A PEDAGOGY OF SELFLESSNESS:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE CULTIVATION AND EXPRESSION OF STUDENT SELFLESSNESS IN AN ONTARIO GRADE 6 CLASSROOM

by

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Abstract

In a society where self-indulgence is aggressively promoted, sapping the vitality of our youth and adults, educators have a moral obligation to react. This study offers a reaction through a pedagogy of selflessness. A selfless person: (a) realizes the infinitude of their own and others’ inner potential, feeling intimately connected to the world; (b) has the strength to overcome self-interested desires to help another; and (c) can work without expectation of a reward (Kurth, 1995). Selflessness should be a focal point of educational discourse and practice.

In this qualitative study I develop a conceptual framework for selflessness in education along with a pedagogy called Learning to Serve through Inquiry (LSI) that blends inquiry, service, and explicit teachings on being selfless. This multiple case study explores: (a) how selflessness is expressed in Grade 6 students of a classroom engaged in LSI, (b) how closely these manifestations of selflessness align with the indicators as informed by the domains of selflessness in the framework, and (c) how LSI operates as a vehicle to promote the cultivation of selfless attributes within and among the learning community.

The LSI unit, which was co-planned and taught with the classroom teacher, unfolded over a period of two months. Over 240 hours were spent observing students of one class, with special attention paid to 10 students who agreed to pre- and post-LSI interviews. The classroom teacher was also interviewed. Additional data included daily notes, reflections, a personal audit of the reflections, and student work.

Three cycles of thematic analysis led to three themes. The first theme describes how students could better articulate the progression towards selflessness, regulate their emotions, and overcome fears. The second theme highlights how explicit teaching and practice cultivate
prosocial behaviour and selfless thinking. The last theme foregrounds this study’s various positive influences on the learning community, including the teacher’s own pedagogy.

The resulting themes are related to the conceptual framework and additional indicators of selfless attributes nuanced through the data are highlighted. Finally, the impact of selfless pedagogy through LSI and future directions for further research are considered.
Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Dr. Christopher DeLuca (my supervisor and one of the most talented and thoughtful writing coaches I have ever had) and my committee members Dr. Rena Upitis, Dr. Azza Sharkawy, and Dr. Michelle Searle. I would like to thank my friends for their continued encouragement as well as the monks and nuns of the Ramakrishna Order who helped me stay on the preferable path. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my parents and my brother for their belief in me—in particular, my mother who continues to provide me with wisdom and guidance and role models the essence of selflessness.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFIS</td>
<td>Canadian French immigration services</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBL</td>
<td>Inquiry-based learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSI</td>
<td>Learning to serve through inquiry</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQ+</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer/question, + (all those who are not listed in LGBTQ but are part of the queer community)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Service-learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSE</td>
<td>Secret selfless experiment</td>
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<td>UbD</td>
<td>Understanding by Design</td>
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**Chapter 1: Introduction—The Importance of Selflessness in Education**

The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 7, p.147).

**Perspectives as a Teacher in Singapore**

Within a couple days of my orientation at an international school where I was about to start my third year of teaching, I was asked whether I would be interested in supervising students as they served adults with severe mental exceptionalities at a local community centre after school. Part-way through my orientation week, I met my homeroom class, a group I was supposed to mentor for two years. Having been at the school longer, these Grade 11 students cheerfully and reassuringly said to me, “Don’t worry Ms. Roy, we’ll help you this year!” During my first week of teaching, a couple of students approached me to ask whether I could supervise their student committee. They wanted to raise awareness and funds for street kids in Bangalore and assured me that I would only be the “rubber stamp” while they would “take care of everything else.”

Even though this school excelled in all aspects of education, it was centrally dedicated to service and every member of the community played a part. Teachers were involved in supervising extra-curricular service initiatives, parents donated their time and energy to organize awareness and fundraising events, facilities staff worked overtime to ensure such activities ran smoothly, and students looked out for every opportunity to help. If students noticed people throwing pop cans into the trash, they would get a bag and start collecting them from the trash cans to transfer them to recycling bins.
Colleagues helped colleagues, going the extra distance without complaint. A K-12 school of nearly 3000 students and teachers felt like a cohesive and welcoming community.

Selflessness was not explicitly listed as part of the learner profile at this school, nor was learning the curriculum through service a practiced pedagogy. However, it seemed to me that every member of that school community knew they had tremendous inner potential through exercising it to affect positive change. It just so happened that at about the same time, I embarked upon a personal study of East Indian philosophy at ashrams in Singapore and India, spending time with monks and nuns of the Vedantic order. These two areas of my international experience made a profound impact and I came back to Canada wanting to further develop my understandings and to theoretically and empirically build upon its possibilities within the field of education.

**Moving from Bread-Winning to Bread-Giving Education: Food for Thought**

Memories of elementary school are generally enveloped in a golden haze of joy and play. There was less concern for the weightier aspects of life. With time, bulletin boards once bright with colours and trim, perhaps celebrating things like kindness and courage, gave way to posters warning of the doors that close without further math. The dawning of an awareness that success is measured in comparison to others (O’Donnell, 2014) can lead students to take on what Nelson and Dawson (2017, p. 315) describe as a competitive mindset punctuated with “strategic” and “superficial” learning. Knowingly or unknowingly, adolescents face a future of “winning one’s bread,” or, securing access to power and control over resources in the labour market (Warren, 2007). At the same time, their interest in school wanes (Lam et al., 2016).
The remedy, Lam et al. (2016) suggest, is quality education with “meaningful and hands-on activities linked to real-life” (p. 150). Meaningful activities enable a person to use their strengths to “serve something [that is] larger than the self” (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009, p. 296) and such service is often guided through hands-on activities. In this dissertation I contend that this shift in focus, from bread-winning to bread-giving, can be nurtured through a curriculum of selflessness, operationalized by a pedagogy called Learning to Serve through Inquiry (LSI) (developed in the second chapter). LSI is a dynamic pedagogy that explicitly develops selfless attributes and cultivates a sense of curiosity and wonder in youth by extracting meaning from experience. LSI’s objectives are to: (a) engage youth in mindful activities that benefit others by meeting a real community need and thereby achieving a sense of connectedness with others and concurrently (b) advance curricular goals through structured time for questioning, research, reflection, discussion, and associating experiences to learning and one’s personal worldview.

For example, hearing a call on the radio for volunteer marshland bird monitors at the local conservation area, a student might express an interest in class. The teacher, seeing an opportunity to serve, could weave the topic into a unit’s big inquiry question and strike a week-long partnership with conservationists, probing into the issues and needs of surrounding marshlands. While monitoring birds and contemplating possible solutions to issues, the students may uncover art, biology, math, and more. What begins as a service to monitor birds could develop into a project of examining water bacteria levels across various marshland regions and then culminate into a report for the conservationists. As curriculum content is uncovered and discovered through inquiry and
reflection, the concept of selflessness is continuously unpacked and articulated through an awareness of naturally occurring examples and modelled in a variety of ways by the teacher, students, and community partners.

As a blend of inquiry- and service-based learning, LSI sits upon the core construct of selflessness which, from my cultural perspective, is the heart of Karma Yoga, one of the four major paths to realization in East Indian Vedantic literature. Karma Yoga cultivates a mindset of believing in one’s infinite inner potential, acknowledging that same potential in everybody else, and, through that belief and selfless work, creating a sense of unity between oneself and others. LSI shifts thinking from a ‘what can I get from you?’ to a ‘how can I be of help to you?’ attitude, where one feels inclined to help others. Karma Yoga also encourages metacognitive awareness of focusing upon the process rather than worrying about end results. These attributes of Karma Yoga are encapsulated in a definition of selflessness by Kurth (1995, p.15) as:

1. An awareness of and/or belief in a Transcendent Reality through which one is, and feels, connected to others and the remainder of the natural world

2. An interest in enhancing the well-being of others in transcending one’s own self-interested desires

3. A non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions

LSI moves beyond self-interest and focuses on meeting the immediate needs of others through engaged creative and critical thinking without fixating upon self-oriented rewards. This cooperative practice (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007) encourages students to tap into and grow each other’s inner potential. Cultivating selflessness through LSI
means being mindful of the power of such initiatives to penetrate to the core of spiritual living. Selflessness enacted through LSI showcases an approach to education in Canada that enriches the process of and reasons for learning.

**Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the cultivation and expression of selflessness as it emerged through a blend of inquiry, service, and explicit and implicit teachings of selflessness in one Canadian elementary school context. Specifically, I aimed to understand how the aforementioned three domains of selflessness as defined by Kurth (1995, p. 15) were cultivated in teachers and students through LSI.

Guiding this study were the following research questions:

1. How is selflessness expressed in students of a classroom engaged in LSI?
2. How closely do these manifestations of selflessness align with the indicators as informed by the domains of selflessness?
3. How does LSI operate as a vehicle to promote the cultivation of selfless attributes within and among the learning community?

Through answering these questions, I aim to provide an in-depth understanding of selflessness as embodied by teachers and students within a Grade 6 classroom context in Ontario, Canada. First, however, I will develop Kurth’s (1995) definition of selflessness and its accompanying attributes into a three-level framework for selflessness by looking at two traditions of thought: East Indian Vedantic philosophy and Western perspectives as informed by empirical research in mostly education and psychology. This process increases the explanatory power of the framework to inform future meaningful research in curriculum theory and pedagogy both nationally and internationally. On a practical
level, the process precipitates out indicators that will guide data collection. Secondly, I develop LSI as a pedagogy that can be contextualized and operationalized within Canadian elementary classrooms.

**Rationale**

Through passing conversations with teachers, librarians, and community members in various Ontario cities, I realized that there exists overwhelming enthusiasm for enacting the above-mentioned ideas. However, I would like to build a case beyond anecdotes to give credence to why LSI, a pedagogy of selflessness is needed and how it might help refresh our Canadian educational system. I consider four broad reasons: (a) morality and decision-making, (b) cultural perspectives on happiness, (c) curricular trends, and (d) service and inquiry-based learning in Canada.

**Morality and decision-making.** Three older boys ganged up on a little girl on a school bus. Not believing that a girl in 1st Grade could read the caliber of book she clutched to her chest, they began calling her a freak and spitting on her. When she moved seats, they did too and continued to taunt and spit on her. When her protests became too loud for the bus driver, the driver stopped the bus and shouted at the little girl, demanding that she be quiet. Valentine (2014) recounted this incident involving her daughter in her article that analyzed ‘the bully’ in Canadian schools. Bullying is one example of immoral behaviour that leads to poor decision-making. Juxtaposed against Kurth’s (1995) three domains of selflessness it can be seen that: (a) the boys that Valentine (2014) described, like all bullies, had no intention of enhancing the well-being of this little girl; (b) they acted purely to satisfy their own cravings for domination and power, and in the process; (c) increased the barrier between themselves and the girl.
Connecting the school view to a national perspective, Valentine (2014) writes that, “the contemporary ‘school bully’ in neoliberal Canada now serves to embody the violence, aggression, status, and individuality we celebrate inside and outside our schools while masking the superficiality of popular collectivist, socially inclusive ideals” (p. 80). There is, she says, a “fallacy of focusing anti-bullying initiatives on the individual behaviour of children in this socio-political context…[where there are]…idealized representations of tolerance of difference, cooperation across peer groups, and inclusivity across socioeconomic strata” (pp. 95-96). In other words, Valentine highlights that anti-bullying initiatives decay quickly on the shoulders of those stuck in a mire of inauthenticity and immorality—a problem that is, she feels, pervasive in all systems of society.

