitude of their teachers. In this study, almost half of the participants were of the impression that their teachers did not appear to be active advocates of service and sensed their absence of fervour. Students can pick up the inconsistencies between what teachers do and what they tell them to do (Brookfield, 1996). What these participants said about their teachers' lack of interest in service was consistent with the findings of several studies. According to Lee et al. (2012), research has shown that within Singapore, educators rarely take part in community life, yet they advocate that students do. However, their findings are not only confined to Singapore (Lee et al., 2012). It was also reported that similar surveys carried out in countries such as the "US, UK, Australia, China and Russia" found parallel results about teachers (Lee et al., 2012, p. 8). These findings have

significant implications on practice. As Brookfield (1996) suggested, the civic behaviour of teachers could potentially influence their students.

As this study has indicated, teacher attitude and behaviour towards community service varied. On one end of the spectrum, there were teachers who champion the cause and on the other extreme, there were those who hardly showed their enthusiasm. One explanation given by Wheeler (2009) for the inability of teachers to concentrate their effort on community service is that service is time consuming. As Bennett (2009) pointed out, teachers are also limited by the many competing demands on them. Incidentally, Alison, one of the participants who is a teacher, talked about how she struggled to find time for volunteering, "Even now, time is my biggest challenge… to find the balance between teaching commitments and volunteering commitments." A study on citizenship education in Singapore by Sim et al. (2011) found that community service was relegated when schools ran on tight schedules.

Besides the lack of time, the participants believed that the teacher's lackadaisical attitude towards service might in part be due to inexperience. In his observation of teacher behaviour, one participant described, "They were also feeling their way around." According to O'Donoghue, Kirshner, and McLaughlin (2003), without experience, "even the best-intentioned adults may not yet understand what youth participation means" (p. 22). One suggestion made by some participants was to avail teachers the same opportunities as students to experience community service.

Correspondingly, Brookfield (1996) argued that the "best way to help teachers empathise with the emotions and feelings of their own learners" was for them to experience what it felt like to be learners (p. 21). What Brookfield (1996) suggested has pedagogical implications on teachers; namely, that teachers had to learn to serve in preparation for them to teach students to do likewise. In Singapore, since the year 2005, service-learning has become an integral part of the teacher training programme in the National Institute of Education (D'Rozario & Low, 2012; Koh, Liu, Chye, &

Divaharan, 2013; Sim & Low, 2012). The year-long service-learning initiative, known as Group Endeavours in Service Learning (GESL), is compulsory for student teachers (D'Rozario & Low, 2012; Koh et al., 2013; Sim & Low, 2012). However, these programmes were for new teachers and were quite recent (D'Rozario & Low, 2012; Koh et al., 2013; Sim & Low, 2012). It could mean then that most teachers would have no previous training on service.

Eyler and Giles (1999) emphasised that students require "emotional support" when they volunteer in environments that are unfamiliar or come into contact with people who are very different (p. 185). Community service by its very nature can expose students to situations that they might never have encountered and they may have difficulties dealing with. For example, one participant related an incident that occurred during a CIP event at a hospital for the mentally ill. Half way through their performance, a patient unexpectedly turned violent. Another individual recalled being bitten by a senior resident in an elderly care centre. Both these participants did not remember receiving any counselling after what had happened, neither were the incidents brought up again by the respective teachers. As Wheeler (2009) explained, teachers might not have the knowledge and experience to handle emotional issues. The point made by Wheeler (2009) reinforces the importance for teachers to be trained so that they could support their students' learning (O'Donoghue et al., 2003). However, research showed that the lack of trained personnel to implement service programmes properly was often a challenge faced by many schools (Wheeler, 2009). The problem of inadequate resources together with time constraints may hamper effective implementation as community service is both "labour and resource-intensive" (Wheeler, 2009, p. 30).

5.1.5 Thoughts on mandatory service.

Eyler and Giles (1999) once described mandatory service as "a contradiction in terms" (p. 181) and indeed it was, as evident in the varied responses of those who participated in it. Even students admitted having conflicting feelings about the idea of required service. Dean gave his assessment:

It's hard to say whether CIP is necessary or whether it is good or bad. Maybe it was just what I needed to spark off the things I do later, or maybe it could turn out that students see volunteering as a numbers game.

5.1.5.1 Reasons for endorsing mandatory service.

In this study, the participants were given the opportunity to comment on the principle of mandating community service. Notwithstanding the controversies surrounding the concept and their varying early perceptions of the CIP, 15 of the 16 participants were in favour of the idea. Two primary reasons were given for their views. The participants believed that firstly, mandatory service would give more students the exposure to community service, and secondly, it could benefit students.

5.1.5.1.1 More students would have the exposure to community service.

Some participants were of the opinion that the only way to ensure that a higher proportion of students would volunteer was by making service compulsory. For example, Roger gave his viewpoint, "CIP allows a greater proportion of young people to know about volunteering". A few participants used the scenario where service had not been required and said they knew few young people would take the initiative to volunteer on their own. As Katie commented, "If they do away with CIP, it could turn out there will be far less people doing anything for the community." Frequently, age or maturity was cited as possible reasons why students might not consider doing service on their own. For example, Beatrice explained, "I think most of us were young and not mature enough, so if schools don't make it compulsory, most people won't do it."

Advocates for the requirement argued that not all young people would volunteer on their own and mandating service would give every student the chance to experience civic involvement (Anderson, 1999; Marks & Jones, 2004; McLellan & Youniss, 2003). As some participants remarked, they could not think of a better alternative but to continue making service compulsory. Evan, for example, felt that

compelling students to serve might appear to be a hard approach, but conceded it was necessary:

> If they don't introduce it in the first place, many students won't think twice about doing community service. So, it is both good and bad. We use a hard approach to ensure the mindset of volunteerism can be reinforced in students. If we don't, students may never have a chance to try it. I'm not saying that the approach is right, but then again, what we have done may be working so far.

5.1.5.1.2 There were benefits in mandatory service.

Another reason participants gave for endorsing mandatory service was that they saw benefits in their own experience with required service. Although outcomes on impacts vary, 14 participants stated unequivocally that the CIP did establish the platform for adult volunteering. Citing themselves as examples, they believed that if not for the initial exposure, there could be a possibility that they might not be currently volunteering. For example, Beatrice commented, "If not for this [CIP], I don't think I would even know about volunteering." Similarly, Gwen believed in the value of mandatory service and was grateful for the experience:

> I really in a sense, thank the school. Without making it an obligation, and giving us the motivation through points, through the grades… many of us would not have been exposed to doing community service.

The point raised by the participants corresponds with the results of studies on high school students that showed that mandated service gave them the exposure to volunteering that they would not have tried on their own (Browns et al., 2007, Giles & Eyler, 1994; Wuthnow, 1995). Similarly, in a survey on the ways young people in Singapore started volunteering, it was found that the school played a major role, in particular, through the CIP (National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre, 2014). Positive outcomes linking the requirement with high levels of interest in future

service have been reported (Harrison, 2012; Henderson et al., 2007; Reinders & Youniss, 2006).

Notably, a few participants commented that they sought other avenues for volunteering because they did not like some of the activities organised by their schools. For these individuals, despite the limitations of the programme, the initial exposure to service gave them the impetus to look for service opportunities on their own, and as a result, many ended up exceeding the stipulated number of hours of service required. Likewise, in their research on the 40-hour service requirement in Ontario, Metz and Youniss (2005) reported that, "80% of the students went on to do voluntary service for which they received no school credit" (p. 413).

Besides gaining the initial exposure to volunteering, the participants felt their CIP experience had benefitted them in other ways. Most significantly, they observed that they had learned through serving others. For example, there were reports of personal growth that resulted from their interactions with people who were suffering or in need. As Nicole explained:

> You develop that sense of responsibility. You may not have it if
> you are never exposed to these types of problems. You learn new
> skills and become more equipped to help, more responsible, and
> more capable of helping.

The personal encounters with those in difficult situations also taught young people moral values such as empathy and compassion. Incidentally, while discussing moral development, Priscilla explained the difference between the two terms, "I see compassion as an action for empathy. Empathy is a feeling, compassion is about doing something because of the feeling". The importance of moral behaviour was similarly emphasised by Dewey (1966/1916) in his Theory of Morals. According to Dewey (1966/1916), morality is "not what a person is inside his own consciousness, but what he [or she] does" (p. 349). From what the participants shared, witnessing

that their acts of service could make a difference to another person's life helped them realise that they could be agents of change.

Parallel conclusions were shown in studies on required service indicating that students recognized that volunteering, even when mandated had its advantages (Bennett, 2009; Henderson et al., 2014; Metz & Youniss, 2005). Although many of the participants saw clear benefits as they looked back upon their experience with mandated service, they admitted that the benefits were not obvious until much later. For example, Beatrice reflected on her evolving perceptions of school service:

> During my secondary school years, I don't think I gave it much
>
> thought. But now, looking back I felt it definitely did help us, it
>
> helped expose us to this kind of work.

5.1.5.2 Programme implementation was more crucial.

In their assessment of whether service should be compulsory, the participants argued that what really mattered was how the programmes were implemented. The participants' views corresponded with the findings of a study by Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar (2007) that showed positive links between programme structure and civic outcomes irrespective of whether service was compulsory or voluntary. Dean, one of the participants shared his insights on the importance of programme execution:

> And your question whether CIP should be compulsory, I don't
>
> have a clear answer. But I think if you want to do it, you have to
>
> execute it well…. CIP must be done in a way that really engages a
>
> child. The outcome of engagement will be a willingness from the
>
> child to want to understand and serve the community. CIP
>
> shouldn't be accounted for purely in quantity. There should be an
>
> element of quality.

What Dean reflected about the importance of quality had always been emphasised by Dewey. For Dewey (1969/1938), it is the responsibility of educators

"to arrange for the kind of experiences which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his [or her] activities are, nevertheless, more than immediately enjoyable since they promote having desirable future experiences" (p. 27). The participants' feedback on what counts as quality corresponds with the point Dewey made; namely, the importance for schools to create learning experiences that are meaningful and relevant to learners.

5.2   Section Two
Sub-question 2:

How do young people feel they might have been affected by their service experience at school?

In the Theory of Experience, Dewey (1969/1938) specified that experience was necessary for "all genuine education" although he pointed out that not every experience would result in learning (p. 25). To have a clearer understanding of what learning is, this study looks to Gagné (1977/1916) for his interpretation:

> Learning is a change in human disposition or capability which
> persists over time, the kind of change exhibits itself in behaviour,
> and the inference of learning is made by comparing what
> behaviour was possible before the individual was placed in a
> "learning situation" and what behaviour can be exhibited after
> such treatment. The change can be and often is an increase in
> capability for some type of performance. It may also be an altered
> disposition of the sort called attitude, or interest or value (p. 3).

As reported in the Findings chapter, what the participants said about the outcomes of their school service experience seems to fit the definition of learning by Gagné (1977/1916). Some of these outcomes included the learning of values such as empathy and a sense of civic responsibility as well as greater awareness of their own capacity to effect change. It was also significant that the majority of these young adult volunteers believed there was a connection between what they learned through their CIP experience and their subsequent involvement in service.

5.2.1 Link between school service experience and adult volunteering.

Fourteen participants believed that there was a link between their civic behaviour and attitude towards service and their learning of service while at school. The next part of this discussion examines further how they interpreted this link.

5.2.1.1 How participants interpreted the link.

While nearly all (14) the participants believed that there was a link between their prior service experience at school and adult volunteering, how they interpreted the connection varied. For some individuals, there was an explicit co-relationship between their past CIP experience and their sense of service, but for others, it did not play a vital role. School service might trigger interest in volunteering or it might be transformational. Hayley described how she perceived the link:

> I think when I did the first CIP [activity], it may not be that
> significant, but it sparked off the next CIP [activity], and as I
> continued doing it, the interest in community service sort of grew.
> I feel that the volunteering activities I did had planted a seed of
> compassion in me to serve.

Almost exclusively, participants described their CIP experience as giving them the initial exposure and providing them a platform for future service. Often, during conversations with these volunteers, the researcher heard remarks such as, "I perceive the CIP in my school as helpful in the sense that it introduced me to the field of volunteering." Words and phrases such as 'foundation', 'stepping stone', 'starting point', and 'first step' were commonly used to indicate how the CIP gave them the first exposure to community service (refer to Table 4.7). The link between school service and subsequent adult volunteering as shown in this study corresponds with what other researchers had found. For instance, Cipolle (2010) reported that there is a strong relationship between school service and adult volunteering irrespective of the kind of service programme. A study on Ontario's mandatory community service programme showed positive connections between participation in the programme and future volunteering (Brown et al., 2007; Meinhard & Foster, 1999). However, these positive links were conditional (Brown et al., 2007;

Farahmandpour, 2011; Padanyi et al., 2009). Positive outcomes were reported only for placements that were sustained and those that were favourably assessed by students (Brown et al., 2007; Farahmandpour, 2011; Padanyi et al., 2009).

Similar to the Ontario study, some of the participants expressed that the type of activities they were involved in had a bearing on their perseverance with service. As Francis analysed, "It depends on the event. Some events make you think a lot more, it makes you reflect on the purpose of service." Ian for example, felt little connection with many of the CIP activities that were organised in his school. However, he singled out one activity, namely, the Boys' Brigade Sharity Gift Box event, that positively shaped his sense of service:

> CIP felt like another school activity… I wouldn't say I had been
> affected in that sense, I did not feel an emotional connection,
> except for that one activity… I felt I actually did benefit someone
> and because of that I kept going back to volunteer even after I left
> school. That actually started it for me.

In Lynn's case, it was also the close interaction she had with the child she was teaching that helped her appreciate the value of service:

> What impacted me most was when I was at the school for
> children with learning disabilities. I was assigned to teach Er hu
> (a Chinese musical instrument) to a child. It was a one-to-one
> interaction. So, through this connection with the child, I felt that I
> can actually help someone, that I can make an impact on
> someone's life. Maybe it was the first time that I felt something so
> strongly, that made me want to continue to do more.

From the participants' descriptions, experiences associated with a sense of efficacy and connection with their beneficiaries help enhance their ethic of service. The importance of understanding the circumstances under which students learn such values has been emphasised by Gagné (1977/1916). Based on Gagné's (1977/1916) perspectives, knowledge about how school service engenders the learning of attitudes

would be incomplete without a more detailed understanding of the conditions that were favourable for such learning.

5.2.1.2 The use of metaphors to describe the link.

It is also worth noting that the participants repeatedly resorted to the use of metaphors to describe the relationship between the past experience and their present involvement. As reflected in Table 4.7, expressions such as, 'planted the seed', 'set the stage', and 'opened the door' were commonly used to portray the link. The repeated use of metaphors was perhaps a reflection of how difficult it was for the participants to articulate that relationship. Maple and Edwards (2010) explained that metaphors give people the tools to "relate, compare, and make meaning" of their experiences (p. 40). As the participants had pointed out, in reality, there could be many things happening in their lives that influenced their outlook and behaviour. For instance, Dean explained, "I would not just relate my sense of service to my earlier service experiences alone, but my experiences in general." Similar sentiments were expressed by Evan, "CIP impacted me but there were many things I did that were also impactful. Even back in secondary school, I worked as a waiter and tutor." On the other hand, Ian believed that his family and the school culture influenced his sense of service more than his involvement in CIP activities. The point raised by these participants reflects the key idea in Vygotsky's (1986) Social Constructionist Theory. In Vygotsky's (1986) view, people are influenced by their interaction with others in their social, cultural, historical environment.

While most participants attributed their sense of service to positive service experiences, there were some who pointed out that negative or unsatisfactory experiences could have paradoxically, pushed them to look for other service alternatives elsewhere. To quote Olivia, "But it [CIP] was inadequate, so I went out to look for other opportunities to serve." Dean shared the same sentiments:

> But volunteering when I was a student did introduce to me the
> meaning of giving back. For example, I might find Flag Days in
> secondary school pointless. But that in itself challenged me to
> think, "Is there a better way to give back to society?" It wasn't a

question I sought answers to at the start; instead it was a thought that was sowed in my head and now that I'm older, I can find the answers.

5.2.1.3 Dewey's (1967/1916) Theory of Experience.

To conclude the discussion on how past service experiences affected subsequent civic behaviour, it would be germane to revisit Dewey's (1966/1916) Theory of Experience. Dewey (1969/1938) was emphatic that learning should not cease when school ended. Using the Principle of Continuity, Dewey explained that every experience has the capacity to change those that come after and how educative an experience is can only be judged by "what it moves toward and into" (Dewey, 1969/1938 p. 38). In Lynn's personal observation, her journey as a volunteer began from her initial experience with service at school:

> I feel that it is a good initial exposure for me. A baby step, but definitely a step towards something… we always need the first step, without that, there won't be subsequent actions.

Perhaps, Lynn's representation of her service experience as a "step towards something" resonates with Dewey's portrayal of continuity. However, ultimately, many of the participants stated that the decision to continue serving beyond what they learnt at school was still an individual choice. Gwen made a salient point in her own observation:

> But in terms of longer-term commitment, it depends on the individuals whether they want to continue because they have a choice. The school gave us the exposure and everything. It's like you can give someone a very good meal, but it's up to the individual whether he or she wants to eat it, it still is a personal choice.

5.2.1.4 Not to establish a cause-and-effect relationship.

Although participants saw a link between early and subsequent service, a causal relationship could not be established and it is not the intent of this study.

While civic responsibility was a desired learning outcome of community service programmes, it would be erroneous to conclude that students persevered with service as a result of their community service involvement at school. In the present study, all the participants had continued to serve the community and were selected for the study because of this criterion. However, it could not be assumed that for all these participants, the CIP that they had been involved in had been successful in achieving its goals. As will be discussed in the subsequent section, there were multiple reasons besides what happened at school that could influence an individual's decision to serve. Their volunteering could also be that they were already predisposed to serve in the first place. Notably, ten students also performed service outside school. Neither could it be assumed that for all the students who did not continue serving beyond the requirement, their CIP experience had been unsuccessful. A multiplicity of factors could interplay to deter a person from serving that may or may not have anything to do with school.

From what the participants had shared, the relationship between service at school and adult volunteering was far from straightforward. Perhaps Dean captured the complexity when he summed up his assessment:

> But it's really something intangible. I can't quantify it. I can't
> really correlate it and say that due to CIP, I'm serving now. I can
> only say that it might have an impact…. Community service and
> adult volunteering has no real equation.