The moral basis of the decisions that are made on individual and institutional levels need to be constantly informed by a framework that seeks to root out immoral decision-making. Simply put, “that which is selfish is immoral and that which is unselfish is moral” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 1, p. 110). However, as Bandura (2015, p. 3) points out, it is easy to fall into the trap of immoral decision-making through selective reasoning that “enables people to retain their positive self-regard while doing harm.” Bullies of all walks of life, young and old, in schools or in central banking districts, may “sanctify” their actions with “worthy moral purposes” (p. 2), disperse responsibility among many and thereby escape personal accountability, minimize the harmful effects of their actions, and/or blame the victims for “bringing maltreatment on themselves” (p. 3). Education must foster the type of reasoning that protects an individual or groups from making immoral, or self-serving, decisions. A framework for education built upon
selflessness can become a moral template for students, and ultimately protect society from degrading self-serving decision-making.

**Cultural perspectives on happiness.** Does stockpiling wealth, whether it be characterized by money, possessions, titles, or power, make us satisfied or content? Seligman et al. (2009) cite studies from the late 1980s and early 1990s to show how depression is approximately ten times more common now than it was 50 years ago with the age of first onset having crept back into adolescence. Layard (2003) points out the striking feature that depression increased mainly during the golden period of economic growth in the decades following the second world war in the United States and in other countries where data exist. The dependability of extracting happiness from materialism can, therefore, be questioned. Piper in Payne and Ross (2010, p. 58) outlines four unspoken lessons from advertisements.

1. You are unhappy with what you have.
2. Buying products is important.
3. You are the centre of the universe and you want what you want now.
4. Products can solve complex human problems and meet your needs.

It is easy to overlook the fact that promise of fulfilment in the last rule must not be entirely true since we will eventually become “unhappy with what we have” and so must again move towards “buying more products.”

When Swami Vivekananda, a monk of the Vedantic order, came to Europe and North America in the late 1800s, he recognized the prevalence of materialism (Vivekananda, 1893/2009) and that, from it, people were trying to find respite. They had “drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and found it vanity” (Vol. 3, p. 277). India had been in
the clutches of materialism twice prior to the coming of the Buddha and each time people had been guided by non-dualistic thought in the Vedanta (Vivekananda, 1893/2009), an ancient East Indian philosophy.

Vivekananda (1893/2009) felt that the non-dual philosophy would appeal to the scientific, rational, and intellectual minds of the West as it only requires one to believe in their own existence. “The moment you feel ‘I am,’ you are conscious of Existence” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 2, p. 320). According to the Vedanta, “…a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 2, p. 294). Our true nature, Existence, is infinite and eternal (Vivekananda, 1893/2009) and, therefore, “true happiness,” says Swami Paramananda (1977, p. 253) “is contained in the infinite and the eternal.” Since our true nature is infinite and eternal, the greatest error according to the Vedanta is to imagine that you are weak (Vivekananda, 1893/2009) and weakness leads to a dependence on external expressions of wealth for fleeting moments of happiness.

Students armed with an inkling of this inner potential can overcome tremendous barriers and make a positive global impact. However, academically successful students aim for, at best, financial and career security. Tough (2012) describes how over 60 percent of University of Princeton graduates accept positions like management consulting or investment banking because they guarantee a respectable title and wealth.

Apart from securing a handsome job, the overall impetus for many who attend university seems to have shifted from the academic to the social realm. Nathan (2005), an anthropologist who spent a year as a college freshman at an American university to study student culture, found that “classes…were described as the ‘price one has to pay’ to
participate in college culture, a domain that students portrayed in terms such as ‘fun,’ ‘friendships,’ ‘partying,’ ‘life experiences,’ and ‘late night talks’” (p. 103). In 1961, students at the University of California spent 40 hours studying per week but by 2003, it was down to 27 hours per week (Babcock & Marks, 2011). In fact, Nathan quotes American national statistics from 2003 showing that 77% of all college students can get by with a grade of B or better by studying only 10 or fewer hours a week. Nathan pins this incredible feat down to students figuring out a type of “spartan efficiency” (p. 121) that includes not doing assigned readings and cheating. Conversely, a study at the University of Mauritius reveals that students want more than just to pass exams—they want the university to cater to their overall, and in particular inner, development (Gobin, 2012).

Justifying undergraduate university attendance by a degree that is obtained with the least amount of work possible (to allow for maximum leisure time) is in stark contrast to aiming for inner development. The former indulges in materialism, subverting opportunities for one’s infinite nature to shine, and is directly at odds with the principles of selflessness. The latter holds promise for overcoming individual weakness and perhaps thereby uplifting society through the projection of one’s inner strength, leading to a more enduring form of well-being. My study aims to nurture this type of inner development.

**Trends in curricula.** Western conceptions of teaching and schooling were not always rooted in the practical aspects of life. Some add that now there is greater import upon standard examinations that test preparation for the job market with less of an emphasis on readiness for life (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2015). Prior to the 1600s, both episteme (practical understandings gleaned from logical and rational thinking) and
gnosis (understandings concentrated on matters of existence and questions of meaning) were necessary components of education (Davis, 2004). In fact, it was assumed that epistemic knowledge would take care of itself in practical life so formal education, where ‘educate’ means ‘to draw out,’ was to access the purer insights residing deep inside the learner and help them develop gnosis (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2015). This would allow the learner to “locate themselves within the web of existence” (Davis, 2004, p. 54). However, these days the word ‘knowledge’ (derived from gnosis) has come to be associated with only epistemic concerns (Davis, 2004) where “the goal is not to let go of the ego, but to bolster it, to make it stand out, to distinguish oneself” (Davis, 2004, p. 54).

The dominance of a curriculum of social efficiency, where there is an emphasis upon the acquisition and mastery of skills and procedures for social productivity (McNeil, 2006; Schiro, 2013), was perhaps to be expected in a burgeoning capitalistic society in the pre- and early 1900s. It has greatly influenced the current Western educational terrain. However, soon a curricular conception centred on learner needs surfaced in reaction to social efficiency’s arguably factory model of education. This conception became known as authentic, humanistic, or progressive education (Davis et al., 2015; McNeil, 2006; Schiro, 2013) and focused on the needs of the individual and less so on that of society (Schiro, 2013). The educator’s role was to set conditions to grow the learner’s potential (Davis et al., 2015; Dewey, 1897). Nuances of this curricular humanistic orientation can be found in inquiry-based learning where students are encouraged to ask questions of personal interest within a topic of inquiry and seek answers (Barell, 2003; Milner, Milner, & Mitchell, 2017; Temple, Ogle, Crawford, & Freppon, 2014).
In the mid-1800s a demand for social justice followed the realization of how very little of the wealth amassed in trade made its way down to the working class (Davis et al., 2015). A curriculum conception for social reconstruction emerged responding to social injustices and created an awareness of the influence of our sociocultural reality (McNeil, 2006; Schiro, 2013). Theorists such as Addams (1908) and Counts (1932) spoke up for vulnerable populations such as immigrants and the impoverished with Counts exhorting the masses to be wary of how industrialism afforded some people rights to resources and associated privileges—people who may not have the slightest inclination of sharing. In fact, Counts beseeched teachers to fight selfishness and instill selflessness.

Attention of curricular theorists in the late 1900s and early 2000s turned on groups seeking to control education in the name of self-interest. These theorists called for a curriculum of consciousness, striving for inclusion of marginalized communities through acknowledging the multifaceted nature of society, acquiring versatility in shifting perspectives, and honouring the hermeneutical textures of voice and prose (Greene 1971; hooks, 2000; Kincheloe, 2007). They pushed for a curriculum imbued with a sense of critical alertness to those seeking to manipulate discourse for personal gain through discouraging dull passivity and cultivating a climate of responsiveness (Freire, 1970; Greene, 1971; hooks, 2000; Kincheloe, 2007). Service-learning, a pedagogy where curricular expectations are met through meaningful service and reflection (Lockeman, 2012), is sensitive to this social reconstructivist spectrum, from servicing those in need to actively campaigning for marginalized sectors.

In recent theorizing, however, there has been a concerted shift towards a curriculum of systemic sustainable education (UNESCO, 2017). Scientific advancements
have yielded dazzling insights from subpersonal systems (i.e., neurological and epigenetic) to the supercultural (i.e., eco and global systems) (Davis et al., 2015). Social reconstructivism has expanded to global citizenship with an emphasis on ecological mindfulness. The learner can be viewed as not only being aware of themselves but also of the interconnections between all learning systems from the subpersonal to the supercultural. In other words, the trend in curricula seems to blend elements of the humanistic approach with social reconstruction and with a decisive emphasis on being mindful of how each individual is intimately connected with the whole, a sort of transcendence of one’s self. It is at this intersection of the humanistic and social reconstructivist approach that LSI sits—a space that traverses the intimately personal and the expansive reality manifested externally. The deeply philosophical curricular conceptions associated with selflessness and guiding this work is outlined in Roy (2019). This dissertation, however, focuses on building and practically exploring a framework for selflessness in education that can be operationalized—one that makes space for acknowledging the inner spirit and its expansion within this universe.

This shift towards appreciating the harmony of this universe, knowing we are all linked through a fabric of connections, and that we each have the potential to better each other’s circumstances, rings distinctly with the profound spiritual pitch of gnosis. Deep insights like, “the universe changes when a thought changes” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 4) coincide with insights like “one atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 3, p. 269). These sorts of statements place an enormous responsibility on each of our shoulders to live morally, and to live morally is to operate from a basis of selflessness (Vivekananda, 1893/2009).
Service-learning and inquiry-based learning in Canada. Service-Learning (SL) is a meaningful blend of community service and reflection with curriculum expectations (Lockeman, 2012). It is an experiential approach to education where youth engage in a wide range of activities that benefit others through meeting real community needs, and concurrently use the resulting experiences to advance curricular goals through structured time to research, reflect, discuss, and connect their experiences to their learning and worldview (Berger Kaye, 2010; Cipolle, 2010; Jacoby, 2015; McPherson, 2011; Waterman, 1997; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). In fact, the hyphen between ‘service’ and ‘learning’ “symbolizes…the symbiotic relationship between service and learning” (Jacoby, 2015, p. 2). This coupling of academic study and service is mutually beneficial to students, teachers, and local partners because, through creative problem solving and critical thinking, they co-create answers to complex problems leading each to learn from the other (Kronick, Cunningham, Gourley, 2011; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007; Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). This approach, in turn, leads to “deeper learning because results are immediate and uncontrived” (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007, p. xiv).

Ultimately, tying “helping others to what [is learned] in the classroom…provides a compelling answer to the perennial question: Why do I need to learn this stuff?” (Fiske, in Terry & Bohnenberger, 2007, p. 5). Thus, the fundamental objective of learning becomes a practice of serving and giving.

Although SL occurs in Canada and has been encouraged through national campaigns (WE Charity, 2018), there is a general lack of empirical evidence describing the operationalization of SL within Canadian K-12 schools. One issue might be that, empirically, service here is conceived of differently—from community involvement to
volunteering. Provisions for community-based learning are available within high school educational curricula in nearly every Canadian province and territory, with six of the 13 provincial or territorial governments having introduced a community service requirement as a condition for high school graduation (Brown, Meinhard, Foster, Henderson, & Ellis-Hale, 2007). However, Brown et al. have found that very few students engage in meaningful SL experiences because most programs are not structured in a way that provides an ideal SL experience (with some actually inhibiting the development of SL initiatives). For example, research conducted in Ontario indicates that few Canadian students engage in meaningful SL experiences during high school due to a lack of school and administrative support for SL and under-established community partnerships (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2013; Meinhard & Brown, 2010).

In elementary schools, curriculum documents like the one for Ontario elementary social studies, history, and geography, not only highlight the importance of citizenship in education through frameworks such as the Citizenship Education Framework but expressly encourage community partnerships (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a). Such documents provide ideas for educationally robust alliances that enrich the curriculum content as well as reasons for maintaining the connections. However, the pedagogical details driving the fulfilment of the curriculum expectations in the context of community service is limited as is the philosophical rationale behind service-oriented educational initiatives. Additionally, the description detailing the possibility of community partnerships is generic across many Ontario K-12 curriculum documents examined and the general neglect in unpacking discipline-specific and detailed resources might serve to devalue the presence of such a description.
A propitious development around inquiry-based learning (IBL), however, is found in Ontario elementary and high school curricula (for example, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a) and elsewhere in Canada and the United States (Alberta Education, 2004; Exploratorium Institute for Inquiry, 2017). Frameworks depict IBL as a cycle where students: (a) pose real questions through wondering and questioning, (b) conduct investigations and explorations to find resources, (c) make sense of and interpret information, and finally, (d) reflect upon and share findings (Colyer & Watt, 2016; Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). This pedagogy has gained momentum in Ontario due to its power to “mov[e] children from a position of wondering to a position of enacted understanding and further questioning” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 2)—a power fueled by activities like journaling, documenting thinking and wondering, field observations, and reflections (Barell, 2003). This development is propitious because IBL often culminates in community events showcasing artistic creations or demonstrations of social action (Milner et al., 2017; Temple et al., 2014), aligning with SL and the Ontario Ministry of Education’s goal of developing community partnerships (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a).

In Canada, the province of Alberta has so far figured prominently in the field of educational research regarding IBL by demonstrating higher achievement in K-12 schools that incorporate IBL practices (Friesen, 2010). Empirical research spanning both elementary and secondary schools (with a concentration in rural schools) both in Western Canada and Quebec have shown that computer supported IBL leads to higher achievement (Turcotte & Hamel, 2016), especially with e-mentoring (Li, Dyjur, Nicholson, & Moorman, 2009). Canadian studies also show that IBL contributes to
significant affective development, increased motivation, greater understanding (Adams & Findlay, 2015), career awareness in students (Li, Moorman, & Dyjur, 2010), as well as prosocial gains (Adams & Findlay, 2015; Weeks, Boxma, & Maxwell, 2009). Teachers find that IBL provides the flexibility of determining the narratives and perspectives especially meaningful to students but maintain that students must be provided with various opportunities to communicate their understanding of curricular concepts (Adams & Findlay, 2015). Scott, Smith, Chu and Friesen (2018) underscore the importance of the integration of tasks and classroom activities (including short lectures) that allow students to critically think about the material and develop skills essential to the inquiry process.

By blending IBL and SL pedagogies and situating both within a framework of selflessness, I have developed an approach called Learning to Serve through Inquiry (LSI). Beginning with an inquiry-based learning context, students delve into the initial big inquiry question with their own smaller inquiries. Students then transition into thinking about how what they have learned can be of service to another, and finally work towards actuating their goals of meeting a real community need. The process is authentic, seamless, and, being enriched by teachings of what it means to be selfless, it is morally purposeful.

**Dissertation structure.** Chapter 2 is presented in two parts. The first part examines selflessness from the perspective of Indian philosophy and merges it with Western empirical studies to create a framework for a pedagogy of selflessness. The second part of Chapter 2 describes Learning to Serve through Inquiry (LSI), which operationalizes selflessness in educational contexts. Chapter 3 details the multiple case study methodology utilized to extract data and explains the three cycles of data analysis.
that led to the creation of the five parts of the results section, Chapter 4. Chapter 4 provides: (a) a description of the context and those interviewed (part I), (b) weekly synopses of the lesson plans (part II), and (c) three overarching themes pulled from all of the data (parts III, IV, and V). Finally, Chapter 5 examines the results through the framework created in Chapter 2, addresses each research question in detail, and discusses future implications of this study.
Chapter 2: Philosophical Insights, Expanding the Literature, and Practical Pedagogy

In Part I of this chapter, I review of concepts from East Indian Vedantic philosophy that lie closest to the construct of selflessness. Kurth’s (1995) definition of selflessness is re-introduced along with other studies that have focused on selflessness. I compile and organize Western empirical research according to Kurth’s guiding definition and complement them with reflections and anecdotes from Vedantic philosophy. In Part II of this chapter, I develop LSI, bringing attention to its natural fit with Kurth’s definition in light of presented research and philosophy, and how it might be conceptualized and operationalized in Ontario classrooms.

Part I: East Indian Philosophy—The Vedanta

I root my conception of selflessness in a Vedantic perspective, drawing upon my cultural background. I was drawn to the Vedanta because it encourages liberating habits of mind and has been expounded upon with a spirit of acceptance for all faiths and spiritual tendencies. This undertone of acceptance, in particular, is what serves as an effective foundation for my conceptual framework in the field of education to provoke a curriculum towards selflessness. In this section I briefly introduce the Vedanta and discuss one of its paths, Karma Yoga, that is directly founded upon selfless service. This description, extracted from East Indian philosophy, acts as a basis for choosing a working definition of selflessness that will be developed as a framework. Figure 2.1 (found below) provides a summary of the following discussion of the Vedanta and the path of selfless action.
The Vedanta

- Knowledge that shows the seeker the way to liberation
- to be liberated is to establish absolute oneness of the embodied soul with divinity
- there are 4 popular paths to liberation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jnana Yoga</th>
<th>Bhakti Yoga</th>
<th>Karma Yoga</th>
<th>Raja Yoga</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The path of reasoning</td>
<td>The path of devotion</td>
<td>The path of selfless action</td>
<td>The path of psychic control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- our present state of life is shaped by our past thoughts and deeds
- our future will be determined by our present actions
- one can overcome being bound to the psychophysical system and manifest one’s divinity through proper work
- to work properly is to work selflessly, without attachments to the results of the work

**Figure 2.1. Summary of the Vedanta and the path of selfless action**

**The Vedanta.** In East Indian philosophy, there are two kinds of knowledge; one based on the experiences of the sense organs, falling within the realm of the physical sciences (knowledge denoted with a lower-case ‘k’), and one that is supersensuous wisdom (Knowledge) (*The Upanishads: Vol. 1*, 1949). The latter is the subject matter of the Vedas, a word that means Knowledge (*The Upanishads: Vol. 1*, 1949). A portion of the Vedas, called the Upanishads, along with two texts, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita form the Vedanta because “in [them] the Vedic wisdom reaches its culmination (anta) [and] shows the seeker the way to Liberation…” (*The Upanishads: Vol. 1*, 1949, p. 7).
The principal Upanishads were written by various sages dating back to 800 to 300 B.C. who spoke “out of the fullness of their illumined experiences” (The Principal Upanishads, 1953/2004, p. 22). These experiences are not reached through physical sense perceptions, inference, or reflection, nor are they “merely reports of introspection which are purely subjective” (The Principal Upanishads, 1953/2004, p. 22). They are seen by sages who “have the same sense of assurance and possession of their spiritual vision as we have of our physical perception” (The Principal Upanishads, 1953/2004, p. 22) and are “steeped in meditative experience—in the exploration of consciousness from within using heightened attention, concentration, and awareness” (Thompson, 2015, p. 19). The spiritual vision revealed to sages was, Thou art That. “In one word…you are divine, Thou art That. This is the essence of Vedanta” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 2, p. 294). The seers recognized the unity of this pure consciousness, or Self, in the diversities of this material world (Adiswarananda, 2006). “The Self, the Atman, in you, in me, in everyone, is omnipresent. You are as much in the sun now as in this earth, as much in England as in America” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 2, p. 255). Further, this all-pervading Self that is not limited by space is eternal, not being bound by a beginning or an end (Vivekananda, 1893/2009). The purpose of the Upanishads, according to the sage Sankaracharya (AD 788-820), who wrote commentaries on 11 Upanishads, is to “prove the reality of Brahman [the Self] and the phenomenality or unreality of the universe of names and forms, and to establish the absolute oneness of the embodied soul and Brahman” (The Upanishads: Vol. 1, 1949, p. 14).

In the Vedanta, the purpose of life is to realize this unity. This seems rather difficult because this oneness appears to us as manifold. When we enter a potter’s
showroom, we do not see shelves of clay. We see various types of cups, pots, and statues. We see variety and differences. “This manifoldness is like a dream. When you dream, one dream passes away and another comes. You do not live in your dreams…it is not therefore that there are many worlds…[or] many lives. All this manifoldness is the manifestation of that One.” (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 2, p. 303–304). The most famous example in Vedantic literature is that of the snake and the rope. Seeing a rope, you might mistake it for a snake. For a moment the snake existed for you with all of its snake-like attributes and you felt fear. However, when you realize that it is only a rope, the whole experience changes. The snake was only a superimposition—a false reality. Similarly, Brahman, or the Self, or Satchitananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) as it is variously called, is the one reality and you are That. When that point is reached, you still see the cups, pots, and statues, but you realize that it is fundamentally all clay (Sarvapriyananda, 2016a).

Effort is required to reach this state of realization. Four paths to channel this effort, known as Yogas, are prescribed by the Vedanta to suit various temperaments such as the mystic, the philosopher, the lover, and the worker. Although mentioned separately, all paths may support each other. Yoga means union (Vivekananda, 1893/2009). The sorrows of life are rooted in a loss of yoga, or the loss of contact with the Self (Adiswarananda, 2006). Vivekananda (1893/2009) explains that for the mystic, this union is between their lower and Higher Self and is prescribed the path of Raja Yoga to bring the mind under control. The philosopher follows Jnana Yoga, or the path of Knowledge to infer and see the union of all existence. Bhakti Yoga is known as the path of devotion and teaches union with a chosen Deity (i.e., Jesus Christ, Allah, or Ma Kali). Finally,
Karma Yoga is meant for the worker, and reveals the union between a person and the whole of humanity. It is known as the Yoga of Selfless Action (Adiswarananda, 2006). Through selfless action, one breaks down the barriers built of desires raised between oneself and others to perceive that Self that pervades everything.

**Foundations of Karma Yoga.** The law of karma teaches that our present state of life is shaped by our past thoughts and deeds (both in this and past lifetimes) and that our future will be determined by our present actions (Adiswarananda, 2006). “…good, good; bad, bad; and none escape the law” wrote Vivekananda (1893/2009, Vol. 4, p. 393). Further, “every person, through every thought, word, and deed is constantly changing and altering the shape of their psychophysical system…for better or for worse” (Adiswarananda, 2006, p. 14). The law of karma operates on the psychophysical level (controlling the body and mind) but has no effect on the Self (Adiswarananda, 2006). Therefore, through working properly, one can overcome the bondage wrought from the identification of the Self with the psychophysical system and move closer to manifesting the divine Self within (Adiswarananda, 2006; Bhajanananda, 2006). Karma Yoga teaches one how to work, but to understand that, the nature of bondage must be first understood.

**The nature of bondage.** We are kept from manifesting our divinity immediately by bonds created from attachments to ego-oriented desires, delusions, and false hopes. These attachments emerge from a reservoir of selfish actions committed in this or previous lifetimes (Vivekananda, 1893/2009). Desires are of two kinds: sensual, and those resulting from wanting to enjoy the fruits of one’s actions (Bhajanananda, 2006). “The more [people] think of themselves, the less are they able to do for others” warns Vivekananda (1893/2009, Vol. 2, p. 351) because “the more we say ‘I and mine’ the

Adiswarananda (2006) states that “Selfish karma in our mind creates walls of separation from the totality of existence” (p. 13) because the ego “infuses us with a heightened sense of duality and individuality” (p. 27) but they can be broken down through selfless action. Selflessness promises freedom from the constraints of a desire-laden ego and movement towards self-expansion. Unfortunately, people tend to influence each other with selfish ambitions, and form competitive mindsets that cripples kindness in their hearts (Vivekananda, 1893/2009). Also desiring good results from pre-meditated good work can cause pain because, for example, the object of pre-meditated kindness may react ungratefully (Vivekananda, 1893/2009).