5.2.2 Understanding impacts using Cipolle's (2010) Social-Justice Model.

While it had not been easy for participants to articulate how their early school service experience correlated with adult volunteering, many of them saw clear benefits in their involvement in retrospect. From the themes that emerged, it was found that there were parallels between how students described those benefits and Cipolle's (2010) research findings on service-learning impacts. Because of these similarities, the study has made references to Cipolle's (2010) Social-Justice Model of Service-learning to help interpret the data. Although Cipolle (2010) developed this

model to explain service-learning outcomes, the concepts behind her theory can have relevance to this study on community service.

According to Cipolle (2010), "regardless of the type of service programme, individuals who participated in any service during high school were more likely to volunteer extensively as adults than those who did not" (p. 17). Cipolle (2010) believed that service-learning, when well designed and properly executed could strengthen "critical consciousness" that was necessary for citizenship development. (p. 39). As represented in Figure 5.2, four areas were identified as essential to critical consciousness; namely, "self-awareness, awareness of others, awareness of social issues, and ethic of service or change agent" (Cipolle, 2010, p. 40). Based on her observations, effective service-learning programmes present opportunities that foster growth in all four areas. However, the data in this study has shown that even for community service, some of the outcomes fit Cipolle's interpretation of critical consciousness.
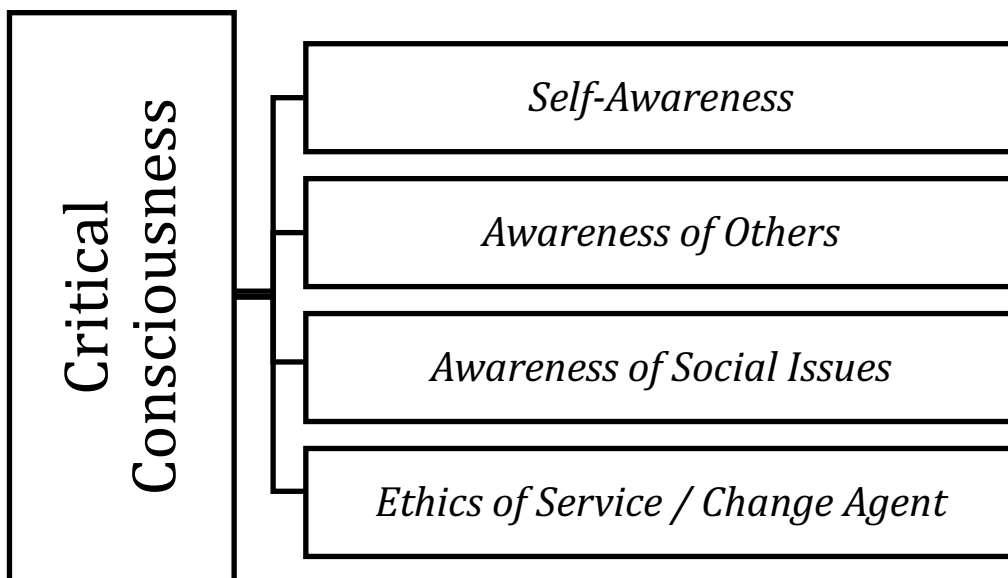
Figure 5.2. Elements of Critical Consciousness Development
From *Service-Learning and Social Justice*. (p. 11), by S. B. Cipolle, 2010, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

5.2.2.1 Greater self-awareness.

Research has shown that direct contact with people whose life circumstances are different can lead to greater self-awareness (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Reinders & Youniss, 2006). Cipolle (2010) defines self-awareness as "having a clear understanding of your level of privilege, your values, your role in society, and your responsibility to others" (p. 9). When the participants reflected on possible changes that could have been attributed to their service experience, they gave examples of widened perspectives, as well as changes in their own attitudes and values. What the participants had shared showed evidence of greater self-understanding. These findings aligned with the results of several studies on required service that reported on changes in the way students see themselves after their experience (Henderson et al., 2007; Reinders & Youniss, 2006).

5.2.2.1.1 Values.

Some participants reported that serving in the community created pathways for them to show care, empathy, and compassion. Close interactions with individuals who were facing difficulties taught students perspective-taking. Through the interviews, it was common to hear these young volunteers talking about imagining themselves in the shoes of those they were helping. Occasionally, there would be those who considered that there was little to separate them from the individuals they were serving. According to Cipolle (2010), the realisation that another person's circumstances could be theirs could serve as a catalyst for action. Cipolle (2010) used Nodding's concept of "engrossment" to explain a person's ethic of care and commitment to serve (p. 47). For Cipolle (2010), when people become engrossed with the person they are helping, they begin to absorb the person's feelings as their own and this feeling of empathy propels them to reach out for him or her.

In addition, the participants also commented that there had been a change in their attitude in that they learned to be less self-focussed. Sensing a connection with individuals who were less fortunate helped them to look beyond themselves. As Francis and Michael shared:

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> CIP was good training… it teaches you adult thinking, to look
>
> past yourself and what you want or do not want.
>
> (Francis)

> I guess CIP provides the opportunity for students to have the
>
> experience, it helped them realise that the world is not all that it
>
> appears to be. It isn't all about their comforts, their computer
>
> games, their toys. So, CIP can open both their eyes and mind to
>
> the world.
>
> (Michael)

According to Saltmarsh (1996), service opens up opportunities for young people to connect with others, helping them realise they should forego their "self-interest to work for the common good" (p. 16). Nicole, one of the participants observed that in getting students to volunteer in the community, schools were sending the message that the community mattered.

5.2.2.1.2 Privilege.

For many participants, seeing with their own eyes the living conditions in some communities enabled them to recognise their own privileges and made them more appreciative of what they have. For example, Evan remarked:

> The opportunity to help others beyond my comfort zone was truly
>
> an eye-opening experience, and this made me appreciate the lives
>
> that we have been living.

The majority of those participants who went overseas for community service mentioned that they realised how fortunate they were to be living in Singapore. Witnessing injustice in some of the communities they served presented these individuals a chance to reappraise their own government and it was common to hear them acknowledging what their government had done. Dean for example, reflected on his community service expedition to Cambodia when he was in Secondary Three:

> The five days in Siem Reap were extremely meaningful and really
>
> expanded my horizons. I was more appreciative of the peace and

harmony Singapore had established…. Interestingly, it made me
more grateful for how our government runs things in Singapore.

5.2.2.2 Greater awareness of others.

In their appraisals, participants described how the service experience triggered their thinking process, enabling them to challenge preconceived ideas about others and see things from a fresh perspective. Participants talked about increasing connection, and the realisation that the people they were serving were no different from them. Several reflected on the shared humanity between server and beneficiary, that despite their very different backgrounds, and their disadvantaged circumstances, the people they were helping were just like themselves. In his reflections, Dean wrote:

> We are different, yet we are similar. In the sense that they also
> have aspirations, they also have dreams…. It's interesting to see
> the commonalities in people. We are the same, not that different.

Gwen discovered that love could be a common denominator in human relationships even in difficult circumstances. She recounted the connection between the students and the children in an orphanage during an overseas CIP trip to Thailand:

> When we left the orphanage, there was silence, everyone was
> sobbing. I learn that any bond can be strong, no matter how short
> it may seem, no matter what the circumstances. Love can still
> happen in torn places.

For Francis, a common life experience connected him to the child he served. During a visit to an orphanage in India, he saw a child with disabilities who reminded him of his own sister with similar conditions, who not so long ago, had passed away. Not only did he feel the emotional connection but also a deep empathy for the child who was not only disabled but also abandoned. In the interview, he recollected how that night after his visit, he broke down during reflection, grieving for his sister and the child. To recapitulate what Gwen reflected upon, "We all share life, we all share this world, we all share death".

Some participants realised that coming into close contact with those who suffered helped to breakdown their stereotypical outlook. One such "negative stereotype" was that those who are in need of help were often relatively weaker (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 29). Eyler and Giles (1999) posited that participation in service, though for a short duration, could moderate stereotypical thinking. For instance, Gwen reflected that even those whose lives had been destroyed by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami were still capable of hope. Witnessing the indomitable will of those who had to come face-to-face with life's adversities, made her question if she would have the same strength and tenacity to survive if she were in their position:

> We had seen the tsunami all over the news and we knew how bad
> it was. But when we got there, it's really how we felt about it. I
> was barely 15, so it was like a real learning point, a discovery,
> because when I got there, there were lots of young orphans. There
> were also many people who were my age or older. And if you
> think about it, we are alive in the same world, at the same age,
> yet, we are living life so differently because of our circumstances
> that are beyond our control. That in a sense was an awakening,
> like, "Wow! I'm lucky!" I can't imagine what they have been
> through and how they're dealing with it and they're still alive.
> Then you begin to get scary thoughts, if I were them what would I
> do, would I kill myself?

According to Cipolle (2010), students developed increased awareness of others through their interaction with people from different backgrounds. She explained that working with those in need or were suffering could enhance students' capacity to see those they were helping as "individuals with their own stories" (p. 41). The point Cipolle (2010) raised seemed true for this inquiry.

5.2.2.3 Enhanced awareness of social issues.

From the participants' accounts, witnessing people's predicaments could provoke introspections that went beyond face value. In recalling some of their experiences, the participants' descriptions not only focused on what they saw but

also on the injustice and the inequities that existed in their own community or globally. For example, Nicole narrated that after spending two weeks doing service in India, she gained a clearer understanding of what poverty was like in terms of people's plight and state of helplessness:

> … their lack of facilities, their lack of food, basic needs that are
> not met, lack of cleanliness and hygiene. Also, the problems that
> they have, the help that they did not receive… I became more
> aware.

In her final reflection, Nicole wrote about how the exposure to the various social problems in the community helped her become more conscious of her responsibility to the community:

> It [CIP] was useful in the sense it helped me gain experience and
> exposure to community problems like poverty and child abuse in
> our own country and overseas. It makes me more consciously
> aware and somehow makes me more compassionate towards
> others.

During the second phase of the interview, Beatrice again brought up and reappraised the experience with Project Rice, a service activity that involved helping to distribute rice to poor people:

> But the experience did spark in me the awareness about
> community work and about people in the community who needed
> help. Like for Project Rice, I remember how shocked I felt to
> know that there were actually people in our community who lived
> in such sad conditions, especially when most parts of Singapore
> seem so developed.

Witnessing could make on impact. Many participants shared that when they were on site to witness, to see hardship for themselves, and to listen to the stories people told, the experience left an indelible impression on them. Francis, who went on a trip to India when he was in Secondary Two, recounted his visit to a village

devastated by the tsunami. Seeing the enormity of people's suffering made him indignant:

> The next day, we visited a village that was hit by the tsunami. We
> talked to the villagers who told us what they had been through
> and their frustrations. I felt indignant that they did not get the help
> from the government authorities…. It was horrifying to learn they
> had no food for four days.

Those participants who had the opportunity to go on overseas trips for community service and had firsthand experience serving and spending time with those who were living in poverty became more globally aware. The realisation that hunger and poverty was far more widespread than they had ever imagined had motivated some to persist with their volunteering efforts. Gwen described how the CIP trip to Thailand affected her:

> That's why after that [the community service experience in
> Thailand], I still continue going overseas, even when I was in the
> polytechnic and subsequently, with Habitat [Habitat for
> Humanities]. I feel there's more to learn, more to see, and more to
> help…. There are really many different needs all over the world.

As shown in the above examples, students could gain a more complex understanding of social issues when they came face to face with the poverty, disabilities, struggles and challenges people confront (Cipolle, 2010). Cipolle (2010) explained why it was important for schools to give students the opportunities to render help to others. According to her, these opportunities, together with good role modelling, could "create an ethic of service that continues throughout their adult years" (p. 43). Cipolle's observation reflected what students like Gwen shared about how awareness of social issues could lead to a longer-term commitment to service.

5.2.2.4 Ability to effect change.

The majority (13) of the participants expressed that through service they discovered their own capacity to bring change to people's circumstances. As Michael reflected on his CIP experience, "… it helped me see what I can do, what I need to do, and what I need to learn to do." During the interviews, it was also common to hear participants mentioning that they came to realise that sometimes even a small contribution could make a huge difference. For example, when Beatrice helped to distribute rice to the poor, she did not expect that a token amount of rice could mean so much to another person, "When I gave them the rice, they felt so happy, even though it was just a small amount, maybe to last them for a few days". Hayley felt the same way during a visit to the home for children who were disabled, that a short visit could bring cheer to others, "We just spent a short while interacting with them, and they felt very happy". According to Cipolle (2010), when students engaged in activities that had a "real impact", they begin to see their own potential to effect change (p. 11). Similarly, a study by Brown et al. (2007) concluded that students who believed that they had made a positive contribution to the community were more likely to view service favourably.

Apart from self-efficacy, the participants also reported that their involvement in some of the service activities increased their confidence. As Reinders and Youniss (2006) explained, the realisation that one has the potential to create change could build a person's confidence. Below, Hayley reflected on how each service experience could scaffold and build confidence:

> I feel that every activity has taught me a thing or two… it has
> given me the opportunity to take in more, do more tasks, because
> I feel that if I can handle this, I can handle a bit more and I can
> deal with a bit more. And if I've gotten to one level, if I've seen
> how things work at this level, I want to venture more. So, learning
> doesn't stop here.

In a way, what Hayley shared illustrates Kolb's (1984) theory on experiential learning. In his Model of Experiential Learning (refer to Figure 2.1), Kolb (1984)

describes learning as a recursive cycle that moves from actual experience, to reflection and conceptualisation, and further experimentation. The learning process, according to Kolb (1984), is continuously transformed by new experiences. As many of these young volunteers reflected, CIP activities got them started, gave them the concrete experience so that they have the confidence and capability to try serving on their own after they left school. Perhaps Katie's interpretation of her learning captured what Kolb said:

> But once again, it's about having that experience and it just
> accumulates. Knowing what you are doing and kind of realising
> that the experience is good. Now, that I think about it, I guess that
> was where it all started, that realisation that you are doing
> something for the community… When I started CIP, I just did it.
> It was quite hard to have a proper reflection because at that time,
> there was never anything to compare our experience with. Now
> I'm at this stage when I'm thinking, "Okay, I did all that, it helped
> with the experience, I like doing it." And I'm thinking now, that
> in future, I could do it. I know I will not stop volunteering.

For many of the participants, the community service they performed as students acquainted them with the different avenues that were available for those who need help. As Lynn reflected:

> I have learned that it's not so hard to help people… there are a lot
> of programmes, all these organisations that are there, I can always
> ask them and see what I can do for the community. At least,
> there's a starting point. It's not just from scratch.

Eyler and Giles (1999) alleged that young people who were ignorant of the welfare agencies in their communities would find it hard to contribute. From the data of this study, there was an indication that even for those who did not enjoy the service activities acknowledged that it was through the CIP, that they were made aware of the various welfare organisations and the avenues available for them to contribute. Incidentally, for one participant, his decision to serve in a particular

organisation in his adult years could be tracked back to his CIP experience ten years ago when he did community service in the same organisation. Another participant, Beatrice, summed up how her CIP experience opened up pathways for her to continue serving:

> I felt that it raised the awareness in me that there are people in our community who have a lot of hardship and that there are these various organisations that I can approach if I want to help. So, in a way, I learn who are those in our community who need our help and perhaps which organisations I can turn to if I want to volunteer. When I look back now, yes, CIP gave me that initial exposure. Like I know I've done it before and hence know what to do.

5.3 Section Three

Sub-question 3:

What do young people believe are their reasons and motivations to continue with service in their adult lives?

So far, the discussion has focused on how participants felt about their past school service experience. The majority of them believed that their early CIP experiences at school introduced them to the idea of service that they would otherwise not be exposed to. They saw the programme as providing them the platform for future service. However, they believed that while school gave them the initial exposure, there were many other contributing factors for their involvement in later years. As Jones, Segar, and Gasiorski (2008) remarked, "it is clear that requirement alone does not automatically produce outcomes such as civic responsibility" (p. 15). Similarly, Eyler and Giles (1999) explained that a single programme was unlikely to produce significant results as "the learning goals in higher education are complex, and students are affected by many of life's experiences" (p. xvii). The findings of this study are aligned with what Eyler and Giles (1999) highlighted. Upon interviews with the participants, what was consistently articulated was the presence of a multitude of forces and reasons that

drove them to render service to others. In contrast, there were a few who believed they never needed a reason to help others.

5.3.1 Various interpretations of service.

In this study, the participants were asked, "What does service mean to you?" and "What matters to you when you serve?" Their various responses gave the researcher an indication of how different individuals interpret 'service' (refer to Table 4.8). The importance of understanding what service meant to those who serve had been emphasised by Coles (1993), "I learned that the methodology for a research project had to do with definition, first, and then vantage point, meaning the way a word such as 'service' is variously interpreted…" (p. 13). From the vantage points of the participants, service could be about selflessness, a concern for others, or it could be a moral obligation or a religious duty:

> Service is about being selfless, giving something without asking
> anything in return and in the process, benefitting humanity and
> the world.
> (Roger)

> I'm a Christian, a follower of Jesus… he was always with the
> poor, the rejected, the disadvantaged. Sometimes, I feel there's a
> bit of experience of Christness when I relate to these people. It
> gives me that feeling.
> (Priscilla)

Yet, there were those who preferred a broader definition of service. For these individuals, service was a way of life that did not necessarily involve a volunteering activity. For example, Alison explained how service could extend to everyday living, "…not just to serve, but to do small things, like writing a little note to a colleague, buying them food, just simple things." Similarly, Michael reflected on how his own understanding of service evolved in his journey as a volunteer:

In the past, I tended to see service as a duty… but as I grow closer

to God, He has been teaching me that service is more than a duty;

it is in a way, a lifestyle.

The broad definitions by Alison or Michael bring into question the whole phenomenon of service. It raises the possibility that one can serve without volunteering. That being the case, the subject of this research, "Youth who serve" may take on a different meaning. The potential for confusion over the word 'service' made it necessary for the researcher to state her stand from the beginning. The service performed by the young adult volunteers of this study refers only to volunteering and not day-to-day acts of kindness.

5.3.2 Variety of reasons for service.

Just as there were multiple ways service was defined by the participants, there were as many different reasons they gave for serving. In analysing the various reasons, two broad themes emerged. Ethical reasons often appeared to be behind their motivations to extend their service to others. On the other hand, there were also other reasons that had little to do with ethics. What the findings reveal has close resemblance to Clary and Synder's (1999) Volunteer Functions Inventory (Table 2.1). Based on the inventory, Clary and Synder (1999) identify five other functions of volunteering besides the "values" function (p. 157).