**The way to work towards selflessness/freedom.** Perfect selflessness comes in the absence of desires. The perfectly selfless are already free/liberated. The rest of us with desires must work to avoid becoming tangled in more desires and reduce and annihilate existing ones. The way we work “changes our attitudes, ideas, emotions, power of concentration, and the quality and direction of our awareness” (Bhajanananda, 2006, p.12). To work selflessly is to be constantly aware of the motive power that prompts us (Vivekananda, 1893/2009). In other words, the practice of non-attachment is highly metacognitive. The mind can be trained to become aware of our intentions behind actions and thoughts (Vivekananda, 1893/2009; Bhajanananda, 2006). Bhajanananda (2006) describes how a gardener should not produce beautiful flowers to receive compliments,
yield the best harvest, or to please those passing by. A pure Karma-yogi keeps their mind firmly on performing a task without thought to future consequences. The point is that by taking the position of a giver without expectation of reciprocation, the Karma-yogi eludes the grasp of misery (Vivekananda, 1893/2009).

True service should not originate with pity. Selfless work ultimately reveals, through the removal of layers of desires, the divine light (Vivekananda, 1893/2009) which permeates all. Therefore, to work from position of pity is to pity the Self, which is divine, eternal, and pure. Selflessly serving the world is therefore a privilege—every act of giving, properly executed, is an opportunity to move closer to divine union (yoga).

Metacognitively, Karma Yoga places equal emphasis on action and meditation. “Selfless action is attaching the entire mind to one’s duties and meditation is detaching the same mind from the results of duty” (Adiswarananda, 2006, p. 72). To overcome obstacles in Karma Yoga, one requires steadfastness in meditation, self-analysis, and discrimination. A fixation upon praise or blame or dwelling over the results of actions while working leads to a loss of perspective and an inflated ego (further asserting individuality). Reflection aids progress. Noting whether or not qualities associated with selflessness are surfacing is like “a lion [who] moves a few steps forward and looks back to see how far he has come” (Annapurnananda, August 15). Move forward after having gained a valuable permanent asset.

The practice of Karma Yoga, (deceptively) simply means to work for work’s sake. Achieving this end, requires one to observe their own thoughts and actions, break down the intentions for each, and ascertain whether there is a risk of creating an attachment to the results of the work being done. Taking the position of a giver allows
one to be vigilant as to not expect reciprocation. This metacognitive process of non-attachment can be viewed as a type of meditation because it calms the restlessness mind (that habitually flies to future results, anticipates joyous news, or forecasts fear of failure) and leads to a mastery of focusing one’s mind on the work. When the restlessness of the mind ceases, then the divine light of the Self can shine. Every being can do this and, therefore, every being is, in essence, divine—it is a soul-fortifying background motif.

Liberation from the bondage of desires, the purpose of life according to the Vedanta, might be a lofty goal for public school students. However, the premise that every being is potentially divine necessitates a mindfulness that is empowering for individuals and rejuvenating for society. To trust sages of the past and present is to believe that we are much more than we think. Viewing each student as having infinite potential and providing them with these foundational principles of Karma Yoga or selfless action as summarized above, might encourage each student to not only manifest this reality themselves but to also help others to do the same.

**A Review of Empirical Work on Selflessness**

In light of the summary of Karma Yoga as provided above, the parallels between it and Kurth’s (1995, p. 15) definition of selflessness below appear striking:

1. An awareness of and/or belief in a Transcendent Reality through which one is, and feels, connected to others and the remainder of the natural world;
2. An interest in enhancing the well-being of others in transcending one’s own self-interested desires; and
3. A non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions.
Although Kurth (1995) does not attribute her definition to a particular source, I feel that it arises from a deep spiritual synthesis of thinking. Her literature review covers Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist thought. Also, she dedicates her entire dissertation to her East Indian spiritual guide Gurumayi Chivilasananda, who, perhaps, influenced her with intonations of Vedantic philosophy. It is because of this resonance with Vedantic literature that I have adopted Kurth’s three-part definition to guide not only my review of Western empirical literature but ultimately my research questions as stated in the first chapter.

Kurth (1995) focused specifically on selflessness in the for-profit industry. In her phenomenological study, Kurth (1995) interviewed 20 employees that yielded lengthy interviews and rich data. She organized the data into four domains; the spiritual, individual, relational, and communal. For each domain she looked at the focus, intentions, and actions displayed by her interviewees. The organizational structure authentically displayed her data but since she moved away from the definition of selfless service as originally stated, as well as the links to Vedantic philosophy, I have only extracted the above definition to inform this dissertation.

Lake (1948), whose PhD focused on the field of egoistic versus selfless versus neurotic personalities, created a 100 item self-rating scale with the intention of measuring egoistic and selfless factors. However, he faced several challenges in his dissertation. First of all, he acknowledges that he had “observed considerable difficulty…in understanding the meaning of ‘selfless’ and ‘egoistic’ activity” (Lake, 1948, p. 16). Lake’s definitions provide a description of the actions of egoistic and selfless people. For example, the egoistic person apports greater amounts of time to their own “comfort,
gratification, indulgence, and self-enhancement” and “uses whatever means” to appear important whereas the selfless person invests most of their time “concerned with the needs, comforts, and self-esteem” of others “using whatever means” to “merge their energies and personal meanings” with the lives of others (Lake, 1948, p. 20). Karma Yoga and Kurth’s (1995) definition widens the scope of understanding because they reveal the core beliefs of such people, how their thinking guides their actions, and how they become bound in selfish tendencies. Ultimately, Lake’s findings revealed difficulties in establishing a reliable self-rating scale.

Recent studies, by Dambrun (2017), Hanley, Baker, and Garland (2017), and Pantaléon, Chataigné, Bonardi, and Long (2019) have picked up where Lake (1948) left off. They generally define selflessness on a continuum with the self being described as sharply defined, independent, and enhanced to one lacking ‘entification,’ being interconnected or enmeshed in all things. All of these studies utilize a variety of questionnaires that were given to adults then analyzed quantitatively to find correlations. Dambrun (2017) found that self-centeredness was positively related to a type of fluctuating happiness whereas selflessness was positively related to a more authentic and durable happiness. Hanley et al. (2017) showed that there is a relationship between selflessness, mindfulness, and well-being and that self-transcendence is linked with greater psychological well-being and mindfulness. Pantaléon et al. (2019) found that selfless people place more importance on self-transcendence. These studies were published after the methodology for the present dissertation was finalized and therefore were not considered for the framework’s creation. However, the importance of working
towards being selfless (as reiterated in these studies) gives credence to the need of promoting the ideals of selflessness within educational systems.

A final study, by Neale (2000), investigated spirituality in the workplace. Four themes were found emerging from 40 interviews on the topic of work as service to the Divine: work is prayer, to serve others is to serve the Divine, let go of ego and work from a place of selflessness, and make a difference. As can be seen, not only does her data align with notions of Karma Yoga but Neale (2000) specifically makes reference to Kurth’s (1995) definition of selfless service (as given above) and her findings.

Neale (2000) made the following point: “the choice to see work as service to the Divine is a personal choice. No one should try to impose spiritual values on others” (p. 1329). Those who believe in a dualistic notion of the Divine (a separate God, as in Bhakti yoga) can follow Karma Yoga as service to God. However, those who do not believe in a personal God can still follow the Vedanta and serve that infinite divinity within them as long as they believe that they themselves exist—as long as they can say ‘I.’ This belief is hopefully accessible to all. After all, it is difficult to selflessly help another without believing that the other exists.

**Expanding the Literature**

In an effort to expand on Kurth’s (1995) definition and present a more robust conception of selflessness as based on literature, I conducted a systematic search using keywords from Kurth’s three-part definition of selfless service and search engines such as EBSCO, Psychnet, and Google Scholar. In addition, I considered related studies or books I had previously read or came across. The search engines yielded articles predominantly in periodicals such as the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, the Journal of
Moral Education, and the Journal of Educational Psychology. For the first definition I used the word ‘transcendence’ to look for empirical research. Transcendence led to ‘growth mindset,’ which conformed to the spirit of that selected definition. The next definition, carrying phrases like ‘enhancing the well-being of others’ and ‘self-interest,’ matched with educational ‘prosocial’ research and ‘altruism.’ For the final definition that highlights ‘non-attachment’ and ‘personal rewards,’ I looked at literature on ‘selflessness,’ ‘selfishness,’ as well as ‘motivation’ to gather empirical research.

Due to the fact that some of the research found for one search term seemed a better fit for another part of the three-part definition, I combined all of the empirical research and colour-coded them again into three sections according to the three-part definition. I then further organized the literature within each section into paragraphs with common themes associated with particular aspects of that definition. Each section concludes with revisiting the Vedanta through anecdotes or stories that somehow resonate with the findings. An organizational chart displaying the notions arising from both Western empirical research and Vedantic thought is then provided alongside the respective part of Kurth’s (1995) definition of selfless service to extract the common facets that become the indicators in LSI. This chart leads to a graphic aid for the framework for a pedagogy of selflessness to be applied to my methodology and future curricular and LSI research.

**Definition of Selfless Service—Domain 1: Transcendent Reality**

*An awareness of and/or belief in a Transcendent Reality through which one is, and feels, connected to others and the remainder of the natural world. (Kurth, 1995, p. 15)*
In this section I move through a couple of definitions of transcendence, both pointing to the importance of creating connections that move beyond one’s self-interest. These understandings underscore the role of an individual’s self-concept and how a mindset allowing for change might enable the growth necessary to feel that sense of connection to others and the natural world.

Phenix (1971) describes transcendence as an “experience of limitless[ness] going beyond any state or realization of being. It…makes a person aware that every concrete entity is experienced within a context of wider relationships and possibilities” (p. 271). Transcendence, loyal to Phenix’s definition, figures prominently in music. Bernard (2009), analyzing four years’ worth of graduate student autobiographical data, noted that transcendence is distinguished by students performing at the height of their capabilities and having a sense of being a part of something larger than themselves. Wills (2011) observed such transcendence in her primary-years choristers and connected it to well-being. Marsh (2008) sites a growing body of outdoor experiential literature that connects experiences of transcendence with adventure, (in settings like mountain exploration and being in a forested environment), and spirituality. These studies indicate that transcendence emerges at the intersection between the individual, a setting that offers possibilities for the individual’s talents, and a skill meaningfully contributed to or related with the setting offered by the individual. There is a heightened awareness of going beyond, even losing, a sense of individuality to being deeply connected with something more.

Transcendence is also characterized in education as moving beyond concerns about oneself and helping others. In the complex world of learning how to teach,
Bullough (2005) showed how demanding contexts can either push a teacher candidate towards self-protection and stagnation, or, under proper mentorship, to face and transcend their own vulnerabilities in order to seek joy in seeing students succeed. In Wright’s (2010) study, teacher candidates transcended barriers with their students by creating avenues for dialogue through musical improvisation on various levels. Tal (2014) found that when teacher candidates transcended themselves, it impacted their understanding of relationships and interactions with their students as well as their representations of the students’ participation and social behaviour, ultimately influencing the candidates’ relationships with the students.

University and college professors who are highly acclaimed by their students demonstrate qualities of care, community, and transcendence where the latter, in this case, refers to moving beyond just the core subject matter and making it deeply relevant for the students (Smith, 2000). These qualities serve to remove feelings of alienation, isolation, and fear that students commonly experience (Smith, 2000). When an educator or mentor makes a concerted attempt to consider their students’ perspectives, they can help the students overcome obstacles or make deeper connections with material. In all of these examples, the educator connects with something beyond themselves that lies in common between the educator and the student and utilizes that to create relationships. Global leaders nowadays count transcendence as one of the many qualities required to lead in a global environment (Cseh, Davis, & Khilji, 2013).