5.3.2.1 Ethical reasons.

How the volunteers interpreted 'service' gave an indication of their attitude towards service and a sense of what was important to them when they served. What was also clear were the moral undertones of those interpretations. Expressions such as 'benefitting others', 'contributing', 'giving back', and 'helping people' reflect the ethical underpinnings behind the reasons for serving (refer to Table 4.8). Conversations with the participants revealed further insights of the moral principles that drove them to render service over and over again. Roger gave his reason for spending three months of his university vacation to volunteer in an aged care facility,

"We can feel the pain even for people we don't know." Values such as empathy, compassion, love, selflessness, care, concern for others, and responsibility constantly emerged as the participants reflected on what moved them to extend help to others

5.3.2.1.1 Moral conscience.

In their narrations, the volunteers occasionally made remarks such as, "If you don't help someone who needs help, you have to answer to yourself, why are you not helping?" or "If I don't do something, I'm going against myself". These statements hinted at the moral conscience that could have acted as a catalyst for action. According to Coles (1993), "…all service is directly or indirectly ethical…" (p. 75). What Coles (1993) said about service could be true for these volunteers. Perhaps their comments also resonated with what Reinhold Niebuhr termed as 'uneasy conscience' (cited in Noddings, 2003, p. 237). According to Noddings (2003), happiness for a person can ensue from "relieving the misery of others" (p. 237).

5.3.2.1.2 Influences on the ethic of service.

The participants' narrations revealed their commitments towards service. Evan, for instance, shared his views, "Life may become without meaning if there is no outlet to contribute to society." Dean's observations of volunteers gave an indication of how he valued service:

> People who volunteer make it their top priority. It's not like
> something you can turn down if you don't have the time. I put this
> at a front seat… I guess it's about helping people, I feel I have the
> need, a need to give back to people, this is what I feel motivates
> me to serve.

Conversations with volunteers like Dean and Evan often indicated the values they embody, values such as responsibility, empathy, or a sense of gratitude, that moved them to make service a priority. However, when probed further, the participants unvaryingly pointed to the various forces at work that urged them to extend a helping hand. One prominent theme that was consistently brought up by the

participants as they introspected about their own sense of service was how their families had played a part. Almost everyone who was interviewed inadvertently mentioned a parent or an adult relative who served as role models of service. From Gagné's (1977/1916) perspective, role models are usually people who are admired or respected and whose behaviour young people want to emulate. Coles (1993) explains the significance of family role models, "The very definition or notion of service has to do with the ethical and spiritual assumptions that informs family life" (p. 7). For example, Ian attributed his motivation to serve to his parents:

> I would think my motivation comes from my parents. My mom stopped teaching to look after us, that was the first thing. They showed it to us in real time what they sacrificed, what they gave up for us. In a sense, that's for me, service. Even today, my mom still serves the church. My dad doesn't serve so much but his career is running a non-profit organisation, it is in itself an indication of what he values.

In addition to family, the participants mentioned various other factors that had a bearing on their attitude towards service such as friends, the adults they encountered, their religious beliefs, or the books they read. According to Gagné (1977/1916), characters in books could turn out to be someone's role models. Similarly, Wuthnow (1995) observed that young people could learn kindness through "stories of service" (p. 134). Hayley, for instance, described how she was inspired by books she read about people who devoted their lives to service such as Mother Teresa and Dr. Tan Lai Yong, a Singaporean doctor who spent 15 years in rural China reaching out to those in need:

> They have one trait that stands out, their selflessness to the community. This trait inspires me to be like them. In every small way I can, I want to touch the lives of other people.

Deep discussions with these young volunteers revealed the many forces at play in influencing their ethic of service. As Coles (1993) highlighted, "the manner in which a moral purpose is worked into a particular volunteer's life will vary enormously" (p. 75).

5.3.2.1.3 Moral satisfaction.

While there are multiple factors that may have influenced their ethic of service as discussed, without fail, every participant at some point in the interview would reminisce on the sense of fulfilment of their service experience. As Lynn tried to explain:

> However, after every act of service, I feel [sic] very good. It's not
> something that can be bought. I don't even get this feeling when I
> buy something that I like. It's that feeling that keeps me wanting
> to do good in whatever way I can to help another person. It's this
> feeling that makes me want to do more and more.

As what Lynn suggested, many of the volunteers believed it was the sense of satisfaction that sustained them. Some participants described the happiness they felt when they see the smiles on the faces of those they served while others felt it was rewarding just knowing that someone's day had improved from the service rendered. Still, there were also those who pointed out that working closely alongside other volunteers and seeing their sacrifices was itself a joy and an assurance that there was hope in humanity. According to Noddings (2003), "the warmth of relationships with those served and also with other volunteers" could be a source of happiness for volunteers (p. 237).

As in the following examples, the reward of service for volunteers can be so intangible, yet sufficient to bring about the "moral satisfaction" that Coles (1993) talked about (p. 75). Josephine had a simple way of expressing that moral satisfaction, "I find joy in seeing joy in others." Priscilla, on the other hand, weaved in memories and her personal philosophy in describing the rewards of service:

> Volunteering gives me a feeling. It taught me that you can't put
> words to a lot of things happening to your life…I remember
> visiting the centre for children with HIV. I was playing with the
> children and feeling this high, like you are on top of the world
> …so, it's a feeling, you feel this sense of joy. Helping gives me
> satisfaction and peace.

5.3.2.2 Other reasons for service.

While there could be moral reasons behind the participants' acts of service, not all decisions to volunteer were ethically driven. Similar to what Clary and Synder (1999) explained in the "Volunteering Functions Inventory" (refer to Table 2.1), volunteering have many functions of which values could be just one (p. 157). For instance, the participants described how service could present itself as an opportunity to do something fun and exciting or simply to spend time with friends. Some participants said they enjoyed connecting with people such as fellow volunteers, the staff in the organisation they were volunteering with, and those they were serving. As one participant described, "It was a golden opportunity to engage and interact with different people from Singapore or around the world." Lynn for instance, showed the researcher a wooden elephant carved by one of the boys in an orphanage in Thailand she volunteered at a year ago. She received the gift recently when another group of volunteers visited the same orphanage and brought it back to her. It was touching as she reminisced on the connection she felt with the child. As Coles (1993) observed, a measure of how valuable a service experience is could turn out to be the connection that occurred as a result of the interaction between the volunteers and the people they serve.

5.3.2.2.1 Reciprocity of service.

As in Lynn's example, most of the volunteers highlighted the reciprocity of service, that serving was not all about giving for they too had gained something in return. One participant had described service as a "two-way thing". For another, it was an "exchange". As Olivia reflected, "The people I'm helping are helping me too." Like Olivia, some felt affirmed, some learnt, such as, to be a better person; some found friendship, and for one participant, even love. Repeatedly, the participants interlaced their narrations with joyful moments, touching moments, learning moments, and proud moments as they recalled their experiences serving others. The use of photographs and other mementos was invaluable in facilitating such recollections that the researcher had the privilege of witnessing. One such example was Priscilla. Priscilla went on mission trip to India. There she visited the children in a quarry who had to be away from their parents for weeks while they laboured in the mines. Priscilla's story of the quarry children and their faces had

stayed vividly in the researcher's memory through a single photograph that she showed:

> Take a look at the children, they don't seem lively, they seem very bothered, very troubled by something and I couldn't understand why, especially when they spoke in their dialects. What happened was, this boy was talking to another girl, they both seemed to be very unhappy and the boy was crying. The boy had earlier told me he's called T. And he is a Muslim boy. But I still went over to him and put my arm around his shoulder and I was so shocked, he kissed me on my cheek. I felt that connection in a way, that both of us were going through difficulties in our lives. And even though we couldn't speak each other's language, we communicated through love. So, I felt that affection from the boy and I was just a total stranger. There's a phrase, "when words fail, love speaks". That experience really broke me. When I went back that day, I felt emotionless. Because all my life, I felt that I had been taken for granted. So, when you receive a small act of love, it really meant so much. And when I reflect on that moment, there was a connection of brokenness. It was beautiful, like, life-changing.

The realisation that service brings personal rewards is in itself, sustaining to those who serve (Coles, 1993; Marks & Jones, 2004; Wuthnow, 1995). Through decades of working with volunteers and through their stories the reciprocal nature of service was evident (Coles, 1993). As in Priscilla's story, many parallels can be drawn from the findings of this study.

5.3.2.2.2 Critical life events.

As a phenomenological study, the researcher often needed to mine deep, sometimes even to intrude into an individual's past (Moustakas, 1994). Sometimes, through these deep discussions, areas of the participants' life, critical events, and memories of those times when they were most vulnerable surfaced. What appeared

evident as the participants took the researcher through their journey as volunteers was the impact of those painful pasts on their attitude towards service. For example, Francis shared with the researcher how service became a diversion from the grief of losing his sister and in a way, helped him cope with his pain:

> After my sister passed away, my dad had a stroke…it made me
> change my perspective; that I had to start thinking like an adult.
> It's pointless staying at home and feeling sad and sorry for
> myself. I might as well use my time to do good for another
> person. And as time goes by, I start to forget the pain from my
> past and good memories take over. So, losing my sister and seeing
> how my dad suffered makes me continue as a volunteer, to keep
> helping others.

5.3.3 The subjectivity of service.

As seen from the various reasons the volunteers give, it is difficult to have a clear answer as to why people serve. Often, as Coles (1993) mentioned, motives can vary and even for one individual, there could be many reasons and yet no fixed reason for serving. Ian was an obvious example:

> Most of the time, it's something I want to do because of various
> reasons. It could be I'm interested or I feel that there is an
> obligation. I could be motivated by my Christian values, that this
> is what the Lord has led me to. Sometimes, it becomes a duty, not
> in the sense that I'm doing it because I have no choice but just
> this cold determination that I have started something, I have
> committed to it, therefore I would finish it.

As an experience, the phenomenon of service and the reasons behind it had not always been easy for the participants to articulate. For instance, as Olivia stated, "I can't really use words to describe my feelings." Josephine shared similar sentiments, "I can't really tell you what motivates me. It's just me, it's in my blood." The assortment of explanations the young volunteers cited for serving is itself a reminder of the complexities of human behaviours. As Coles (1993) pointed out, "I had begun

to see how complicated this notion of service is, how it is a function not only of what we do but who we are…" (p. xxvi).

While a multitude of reasons were given for service, some felt they could not think of any reason why they should not be helping others. For example, Evan remarked:

> If you can commit on a regular basis for a project that is close to your home, why not? To give an analogy, if you see someone carrying a heavy load and something falls off, are you going to just stand there and watch?

Coles (1993), who himself is a volunteer and who had spent three decades working with volunteers, cautioned against the temptation of trying to "sort people" out but instead to pay closer attention and see them in their "vast variety" (p. 33). In his book, *The Call of Service,* Coles (1993) documented the stories he heard from his encounters with individuals who, like him, had devoted their life to offer help to others. Through the stories, Coles (1993) captured the "subjectivity" of the phenomenon of service, not only in the myriad ways it can occur but also the various reasons that can inform it (p. xxiv). Aptly, Coles (1993) had used the phrase "the phenomenology of service" to depict this subjectivity (p. xxiv). He reiterated what one volunteer said, "The closer you look, the more one picture turns into two and three and four and more" (p. 33). What Coles (1993) shared cautions one against having a fixed formula about the motivations and intent behind service. Although Coles' study took place in America that has a very different culture and socio-political environment from Singapore, the findings in this study resonate with his stories.

5.4   Section Four

Sub-question 4:

What do young people believe are their longer-term plans to continue serving?

Up to this point of the discussion, the focus has been on the participants' past school service experience as well as their present volunteering involvement as adults. In this section, the emphasis is on the participants' future plans to volunteer. While knowing what these young volunteers aspire to do for others in their later life may be an indication of their civic inclination over time, it is by no means possible to predict future behaviour. The closest the researcher could achieve in asking the participants about their future intentions to continue volunteering is to have a better idea of their commitment and sense of service.

According to Burack (2009), to understand how students are affected by their community service experience, it is necessary to learn how their civic attitude develops over time. Outcomes such as civic behaviours and choice of career require longitudinal data (Burack, 2009). As Gagné (1977/1916) emphasised, studying behaviour requires time. For this study, it is hoped that in choosing a sample that comprises only post-school youth and finding out what they are doing and planning to do in future for the community could enhance understanding of students' longer-term civic dispositions.

5.4.1 Longer-term plans for service.

During the second phase of data gathering, opportunities were created for participants to express their thoughts on their plans to continue with service in the future. Without exception, the participants expressed their desire to continue volunteering. Alison, a teacher, shared her aspirations:

> My long-term plans will be to continue serving and take up more
> executive roles. Hopefully, I would be able to bring my students
> to serve alongside me with organisations that I am committed to
> and believe in.

Like Alison, as the participants contemplated on the prospects of serving in the longer-term, they envisaged the various ways they could contribute as volunteers. However, they shared their concerns about the possible challenges that could deter them from serving. At the same time, they identified those factors that could sustain their effort. The significance of these findings will be discussed in light of two learning theories, Beard and Wilson's (2002) Theory of Prospective Learning, and Eyler and Giles' (1999) Elements of Citizenship Theory.

5.4.1.1 Beard and Wilson's (2002) Theory of Prospective Learning.

In projecting their future possibilities for volunteering, the potential challenges they might encounter, or the support they could receive, the participants showed their capacity to imagine and envisage what was ahead. According to Beard and Wilson (2002), the process of "visualisation and mental rehearsal" is a form of learning known as "prospective learning" (p. 34). Although people cannot possibly reflect on an experience that had not taken place, they could have a certain expectation of the alternatives ahead (Beard & Wilson, 2002). Perhaps Lynn's interpretation of how this expectation was created by her past service experiences and carried forward exemplifies the prospective learning Beard and Wilson described:

> When you go through an experience, you have a certain
> expectation …the expectation created from my earlier experience
> with service has been carried forward. In the same way, my
> expectation for my future involvement has something to do with
> the positive experience I had in my current and past voluntary
> experience.

Not only did the participants express their hopes to persist with service, they also articulated the strategies they could take for them to materialise. In exploring new ways of contributing to others, seven participants considered pursuing careers in the helping professions. For example, Katie hoped that an internship experience with a Voluntary Welfare Organisation could increase her chance of getting a job in a service-related field upon her graduation. According to Wuthnow (1995), having the

motivation to work in "careers of service" is one of the most powerful long-term effects of serving (p. 203).

Beard and Wilson (2002) explained that in analysing what others have experienced or their own past experiences, people can imagine the future. It is through imagination that plans and preparations can be made (Beard & Wilson, 2002). Dewey (1917, p. 69) once said (cited in Beard and Wilson, 2002, p. 223):

> Faith in the power of intelligence to imagine a future that is the projection of the desirable in the present, and to invent the instrumentalities of its realisation, is our salvation.

What Dewey pointed out is a reminder for educators to not only cultivate this faith in young people but also to have faith in the potential of what they are doing in helping students continue to learn. In the words of Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1996), "every experience is potentially an opportunity for learning" (p. 8). It is through the knowledge of how students' learning occurred over time, especially long after they leave school can this assumption be tested.

5.4.1.2 Eyler and Giles' (1999) Elements of Citizenship Theory.

Up to the point of data collection, the youth in this study were either participating in service or had recently been involved in some volunteering activities. While it is not possible to predict their civic behaviour in later years, one is able to have a grasp of their civic inclination both from their civic habits in the present as well as from what they said about their future intentions to volunteer. Dewey (1966/1916) once remarked, "Any habit marks an inclination…" (p. 48). Perhaps what Dewey said seemed true for some of the participants. Josephine, for example, wrote in her reflections, "It [serving] has been part of my life since I was young. Thus, if I suddenly stop, I feel that something is missing from my life." Michael, one of the participants, had used the metaphor of a drug to describe volunteering, "Service is like a drug, it gives you the high and excitement and brings you back to do it again and again and again." According to Janoski, Musick, and Wilson (1998), those who volunteer tend to become "attached" or "stick with it" (p. 516).

What the participants shared, such as the various ways they could contribute to the society, or their hopes to work in service-related fields revealed their civic vocation and commitment. Gwen, for instance, stated:

> My long-term plans are to continue doing what I have been
> doing, being in different organisations and helping out when I
> can… I do not foresee anything that may change my mind about
> my desire to engage in community service.

According to Eyler and Giles (1999), commitment to service is an important element of citizenship. In addition to commitment, Eyler and Giles (1999) identified four other elements of citizenship. The first is "value," such as, "social responsibility" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 157). The participants' willingness to persist with volunteering despite knowing the challenges ahead reflects their value. That they valued service was also evident in their desire to exert a positive influence on others and encourage more people to volunteer. As Roger shared:

> When I am with my friends, I would ask them what they are
> doing for their holidays and if they have nothing on, I will tell
> them about serving. I see it as giving them another pathway,
> another perspective on how they could spend their time. Yes, it is
> similar to passive converting, by opening up the world of
> volunteering for them.

The next two elements of citizenship are "knowledge" and "skills" (Eyler and Giles, 1999, p. 157). Volunteers need to "know what they ought to do and how" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 157). When the participants contemplated on their longer-term plans to serve, they speculated on the various alternative routes they could take. Some explored other avenues to volunteer, especially in the areas of their interests or expertise. For example, Evan considered contributing towards charity events in areas such as photography and logistics while Roger expressed his desire to promote Tai Chi (a form of exercise) to the elderly to help them stay healthy. Some, like Olivia, considered leading overseas expeditions, "One of the plans I have in the future is to lead a group overseas for community service." The participants' keenness to step up

their roles and venture into new frontiers gave an indication of their knowledge of the options available and the skills needed to achieve them.

The final element of citizenship is "efficacy" or the belief that one's action could "make a difference" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 159). To serve others, individuals not only must have the desire to help others, they also need to realise they have the potential to change things and make a difference (Cipolle, 2010; Giles & Eyler, 1994). On a similar note, Frederick (2007) explained that to sustain civic engagement, people needed to feel that they were "actually accomplishing something" (p. 19). Evan used to tutor a child with a hearing impairment. Knowing that he had helped the child progress to mainstream schooling reminded him that a small act could have an impact on someone's life:

> I would say everyone has a part to play in the community. No
> matter how small a role, there can be an impact. My role is small
> if you ask me, giving tuition to a child. But my tutee who has a
> hearing impairment, she's able to go from a special education
> school to a mainstream school....

Gwen, a regular volunteer in a soup kitchen, shared her thoughts on the lives all the volunteers were affecting:

> … many people are volunteering there every day. When I was
> there four years ago, there were 2500 people who come for their
> meals every day. I thought that was it. Now there are 3500 people,
> people who are poor. And we know it is not just 3500. The
> statistics is something I would remember. It's a story on its own.
> What I learn from the number is that it is not definite, there could
> be many more…so, whatever we can do, no matter how small, we
> can help them. Every helping hand can make the life of another
> person easier and happier.

As discussed earlier, the participants not only expressed their intentions to serve but were able to articulate in some detail their plans and expectations. Eyler

and Giles (1999) pointed out that the "eagerness to act and lead carries an implicit message of self-confidence" (p. 159). The participants' accounts of their thoughts and aspirations to persevere with service reflect the five elements as described by Eyler and Giles (1999), and give a strong suggestion of their sense of citizenship.

5.4.2 Link between the past, present, and future.

In this study, the participants were asked to look back upon their earlier school service experience and interpret the relationship between their past, present, and possibly, future service involvement. The aim was to understand the perspectives of these youth who were students before, to find out if there had been anything significant about their school service experience that affected their longer-term commitment to serve. The following quotations exemplify how these young adult volunteers interpreted the relationship:

> When I look back, it was a starting point for me to be involved in community service. I feel more willing to do these activities because I had participated in them before and felt that I had the experience to handle. So, in future, I'd probably still choose those volunteering activities based on what I had experienced.
> (Beatrice)

> Without having been prompted to be involved in community services in my secondary school, I believe I wouldn't have had the guts to try out many things. Each experience from school shaped my subsequent decisions, and each involvement in subsequent community services helped developed my future decisions and me.
> (Gwen)

Similar to Beatrice and Gwen, the study found that most of the participants believed that their present involvement and future intentions to volunteer had links with their past school involvement. However, the extent of that connection was found to vary amongst them.

5.4.2.1 Understanding the link using Dewey's Principle of Continuity.

Dewey used the Principle of Continuity to describe the temporal nature of experience (Dewey 1969/1938; Fishman, 1998b). According to Dewey (1969/1938), every experience has the capacity to influence later experiences. For Dewey (1969/1938), the value of an experience can be "judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into…" (p. 38). The Principle of Continuity implies that the future has to be taken into consideration in appraising an experience (Dewey, 1969/1938). This study has relied on Dewey's theory to understand experience, in particular, young people's past school service experiences and their effects on subsequent and future experiences. From the perspectives of most of the participants, their intentions for future service could be linked to their experiences with service both at school and beyond. For example, Alison portrayed her past CIP experience as "… the seed that has been planted in us in secondary school and I think it won't stop growing." Incidentally, Hayley used the same imagery to describe how her sense of service continued to grow:

> The seed of service that was planted when I was a young girl has
> to grow…. It feels like the same me, but yet, I'm branching out.
> Certain things have changed in that I have grown.

Like Hayley and Alison, many believed that their journey as volunteers continued from where they first started – their school CIP experience:

> I can say that my past experience with CIP did spark something in
> me to search on my own how I can do more for the society, which
> then led me to volunteering…. What CIP did for me was to
> create that awareness. But the service experiences that had been
> most impactful were those that I took part in at the youth
> centre…. I would continue with service. I want to be a social
> worker.
> (Josephine)

> I see it as a transition, from my early experience with CIP, then to
> my current acts of service now, and eventually, leading to my

future plans to serve. It just keeps growing from something small

to something bigger. From each experience, you learn something.

(Nicole)

However, even though the participants' perception of the co-relation between their early experience of learning to serve and future plans to continue with service suggest a sense of continuity, it does not imply there is a causal relationship. There are two possible explanations. Firstly, learning does not take place in a vacuum. A student's experience with service cannot be isolated from all other experiences from his or her environment and be "stripped off its context" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 5). As Boud et al. (1996) emphasised, "We bring the whole of our life to every learning event and any aspect of our past may be brought into play." (p. 9). Dean for example, tried to explain, "I would not relate my sense of service to my earlier school service experience alone, but my experience in general." Alison made a similar comment:

> My school was a very nurturing environment. It may not really be
>
> only the CIP that shaped the students, I think it's just the whole
>
> string of events that we experienced, the very positive school
>
> culture and the nurturing teachers that we had… most students
>
> would come out of the school with a sense of wanting to serve the
>
> community.

The significance of what Dean and Alison said serves as a reminder that school service and subsequent volunteering does not have a straightforward co-relation. To quote Hollander and Burrack (2009), "We will know remarkably little about how young people develop long-lasting habits of civic engagement if we assume that school settings are the only vehicle for teaching civic skills" (p. 6). As the findings indicated, many reasons were given for engaging in service of which the school might be one.

A second explanation why a causal relationship between school service and subsequent volunteering cannot be established is that a person's past, present, and

future cannot be reduced to a simple equation. Life, and all its experiences, is complex (Fishman, 1998b). According to Dewey (1969/1938), "experiences may be disconnected" and "are not linked cumulatively to one another" (p. 26). The point highlighted by Dewey (1969/1938) can be illustrated by the example of Roger who used the analogy of a "parcel" to describe his CIP experience. For him, he "opened his parcel" 10 years later when he went to volunteer at the same elderly care centre he visited as a schoolboy. As in the case of Roger, learning was neither linear nor regular (Boud et al, 1996). Sometimes it may lie dormant and need further experiences to reactivate it (Sherrod, 2009). Boud et al. (1996) explained that "Learning occurs over time and meaning may take years to become apparent." (p. 9). Beard and Wilson (2002) referred to this form of learning as "retrospective learning" (p. 33). Often, in the process of looking back and re-analysing a past event in the light of later experiences, the meanings attached to the event start to change (Beard & Wilson, 2002). As seen from the various feedbacks from the participants, how they made sense of their CIP experience evolved with maturity and increasing life experiences. To illustrate this point is a quote from Lynn:

> After doing a lot more service on my own beyond my secondary
> school days, I do view service differently, in that I see the
> significance of some of my school service experiences.

According to Boud et al. (1996), "Construction of experience is never ending" (p. 12). Concomitantly, Eyler and Giles (1999) described learning as "never done because each new thing learned brings us to a new place with new possibilities…" (p. 194). For some, as in Roger's example, the process could begin years later.

What Boud et al. (1996) or Eyler and Giles (1999) highlighted, echoed Dewey's philosophy on continuity. According to Dewey (1969/1938), learning is developmental and should not be conceived as "finished" once school was over for what is learnt will continue to be modified by new experiences (p. 19). For the participants in this study at least, their learning to serve had continued to grow years after school. From the examples they gave, it is evident that their journey as volunteers had no fixed destination and even amongst them, there were multiple

possible routes they could take in later years. Nicole for instance, reflected on her personal development in terms of her attitude as a volunteer:

> At a young age, you may volunteer at a different level, you may just be helping with simple things. Then from there, you take on more as you grow older, you step up your roles as a volunteer and you also begin to see yourself as someone who could be a positive influence on others, that you can inspire and motivate others to contribute through service. I see this transition in me.

The transition and changes that Nicole spoke about suggest the importance of looking at learning as work "in progress". As Dewey (1969/1938) reminded, there is no 'finished product' in learning civic responsibility (p. 19). It follows then, that a longer-term view may be necessary if one is to have a clearer understanding of how students learn to serve.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of this research on young peoples' past and present experience with service as well as their future plans to continue serving were discussed in light of various learning theories and what other studies have shown. It is hoped that the discussions will bring educators closer to the learners' world and give them some insights of the real significance of their past experience with service at school in shaping their sense of civic responsibility. These insights will provide the basis of some of the recommendations in the final chapter.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This final chapter brings together all the important elements of the study. To begin, the chapter traces back the aims of the study and recapitulates the research questions. Next, the chapter outlines the design of the research by looking at the paradigm that frames the study, the methodology adopted, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. Following the description of the research design, the chapter summarises the key findings before discussing the meanings of these findings and their possible implications. From these insights, recommendations for policies and practice in the pedagogy of community service are made. In addition, this chapter proposes using a model for research on community service. Lastly, the limitations of the study are highlighted. In closing this chapter, the researcher shares her thoughts and feelings on youth who serve, a subject that has grown close to her heart, and whose stories she had the privilege to hear, to learn from, and to share.

6.1 Aims

This study aims to examine in what ways young adult volunteers believe that their sense of civic responsibility was influenced by their school service experience. To achieve this aim, a qualitative study was conducted on a small group of post-school youth in Singapore who had participated in mandatory service during their school days and had continued to serve beyond school. This study is keen to explore how these young people make sense of their past experience with service at school. It is about listening to their perspectives on what matters concerned them and what had been significant in those experiences. In addition, the study is interested in examining the reasons these young volunteers give for their commitment to serve in their adult years and understand how they interpret the connection between their past and subsequent experience with service. Besides, exploring young people's past and present service experience, the study also wants to know their future plans to continue serving. A better understanding of their longer-term commitment to service

could potentially shed some light on how their civic behaviour might develop over time.

6.2   Research Questions

This study is driven by a general question and four sub-questions. All the questions are interpretative and perspectival in that they seek to understand experiences from the points of view of individuals with the experience (Mertens, 2005).

General question:

To what extent and in what ways do young people believe that their sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve has been influenced by their school service experience?

Sub-questions:

1. How do young people who are currently involved in voluntary service perceive their prior experience with service while at school?
2. How do young people feel they might have been affected by their service experience at school?
3. What do young people believe are their reasons and motivations to continue with service in their adult lives?
4. What do young people believe are their longer-term plans to continue serving?

6.3   Research Design

An important ontological assumption of the study is that "reality is socially constructed" and 'truth' is subjective (Mertens, 2005, p. 14). Aligned with this assumption is the qualitative paradigm that overarches the study. A phenomenological approach was adopted for this inquiry with the belief that it was best suited for a research exploring how people make sense of their lived experience (Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). From a phenomenologist's viewpoint, the only way to understand human experience is through the personal accounts of people who have had the experience (Farber, 1966, p. 45; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). It was with this understanding that the study directed its inquiry at individuals who had experienced both the phenomenon of adult volunteering and school service. Hence,

the sample of this study comprises a group of young adult volunteers who had participated in mandatory community service while at school. The total number of participants was 16. The small sample size had enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and rich data.

The primary method of data collection encompassed the use of one-to-one interviews that were scheduled over two phases. The interviews were considered semi-structured in that interview schedules with open-ended questions were used to guide the conversations. Mostly, the interviews lasted one to two hours. During the second phase of interviewing, artefacts were used to facilitate the discussions. These were the mementos that the participants were requested to bring along, such as cards, photographs, letters, journals, and other memorabilia related to their service experience. These objects of interest turned out to be a useful stimulus for recollecting experiential details and generating rich and highly idiosyncratic discussions (Creswell, 2007).

In addition to interviews, another source of data was participants' reflection journals. The participants were asked to write reflections after each phase of interview. There were several reasons for choosing this method of data collection. Firstly, it was to promote self-reflection and encourage participants to think more deeply about their experiences (Cone & Harris, 1996; Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). The writing of reflections also offered participants another chance to recall details that they forgot to share or points of interest that the interviewer failed to enquire. While open-ended questions were used to guide the participants in their reflections (Appendix 8 & Appendix 10), they were also given the flexibility to write what they felt was most relevant to their experience. Affording the participants a choice was again another attempt to encourage individuals to tell their stories in their own ways.

The data collected were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Typically, the analysis could be described as an iterative and

inductive circle (Kervin et al., 2006). Often, the researcher worked recursively by shuttling back and forth between the various steps (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Kervin et al., 2006). As Smith et al. (2009) fittingly described, IPA was a very complex process in the sense that the researcher never really knew the direction the process could take her.

The underlying assumption of IPA was that access to the participants' life experiences was essentially interpretative (Smith et al., 2009). However, the interpretation not only rested with the researcher. Readers of the research also go through the process of meaning making as they read what the researcher has written (Smith et al., 2009). To give readers greater access to the "things themselves" as Husserl (1927) often suggested, the researcher has made a conscious attempt to allow the participants to speak for themselves (as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p. 12). As a result, the researcher elected to rely on frequent and direct quotations of the participants to let their stories do the talking. The intent was to preserve the originality of the stories and give readers a chance to listen to the voices of the researched and judge for themselves how they want to make sense of their narrations.

6.4   Summary of the Findings

From the data collected, several significant themes emerged and these were presented and discussed in Chapters Four and Five. In accordance with the research questions, these themes will be summarised under the following headings:

- Perceptions of past school service experience;
- Impacts of past school service experience;
- Reasons and motivations for volunteering in adult years; and,
- Future plans for service.

6.4.1 Perceptions of past school service.

This study had relied on the participants to recall and elaborate on the nature and characteristics of their school's programmes and how these programmes were

implemented. Besides finding out what school service was like, the study also explored how the participants perceived those experiences when they were at school. Opportunities were created for them to give their appraisals of the service programme and how it was implemented in their respective schools. Finally, the participants were asked for their views on the principle of making community service mandatory for students.

6.4.1.1 Nature and characteristics of community service programme.

The participants' descriptions of their schools' community service programmes revealed similarities in several key areas. All the participants stated that the service programme was known as the Community Involvement Programme (CIP). From their descriptions, it was clear that their schools' programme was community service. One prominent characteristic of the CIP was that it was compulsory. Another feature that was consistently mentioned concerned the rate of participation and the duration of the activities. Service involvement was described as infrequent and usually of a short duration. In terms of the location and sites of service, typically, students volunteered in the local community, concentrating their efforts on various sectors of which the elderly were most common. Mostly, the service activities focused on fund-raising, direct services, environmental events, and school duties. Consistently, the participants described that the service was mostly carried out in groups.

6.4.1.2 Programme implementation.

Even though all the participants were involved in the same programme that shared common characteristics, variations existed in how it was administered. For example, community service could occur in various locations, involve different groups of students, sites, and sectors and for varying frequencies and durations. Even for the same sector, there were different ways students offered assistance. Another difference in programme implementation concerned the element of reflection. In this study, the data shows that in most schools, reflection was rare. However, for those who went on overseas community service, structured reflection was organised. Furthermore, eleven participants reported that they carried out service through different co-curricular activities (CCAs). From their descriptions, these CCAs had

their distinctive missions and value systems that influenced the nature and purpose of the service activities.

6.4.1.3 Early perceptions of school service experience.

Mixed responses were received when participants were asked to recollect how they felt about their experience with service when they were at school. Over half of them recalled feeling positive about their overall CIP experiences and remembered the service activities as fun and meaningful. However, there were others who admitted feeling resentful that they had been compelled to perform service. Mostly, the participants' perceptions correlated with the manner in which programmes were implemented.

6.4.1.4 Reappraisals of the CIP experience.

The participants usually evaluated their experience in relation to the quality of the programmes. Meaningful programmes, in particular, had positive effects on them. Most of the participants associated meaningful service with a sense of efficacy, and a sense of connection with those they serve. The meaning of an activity was enhanced when they knew the cause they were contributing to or when they understood the purpose. In contrast, reasons such as, the lack of variety in terms of service activities, inadequate explanation, and the absence of student input were said to diminish the meaning of service activities.

In their appraisals, the participants offered their views on how programmes could be improved. Some of their recommendations include giving students a wider selection of activities and allowing them to voice their preferences. In addition, the participants believed that schools should prepare students for service by giving them more information and help them understand the purpose of their involvement. The majority of the participants emphasised the need for teachers to engage students in some form of reflection. For greater sustainability, the participants suggested that service activities should be longer and more regular. Finally, the participants

believed that the CIP would be more likely to succeed if there were competent and experienced teachers to facilitate the programme.

6.4.1.5 Thoughts on mandating service.

As seen in the discussion on early perceptions, participants had different responses to their past community service experiences when they were at school. Despite their differential perceptions, the majority (15) endorsed the idea of making service a requirement, even for those who did not enjoy the experience. As one participant rationalised, mandating service might be a "hard approach", but it was still a necessary measure. The participants gave three main reasons why they agreed with the requirement. Firstly, in mandating service, every student would have the chance to serve. The second reason participants gave was that they saw benefits in their own experience with required service. Lastly, the participants explained that students might not have the maturity to consider doing service on their own. Besides, students' lack of resources or experience could hinder civic participation even for those who might be open to the idea. Still, the participants maintained that the issue of ultimate importance was how service programmes were structured and executed.

6.4.2 Perceived impacts of school service.

Results were mixed when it came to how participants perceived the extent school service had affected them. On one end of the spectrum, there was a participant who felt she was hardly affected, while there were those who attributed their ethic of service to their CIP experience. Nevertheless, there was greater agreement amongst them that their CIP involvement exposed them to community service and introduced them to the idea of serving.

While not all participants found their school's service programme satisfactory, many saw benefits as they looked back upon those experiences. Almost consistently, the participants reflected upon the reciprocal nature of service, acknowledging that they too had been rewarded in helping others. Another recurring theme was that they

did learn from their experience in serving others. The learning was often described in terms of increased awareness of social issues and personal growth.

Although it was a common belief amongst the participants that there were benefits in their past CIP experience, they acknowledged that sometimes, as students, it was difficult to see clearly the value of the experience. For many, these benefits became apparent only in retrospect and with the passage of time. Most of those who shared their insights cited greater maturity and further life experiences, in particular, increasing experience with service, as possible explanations for their evolving perceptions.

6.4.2.1 Link between past CIP experience and subsequent adult volunteering.

One significant finding was that the majority of the participants believed there was a link between their prior service experience at school and subsequent adult volunteering. Nevertheless, the strength of this link varies. For some individuals, there was an explicit relationship between their past CIP experience and their sense of service, but for others, school service did not play a large role. However, almost exclusively, the participants described their CIP experience as providing them with a platform for future service.

6.4.3 Reasons and motivations for volunteering in adult years.

In analysing the data, it was found that there was a multitude of reasons why young people serve. Even for a single individual, there could be overlapping factors that shaped his or her propensity to serve. Without exception, the reasons participants gave for rendering service reflected their altruistic values, their ethic of service, and personal beliefs (see Table 4.8). Incidentally, all the participants attributed their sense of service to adults in their lives who volunteered and modelled service. Frequently, participants described how family members, teachers, religious leaders, and mentors in the organisations with which they were volunteering had shaped their

attitude towards service. A few participants also found inspiration from books they read about extraordinary people and stories of courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice.

Yet for some participants, what propelled them to help others had something to do with the critical events in their lives. For these individuals, life's adversities became a driving force for them to reach out and connect with those who were suffering. To them the reason was simple; they understood what it was like to be hurt. Another common reason cited for serving others was that the experience could be rewarding. Often, service was described as reciprocal, that as volunteers, they too received and had benefitted. Apart from enjoying the time spent connecting with the recipients and feeling a sense of fulfilment, many participants realised that a lot of learning could take place.