The field of psychology showcases studies on transcending one’s own self-concept. Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan (2011) randomly assigned 148 adult participants into different groups. Among the groups, one wrote about an event when they helped
other people (moral), and the other detailing a time when they used someone to get what they wanted (immoral). The groups then answered questions regarding donating to a charity, giving blood, volunteering, attending a party, and seeing a movie. Those who recalled their own immoral behaviour reported greater intention to act with the objective of benefiting another. Getting ‘pro-self’ participants (those who value self-enhancement over self-transcendent values) to ponder their own mortality also led to an increase in embracing self-transcendent values (Joireman & Duell, 2005). These studies seem to suggest that people want to at least appear to be self-transcending.

Strenta and Dejong’s (1981) psychological study invoked the power of suggestion. Fifty-seven psychology students were given a bogus personality inventory and randomly assigned one of four labels, including one that labelled students as kinder and more thoughtful than the rest. Participants in all of the conditions later encountered a person who dropped a large number of cards while walking behind them. The group labelled as ‘kind’ and ‘thoughtful’ provided significantly more help than those in the other three conditions. Personal reflection and a mere suggestion encouraging a positive self-concept can help students to think beyond themselves.

The power of a positive self-concept, as suggested by the above studies, demonstrates the importance of cultivating one. Dweck (2008) calls a positive self-concept a ‘growth mindset.’ She describes how people with growth mindsets, as opposed to fixed mindsets, believe that their abilities and aspects of their personality can grow and evolve and that every obstacle is an opportunity for growth. They are nurturing, crediting, and know how to listen and root out elitism. They are alert to subtle lessons in life and
are full of gratitude. In short, people with growth mindsets value their own and other’s potential.

Many studies have followed in the wake of Dweck’s (2008) claims. They show how fixed mindset instructors readily judge students who, in response, report lower motivation and expectations for their own performance (Rattan, Good, & Dweck, 2012). However, through interventions, students are willing and able to change their mindsets from a fixed to a growth perspective (Laurian-Fitzgerald & Roman, 2016; O’Brien & Lomas, 2017). When students are taught that social attributes can be developed, that people can change over time, they are less likely to retaliate in an aggressive manner and this is accompanied by the side benefit of increased academic achievement (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Other benefits include increased motivation for special education adolescents (Rhew, Piro, Goolkasian, & Cosentino, 2018) and a greater sense of belonging in school for those high school students on the verge of dropping out (Thayer, Cook, Fiat, Bartlett-Chase, & Kember, 2018).

In summary, transcendence, in its purest form, occurs in fields like music or outdoor adventure when individuals move beyond themselves and, through some skill or knowledge, connect with something indescribably greater—a transcendent reality. Transcendence also moves educators beyond self-concerns to place importance on connecting with students. Psychological studies demonstrate the effect of self-concept on subsequent transcendence. Growth mindset literature links self-concept to abilities and personality, showing that students can transcend aggressive retaliation through extending growth-mindset principles to their peers. However, there is no conclusive evidence to say that a growth mindset helps one to specifically transcend self-interest and move towards
Phenix’s (1971) characterization of transcendence. Nor can we say that transcendence is only experienced by those who have a positive self-concept. However, perhaps there is a connection between the two and further, a movement from a positive self-concept (where each person has infinite potential) towards a sustained connection with a transcendent reality.

**Vedantic stories/anecdotes.** Sri Ramakrishna (in Gupta, 1942/2007) told a story that relates to the potential of positive self-concept. A fisherman one night snuck into another’s garden and cast a net into the lake to steal fish. The owner heard a noise and with his men, lit torches and began searching for the thief. Meanwhile, the thief smeared himself with ashes and assumed a meditative posture under a tree, pretending to be a holy man. Not finding the thief, the owner gave up the search. In time, news spread in the village of there being a holy man in the owner’s garden and people came from all over with offerings to pay their respects. Bewildered, the fisherman thought to himself, “Just by playing the part of a holy man, I have elicited so much devotion. There can be no doubt that if I practice spiritual disciplines that I will actually attain realization!” The mere pretense of greatness can kindle spiritual awakening.

The following quote conveys the idea of divine transcendence:

> Once a salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean. It wanted to tell others how deep the water was. But this it could never do for no sooner did it get into the water that it melted. Now who was there to report the ocean’s depth? (Sri Ramakrishna in Gupta, 1942/2007, p. 103)

**Definition of Selfless Service—Domain 2: Benefitting Others**

*An interest in enhancing the well-being of others and in transcending one’s own self-interested desires.* (Kurth, 1995, p. 15)
The previous domain investigated what it might mean to transcend one’s own self-interested desires. Now I examine research regarding enhancing the well-being of others, perhaps even at one’s own cost. I have looked at prosocial literature across all age groups, where ‘prosocial’ is defined as behaviour where one voluntarily acts with the intention to benefit another (Eisenberg & Fabes in Spivak & Howes, 2011). I also looked at altruism which carries a similar definition adding that the one who acts may do so at personal cost (De Waal, 2008). Altruism can be broken down into various levels from spontaneous action to intentional altruism where one calculates future reciprocation (De Waal, 2008). By purposefully limiting my search to prosocial and altruistic literature, I believe that I have maintained greater coherence with Kurth’s (1995) definition.

Humans of all ages exhibit a natural tendency to help others and have their best interests at heart. For example, Eisenberg-Berg and Neale (1979) observed pre-schoolers over a 12-week period. When asked about their prosocial behaviours, the children justified their actions with reference to others’ needs and pragmatic considerations. Similarly, at the university level, participants in laboratory games are often willing to alter others’ incomes at a cost to themselves, effectively promoting cooperation (Dawes, Fowler, Johnson, McElreath, & Smirnov, 2007; Eek & Gärling, 2006). University students will also patiently (Albrecht, Volz, Sutter, Laibson, & Von Cramon, 2010) make better choices for another person, although not necessarily for themselves (Pronin, Olivola, & Kennedy, 2008).

Bandura, Ross, and Ross’s (1961; 1963) seminal works unpacked anti-prosocial behaviour. They show how nursery school children exposed to models who behaved aggressively tended to imitate it and how children who viewed aggressive human and
cartoon models on film exhibited nearly twice as much aggression than those who were not exposed to such content. In his most recent work, Bandura (2015) concluded that prosocial behaviour is negatively correlated with moral disengagement, aggression, and delinquent behaviour (Bandura, 2015). The question is, then, can modelling prosocial and altruistic behaviour have the opposite effect? The answer is, yes.

Anthropologists have shown that in cultures where parents demonstrate exceptional patience and model nonaggressive behaviours (like the Mbuti, Tasaday, Fore, Semai, and Inuit) children transition into adolescence behaving more selflessly and carrying less violent perspectives than children from other societies (Lasley, 1987). Prosocial maternal behaviour (Garner, 2006), or parenting by investing time doing chores with children, results in children who demonstrate prosocial behaviour (Roerig, 2014). Nurturant caretakers and altruistic peer models influence children to display consistent altruism as opposed to kids not exposed to a prosocial model (Hartup, 1967; Yarrow, 1973).

Friederich and Stein (1973) compared children exposed to aggressive programs (e.g., Batman and Superman) to those exposed to prosocial programming (e.g., Mister Rogers’ Neighbourhood). They found that those exposed to the latter showed higher levels of task persistence with an increase in prosocial interpersonal behaviour for children from lower SES families. Adolescents who play prosocial videogames show an increase in helpful and a decrease in hurtful behaviour whereas violent games have the opposite effect (Saleem, Anderson, & Gentile, 2012). The effect of prosocial modelling is evidenced in university as well where perceived stronger ethical academic supervision
yields greater compliant prosocial behaviour in graduate students (Nejati & Shafaei, 2017).

A large number of studies with children from preschool to middle school have demonstrated the effectiveness of prosocial interventions (such as a kindness curriculum based on mindfulness, 10 sessions on altruism, and cooperative education, to name a few). The success of these interventions indicates a “plasticity of altruistic behaviour” which is “highly susceptible to experience within social contexts” (Lozada, D’Adamo, & Carro, 2014, p. 75). Along with prosocial behaviour, and depending upon the intervention, some studies have seen increases in children’s awareness of themselves and others (Lozada et al., 2014) and improvements in the capacity for perspective-taking (Extebarria et al., 1994; Johnson, Johnson, Johnson, & Anderson, 1976). Studies have shown positive attitudes towards classroom life (Johnson et al., 1976), higher achievement (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, & Davidson, 2015; Johnson et al., 1976), and less selfish behaviour (Flook et al., 2015). Some interventions have also noted a decrease in conduct and peer problems (Farrell, Valois, & Meyer, 2002; Gose, 2011) and greater student-led initiatives to resolve conflicts (Sharpe, Crider, Vyhlidal, & Brown, 1996). Pedagogical approaches such as desegregation (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979), providing students more autonomy in selecting materials and completing tasks (Babcock, Hartle, & Lamme, 1995), and cross-age tutoring (Yogev & Ronen, 1982) also encourage prosocial and altruistic behaviour.

Fewer studies on interventions can be found at the secondary level. Mesurado, Distefano, Robiolo, and Richaud (2018) implemented an online program called ‘Hero’ to promote prosocial behaviour and this study was found after the data for the present
dissertation had been gathered. The intervention was effective in promoting prosocial behaviour towards strangers and family members but not towards friends. Most other high school interventions generally focus on improving mental health but seem to additionally generate social gains (Fisher, Masia-Warner, & Klein, 2004; Seligman et al., 2009). In one study, researchers implemented an intervention to increase students’ awareness of the moral atmosphere (Brugman et al., 2003). Having a more unanimous perception of the moral atmosphere related positively to prosocial behaviour.

Adults also face obstacles that impede an egalitarian prosocial attitude (i.e., biases towards those who are different, or, out-groups). Extreme out-groups (such as addicts and the homeless) may be dehumanized, preventing the formation of positive out-group attitudes (Harris & Fiske, 2006). Fifty years of research, however, show that intergroup prejudices can be reduced through friendly intergroup contact (Henry & Hardin, 2006) and even more so through extended contact and self-disclosure to reduce intergroup anxiety (Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007; Ensari & Miller, 2002). This is desegregation at the adult level. For example, direct and indirect cross-group friendships between Catholics and Protestants resulted in reduced prejudice (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, & Voci, 2004). However, Henry and Hardin (2006) show that although cross-groups might explicitly demonstrate less prejudice, implicit prejudice is reduced only in the low-status group.

Often these types of studies investigate increased amygdala activity upon seeing images of out-group members where amygdala activity is associated with a threat (Grezes, Berthoz, & Passingham, 2006). Fortunately, these responses can be cognitively moderated by enhancing out-group representations while at the same time overcoming
one’s own perspective (Majdandžić, Amashauf, Hummer, Windischberger, & Lamm, 2016). To an extent, these reactions also depend upon one’s current social cognitive goals (Wheeler & Fiske, 2005). Even though Jordan et al. (2011) show that we all have a strong desire to be moral people, rooting out deep biases requires opportunities for intergroup exposure and cognitive effort.

Darley and Batson (1973) show how cognitively difficult it is to put good teachings into practice. They recruited 40 student participants from the Princeton University Theological Seminary. Some of them were told that they would have to give a lecture on suitable work prospects for seminary students while others had to comment upon the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable is taken from the Bible where Jesus describes a man who fell among robbers, was beaten, and left for dead on the side of the road. Who helped this man? Not the priest, nor the Levite, but the Samaritan. In the study, the participants encountered a shabbily dressed person slumped by the side of the road on the way to give the specified lecture. It was found that the topic of the participant’s lecture did not make a significant difference on the likelihood of helping the person. Sixty percent of the participants did not offer any help at all.