6.4.4 Future plans for service.

When asked about their longer-term plans to serve, all the participants expressed their desire to continue serving in future. Many were eager to explore different sites, sectors, and venture into new frontiers. Some of the participants indicated that they would consider taking up greater responsibilities or starting up their own voluntary initiatives. In addition, almost half (seven) of the sample indicated that they were contemplating on careers in service.

When asked what could sustain their long-term commitments, most of the participants cited the support from other volunteers, friends and family. A few mentioned a supportive work environment and a corporate culture that encouraged social responsibility. Several participants said the support from welfare organisations was crucial. Conversely, the participants also brought up examples of potential challenges that could undermine their capacity to continue serving in future. For them, time was a major constraint, considering the various competing demands they might have to deal with relating to their work, studies, family, and friends.

6.5 Concluding Insights

As a phenomenological study, it is hoped that the findings would endow its readers with greater insights into the essence of the participants' lived experiences. However as Minichiello and Kottler (2010b) acknowledged, "Essences of anything are ethereal and difficult to pin down" (p. 25). At best, as a final chapter, the researcher can only leave its readers with her reflections of what she believes encapsulated the essence of the findings. The term "insights" has been used to represent the researcher's interpretations of what is essentially the felt experience and constructions of a group of young people involved in this study.

6.5.1 That students' school service experience could be a diverse and complex phenomenon.

In listening and re-listening to the stories the participants shared, it became increasingly obvious that each of their service experience had its distinct qualities. Service for the students, in other words, was not uniform even though they underwent the same programme that shared several key characteristics. A medley of factors, ranging from implementation and institutional differences to student diversity, could create an infinite combination of possible experiences for students.

6.5.2 That the learning associated with the CIP experience was usually not straight-forward.

The data yielded some fresh insights about the learning that characterised the participants' CIP experience. In essence, their learning was found to be incoherent, and not necessarily evident, even to the learners till later in life. According to Beard and Wilson (2002), it is often difficult to make sense of what is happening when people are "physically, chronologically or emotionally" too close to the experience (p. 33). Another insight about learning is that it is subjective. As discussed earlier, there are multiple dimensions in students' community service experience that could result in varying types and degrees of learning. Besides, students do not respond to a learning event in uniform ways.

6.5.3 That some students saw value in mandatory service.

Despite the controversy surrounding mandatory service, the participants who had been through the experience were not against the idea. On the contrary, most of them (15 out of 16) agreed that the requirement was necessary. While not all participants found their school's service programme satisfactory, many saw benefits as they looked back upon those experiences. Although the majority endorsed mandatory service, they believed that for any service programme to succeed, it must be implemented well. In other words, programme quality mattered.

6.5.4 That volunteering service is a wide-ranging concept and can be motivated by a multiplicity of reasons.

Through conversations with the young adult volunteers, it was clear that the term service could represent a vast array of activities that are quite distinct from each other. Just as there were innumerous ways the participants rendered service to others, there were as many reasons cited for their acts of service. A closer analysis of their reasons for service revealed the multitude of factors that could have influenced their sense of service and propensity to serve. While school might have played a part in influencing an individual's decision to serve, all these factors have to be taken into consideration in the overall understanding of a person's motivations for service. Perhaps Coles' (1993) remark, "I had begun to see how complicated this notion of service is…" further validates what the findings in this study revealed (p. xxvi).

6.5.5 That the CIP could be a platform for future service.

That 14 out of the 16 participants believed that there was a positive link between their learning of service and adult volunteering suggest the possibility of continuity in their learning. However, even though they believed there was a relationship, it cannot be assumed that it was a causal relationship. As raised in the preceding point, many other reasons spurred students to continue volunteering.

6.5.6 That participants had a sense of commitment to service.

Up to the point of data collection, the young volunteers in this study were participating in service. When they were asked about their longer-term plans for service, all expressed their desire to continue serving even though they were aware of the potential challenges such as the lack of time and career demands. While it is not possible to predict the civic behaviour of these participants in later years, one is able to get some idea of their civic inclination both from their civic habits in the present as well as from what they said about their future intentions to volunteer. As Dewey (1966/1916) remarked, "Any habit marks an inclination…" (p. 48). What the participants shared, such as the various ways they could contribute to the society, or their hopes to work in service-related fields, revealed their civic responsibility and commitment to service. That these volunteers also saw themselves as exemplars of service further affirms their level of commitment.

6.6   Recommendations on Policy and Practice

Even though mandatory service has been practised in Singapore for nearly two decades, there is little research on its outcomes. Evidence on how the CIP contributes to the development of the ethic of care and commitment to service is scarce. The findings of this study are potentially useful for educators there and form the basis of the following recommendations. These recommendations have implications on the pedagogy of mandatory service and concern policy-makers and educators involved in executing service programmes. Although the recommendations are made in relation to Singapore's context, it is possible that they have some relevance to educators in other parts of the world where mandatory service is instituted. Altogether, four recommendations are made.

6.6.1 Recommendation One: Maintain the policy of mandatory service.

Despite the controversy surrounding required service, the study shows that the majority of the participants still believed it was beneficial for young people. It was significant that 15 out of the 16 participants endorsed the principle of compulsory community service. Not only were they in favour of the idea of mandatory service, they articulated reasoned arguments to support their views.

The strong mandate from the participants, together with the reasons they gave for advocating the requirement, sends an important message to educators; that the CIP can be a valuable platform to involve young people in community life and instill in them the ethic of service. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the policy of mandatory community service be maintained and remain as a core component of secondary school education.

6.6.2 Recommendation Two: Focus on developing high quality programmes.

According to Dewey (1969/1938), "Everything depends on the quality of the experience", and it is the responsibility of educators to "arrange for the kind of experiences which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his [or her] activities…" (p. 27). However, the challenge for schools is to create a service experience that has an element of quality and that engages the learner. As the findings revealed, the issue that concerned participants most was how service programmes were implemented. The insights gleaned from the participants' perceptions and appraisals of their school service experience provide the basis for the following recommendations. Specifically, the recommendations are directed at enhancing the quality of service programmes:

1. Prepare students for service;
2. Create opportunities for students to reflect on their service experience;
3. Sustain student's service efforts;
4. Provide students with more options; and,
5. Encourage stronger student voice.

6.6.2.1 Prepare students for service.

In the participants' appraisal of their school service experience, inadequate preparation was identified as one of the shortcomings of the CIP organised by their schools. As the findings showed, most of the participants had no prior experience with service. Visiting the service sites and beneficiaries for the first time could be daunting. As Michael described, "We did not interact with the old folks, many of us

just stood there not knowing what to say and do". Clearly, students need to be prepared before each service activity.

It is recommended that service programmes incorporate strategies to prepare students for service. First of all, the objectives of service programmes need to be communicated explicitly to students so that they have a "clear and compelling rationale for service" (Metz & Youniss, 2005, p. 434). To encourage students to see the value of the programme, schools need to put in more effort to give it greater publicity and visibility. Assembly talks, student presentations of their service experience, and poster displays of CIP activities are some strategies that schools could adopt to help students gain awareness of community service. The school's webpage could be another possible platform for educators to disseminate information on CIP and the various events associated with it. In other words, service needs to be more closely aligned with the schools' culture and mission and be infused into the everyday lives of students.

It is also recommended that teachers who are involved with programme execution explain to students the purpose of their involvement before assigning them their service projects. This advanced preparation could enable students to understand the needs of the beneficiaries and how their efforts could benefit those they are helping. Preparation also entails helping students appreciate their roles and equipping them with the necessary skills to carry out the activities. It cannot be assumed that students would know what to do and how they should behave when they visit a service site.

6.6.2.2 Create opportunities for students to reflect on their service experience.

While reflection characterises service-learning and is recognised by practitioners and researchers as fundamental to good practice, it is not a regular feature for community service (Arenas, Botsworth, & Kwandayi, 2006; Chambers & Lavery, 2012; Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006). As evident in this study, reflection

was rare with the exception of those who did community service overseas. To quote one student, "Once the task is completed, we don't talk about it".

Most of the participants who had personally benefitted from the reflective activities integrated in their current volunteering work, purported that reflection was vital, as the process had helped deepen the meaning of service. The participants' views were concomitant with the findings of Ash, Clayton, and Atkinson (2005) who concluded that reflection, when included in any service programme, could "generate meaningful learning" (p. 50). The process of reflecting plays a critical role in helping students see the relevance of their experience in their own lives and the lives of others (Chambers & Lavery, 2012).

Even though it is not the norm for community service, it is recommended that a reflection component be integrated into the service programme. Educators not only need to create the time and space for reflection, they must also carefully consider their objectives and have a clear idea of how to structure them (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Rodgers, 2002). According to Rodgers (2002), for effective reflections, educators need approaches that are "systematic, rigorous, and disciplined" (p. 843). Participant feedback suggested their preference for group discussions and oral presentations. They believed that these methods of reflection would enable them to know the experiences and perspectives of other students. In view of what the findings revealed, teachers need to create more occasions for students to share experiences with their schoolmates.

6.6.2.3 Sustain student's service efforts.

Apart from those who had a chance to perform service overseas, most participants reported that nearly all the activities were episodic or one-off, lasting just a few hours. Without any exception, they expressed their concern over the short duration and irregularity of visits to service sites. The participants argued that for service to be meaningful, their efforts had to be sustained and recommended more frequent trips back to the same site. Their observations reflected the results of a study

on high school community service requirement that reported positive student experiences when the volunteering effort was regular and sustained (Brown, Pancer, Henderson, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000).

The research findings in correlation with the various studies have some policy implications. Increasing the duration and regularity of service suggests that more hours need to be devoted to service. One recommendation is that policy-makers, in consultation with teachers, students, and other stakeholders critically reassess if the six-hour requirement for the CIP is in effect enough to sustain the service efforts of students. In their assessment, both the optimum number of hours necessary and the availability of resources need to be carefully considered.

Another recommendation to achieve greater sustainability would be to encourage students to continue their community service activities independently. If schools are concerned about instilling civic responsibility in students so that they could continue to be proactive outside school, they need to equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills. Based on Dewey's philosophy, effective education involves helping students "build their own continuities" (Fishman, 1988a, p. 20). Farahmandpour (2011) suggested greater collaboration with external welfare agencies to help train students by "virtue of their field experience" (p. 55). In the context of Singapore where many teachers lack the resources or experience in community service, it may be necessary for schools to work with service organisations to provide training and support for students. To further motivate students to do community service on their own, schools may also need to have policies that recognise their efforts.

6.6.2.4 Provide students with more options.

One of the issues raised by participants concerning the CIP was the lack of variety in the activities they were asked to do. Participants commented on the repetitive nature of some of the CIP events and the paucity of options. As the

findings imply, students favoured programmes with a wider choice of activities, sites, and sectors. Certainly, the 'one-size-fits-all' approach often described by the participants did not agree with them.

Based on participant feedback, it is recommended that educators cater to the different needs, interests, and capabilities of students and consider how students feel. Designing programmes that show sensitivity to student differences when translated to practice meant giving students greater choice and flexibility. Educators also need to pay special attention to the selection of activities when planning for service. As Reinders and Youniss (2006) suggested, educators have the responsibility of "locating and vetting" sites and arranging for activities that suit the students before assigning them the tasks (p. 10).

As the findings show, it is the norm for students to perform service within Singapore. However, the positive reports by participants on overseas community service suggest the need to offer more students this option. Notwithstanding, such an option would incur further use of resources and the restructuring of existing policies. Schools then, would need to seek greater support from the government to provide them with extra funding and more trained personnel to help carry out these overseas expeditions.

6.6.2.5 Encourage stronger student voice.

Besides the lack of choice, another criticism levelled against the CIP was the lack of student input or voice. According to Morgan and Streb (2001), "A project with a low level of student voice would be one where the teacher selects the specific service projects, plans the logistics, and then has the students involved in the actual performance of the service" (p. 158). Remarks made by some participants such as, "The teachers planned the programme and we just go" (Roger) or "There was no avenue for being proactive in the tasks at hand" (Evan) fit Morgan and Streb's (2001) descriptions.

To promote student voice, it is recommended that programmes make provisions for students to have their say and allow them to play bigger roles in the decision-making process. Educators need to create pathways that give students the responsibility to initiate, plan, and choose the kinds of activities they preferred (Shumer, 1997; Sibthorp, Paisley, Gookin, & Furman, 2008; Vogelgesang, 2009). When students are actively involved in the planning and execution of service projects, it is likely that they would have a greater sense of ownership, and feel more positive about their attitudes towards the beneficiaries (Cipolle, 2010; Farahmandpour, 2011; McBride, Pritzker, Daftary, & Tang, 2006). Thus, educators may have to adopt a different strategy in the way they administer their programmes; that is, from a directive, or "sage on the stage" (p. 150) approach as Kaye (2017) described, to one that is more consultative and student-centred.

6.6.3 Recommendation Three: Provide support and training for teachers.

Finally, in their assessment of the CIP, the participants factored in effective teachers as central to successful outcomes. Although a few described their teachers as good role models of service, almost half of the participants were of the impression that their teachers did not appear to advocate service and sensed their lack of enthusiasm and support for the programme. One of the reasons the participants gave for some of their teachers' attitude was that they could be inexperienced, both in community life and in the pedagogy of service.

Correspondingly, in their investigation, Lee, Sim, and Koh (2012) found that within Singapore, teachers rarely participate in community work though they had to instruct young people to do so. It is challenging for teachers to comprehend what service participation means and even harder for them to champion community service when they have never tried it before (O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2003).

Based on the findings of this study and what other researchers have found, it is recommended that provisions be made for teacher training and development in the

area of service. Although service-learning had been an integral part of teachers' training programme since 2004, the initiative is still fairly recent and a proportion of teachers would have missed out on the programme (D'Rozario & Low, 2012; Koh, Liu, Chye, & Divaharan, 2013; Sim & Low, 2012). Schools, together with The Ministry of Education, and the National Institute of Education could formulate policies to give more teachers access to similar programmes, such as through in-service training.

Another recommendation would be that schools conduct surveys on teachers new in the field of community service to understand their needs and concerns and provide them with the necessary support. Schools could also encourage teachers to volunteer by initiating programmes for them to engage in service activities. To further promote volunteering, teachers with service experience could be invited to share their knowledge and expertise. To give teachers inexperienced in community service greater exposure, schools could look for opportunities for them to attend community service workshops and conferences.

6.6.4 Recommendation Four: Adopt longer-term strategies for measuring outcomes and setting goals.

As the findings of this study indicated, the learning associated with community service can be described as evolving, disconnected, and not always apparent. For example, in describing their CIP experience as "seeds of service" that had been planted, or "stepping stones", the participants portrayed their learning as a developing process. In other words, the outcomes of learning may not occur concurrently with the learning experience.

Based on the participants' descriptions of learning, it is recommended that educators adopt a longer-term approach to understand the impacts of school service on students. Qualities like citizenship and civic responsibility, that are the desired outcomes of the CIP, cannot be assessed without a clearer understanding of how students are contributing to the community in their adult life. If long-term goals are

to be incorporated in their policies and programmes, educators need to consider methods of measurement that look at students' civic behaviour long after they left school. To recall The Theory of Continuity in the literature review, Dewey (1966/1916) expounded that, "The learning in school should be continuous with that out of school" (p. 359). Often, his advice to educators was to take a "long look ahead" if they were to understand learning outcomes (Dewey, 1966/1916, p. 87). For Dewey (1966/1916), it is only when educators have these outcomes in mind, can their instruction be perceived as a "shaping, forming, moulding" process (p. 10).

6.7   Using a Model for Research in Community Service

A key insight of the findings in relation to students' community service experience is that it is a complex phenomenon with many facets and dimensions. What can be concluded from their various descriptions was that even though all of them participated in the same programme (CIP), their experiences were not uniform. These differences not only existed between schools but also within their individual school. This study confirms what other researchers found, namely, that "service is not a homogenous term" (Reinders & Youniss, 2006, p. 9). As Metz and Youniss (2005) pointed out, "The term service stands for a variety of activities that are not simply commensurable" (p. 416).