To summarize, we see evidence that prosocial altruistic behaviour can be influenced at any age. However, prejudices can set in that prevent us from extending help to those who are considered to be out-group members—in some cases we may unwittingly practice against what we preach. Research has shown that modelling and directly teaching prosocial behaviour is highly effective, with visible behavioural changes occurring within a short span of time. Considering the plasticity of altruistic behaviour, the studies seem to indicate that perhaps prolonged exposure to proper role models along
with continued reflection to stimulate cognitive awareness would be helpful in establishing and practicing prosocial and altruistic behaviour.

**Vedantic stories/anecdotes.** The following passages provide insight into how particular saints of the Vedantic order described or modelled prosocial and altruistic behaviour:

In the fullness of spiritual realization, a person finds that the God who resides in his heart resides in the hearts of all—the oppressed, the persecuted, the lowly, and the untouchable. This realization makes one truly humble. (Ma Sarada in Sarvabhutananda, 2009, p. 28)

In the United States, Swami Vivekananda (an East Indian) had been mistaken for being black and refused admission to hotels. Later, American Southern magnates apologized, intimating that he could have corrected the hotel staff. Swami remarked to himself: "What! Rise at the expense of another!" (Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 9, p. 420)

My child, if you want peace, do not look into anybody’s faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own. (Ma Sarada in Sarvabhutananda, 2009, p. 24)

**Definition of Selfless Service—Domain 3: Non-attachment**

*A non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions.* (Kurth, 1995, p. 15)

As seen in Karma Yoga, non-attachment has particular implications for the meta-cognitive plane. There needs to be an awareness of the motive power that drives work because attachment comes when a return is expected (Vivekananda, 1893/2009). In the following section, I consider the above definition by first investigating empirical research
that looks at attachment to outcomes and its motivations. From there I explain the psychological impact of being extrinsically motivated, which then leads into considering the value of non-attached action.

Decisions made in situations involving an end result (often money) are coloured by personal interests. In a study where participants were paid to identify whether or not there were more dots on the left side or on the right side of a vertical line, participants chose the right side more frequently knowing that they would be paid eight cents more if they did (Reeck, Mazar, Ariely, Ludwig, & Mason, 2015). This self-serving bias is more common in ambiguous situations as just described. Another study provided first year university psychology students with a coin to fairly assign a task but most of them ended up keeping the positive consequence for themselves despite the coin’s verdict (Batson, Thompson, Seuferling, Whitney, & Strongman, 1999). These morally disengaged acts Bandura (2015), where people justify immoral actions whilst preserving their self-respect, occur through: (a) “sanctify[ing] harmful means by investing them with worthy social and moral purposes” (p. 2); (b) dispersing responsibility, minimizing, or distorting the effects of the actions; and/or (c) dehumanizing or blaming the victims. Being aware of how we justify moral hypocrisies may prevent future transgressions. In one study an ethical awareness intervention was provided to university business students but not to psychology students. The former saw a shift in conceptions of ethical behaviour and reduced their propensity to engage in theft (Tang & Chen, 2008).

An awareness of impure intentions develops from elementary school. Mendelsohn and Straker (1999) noticed that 7- to 16-year-olds advance in perspective-taking, allowing them to recognize calculated or intentional altruism and begin perceiving
helpful behaviour as less kind if motivated by self-interest. Subtle deceptions are registered in the amygdala (Grezes, Frith, & Passingham, 2004), an area that is activated in response to threat. However, if the target of deception is not one’s self but, rather, another, the amygdala is not activated (Grezes, Berthoz, & Passingham, 2006)—in other words, people are primed to guard their own interests.

Despite the ability to detect calculated actions guided by self-interest, people still commit them. Willer (2009) shows how those who received group status for their contributions not only viewed the group more positively but ended up contributing even more. Fisher and Ackerman (1998) show how individuals will contribute if the behaviour is both important to the group’s welfare and, like Willer (2009), if it accrues towards a group-mediated reward. A rather awkward battle ensues—one where intentional or calculated altruism is internally deprecated but the compulsion to externally commit such actions exists. There is a distaste for seeing self-interested activity by others, yet people become attached to the prospects of personal future rewards.

Overt and subtle examples of calculated intentions surround us. Shariff and Norenzayan (2007) demonstrate that citizens (ages 17 to 82) who receive secular priming (a task where they had to unscramble sentences that contained words like civic, jury, court, and police) give almost twice as much money in a subsequent anonymous dictator game—a game in which research shows that the majority of givers leave little or no money for the receivers. Priming is a type of deception that actually might escape our cognitive awareness but is duly executed with full awareness by those requiring the benefit. Even subtle gestures, like including eye-spots on a computer background, increases the amount of money given in such games (Haley & Fessler, 2005). Each of us
operate on a web of collective desires and attachments. The motive power that drives actions makes a tremendous impact upon density of this web. Motivation literature, found in the field of education, can inform our awareness of cognitive process and help us negotiate intentions.

Student motivation, from the point of view of attachment to outcomes, at first seems dichotomously simple; either one is attached to the end product or happy to engage in the process. However, motivation literature has contributed a far more developed understanding involving a continuum of when and how end results motivate work, providing evidence of approaches that are beneficial to student learning longevity. Ryan and Deci (2009) differentiate between intrinsic motivation—that which provides a psychological need to feel autonomy and competency and leads to growth, enjoyment, and creativity—with extrinsic motivation. They subdivide extrinsic motivation into varying categories, from low in autonomy (based on external rewards or punishments or satisfying the ego), to those that are higher in autonomy (based on valuing the activity and its foreseeable benefits). All extrinsic motivations are characterized by an attachment to or thoughts of an end result. Low autonomy tasks place the locus of causality on something external whereas higher autonomy tasks place the locus of causality internally. Engagement in education and optimal learning occurs with intrinsic and autonomous types of extrinsic motivation.

Ryan and Deci (2009) summarize studies that show how tangible rewards lead to a loss of autonomy because students perceive the locus of causality to be external. Fostering the ego often leads to a withdrawal of persistence. Alternatively, autonomy supportive practices, (i.e., offering choice or performance-relevant feedback), allow
students to feel more confident and is linked to greater psychological well-being. Importantly, autonomy increases as the focus shifts from being reward oriented to being process oriented. In other words, non-attachment, as described in Karma Yoga, is a consequence of being more mindful of the process rather than end results. In Neale’s (2000) study, four practices helped her interviewees maintain an attitude of service; being in nature, meditation, journaling, and reading spiritual literature. The latter three practices all support cognitive reflection and mindful practice in-situ.

This section demonstrates how an individual can be motivated by self-interest and affected by other’s self-interested actions. Keeping a constant eye on the end results can become a habit. However, research also urges us to be thoughtful about the motivations that drive our practices and how we choose to justify our actions. Reflective cognitive practices can increase metacognitive awareness regarding the intentions motivating actions, providing guidance on how to switch from ends driven/highly extrinsic practices to those that focus on the immediate tasks.

**Vedantic stories/anecdotes.** Sarvapriyananda (2016b) illustrates the concept of non-attachment through a story involving a monkey and a farmer. There was a certain little monkey who was a banana farmer’s nemesis. Every time the banana farmer would fill up his basket with bananas, the monkey would climb down from its tree, grab a handful of bananas and escape before the farmer could catch it. The farmer then craftily devised a container with a wide bottom but a narrow mouth. The next day, the farmer, making eye-contact with the monkey, slipped bananas into the container one by one. Just when the farmer was far enough away, the monkey scrambled down from the tree, put its hand in the container and grabbed a hold of a banana. However, the mouth of the
container was too narrow for both the monkey’s hand and the banana. Meanwhile the farmer came back and started thrashing the poor little monkey. The only way for the monkey to escape this torment would be to let go of the banana, but this did not occur to the poor monkey because it was so attached to the banana. The monkey was not trapped. The only thing that trapped the monkey was its desire and confusion. Similarly, we are not trapped in this world. It is our attachments to this world that torment us. The moral of the story is to renounce attachments mentally and live free.

Ma Sarada (in Sarvabhutananda, 2009, p. 25) provided insight into the performance of actions by saying, “Many are known to do great works under stress of some strong emotion. But a man’s true nature is known from the manner in which he does his insignificant daily task.”

**Synthesizing Findings to Build a Framework for Selflessness: Discussion and Implications**

In Table 2.1, I have distilled themes from each of Kurth’s (1995) three definitional levels of selflessness dedicated to Western empirical research as well as Eastern Vedantic literature. These themes were extracted by noting the key ideas presented in each paragraph associated with the relevant definition. In the last column entitled ‘indicators/attributes’ I have placed points that are meant to capture the combined ethos of both previous columns and are expressed as descriptors that can be observed and tracked to guide data collection and analysis.
Table 2.1.

*Summary of findings and towards a framework of selflessness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Western empirical research</th>
<th>Vedanta</th>
<th>Indicators/Attributes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An awareness of and/or belief in a Transcendent Reality through which one is, and feels, connected to others and the remainder of the natural world</td>
<td><strong>Transcendence</strong>&lt;br&gt;• intersection of the individual, a the setting, and a skill meaningfully offered by the individual&lt;br&gt;• heightened awareness of moving beyond individuality and deeply connecting with others and the natural world</td>
<td>• the Self in every person has infinite potential, this is Existence, or, transcendent reality&lt;br&gt;• everything is connected because everything in essence is this Self&lt;br&gt;• the purpose of life is to realize your infinite potential</td>
<td>• positive self-concept and belief in inner potential&lt;br&gt;• awareness of connectedness between self and others&lt;br&gt;• provision of possibilities available in the setting for students/participants to realize and offer skill sets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An interest in enhancing the well-being of others and in transcending one’s own self-interested desires</td>
<td><strong>Transcending self-interest</strong>&lt;br&gt;• educators consider students’ perspectives, helping them overcome obstacles and deeply connect with material</td>
<td>• have equal regard for others and do not look at anybody’s faults&lt;br&gt;• service without expectation of reciprocation is a practice that leads to realizing inner divinity&lt;br&gt;• selflessness decreases isolation from the world</td>
<td>• prosocial modelling &amp; interventions&lt;br&gt;• development of prosocial attributes&lt;br&gt;• pedagogy enacted to enhance prosocial atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions</td>
<td><strong>Selfishness</strong>&lt;br&gt;• we are sensitive to deceit&lt;br&gt;• we have an ability to justify selfish acts&lt;br&gt;<strong>Metacognition and reflection</strong>&lt;br&gt;• non-attachment is a consequence of being more mindful of the process rather than the end results.&lt;br&gt;• there is a need to be thoughtful about the motivations that drive our practices and how we justify our actions&lt;br&gt;• cognitive awareness can help us shift from ends-driven/extrinsic practices to focusing on thoughtfully carrying out the immediate tasks</td>
<td>• non-attachment to work makes one selfless&lt;br&gt;• attachment comes when we expect a return&lt;br&gt;• attachments confuse and delude us into forgetting our divinity&lt;br&gt;• simple daily tasks should be mindfully executed</td>
<td>• metacognitive aspects (motivations behind and justifications for work)&lt;br&gt;• positive attitude towards work without attachment to an end reward&lt;br&gt;• reflective practices that stimulate non-attachment</td>
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</table>
Table 2.1 provides a framework for selfless pedagogy that spans dominant areas in educational research—namely, mindset, pro-social modelling, motivation, and metacognition. They have been pursued separately by researchers but have overlapping findings. The scope of Kurth’s definition, or, the potential latent within a careful study of selflessness, is revealed by its ability to embrace so many fields. This definition of selflessness engulfs all of these bodies of work, emphasizing the need for us to treat each area as vital components of a whole. To this end I have amalgamated the main indicators emerging from Western research and Eastern philosophy from this paper with key elements of Kurth’s (1995) definition in Figure 1 on an additive primary colour model using red, blue, and green light. They mix to reveal white light (or the higher Self—denoted with a capital ‘S’).