The complexity of students' school service experience has several implications on research methodologies. Firstly, researchers may need to adopt a more holistic view of students' community service experience. This study proposes using a model of a puzzle to represent service experience, an idea from Wink and Putney (2002). In their Puzzle of Learning (Figure 6.1), learning can be visualised as a puzzle with many interconnected pieces (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 64). These different pieces illustrate the various components of learning. The puzzle has been left without a border to indicate that there could be other possible components. According to Wink and Putney (2002), it is unlikely to have a complete picture of learning.
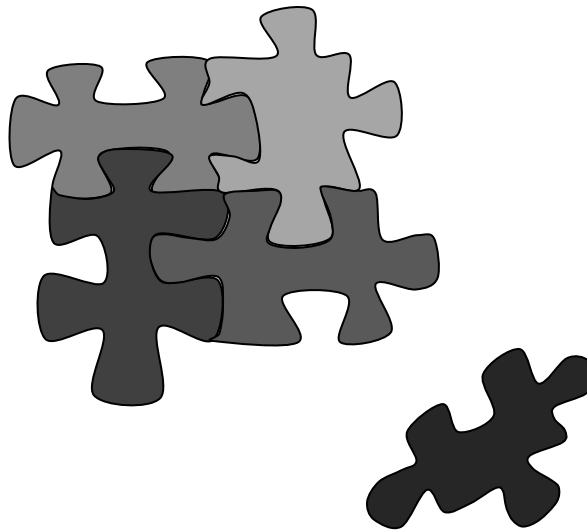
Figure 6.1. The Puzzle of Learning

From *A Vision of Vygotsky* (p. 64), by J. Wink and L. G. Putney, 2002, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

6.7.1 The Community Service Puzzle.

Wink and Putney (2002) not only used many visuals to explain concepts, they encouraged their readers to do the same, "Our goal is to encourage readers to enhance their thoughts by generating their own visual portrayals" (p. 87). What Wink and Putney said inspired the researcher to build on their Puzzle of Learning (Figure 6.1) and extend it to community service (Figure 6.2). Similar to Wink and Putney's visual, the Community Service Puzzle is made up of interlocking pieces. These individual pieces represent the various dimensions of community service that include the programme itself, the school in which the programme was used, and the students involved. However, in this model, within each individual piece is a subset of another puzzle. For instance, the piece that represents 'programme' is made up of smaller pieces, representing features of the programme such as the types of activities, duration, frequency, sites and sectors. Furthermore, there can be other missing pieces in the puzzle and within each piece of the puzzle. A missing piece in one school may, however, be present in another. One example is the element of reflection. The

missing pieces also depict other facets of community service such as the different welfare organisations that schools work with or the communities that students are serving.
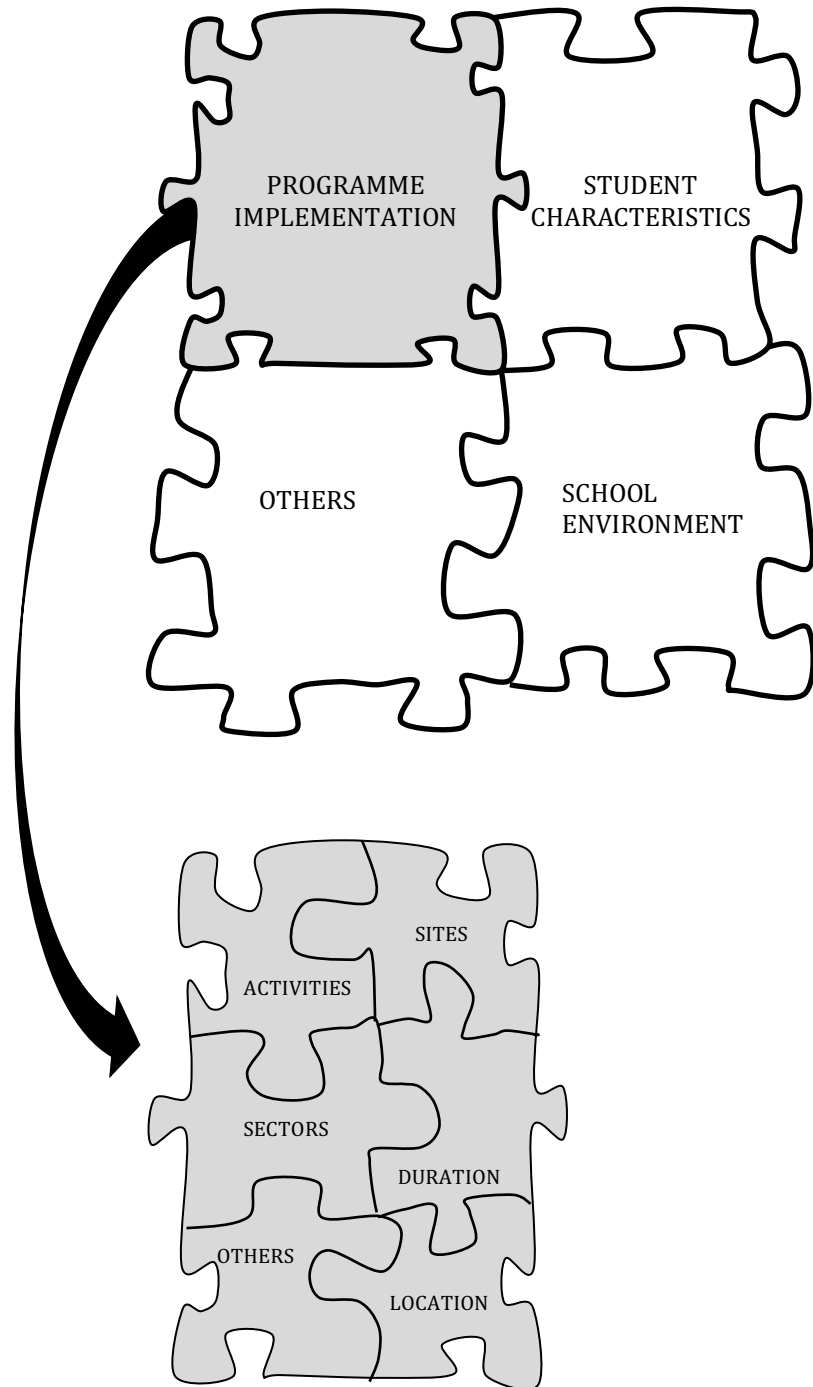
Figure 6.2. The Community Service Puzzle

The model of a puzzle is a useful tool for researchers to disentangle some of the complexities of community service. In looking at the model, one gets a clearer understanding of the multiple facets of community service and their interconnections. Most significantly, the model reminds researchers to look at students' service experience more holistically. There are many dimensions in their experience that deserve attention besides the actual activity itself. The conglomeration of these different aspects of students' service experience can imply that there are infinite ways service can manifest.

Yet, the puzzle also calls for greater specificity in the research process as illustrated by the subset of the puzzle within a single piece. For example, any investigation of students' community service experience requires the researcher to differentiate between programmes, school conditions, and the students involved. As shown in this study, even students doing the same programme in the same school will have different experiences. Such variations imply that researchers have to be more discriminating in their assessment of programmes. Hence, instead of looking for simple answers like whether progammes succeed or not, it would be more fruitful to ascertain which particular aspects and under what conditions programmes worked or failed.

Similar to Wink and Putney's (2002) model (Figure 6.1), the Community Service Puzzle is not confined by a border. The absence of a frame (Figure 6.2), suggests one should view service as something that is not fixed. From the descriptions of the participants, every experience has its own level of complexity and possibilities. As Furco (1996b) described, service programmes are "complex enterprises defined by the nature of service activities, the individuals who serve in them, the school environment within which the programmes operates, and the community in which the service activities take place" (p. 47). It follows then, that researchers need to adopt methodologies that allow them to explore the breadth and depth of students' experience. Equally important, the puzzle cautions one to be more discerning in reading what other researchers report, and perhaps visualise what their puzzles may look like.

6.8 Limitations

In this concluding chapter, it is also important to re-examine the limitations of the study. The first limitation concerns the nature of the study that relies on the participants' retrospections of their past experience with service at school. Knowledge obtained through the memory of an individual has its limitations in regard to reliability and completeness (Levering, 2007).

Secondly, the study also takes into account that the research was carried out in Singapore. Thus, the participants' interpretations and beliefs would be specific to its unique socio-cultural setting. For this reason, the findings from the study may not be transferrable to youth in another country even if they have some common experience in regard to service (Smith et al., 2009). Readers can, however, make comparisons and assess the relevance of the findings in terms of their similarities and differences (Sarantakos, 2005).

Finally, this study is about post-school youth who serve. The primary purpose was to explore to what extent and in what ways these youth believed their sense of civic responsibility was influenced by their school service experience. Although their narratives could give educators a glimpse of the lived experience of those learning to serve, what they had shared was only a fragment of the broader picture. Moreover, it must also be acknowledged that the views of these youth may have an element of bias because they might be predisposed to serve. For this reason, their interpretations are not generalisable to all youth in Singapore.

6.9 Researcher's Personal Reflections

Undertaking this study on youth who serve was personally meaningful and rewarding. What I consider to be the greatest privilege was to receive the generosity of these various individuals who not only patiently sat with me for many hours through two interviews that stretched over several months, but had also entrusted me with their personal stories. I am profoundly moved, for in every way, I too, was served by them.

Minichiello and Kottler (2010b) once pointed out that qualitative researchers have to immerse themselves into the data collected and allow it to "speak to you over time" (p. 20). Indeed it is true. In a touching way, the voice of each of my participants continues to speak to me although the research is all over, reminding me of the richness and nuances of the word, 'service', and what it means to those who serve. In reminding me to see service in all its complexities, the participants are steering me away from oversimplified attempts to explain why service is rendered. While the reason for embarking on this study was to explore the link between school service and adult volunteering, the participants were cautioning me that the phenomenon of service, whether it occurred in school or beyond is far more complicated to be reduced to a simple equation. To recall what Dean told me,

> On hindsight, it [CIP] might have been useful. It's a stepping-
> stone that I needed to start me volunteering. But it's really
> something intangible. I can't quantify it. I can't really correlate it
> and say that due to CIP, I'm serving now.

In looking back, I realised the difficulty of the question I had posed to the participants in asking them to interpret the relationship between their past and subsequent service. It was hence not surprising that there were as many interpretations as there were metaphors used by the participants to describe the relationship. For example, the CIP experience was depicted as a seed planted, a spark lit, a parcel received, an expectation created, or a starting point. For these young volunteers, their past experiences might have, as Fishman (1998b) said, "left deposits or residues" (p. 30) that continued to influence their later decisions. However, from the stories the participants shared, I am also acutely aware of the uniqueness of each of their life experiences that had shaped their sense of service and propensity to serve. Before I conclude, I would like to share with readers a segment of my personal reflections that I had written after my interview with Francis. Francis' story may serve as a reminder that service "cannot be understood adequately if isolated from their contexts" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 5).

> At one point during the interview, Francis shared with me a very
> painful period of his life. He lost his sister five years ago. She had
> been bedridden all her life, and Francis always felt close to her.

The day she died, he was sitting for his exam and he remembered clearly the teacher breaking the news to him. After his sister's passing away, his father suffered a stroke. I can imagine the magnitude of their suffering. All the while after the first interview, I had sensed that he had some family issues, but he did not disclose them to me then. I felt so sorry for all that he had been through and I am reminded again that there are so many aspects of a person's life we will never truly comprehend. Even as I am writing this reflection, my heart wrenches for him. I wonder to what extent and in what ways he has been affected, how he copes with the weight of his pain. I feel the sorrow and I am crying.

Understanding this facet of Francis' life puts things in perspective. It begins to make sense to me why he feels and thinks in a certain way, why he chooses to do what he does. He recalled a moment during a school community service trip to India and when he saw a girl in the orphanage who reminded him of his own sister. He was unable to write his reflections that night, and felt he needed to grieve all over for his sister. The wound felt raw and in that moment of sadness, he broke down and cried. I felt really sorry that I had made him relive those pains. It was his 21st birthday. Did I spoil his day?

I wrote him a note to thank him for giving up his time for me, for scheduling time for our interview even though it was his birthday. The generosity of spirit overwhelms. These are the things that I will treasure in my research journey and long after.

As I reminisce on the conversations I had with these young volunteers, there is this growing awareness I will never see service in the same way again. Now that I can imagine and put a face behind every act of service, the phenomenon takes on a whole new meaning for it has within itself a story to tell.

Glossary of Terms

Artefacts Objects that "inform us about the phenomenon under study because of their significance to the phenomena" (Hancock, 1998, p. 13). In this study, artefacts brought by the participants were used during the interviews.

Bracket To suspend or set aside one's pre-existing beliefs and prejudices (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Spinelli, 2005).

Coding One of the initial processes of data analysis where data is organised into "similar categories" (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006, p. 199).

Epoche "A Greek word meaning refraining from judgement" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33).

Formal volunteering Volunteering "through an organisation" (National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre, 2013, p. 3).

Lived experiences "A term used in phenomenological studies to emphasise the importance of individual experiences of people as conscious human beings" (Creswell, 2007, p. 236).

Memoing "Recording reflective notes about what you are learning from the data" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 592).

Member-checking Process of having participants to check on the accuracy of the transcribed interviews.

Metaphor "A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable" (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018, April 27).

Methods "The techniques and procedures used to gather and analyse data" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).

Methodology The "strategy, plan of action, process or design" of the research (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).

Open-ended questions "Questions that allow participants to respond in their own ways" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 594).

Phenomenology "A philosophical approach to the study of experience" that involves examining the essential qualities of people's experiences in their own consciousness (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 11).

Post-school youth In this study, post-school youth refer to young adults who have graduated from secondary school and are "no longer in the school setting" (Hollander & Burack, 2009, p. 5).

Reflexivity Being "conscious of the biases, values and experiences" that the researcher brings to the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 243).

Secondary school education In the educational system of Singapore, secondary school education can be four or five years depending on the course students are enrolled in. The typical age for students to begin secondary schooling is 13 (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2015).

Snowball sampling The process of asking research participants to "identify other potential participants" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 602).

Thick description A "rich" and in-depth account of people's experiences (Kervin et al., 2006, p. 84).

Youth/young people For the purpose of this study, youth or young people refer to young adults from 19 to 29 years of age.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Letter to Welfare Organisations Seeking Help to Advertise Opportunity to Participate in the Research

Dear Sir or Madam

RE: Recruitment of participants for a research project

PROJECT TITLE: Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR: Professor Chris Hackett
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Cho See Chong
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD

My name is Cho See Chong and I am a student of The University of Notre Dame, Australia. For my PhD degree, I will be conducting a research on the civic responsibility of post-school youth in Singapore. It aims to investigate in what ways post-school youth believe their sense of civic responsibility has been influenced by their school service experience. The purpose is to understand their perceptions and interpretations of their experience with service participation at school and how they may have been affected.

In carrying out a research on post-school youth who have continued with their involvement in community service, the study may enhance understanding of how students' sense of civic responsibility develops over time and what could have motivated them to continue with service beyond their school years. I believe that educators would benefit from having clearer insights of the actual and longer-term impacts of service participation if they are to create programs that not only increase young people's propensity to serve but also sustain it.

I plan to recruit participants who are currently involved in voluntary service in your organisation and would be extremely grateful if you could support my research by helping to advertise the opportunity to participate and refer potential participants to me.

The criteria for the selection of participants are:
1. They have graduated from any secondary school in Singapore;
2. They are aged between 19 and 29;
3. They are currently involved in voluntary community service;
4. They have previous experience with service participation while at school either through the Values in Action or Community Involvement Programme.

Participants will be taking part in one-to-one interviews carried out in two stages. They are also required to write reflective journals. All interviews will be held in a safe and mutually convenient location.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants may opt out of the study at any time. Each participant will need to sign and return a Consent Form to establish his or her informed consent.

The protocol adopted by The University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/. Professor Chris Hackett of the School of Education is supervising the project. If you have any queries regarding the research, please contact me directly or Professor Hackett by phone (618) 94330159 or by email at chris.hackett@nd.edu.au.

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 013135F). If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (618) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au

Please find attached the following:
1. Advertisement for Opportunity to Participate
2. Participant Information Sheet

I would be most happy to answer any further queries. Please contact me by email at chosee.chong1@my.nd.edu.au.

Thank you so much for your time

Yours sincerely
Mrs. Cho See Chong

Appendix 2

Advertisement for Opportunity to Participate in Research Study

Title of Research

Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

This project is being conducted by Cho See Chong and will form the basis for the degree of PhD at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Professor Chris Hackett from the School of Education.

Description of study

The research concerns post-school youth who not only participated in community service while at school but have also chosen to continue serving beyond their school years. The purpose is to understand their perceptions and interpretations of their experience with service participation at school and how they may have been impacted. It is hoped that the findings can give educators a clearer picture of the actual and longer-term impacts of service participation and help them implement policies and programs that can cultivate civic responsibility among young people. Participants will have the opportunity to share their personal insights through interviews and reflective journals.

Criteria

1.Graduated from a secondary school in Singapore
2. Aged between 19 to 29
3. Currently involved in voluntary community service
4. Previous experience with service participation while at school through either the Values in Action or Community Involvement Program.

Benefits to participants
Participants will have the opportunity to have their experiences represented and contribute towards a research about young people's sense of civic responsibility.

Compensation
As a token of appreciation for their time and effort, participants will be rewarded with a gratuity in the form of a gift.

Contact information
Please contact Cho See Chong chosee.chong1@my.nd.edu.au for more information. Request for information does not obligate you to participate in the study.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity

 Cho See Chong

Appendix 3

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, *(participant's name)* _____ hereby agree to being a participant in the above research project.

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet about this project and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information gathered by the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential, except in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals.

- I understand that the protocol adopted by the University Of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the *Privacy Act* are available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

- I understand that I will be audio-taped.

- I understand that the small sample size may have implications for protecting my identity.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE:		DATE:	

RESEARCHER'S FULL NAME:	CHO SEE CHONG		
RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE:		DATE:	

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au

Appendix 4

Participant Information Sheet

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
AUSTRALIA

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR: Professor Chris Hackett
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Cho See Chong
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

The research concerns young adults like you who are currently involved in voluntary community service. It aims to investigate in what ways you believe your sense of civic responsibility is influenced by your school service experience. The purpose is to understand your perceptions and interpretations of your experience with service participation at school and how you may have been impacted. In carrying out a research on youth who have continued with their involvement in community service beyond school, the study may enhance understanding of how students' sense of civic responsibility develops over time. Educators need to have clearer insights of the actual and longer-term impacts of service participation if they are to create programs that not only increase young people's propensity to serve but also sustain it.

This project is being conducted by Cho See Chong and will form the basis for the degree of PhD at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Professor Chris Hackett.

The study will involve you taking part in interviews and writing reflective journals. Firstly, you will be participating in one-to-one interviews with the researcher that will be carried out in two stages. Both the interviews are about an hour long. Interview schedules with a list of questions will be used and you are encouraged to look through them before the interviews. The interviews will take place at a mutually convenient location that is safe and public. Both interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. After the interviews have been transcribed, you will be offered a transcript of the interview, and I would be grateful if you would comment on whether you believe I have captured your experience accurately. Apart from the interviews, you will be asked to write reflective journals on both your school service experience as well as your current service experience. The purpose of the journals is to encourage you to reflect more deeply while at the same time offer you further opportunities to share what may have been missed out during the interviews.

The protocol adopted by The University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the Privacy Act are available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/. Professor Chris Hackett of the School of Education is supervising the project.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

If you have any queries regarding the research, please contact me directly or Professor Hackett by phone (618) 94330159 or by email at chris.hackett@nd.edu.au.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without a need to explain why and without prejudice. If you withdraw, all the information you provided will also be withdrawn from the study.

Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken in instances of legal requirements such as court subpoenas, freedom of information requests, or mandated reporting by some professionals. Raw and unedited transcripts will only be read by the researcher. Edited transcripts will be given to each participant to allow him or her to check for accuracy. For anonymity, no identifying information will be disclosed and all participants will be referred to by pseudonyms in any publication arising from the research. However, the small sample size may have implications for protecting your identity.

Data will be stored securely in the School of Education at The University of Notre Dame Australia for a period of five years after which all data will be destroyed. The study will be submitted for publication in academic journals in Australia or Singapore. The results from the study will be made freely available to all participants upon publication.

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 013135F). If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (618) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate, please contact me by email at chosee.chong1@my.nd.edu.au. Before the interview, I will ask you to sign two copies of the consent form. Each of us will keep a copy of the consent form.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs. Cho See Chong
Email: chosee.chong1@my.nd.edu.au

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (618) 9433 0943, research@nd.edu.au

Appendix 5

Interview Plan

Pre-interview

Documents to prepare
1.Interview schedules
2.Consent forms
3.Participant information sheet
4.Opportunity to participate letter
5.Participant's personal profile form
6.Letter to welfare organisations
7.Researcher's own interview protocol/notes/reminders
8.Researcher's own interview schedule/field notes
9.Questions for Participants' Reflective Journals
10.Plain paper files to keep all data/documents for each participant

People to contact
1.Gatekeepers
2.Potential participants

Things to buy
1.Audio recorder
2.Zip Files
3.Gifts
4.Participants' reflective journals/notebooks
5.Clip-boards
6.USB
7.File/folders for keeping each participant's notes, documents

Initial meetings with potential participants

1.Introduce myself, show appreciation for their attendance, focus on building relationships
2.Brief participants on the nature and purpose of research
3.Explain to participants how they can contribute
4.Brief participants on what is expected
5.Assure participants of their anonymity
6.Assure participants that a copy of the transcription of the interview will be e-mailed to them to allow them to check for accuracy or completeness
*7.Distribute **consent forms**, **opportunity to participate letter, participant information sheets**, **participant's personal profile forms, and interview schedules.** If possible collect consent forms and personal profile forms for those who want to participate*
8.Request for help with snowballing
9.Arrange meeting date, time, and location with participants who agree
10.Exchange contact numbers, e-mail addresses
11.Obtain permission for the use of interview venue if applicable

Phase One Interview

Before the interview

1.Contact participant to confirm meeting
2.Remind them to bring consent forms and personal profile forms if they had not submitted earlier
3.Read through personal journal and be conscious of the need to bracket my own value judgements that could potentially interfere with the interview.

Things to bring

1.Extra consent forms, personal profile forms, opportunity to participate letters, participant information sheets, and interview schedules
2. Researcher's own interview protocol/notes/reminders
3.Researcher's own interview schedule/field notes
4.Questions for participants' reflective journal
5.Participants' reflective journals
6.Audio recorder
8.Zip files
9.Clip boards, plain paper and stationery
10.Notebook for interview related matters
11.Plain paper files to keep all data/documents for each participant

During the interview

1.Preliminaries
 * Greet and thank participants
 * Collect consent forms and personal profile forms
 * Check seating arrangement, ask if they are comfortable
 * Seek permission to record the interview and assure them of anonymity
 * Test audio-recorder
 * Ask if they have any questions before the interview commences
 * Very briefly describe how the interview is structured and encourage participants to seek clarifications if the questions were not clear
 * Let participant have a clip board with plain paper and pen in case they want to write or draw something

2.Conducting the interview
 * Be reflexive and listen with an open mind (bracketing)
 * Listen attentively, be patient, neutral but warm and friendly (beware of interviewer effect)
 * Establish eye contact
 * Check body language
 * Check tone of voice
 * Use appropriate probes, clarify, at times repeat/mirror
 * Take note of participant's body language/ paralinguistic feature

3. At the end of the interview
- *Show appreciation*
- *Give token of appreciation*
- *Distribute reflective journals/zip files and explain what they have to do*
- *Distribute questions for reflective journals but emphasise that participants are free to write what feels more relevant to them*
- *Encourage participants to email me their reflective journals*
- *Encourage participants to bring any memorabilia such as photographs for next interview*
- *Briefly explain what next interview is about*
- *Enquire if they can help recommend participants to take part in the study*
- *Make arrangement for next interview*
- *Ask if they have any feedback or further question, encourage them to email any time*
- *Remind participants that a transcription of Phase 1 interview will be emailed to them for checking*

After the interview

1.After the participant has left, find a quiet place to begin writing my notes
2.Enter immediate thoughts, impressions and perceptions in my notebook
3.Reflect and write self-appraisal of performance in the interview

Transcribe, file and store data safely according to ethical requirements

Send a copy of transcribed interview to participant via email for checking and request for a response by a certain date

Begin data analysis

Phase Two Interview

Before the interview

1.Write up the interview schedule that is mainly open-ended (This may vary with each participant's 1st interview, the field notes, and reflections of the researcher)
2.Email the interview schedule to participants but emphasise that they are free to raise any topic that has relevance to their experience
2. Check that participant had received email of transcriptions. Stress importance for him/her to write down their feedback and further thoughts on the issues raised. The 2nd phase of the interview can follow up on this.
3.Check that participants had written their reflective journals and remind them to bring any memorabilia of interest for a more personal discussion
4.Arrange for date, time and location of interview
5.Obtain permission to use the interview venue if applicable
6.Write thank you cards

Things to bring

1.Individual file of participant
2.Interview schedule
3 Transcribed data
4.Anything that participant may have emailed me earlier, such as reflective journal
5.Audio-recorder
6.Researcher's own interview protocol/notes/reminders
7.Researcher's own interview schedule/field notes
8.Clip boards, plain paper and stationery
9.Notebook for interview related matters
10.Thank you card

During the Interview

1.Preliminaries
- *Thank participants for their help or if applicable, for helping to snowball*
- *Briefly explain the difference in emphasis between the two interviews and its purpose*

2.Conducting the interview
- *Invite participant to show objects they brought and initiate discussion based on these objects*
- *Invite participants to share their reflections, things they would like to highlight*
- *Ask participants if they have any further comments or points they want to add.*
- *Conduct the interview with the interview schedule as a rough guide but keep it open and if possible allow participants to lead the discussion.*

3.At the end of interview
- *Thank participants for their time and effort and most of all for sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences*
- *Thank you card*
- *Remind participants that a transcription of Phase 2 interview will be emailed to them for checking and encourage them to continue with their reflective journaling to capture any perspectives and thoughts that may have evolved during data collection*

After the interview

1.After the participant has left, find a quiet place to begin writing my notes
2.Enter immediate thoughts, impressions and perceptions in my notebook
3.Reflect and write self-appraisal of performance in the interview

Transcribe, file and store data safely according to ethical requirements

Send a copy of transcribed interview to participant via email for checking and request for a response by a certain date

Analyse data

Thank all gatekeepers for their help in recommending participants

Throughout different stages of gathering data, keep supervisor informed through email. CC supervisor all correspondence with gatekeepers.

Appendix 6

Interview Protocol (Phase One)

Date:
Time:

Participant:

Preliminaries

Greet participant by name. Introduce myself.

Thank you for giving up your time to participate in this research. Your contribution to this research is invaluable.

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of how young adults like yourself perceive your experience with service participation while at school. There are no right or wrong answers. I am most interested to hear your personal perspectives, thoughts, and feelings about your experiences with service.

I would like to go over the items in the consent form before we sign it.
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time during the data gathering process.

I can assure you that your identity will be protected and throughout the study, you will be referred to with a pseudonym.

A transcription of this interview will be emailed to you to check if it accurately reflects what you have shared.

Can I ask your permission to audio record the interview?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Are you comfortable with this seating arrangement?

Closing

Do you have any comments you wish to add to any of the issues we have discussed?

Things to hand over to participant
1. Reflective journal and questions
2. Zip file for memorabilia to bring for next interview

Find out if they can help recommend other participants

Ask permission to email them if there is a need to clarify

Also to expect email of the transcribed interview from me for member-checking

Arrange for next interview if possible.

Thank participant for their time and effort.

Appendix 7

Interview Schedule (Phase One)

Research Title
Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

Questions 1 to 4 relate to your participation in community service after you have left school.

1.Can you describe the nature of the service project you are currently or recently involved in?

Possible prompts
- *How did you come to know about this service opportunity?*
- *Can you tell me more about the organisation you are volunteering for?*
- *Can you describe the types of activities you are involved in?*
- *Can you elaborate on your roles?*
- *On the average, how many hours do you usually spend on the activity/project? Does this include time for preparation and planning?*
- *How frequent is your involvement?*
- *How long have you been involved in this project?*

2. Can you describe your personal experience as a young adult volunteer?

Possible prompts
- *How does the service experience make you feel?*
- *Do you think the service experience has influenced the way you see the community and your place in it?*
- *What do you feel are some of the challenges or difficulties you face as a volunteer?*
- *What are the things that make you feel supported?*

3. Can you describe how voluntary work has affected you?

Possible prompts
- *What did you learn from your participation?*
- *How do you think the experience had affected you in terms of your own personal growth, sense of self and identity development?*
- *In what other areas do you think you are affected?*

4. What do you think motivates you to serve?

Possible prompts
- *What is the greatest motivation for your commitment to service?*
- *What other factors motivate you?*
- *Is there a particular person who may have been a motivating influence?*

Questions 5 to 9 relate to your experience with service participation while at school.

5. Students in Singapore are required to participate in community service. Can you describe some key characteristics of the service program in your school?

Possible prompts
- *What was the service program in your school known as?*
- *What did the program look like, sound like and feel like in your school?*
- *Was the service program linked to the curriculum?*
- *Can you describe the various types of activities associated with your school's service program?*
- *Did students have a choice in the types of service activities or the volunteer sites?*
- *On the average, how many hours of service did you perform each year?*
- *Can you describe your roles?*
- *Can you also describe the roles of those who might be involved in the program such as the principal, teachers, parents, and students?*

6. Can you describe your personal experience with service at school through the CIP/VIA (Community Involvement Programme/ Values in Action) or other forms of service while at school?

Possible prompts
- *How many years had you participated in CIP/VIA or other forms of service organised by your school?*
- *What are your thoughts and feelings about the program? Why do you feel this way?*
- *In your opinion, what aspects or features of the program had worked/ had not worked for you?*
- *Can you describe some of the challenges or difficulties you faced?*
- *In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a well- implemented service program?*

7. Were there any opportunities for discussion and reflection for each project?

Possible prompts
- *If your response is 'Yes', can you tell me more the nature of these discussions or reflections? (For example, were they formal or informal, individual or as a group?)*
- *If your response is 'No', can you think of possible reasons why there no discussion/reflection after each service project? On your own, did you try to make sense or reflect on the service experience?*
- *Do you feel it is important to allow for reflection and discussion after each activity? What kind of reflection do you think works best for you?*

8. In what ways do you feel your school service experience had affected you?
Possible prompts

- *What did you learn from the experience?*
- *Do you think there had been a difference in your personal values, attitudes, and behaviours that could have resulted from your experience?*
- *Was there any significant event during your participation in service that you find impactful? How did that affect you?*

9. To what extent and in what ways do you think your sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve has been influenced by your school service experience?

Possible prompts
- *Were there any aspects of your experience that could have contributed to the development of your ethic of care and concern for the community?*
- *Do you think your experience with service while at school would have any impact on your longer-term commitment to service?*

10. What do you feel are the factors that have influenced your sense of civic responsibility and propensity to serve?

11. Are there any other things you would like to add?

Thank you so much for your time

Appendix 8

Topics for Reflections (Phase One)

Research Title
Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

Introduction
Thank you for setting aside time to reflect and share your thoughts, feelings and perceptions about your experience with service during your school years and beyond. Your contribution to the research is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Purpose
It is hoped that this reflective journal will:
- *encourage you to reflect deeply in your own time and space*
- *capture the things that I may have forgotten to ask or missed out during the interviews*
- *allow you to share what is uniquely your own lived experience*
- *give you another opportunity to reflect on the changes to your own understandings that may have evolved over these few months*

Questions
The following questions serve only as guidelines. Please feel free to write what you see as most relevant to your own experience.

1. Reflect on how your school service experience may have affected you. As a suggestion, you can use the following points as a guide.
- *Head: How your learning, knowledge, understandings, skills, and self-efficacy may have been affected?*
- *Heart: How your feelings about yourself in terms of your attitudes, values, worldviews and moral reasoning may have been affected? Was there a change in the way you feel about others?*
- *Hand: Has your school service experience made a difference in terms of your behavior, your relationship with others, your choice of career, and your decisions?*

2. Think of a particular service project/event during your school days that you feel is significant.
- *Can you describe the nature of the activity and how you were involved?*
- *In what ways do you find the event/activity significant?*
- *How did you feel about that particular experience?*
- *How do you think it affected you?*

3. Reflect on your current acts of service to others.
- *What motivates you?*
- *How would you explain or understand the relationship between your past school service experience and your sense of civic responsibility?*
- *What do you see as challenges young adults like yourself face as a volunteer? How do you manage these challenges?*

4. Think of the various features/elements in your school service programs.
- *What do you think had been meaningful? Why?*
- *What did not work for you? Why?*
- *What is the difference between the service activities you participated in at school and those you participated in after you have left school?*
- *What do you think are factors that could contribute to a successful program?*

5. Think of your plans for future involvement in voluntary service.
- *What are your longer-term plans for volunteering?*
- *What do you think have an impact on your ethic of care and commitment to service?*
- *What are do see as potential challenges/supports for your future involvement?*

Thank you for giving up so much of your time.

Appendix 9

Interview Schedule (Phase Two)

Research Title
Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

In our final interview, I am interested to hear your personal stories as a young adult volunteer. Take me through the processes of your service experiences and share with me your thoughts, insights, perspectives and feelings. This interview will require much retrospection and recounting of earlier experiences, as well as self-scrutiny and self-understanding. As a result, it is important that you look through the schedule and reflect upon the topics raised before the interview.

Questions 1 to 4 concern your participation in community service after secondary school.

1. What does service mean to you?

Possible prompts
- *What matters to you when you serve others?*
- *How do you regard your personal sense of service?*
- *How do you really feel about your acts of service to others? (Think about your experience before, during and after your participation).*
- *Why do you feel this way?*
- *Do you think your life had been affected by your volunteering experience?*

2. What did you learn from your service experience?

Possible prompts
- *What did you learn about yourself?*
- *Do you think there were any changes in your own perspectives, attitudes and behavior that could have been impacted by your service experience?*
- *What did you learn about those whom you were helping?*
- *What did you learn about other volunteers?*

3. This question requires you to recount significant events that took place during service. (These could be scenes that you witnessed, encounters that you would not forget, stories you heard from those you served).

Possible prompts
- *What makes these experiences/stories stand out?*
- *How do you feel? Why do you feel this way?*
- *How do you think the experiences/stories had impacted you?*

4. What do you think motivates you to serve?

- *Think about your environment/culture around you. Did your environment have an influence on your ethic of service?*
- *Think about the people around you. Did your family members, peers, friends, mentors, teachers or any other persons impact your sense of service?*
- *Think about your own values and your sense of what matters. Is your commitment to service affected by your beliefs, moral stance, aspirations, assumptions, life goals, expectations, sense of duty and concerns?*
- *Think about your past experience. Were there significant events in your life that could have could have shaped your own attitude in regards to service?*

5. In your opinion, what part does your earlier school service experience (CIP) play in your decision to serve?

Possible prompts
- *What does your school service experience (CIP) mean to you now that you are an adult? Why do you feel this way?*
- *What did the experience mean to you when you were a student? Why do feel this way?*
- *To what extent would you think your earlier experience with CIP had influenced your sense of civic responsibility?*

6. This question requires you to recount significant events that took place during your CIP service experience (These could be scenes that you witnessed, encounters that you would not forget, stories you heard from those you served).

Possible prompts
- *What makes these experiences/stories stand out?*
- *How do you feel? Why do you feel this way?*
- *How do you think the experiences/stories had impacted you?*

7. What are your thoughts on your longer-term commitment to service?

Possible prompts
- *Do you see yourself continuing to serve in future?*
- *In your opinion, what would help sustain your long-term commitment to serve?*
- *What do you think are the dilemmas and challenges that could undermine your commitment to volunteer?*
- *How would you explain the relationship between your longer-term commitment and your earlier experience with service while at secondary school?*

8. Are there any other things you would like to add?

 Thank you so much for sharing your lived experiences and personal stories. I am deeply grateful for your kindness and support.

Appendix 10

Topics for Reflections (Phase Two)

Research Title
Youth who serve: Mandatory school service experience and consequent civic responsibility

Introduction
Thank you once again for patiently staying on with me throughout our data gathering process that has extended for almost half a year. I am deeply grateful for your willingness to help and the sacrifice you have made for me. I hope, once again, that you can help complete our data gathering by writing your reflections.

Purpose
According to Bruner (1966) "the act of writing detaches one from his immediate social interaction, creates new awareness about the nature and power of language" (p. 111).

It is hoped that the process of writing will:
- *encourage you to reflect deeply without distraction*
- *give you time to deliberate on your choice of words and language use*
- *allow you to share what is uniquely your own lived experience*
- *give you another opportunity to reflect on the changes to your own understandings that may have evolved over these few months*

Questions
The following questions serve only as guidelines. Please feel free to write what you see as most relevant to your own experience.

1. As an adult now, how do perceive your earlier school service experience (CIP)?

2. How do you interpret the relationship between your past CIP experience and your subsequent involvement in community service as an adult?

3. In your opinion, what was it about the CIP in your school that worked or did not work for you?

4. In your opinion, how would you think the CIP in school could be improved?

5. What are your reasons for continuing with service in your adult life?

6. What are your longer-term plans to serve in future? What do you think can sustain your commitment to service? What potential challenges would there be that could undermine your commitment?

Thank you for your sharing your personal stories and insights on your experience with service. I appreciate deeply your patience, understanding and generosity in giving up so much of your time as my co-researcher.

Appendix 11

Sample of Participant Reflections (Roger)

1 As an adult now, how do perceive your earlier school service experience (CIP)?

I perceive my CIP in school as helpful, in the sense that it introduced me to the field of volunteering. If not for my secondary school CIP involvement, I would not have known about Organisation X and what is volunteering basically all about. I had fun with my friends doing CIP together but were limited to doing menial tasks like cleaning, picking up rubbish every time our school involve us in some volunteering programme. As an adult now and after volunteering in X during the holidays, I get to get in touch more with what I was supposed to volunteer for, that is to make a positive impact on the lives of the disadvantaged and personally feel the benefits volunteering has brought to myself.

2 How do you interpret the relationship between your past CIP experience and your subsequent involvement in community service as an adult?

I see the relationship as a stepping-stone. My past experiences with CIP in secondary school and JC are more of a basic form of volunteering with little responsibility to shoulder during the period of time. Although the experience I have now in volunteering as an adult is a lot different and requires more responsibility as compared to that in secondary school, the CIP exposure which I have gained in the past has given me more confidence to volunteer rather than to spend my time on other areas during holidays, although I wouldn't say that it is my CIP that instill this 'morality' in me. At least what CIP did teach me is that people of all ages, like young teenagers, can volunteer and it is not strange for me to go to an organisation to volunteer next time.

3 In your opinion, what was it about the CIP in your school that worked or did not work for you?

CIP in my secondary school worked for me in the sense that it is something different from the very mundane school life of studying. Moreover, you get to mingle with your friends more during CIP and it is one of the ways to relax and get away from textbooks. Other than that, the primary impact to me as a small boy in secondary school is quite minimal other than knowing it is a compulsory activity organized by the school.