The model depicted in Figure 2.2 graphically details the practical attributes or indicators folded into each of the three domains (transcendent reality, benefitting others, and non-attachment) attached to the original definition of selflessness. There are three advantages of this figure.

1. The model associates (with reference to key terms) practical guidance with educational literature that supports good pedagogy.

2. Indicators and attributes are provided for observing and tracking the cultivation and emergence of selflessness in educational research.

3. Each practice is unpacked fully so that an educator can integrate extracted understandings into their own life and pedagogy with full awareness.
The strengths and limitations of this framework will be discussed in the final chapter.

**Figure 2.2. A framework for selflessness**

**Part II: Learning to Serve through Inquiry**

My research aims to explore the emergence of selflessness in an elementary school context. The three domains of selflessness are: (a) being and feeling connected to others and the remainder of the natural world through an awareness of and/or belief in a Transcendent Reality, (b) an interest in enhancing the well-being of others and transcend one’s own self-interested desires, and (c) non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions (Kurth, 1995). Figure 2.2 highlights attributes of selflessness and accompanying pedagogical practices coinciding with each domain (Transcendent Reality, benefiting others, and non-attachment).
If I am to monitor the emergence of selflessness, teachers need a pedagogical approach that has the scope to cultivate selflessness. Learning to serve through inquiry (LSI) knits together service-learning (SL), inquiry-based learning (IBL), and the practical attributes unpacked in the framework of selflessness. A further purpose of LSI, beyond conceptualizing and operationalizing the SL/inquiry/selflessness combination within the Ontario context, is to inform a methodology that will find expression in a context of inquiry. I begin by summarizing the ethos of both SL and IBL and then present Table 2.2 that highlights various literature sources to characterize each.

‘Service-Learning’ was coined in the 1960s by two American educationists that grew out of the American political and military landscape with a “primary emphasis on service to the country and less on making connections to curriculum content” (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010, p. 70). Much of the connotation of maintaining coherence with nationalistic mandates remains, although with time came distinct efforts to create connections to the curriculum as well as a bit of a departure from nationalistic obedience with the inclusion of a critical and social justice component.

IBL places greater emphasis on the individual, fostering curiosity and empowerment of the student by encouraging a pursuit of personally relevant questions to find satisfactory answers through authentic experiences. The process strives to make learning visible to the individual and to increase such encounters so that the individual can track and carry on with their evolution as a learner. Community contributions might arise from the work, but that intent is not a primary focus of IBL. Inquiry pedagogy, as mentioned, has its theoretical roots in the authentic/humanistic/progressive works of John Dewey (Canestrari, 2005; Colyer & Watt, 2016; Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010).
Dewey felt that learners “should ‘do’ the discipline by thinking, communicating, and verifying knowledge in an authentic manner” (Colyer & Watt, 2016, p. 10). IBL was also influenced by Jerome Bruner’s discovery learning movement where he advocated for self-directed learning (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). Additionally, Bruner felt that learning should conform to the “contextual structure of the discipline” so “teachers should engage their students in activities that are used by historians, anthropologists, political scientists, geographers, and so forth” (Canestrari, 2005, p. 23).

As noted from Table 2.2, SL differs from IBL by intentionally meeting a community need and having a relationship with community partners that is mutually beneficial while at the same time fulfilling curricular goals. The process involves active participation, discussion, and reflection. Together, SL and IBL bring alive Dewey’s (1916/1966, p. 192) claim that “a curriculum which acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest.” Students would achieve this by “the reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (p. 76).

A comparison of the ethos of SL and IBL yields a distinct difference in who the process enables. The IBL ethos primarily caters to individual development whereas SL encourages students to strive to meet another’s need as well as their own. However, both are not only forms of experiential learning (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010) but also operate from a problem-solving format of identifying a question/need and then embarking upon research to inform solutions. A majority of the pedagogical practices that exist in both
approaches are similar, but some are different. For example, IBL, as a fully developed pedagogy, exploits students’ innate curiosity and fosters strong independent learning skills. SL, on the other hand, nudges a student from considering their own conceptual growth to the social platform of applying what is learned at a group/community level.

Table 2.2.

Summary of definitions and descriptions of service-learning and inquiry-based learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service-learning...</th>
<th>Inquiry-based learning...</th>
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<tr>
<td>...engages youth in a wide range of activities to benefit others and meet real community needs, concurrently using resulting experiences to advance curricular goals through structured time for research, reflection, discussion, and connecting experiences to learning and personal worldviews (Berger Kaye, 2010; Cipolle, 2010; Jacoby, 2015; McPherson, 2011; Waterman, 1997; Wilczenski &amp; Coomey, 2007)</td>
<td>...is a “practice of extracting meaning from experience” (Audet, 2005, p. 6) and involves a process where students identify areas of inquiry around problems and questions in their world and then find the answers (Barell, 2003; Milner, Milner, &amp; Mitchell, 2017; Temple, Ogle, Crawford, &amp; Freppon, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...couples academic study and service to mutually benefit students, teachers, and local partners through creative problem solving and critical thinking, allowing for a co-creation of answers to complex problems where each learns from the other (Kronick, Cunningham, Gourley, 2011; Wilczenski &amp; Coomey, 2007; Wurdinger &amp; Carlson, 2010)</td>
<td>...is a dynamic approach to chosen themes and topics that: (a) begins with wonder, curiosity, and a desire to make sense of the world; (b) encourages the posing of deep questions with all “tentative answers taken seriously” (Wells, in Audet, 2005, p. 5); (c) allows for making discoveries; and then (d) testing those discoveries to gain new understanding (Alberta, 2004; Audet, 2005; Colyer &amp; Watts, 2016; Wurdinger &amp; Carlson, 2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>...can challenge students to consider their roles beyond the classroom as citizens and leaders (Robinder, 2012) with teacher responses to student reflections evoking critical thinking and social justice awareness (Astin et al., 2006; Richards, 2013)</td>
<td>...pays attention to motivational factors, i.e. “mov[es] children from a position of wondering to a position of enacted understanding and further questioning” (OME, 2013b, p. 2) and includes “opportunities for social interaction, and creat[ing] active learning environments” (Audet, 2005, p. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...involves making connections between the service experience and the academic material (Astin et al., 2000) through in-class instruction pertaining to the experiences, expectations, and populations of the service site (Wozencroft et al., 2015), and frequent reflection with academic goals during the service experiences (Hart &amp; King, 2007)</td>
<td>...involves journaling, documenting thinking and wondering, field observations, and reflections (Barell, 2003) and often culminates in community events showcasing artistic creations or demonstrations of social action (Milner et al., 2017; Temple et al., 2014).</td>
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As such, SL cultivates collaborative and interpersonal skills and positively affirms individual and societal investments in learning. A strong philosophical basis in selflessness can guide both teachers and students to enact a healthy, positive, and liberating internal framework to negotiate thoughts and actions that is demonstrable through both the process of individual and collaborative learning. Informed by the above context, the definition of LSI is, once again, given below.

Learning to Serve through Inquiry (LSI) is a dynamic pedagogy that explicitly develops selfless attributes, extracts meaning from experience, and cultivates a sense of curiosity and wonder inherent in youth. LSI’s objectives are to: (a) engage youth in mindful activities that benefit others by meeting a real community need and thereby achieving a sense of connectedness with others and concurrently (b) advance curricular goals through structured time for questioning, research, reflection, discussion, and associating experiences to learning and personal worldviews.

**Research on Service-learning and Inquiry-based Learning**

A substantial body of empirical research on SL in K-12 education exists and has been conducted primarily in the United States. Studies demonstrate that SL has been associated with school enjoyment (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005; Mcloughlin, 2010), increased motivation to learn course content (Hart & King, 2007), behavioural accountability (Mcloughlin, 2010), the valuing of diversity of citizens within the community (Cox, 2012; Kalisch, Coughlin, Ballard, & Lamson, 2013; Long, 2014; Wozencroft, Pate, & Griffiths, 2015), enhanced teamwork skills and civic responsibility (Astin et al., 2006; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007), and
nurturing students’ leadership and communication skills (Mitchell, 2007; Nabors, Welker, & Faller, 2018). Intrapersonally, SL helps students develop more sophisticated perspectives of the self and society, altruism and metacognitive skills (Terry & Panter, 2011), deeper emotional realization (Eppler, Ironsmith, Dingle, & Errickson, 2011; Naudé, 2015; Winans-Solis, 2014), feelings of autonomy and competence (Kacker-Cam & Schmidt, 2014), and empowerment (Beason-Manes, 2018). Positive ties are also forged between schools and the community (Cox, 2012; Gray et al., 1998; Phillips, 2011).

Wurdinger and Carlson (2010), cite research supporting IBL pedagogy that shows how learning increases with: (a) greater student self-directed approaches in the presence of facilitation, (b) embedded problem-solving processes preceding the introduction of new content, and (c) intentional use of scaffolding by instructors. Friesen and Scott (2013), in their review of empirical work related to IBL, conclude that it is positively associated with students’ ability to understand concepts and procedures as long as careful scaffolding is provided with formative feedback loops and “powerful questioning strategies” (p. 25).

Friesen (2010) reports that a study undertaken in Alberta showed that schools encouraging inquiry not only led to higher district and provincial averages but that those schools deemed as high inquiry schools demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the provincial and district achievement scores. IBL can promote metacognition (Nunaki, Damopolii, & Kandowangko, 2019), cohesiveness, cooperation, on-task behaviour (Cook & Ewbank, 2019), and create a more engaging learning environment (Friesen & Scott, 2013). The latter stems from the fact that the quest for knowledge and
deep understanding are encouraged and that in the process, students create personally significant pieces of work (Friesen, 2010; Gómez Gutiérrez, 2018). Depending upon the project, students can also gain an appreciation of the interrelations of members in a community (Gómez Gutiérrez, 2018). In fact, like SL, IBL has the potential to stimulate critical consciousness of students and introduce them to the idea of civic action (Beutel, 2018).

Recent research in IBL pedagogy examines the use of technology as a vehicle to drive the process forward. Technological tools such as smart phones and tablets can be helpful when they are thoughtfully integrated into the learning design by the teacher. Students cultivate their pragmatic and epistemic understandings (Cerratto Pargman & Nouri, 2018) and find the learning experience to be valuable (Gordon, Georgiou, Cornish, & Sharma, 2019).

**Conceptualizing LSI: What does it feel like?**

To conceptualize LSI and embed it within the Ontario context, I draw upon the Citizenship Education Framework (see Figure 2.3) extracted from the current Ontario Ministry of Education Elementary Social Sciences, History, and Geography curriculum (OME, 2013a) as an example. I am using the Citizenship Education Framework, to show how the different components of LSI (IBL, SL, and the practice of selflessness) merge to actualize and enhance what the Ontario Ministry of Education already encourages.
When considering the Citizenship Education Framework, the elements of IBL, a practice in which Ontario is already invested, figures most strongly in the “Structures” component of the diagram, where students, through personal inquiries, pursue areas of interest and develop understandings related to the topic. There is also some emphasis on the “Attributes” component as students are encouraged to discuss and reflect upon their understandings in group formats. SL as defined above, cuts into the “Attributes” and “Active Participation” components by encouraging action and building interpersonal
skills through collaboration and community development. SL places some emphasis on
the “Identity” component through its focus on reflection. The framework of selflessness
also overlaps with the “Active Participation” and “Attributes” components with its
attention to prosocial modelling and benefitting others but then places substantial
emphasis on the “Identity” component. The metacognitive practices of non-attachment
that grapple with questions of morality and developing a sense of connectedness (thereby,
perhaps transcending the Self) are key fundamental practices that inform the “Identity”
component.