4 In your opinion, how would you think the CIP in school could be improved?

I feel that CIP in school should be more customized to students of different interests. For example in universities, we have different volunteering sectors, like the elderly, orphans, intellectually disabled. Plus we can choose to help in different ways like befriending or painting their houses. Again I feel that schools may not have these resources to cater to the different needs of students and the roles of volunteering, which is a limitation.

Another point to note that the CIP done in my school has been helpful in introducing me to the field of volunteering (by knowing Organisation X existed). Making it compulsory to volunteering when we are in school may be beneficial as we would never know that people may grow up and have a chance to do volunteering again if their interest and heart allows. If they are interested, at least there is already an experience of volunteering at an organization before which aid in their decision to volunteer. A person who has never done CIP may not know how and where to start even if they want to try volunteering unless they have friends or family who actively volunteers. CIP allows more proportion of the young adults to have greater knowledge about volunteering, which may introduce this field by word of mouth to the rest who may be interested to volunteer in their free time.

Using an analogy, it is just like learning basic math that is compulsory in school. Not everybody will be mathematician /accountant next time but the knowledge and exposure you bring with you will form part of an essential skill that may be useful in your adulthood if you ever need it.

5 What are your reasons for continuing with service in your adult life?

I continued with service in my adult life because of various reasons that happens together in a right period of time that set my mind to do volunteering. Firstly it is because of school holidays and the desire to do something meaningful before I graduate. I have joined camps and done internships in the past but this time round I just want to give back to the society when I am free. I know that I would have no time to volunteer when I start work too. That is what makes me continue my volunteering service. It is also a challenge to myself as a person who believes that we must try to be compassionate and to empathise with the disadvantaged and that everybody should strive to keep the society a better place to live in. Of course the first thing that came to my mind when volunteering was Organisation X. And that is how I volunteered there in my school holidays.

6 What are your longer-term plans to serve in future? What do you think can sustain your commitment to service? What potential challenges would there be that could undermine your commitment?

I plan to volunteer when I have the time and means to do so. Time and commitment is still one of the major obstacles. I may have other commitments like family, work and a change in mindset that would cause me to volunteer less. I would have to work my time around and be committed as a part time volunteer if I have the thoughts of doing it. Time management and the willingness to fork out the extra effort are huge challenges for me. Perhaps I can influence others positively based on my experience volunteering with X so that they may develop the desire one day if they ever want to give back to the society.

Appendix 12

Researcher's Journal on Preparing for the Interview and *Epoche*

Interview plan
Once I drafted out my interview schedule questions, I prepared a set of interview notes that details the list of things I need to get ready for the interview. I find that it is an important step to free my mind from worries about what I may forget to bring for the interview (such as important forms and audio recorder). The sense of being prepared allows me to focus on the interview.

Interview protocol
The primary aim of the protocol is ensure that research ethics is adhered to. Hence it works like a set of procedures that reminds me all the important things I must always inform the participants in relation to the ethical aspects of their participation. Besides, I consider the protocol as part of interview etiquette crucial for establishing rapport and trust. I want my participants to feel that what they contribute is invaluable and significant.

Pilot interviews
I carried out three pilot interviews. After each of interview, I started writing down my impressions of the interview. For instance, I critiqued my technique and style and commented upon the strengths and weaknesses of the interview. The significance of these reflections is that it helped me identify certain themes that may need further exploration. As a result, I reevaluated my interview schedule questions and made some changes to them.

Researcher's journal
I made a commitment to myself to write my own reflections after each interview. As Bednall (2006) suggested in his article "Epoche and bracketing within the phenomenological paradigm," journalling is best carried out immediately after each interview. For me, the act of journaling reminds me to respect the time and effort each participant had contributed to the study and to treat the interview process seriously. Each interview is unique and warrants the researcher's effort to deliberate and contemplate on its success or failures. Another purpose of the research journal is to record thoughts and ideas that arise during the process of transcribing and analysing. The journal in a way is a memoir and a personal account of my research journey.

Participant preparation
As part of HREC's ethical requirement, participants are informed about the purpose of the research as well as the nature of their participation. The plain language statement of the study and the opportunity to participate letter will be emailed to each participant at least three or four days in advance of the interview. In addition, each participant will also receive the consent form, participant profile form and the interview schedule questions. It is hoped that reading through the interview schedule will help initiate the reflection process for each participant. Considering that the study requires the participants to retrospect on their earlier experience of service in school, it is important that they are given time in advance to help them recall. The

email is followed up with a phone call to confirm that they have received my email and to answer any queries.

From my experience with the first interview, it is crucial to prepare the participants for the interview. They need to feel ready to talk and I feel that equipping them with the information and interview questions helps as they step into the interview space knowing what to expect.

Proposal Mind Map
A day before my first interview, I read through my research proposal and drew up a simple mind map of the key areas of my research. It serves to remind myself of the philosophical assumptions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks that form the backdrop of my study. Reviewing my proposal also helps sharpen my focus, giving me greater clarity of the "who, what, why and how" of my study. Of special significance is the concept of *epoche,* in particular, what it represents. Reading my proposal does strengthen my own understanding of its purpose and I feel clear about how *epoche* is connected with the nature of the study and its philosophical assumptions.

***Epoche* on the ground**
While I am convinced of the centrality of *epoche* in a phenomenological study, I was very skeptical of my own ability to execute it in reality. The idea of bracketing and eliminating one's preexisting habits of thinking feels a little idealistic and almost as if transcendental. The question of how I could exclude my preexisting understanding of the topic of service that I had read so much about as part of my literature review felt rather unsettling. Nevertheless, putting my apprehension aside, I decided to take a very pragmatic approach and came up with a series of steps to mentally prepare and give myself a chance to be truly open. I see it important to spend some quiet moments to slowly go over each step before the interview to put myself in the proper frame of mind to practise bracketing.

Epoche step-by-step
1.Be explicit and acknowledge my understanding and perceptions about "service" and the multitude of reports, studies and findings related to it.
2.Be aware that that a research is value-laden (the philosophical concept of axiology). I need to exercise "self" consciousness and mindfulness of my own values that may bias the interview.
3.Be quiet and enter into a meditative state, letting go of presuppositions.
4.Be curious like a child and naïve like a stranger during the interview. Be open and listen as though for the first time, afresh and anew for every participant.
5.Be empathetic and try to immerse into the participant's world by listening with full attention without being distracted by my own thoughts or environmental disturbances. The word 'epoche' is written on every page of my interview schedule as a further reminder.
6.Be peaceful. Be positive.

Appendix 13

Two Samples of the Researcher's Reflections after an Interview

Reflections of my interview with Priscilla (Phase One)

A few days before my interview with Priscilla, I had a telephone chat with her to organise an appointment. We ended up talking for a really long time. She seemed very interested in my studies and was keen to participate in it.

Our interview was scheduled at night. Priscilla is a primary school teacher and I know her working hours are long. I had looked forward to meeting her and felt an immediate connection with her. She has such a lovely smile, one that brings you light. She is articulate, but there is something about her voice. Can I say, her voice smiles at you too?

I felt the interview was intense. I wanted to take in everything Priscilla shared because she was so vivid in her description and had a way of transporting you to the situations she had been. I visualised her in India, at the quarry, or leading a group of youth to Thailand. I visualised her looking at the night sky and the love she feels for a primary one student who told her to do that each night when the day ends.

Priscilla has refreshing thoughts and ideas. I learned many meaningful ideas from her and I was amazed by many of the novel phrases she used, " love deficient", "success-failure mindset", "making thinking visible". I enjoyed listening to Priscilla. Besides being introspective, reflective and to a great extent rhetorical, she teases your imagination with her deliberate play with words.

I also appreciate her honesty. She was quiet and still as she brings you to moments of her life when she felt isolated and alone. I could not imagine that sleeping in the park had been an option at some point in her life. I felt tormented by the thought.

The interview with Priscilla left me emotional. I felt the need to listen to the recording again and recapture those poignant memories she had shared.
I walked Priscilla to the bus stop as it was late at night when our session ended.
I was grateful for another opportunity to meet a beautiful soul.

Reflections of my interview with Gwen (Phase Two)

I was looking forward to meeting Gwen again. I recalled being moved by her narration in the last interview, the poignancy of her story was so compelling, something that won't easily go away. The emotions that were stirred in me during

our earlier meeting, the subsequent replaying of our recording, and then the transcription were still palpable today. I was conscious of my anticipation, excitement and expectancy this time round. Calming myself was a little more effortful and I gave myself plenty of time to slowly quiet my heart and mind and to contain all my pre-sentiments. I rehearsed my steps on *epoche* and prepared my mental state, pushing aside as much as possible my own preconceptions and to immerse myself into her life stories.

When Gwen appeared, she was completely cheery and relaxed. Her final exam for her degree in Psychology was just over the day before and her great sense of relief was evident. In a way, it put me at ease too. Gwen is one person who takes her task seriously. When I asked her for photos and memorabilia, she emailed over 30 photos to me before the interview, I suspect immediately after her exam. I had a careful look through the photos even before the interview. In fact the excitement I felt could be attributed to viewing all those photos, the stories behind them that are waiting to unfold. I can see too that Gwen was equally ecstatic about the photos. So we started with the photos first, one by one, from my laptop. Throughout the interview references were made to the photos and Gwen's narratives came alive as she pointed to the faces, the scenes, the things that happened. And I had the opportunity to ask, to ponder and step into her world for those moments. With much ease, Gwen transported me to the orphanages in Thailand, the villages in Hungary, the shopping centres where Gwen had for the past four years volunteered to wrap gifts for Salvation Army. I saw clearly the faces of young orphans happy to be carried by Gwen, fellow volunteers many whom had shared their stories with her of which I had the privilege to hear. It became apparent to me why this young girl kept giving, kept doing, kept serving. She was happy. The photographs captured that.

When Gwen left, I actually wished I had her as a friend, nothing to do with my research. I wished I had known this amazing human being all my life, her wits, humour, courage, wisdom and greatness of heart is a rarity and true reflection of humanity. I said a prayer for God to continue blessing her.

Appendix 14

Excerpts of Researcher's Reflections on the Use of Artefacts during Interviews

Reflections of my interview with Nicole (Phase Two)

Nicole brought the zipped file I had given her at the first interview to get her started on gathering artefacts. I was curious and felt eager to see what was in store. Inside the file were what I feel her treasures: photographs, many folded notes that the youth she served wrote her, certificates, camp programmes, brochures from the voluntary organisations, application forms for youth programmes. Nicole also showed me photos on her mobile phone. These were mainly of her overseas trips to Cambodia and India. I was so glad for the photos and other mementos. It took me to a totally different level of understanding of Nicole's life as a volunteer.

Reflections of my interview with Ian (Phase Two)

Earlier, I had requested Ian to show me some photos of his community service experience. He had been to Cambodia and Indonesia. Some of the trips were with the church. Once he led a group of BB [Boys' Brigade] boys to Phnom Penh. As Ian was looking at the photos, I sensed he enjoyed reminiscing on those fond moments. He was pointing to each boy in the photos, referring to him by his name and describing his character and contributions. It is interesting that because of the photos, Ian began to relate all his overseas service experience. In his previous interview, nothing was mentioned about his community service overseas. It dawned on me that I could have missed out on these significant chapters of his journey as a volunteer. I experienced for myself the power of photographs and would recommend to researchers this simple, yet useful tool. In these days, with mobile phones, photos are so accessible and almost instantly available.

Reflections of my interview with Josephine (Phase Two)

The photos gave me a glimpse of the nature of her service, the people she was serving, other volunteers she was working with as well as the missionaries she met while she was at the village. I can see how she bonded with the children. Later she shared how much she had learnt from the children; in particular, to find joy in simple things. As she showed me a photo of the children having fun with a puddle of rainwater, I felt I understood what she meant.

Appendix 15

Interview Strategies

The following were a few examples of the strategies used by the researcher (R) during the interviews, together with some interview excerpts to illustrate how they were carried out.

   Probing

   Phenomenological studies are specifically concerned about how people ascribe meaning to their experiences and strive to produce "thick descriptions" of a phenomenon (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009, p. 13). Through probing, the researcher could move beyond people's initial responses that tend to be at "surface level" to reach a deeper, more nuanced understanding of their experience (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003, p. 141). Probing was one method used by the researcher to explore these deeper meanings as shown in the following interview with Katie (K):

   Interview with Katie (a volunteer in the library for the visually impaired):

   K: It's weird to say that I want to give back or that I enjoy doing it.

   R: Why is it weird?

   K: I enjoy doing it. I just like doing it.

   R: What is it that you enjoy when you go there?

   K: I guess I like the interaction, especially with the librarian. It's nice. It's also knowing that you're helping somebody. It's fun and it's not hard, anyone can do it. I guess, knowing that someone appreciates the reading even though it may not be that great.

   Prompting

   During the interview, the researcher might need to pick up certain relevant points raised by the participant and prompt them to elaborate. Without being prompted, sometimes, the participant might move on to another topic, resulting in a loss of important information. For example, Evan was asked about the nature of the service project he was currently involved in.

   Interview with Evan (E):

   E: Recently, I'm involved in tutoring hearing-impaired children. That was over the past three years and on going. And I'm also helping with meal deliveries for areas that are hard to reach.

   R: Meal deliveries?

E: For residents who can't leave their homes, we bring meals to them.

Clarifying

To enhance accuracy, it is important to ask for clarifications. As part of the bracketing process, the researcher had to put aside her personal assumptions to ensure she understood correctly what the participant had said. For example, during the interview with Roger, it could not be assumed that the school visit to the elderly centre was a compulsory CIP activity.

Interview with Roger (Ro):

Ro: I came to know of Organisation X [welfare organisation] through my secondary school. That was about 10 years ago when I was in Secondary Two. During that time, my school brought us to the elderly care services at X. The thing is, they only asked us to help with the cleaning and tidying up of the environment. I had no contact with the elderly during that time. But I still remember this organisation. That's why, when I decided to volunteer, I went back to this organisation.

R: So, when you were in Secondary Two doing your community work, was it part of the compulsory CIP?

Ro: It was organised by my school. Actually, it was a compulsory CIP activity.

Repeating

In repeating a point that was brought up by a participant, the researcher was trying to check with him or her that she had understood correctly. If the researcher's interpretation was wrong, the participant had the opportunity re-explain.

Interview with Josephine (J):

J: Being a youth leader, you begin to see your own place, you begin to understand your role better. I take my role seriously. I feel that I have a certain responsibility. I don't want to be a poor role model, like "she can do that, so can I". That would not reflect well on me. I was a youth in the youth centre before, I don't want to let the staff down, for they had brought me up.

R: So, as a youth leader, you felt a sense of responsibility to those who had helped you and a sense of responsibility to those you are helping. You want to be a good role model for the youth you serve.

Appendix 16

Sample of Member-checking (Hayley)

The interview transcripts were sent to the respective participants for checking. In the example below, Hayley (H) made changes to the original transcripts by clarifying, expanding, explaining, and correcting some of the mistakes made by the researcher (R). The texts in *italics* show the original transcript.

Some things I would like to clarify:

On page 3 of 23:

H: We have a space in A (Pseudonym) Community Centre, cause my cousin is the manager. So, the rooms and <u>all these</u> are very flexible.

I would like to clarify *all these:*

We have a lot of support from the staff of the community centre, they provide the children with snacks to take home every week, and also make purchases like carpets for the children to sit on. They also provide freedom for the volunteers (us) to conduct any activities that may be beneficial for the children.

On page 3 of 23:

R: I see. Do you think the service activity you are participating in has influenced the way you see the community and your place in it, such as for example, whether you feel a certain responsibility that you have towards others in the community?

I may not have answered your question accurately. Below is how I would like to answer:

I feel more responsible after going through a number of service experiences, and through these, I feel that each of us has a stake to play in the community. Being useful and able to provide assistance to the community has made me feel like a more responsible person towards the society. I would like to think that those who can should help. Most of us have received some form of help or support from the community, and hence I think that it is only right to reciprocate this goodwill.

On page 10 of 23:

H: One week prior to the program. Mount Mayon in the <u>Glaspi,</u> a very nice volcano erupted. I think there were 5 mountain climbers going up the mountain and they

were all stoned to death. So that was quite bad and that was only one. And I think maybe a few years before that, some disasters happened also. So, when we went up the volcano, it was still very active.

Mount Mayon in Legazpi (not Glaspi)

H: I've never been to the slums. So, it has increased my feeling that the world is very unfair. It makes me feel very sad. At some points especially when I went to the slums, because the place is always flooded. So a lot of diseases are very common in the slums. We also saw this place where the children, it is this rubbish field, where the children collect plastics to sell, and they can only sell one kilo of plastics for 30 cents, which is very very little. And I think the behavior and the environment there had made me very very upset. But it has also motivated me to be more involved in these kinds of programs. I also want to see a lot of this and how I can help these communities. 'Cause Mercy Relief has a few batches, they have one learning centre in this slum, to show those mothers or anybody can come, and they <u>weave backs</u> out of them. Mercy Relief is really great because they have all these handbooks, and every night we will plan new <u>proposals and new innovations to help the communities in that situation</u>.

I would like to clarify this statement:

We went to a slum where there is a wasteland, and children would collect plastics from the wasteland to sell them for 30 cents a Kilo. I was upset about the environment they were living in, as they do not know that dangerous materials like syringes and chemicals could be found in the wasteland.

We conceptualized and brainstormed ideas and innovations that will meet the needs of the communities in BASECO Slums.

They weave bags out of discarded plastic and water hyacinth.

On page 18 of 23:

R: Yeah, and as a student, you like more choices in the activities or the choice of sites?

I would like to add on to what I have stated:

I would like more choices in the activities. As a student, we have different interests and it would appeal to us if there were a variety of activities for us to choose from. For example, my secondary school attached me to the Night Safari as a volunteer,

and I enjoyed my time spent there. If there were more choices in terms of activities, I feel that more people would be willing to do volunteer work.

On page 19 of 23:

R: So I guess that is a limitation? And were there any other challenges trying to commit yourself to the CIP? You said that sometimes, teachers were not very involved, or students did not have much say in the types of activities? What other challenges did you face as a student participating in community service?

I would like to add on:

The greatest challenge is that, I find it difficult to concentrate and focus on my studies. I was spending too much time engaging in leadership roles in secondary school and community work, and thus my studies deteriorated.

Appendix 17

Sample of a Group Table used to Organise Data based on a Super-ordinate Theme

Theme: Reasons and motivations for subsequent adult volunteering

Reasons / Participant	Altruism	Personal values and ethics	Sense of efficacy	Personal beliefs	Significant adults/ role models	Peers/ friends	Educational experience	Overseas service experience	Supporting organisation	Critical events	Personal Satisfaction

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