The Citizenship Education Framework provides a simple introduction to how LSI
pieces together and highlights the strengths of SL, IBL, and the selflessness framework.
The LSI approach however, as defined, not only fully encompasses what already exists in
the Citizenship Education Framework but then digs deeper into the foundations of
pedagogy drawn from educational research and philosophy to enrich the process.

**Operationalizing LSI: What does it look like?**

Before jumping into the five-step LSI process, I will outline characteristics of the
learners (the teacher, student, and community members), curriculum content, and class
culture that would accommodate deeper experiences. These characteristics represent a
blend of best practices gleaned from existing IBL practices and SL initiatives. I also
highlight some areas where the practice of selflessness can manifest. I conceive of LSI as
starting with an inquiry approach to gain a sufficient and deep understanding of the
curricular aims and then merge inquiry into a service initiative. LSI draws upon the
crowning jewels of each process—cultivating deep questioning skills from IBL and
eliciting careful and continuous reflection from SL. However, this is only a possible path
of many in LSI, described for demonstrable purposes. Teachers may cater LSI to their own style while preserving the essential components of selflessness, SL, and IBL.

**Teacher and student profiles.** LSI, like IBL, redefines the teacher role as variously a teacher, coach, facilitator, networker, and a shoulder-to-lean-on who makes learning visible to the students (Mackenzie, 2016). Teachers provide ample space for student voice (Gent, 2009) and through the formative practice of “intelligence gathering” (Wolf as cited in Gent, 2009, p. 188), teachers diagnose student understanding, stimulate more curiosity, build confidence, and nudge students further along in their inquiries by pointing out or gathering resources. In an LSI ethos, good questions are valued more than correct answers (Audet, 2005), and concerted effort is made to eradicate views that hold questions as threatening, rude, or destabilizing the status quo (Barell, 2003). Teachers provide students with the skills they need to pursue their own inquiries and grapple with service ideas. There is a sense of “gradual release of control” where teachers move from structured LSI in the sense of “students, as an entire class, engages in one inquiry/[service initiative] together” (Mackenzie, 2016, p. 28) to where a teacher chooses a topic and provides students with high autonomy to pursue their own inquiries related to that topic (Audet, 2005; Colyer & Watt, 2016)—perhaps spearheading various mini-service initiatives with the same community partners.

LSI aims high and promises independent learners who have a thirst for knowledge with an inclusive mindset that is geared towards being of service. They must have an appreciation of different strengths and weakness of their peers and be ready to engage in meaningful actives that challenge (Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010). This appreciation of strengths and weakness, coupled with an emphasis on developing dispositions and
qualities that are empowering, feed into the self-concept aspect of selflessness. The students learn to see both themselves and others as having that potential—that everyone can be better. There is an emphasis on curiosity to highlight that individual motivations naturally fall closer to the intrinsic end of the spectrum, meaning that students will tend to be more process-driven due to the privilege of increased autonomy. Metacognitive aspects regarding non-attachment, then, become a natural component to LSI and can be further explored in reflective sessions.

Whitehead III and Kitzrow (2010) also point out that community members who partner in service initiatives, drawn from the school, families, or wider communities, should ideally be caring adults/citizens. They should be flexible, patient, and appreciate the value that is gained from learning with students.

**Curricular organization.** LSI could be carried out in a unit in the curricular area that relates to an important community issue, something that students might be passionate about, or, perhaps in a topic area that is traditionally boring for students in order to animate it through personal inquiries and service (McPherson, 2011). Once a unit has been targeted, assessment opportunities to foster the skills and dispositions illustrated in the student profile along with the associated curriculum content, should be mapped onto a planner (Colyer & Watt, 2016) like Understanding by Design (UbD) (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). The UbD template allows teachers to work backwards from end goals, allowing them to visualize and cogitate upon the process (so that the logic line is also clear to the students). A teacher might want to target particular traits from the Citizenship Education Framework as shown in Figure 2. Wilczenski and Coomey (2007) also add a ‘career’ dimension to align experiences with possible future opportunities for the students.
and integrate the school’s mission and vision. As in IBL, learning in LSI is “not accidental” because “big ideas emerge from a set of intentional planning actions taken by the teacher…” (Canestrari, 2005, p. 31). Teachers, in a facilitator mode, and having mapped out their goals for students, orient student attention to key curricular areas as they progress. As a consequence, students “often make observations and reach conclusions that are exactly or very close to the standards established by national organizations” (Canestrari, 2005, p. 30).

Mackenzie (2016), in his bid to empower students further, co-designs learning with students and this approach can also be considered in LSI pedagogy. In such cases, teacher facilitator’s planning involves mapping out possibilities that might emerge along with the many mini-inquiries that might be sparked from the ‘provocations’ (as will be discussed in the next section) that fall under the big inquiry topic of the LSI unit. An understanding of the curricular content area, possible rich questions that might straddle a variety of disciplines, and resources to guide students’ journeys could dot the planner. The teacher could plot out some questions/worksheets that will scaffold student thinking along curricular goals and brainstorm possible viable service sites.

Key assessment practices are integrated into IBL and SL components of LSI. To contextualize assessment from Ontario’s perspective, I describe assessment for, as, and of learning (OME, 2010). Assessment for learning (AfL) enables teachers to provide students with descriptive feedback for improvement (OME, 2010). Assessment as learning (AaL) are the opportunities that the teachers provide students to help them develop their capacity to be independent, autonomous, and self-regulated learners (OME, 2010). Assessments of learning (AoL) are summaries of student learning at a given point.
in time that are used to make judgements about the quality of student learning (OME, 2010).

Providing ample scaffold supports for AaL coordinated with AfL allows for moment to moment individually tailored feedback (i.e., knowledge-building circles where students share and receive feedback on what they are discovering and journal reflections). Additionally, AaL and AfL opportunities that make metacognitive aspects that drive motivation for learning and service visible to students (i.e. through journal reflections and sharing opinions on sticky note paper) can help them juxtapose their nature with that of one who is selfless. This AaL and AfL combination is extraordinarily powerful because one can witness students gaining confidence in their skills, following their own avenues of interest, and becoming strong independent learners.

To add to Colyer and Watt’s (2016) directive of mapping out assessment opportunities on a UbD, Berman (2006) further suggests creating a separate assessment planner with AaL and AfL pieces like quizzes and journal reflections with feedback and AoL evidence like tests, and products (including posters, reports, presentations, or portfolios to name a few). Garnering student help to create a rubric for the final assessment products clarifies specific success indicators for the students (McPherson, 2011). Rubric-making is a type of AaL that directly impacts AoL. Pre-emptory prompts, an assessment planner, and prefabricated rubrics guard LSI initiatives from straying away from stated learning outcomes.

**Class culture.** LSI requires a classroom culture that values curiosity, builds confidence for growth towards independent learning, teaches students pro-social traits like how to effectively collaborate, and supports positive self (and other) concepts. A
curiosity supportive classroom is one where students “wonder, inquire, and [do] not accept the easy answer or the most common solution” (p. 47) and identify intriguing mysteries and puzzles within any topic (Barell, 2003). Classmates then ask thoughtful questions in return that stimulate even more insightful responses, “rais[ing] the quality of peer interactions” (p. 41). Sackstein (2016) outlines that an inclusive environment is one that values the contributions of all parties and avoids placing control solely in the hands of one person. An inclusive environment that fosters independent thinking is facilitated by teachers who find out who their students are inside and outside of school, keeping lines of communication open, and building peer-to-peer trust. Sackstein further adds that conversations should “start and end with student thoughts” (p. 5).

Team/trust building activities can serve to highlight the talents of each individual and supports a collaborative community (Sackstein, 2016; Thomsen, 2006). Collaborative-supportive and pro-social skills that could be explicitly taught are how to defer judgment, how to withhold criticism in brainstorming sessions, and how to combine quality aspects of various ideas to create an even better solution (Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010). A positive community dynamic is built on positive self and other concept where teachers explicitly teach students about how the brain is malleable, giving students the endless right and power to learn from their mistakes—that they can unlearn and re-learn new ideas at will (Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016). They characterize the classroom as a “mistakke zone” (p. 24) and that fosters a growth mindset. Accessing this potential that lies within every individual is key in cultivating selflessness as is the metacognitive awareness of being able to affect personal and social change.
The LSI process. Now that the background and context of LSI has been described, I will delve into the LSI process as illustrated in Figure 2.4. There are five areas that feature prominently in the LSI process and although I am presenting them in this linear fashion for greater ease of explanation, there is flexibility. For example,

![Figure 2.4. The LSI Process](image)

steps of the LSI are inspired by the works of Mackenzie (2016) and McPherson (2011) exploring a passion could leak into the other stages, informing deeper and richer reflections. Sharing also must occur at various points to varying degrees in order to stimulate growth in creativity and curiosity. ‘A’ refers to, variously, AaL, AfL and AoL, symbolizing that it should be occurring regularly throughout the LSI process.

Explore a passion.

Teachers, modelling curiosity (Colyer & Watt, 2016), provide their students with “open-ended invitations to explore” (Audet, 2005, p. 2). These explorations embrace the
big inquiry or essential question that the teachers craft for the unit (perhaps with the help of their students). This main question and subsidiary questions are open-ended, require students to engage at the depth of study that is demanded by the course, should be meaningful to the students, lead to debunking myths, and require critical thinking, research and original thought (Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016; Mackenzie, 2016).

“Provocations” (Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016, p. 42) or “wonder activities” (Colyer & Watt, 2016, p. 47) can be utilized to leverage students’ natural inquisitiveness and curiosity. They elicit genuine questions and can be used throughout the entire LSI process. Examples of such activities are, posing an ethical dilemma, sharing a personal story, playing different types of music, sharing artwork, going outdoors, and conducting a scientific experiment (Colyer & Watt, 2016). In a KWL charts (what do we think we Know/what do we Want to find out or Wonder about/what have we Learned?), during the first two sections students put into perspective where they are and where they want to go (Barell, 2003; Colyer & Watt, 2016; Sackstein, 2016). The final section provides a retrospective glance at how far they have gone once they have made progress in their quests. Posting the big inquiry or essential questions around the room or online on social media platforms helps further focus the class (Colyer & Watt, 2016).

Students might need help with how to wonder. Aids such as thinking journals, writing stems, discussions that allow for peers to exchange ideas, and other avenues for creative expressions that involve the senses and the imagination are effective methods (Barell, 2003; Townsend, 2005). Journals allow for excellent AaL and AfL opportunities as do anchor charts, word walls for building vocabulary, and portfolios—especially the latter three since they are created either with or by students (Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016).
One of the most important skills, however, that drives the inquiry component of LSI, is the crafting of a good question since the “quality of questions deepens critical [and] creative…thinking” (Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016, p. 54). Questions fall along three categories—those that are factual and cater to information gathering, those that lead to making connections and extensions, and those that allow for inference or applications (Barell, 2003). All are helpful, serving various purposes, and students can be trained to be alert to the types that connect with their curiosities and metacognitive development. For example, if one is conducting an interview, then a good question is generally open ended, includes a strong/debatable verb, and “provoke[s] a continued conversation” (Sackstein, 2016, p. 13).

As students begin to explore and research, AaL and AfL opportunities can help them build the ability to locate and critically assess the information (Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010) against evaluative criteria (i.e. whether the information helps answer the question, where it came from, when was it created, whether it is fair and unbiased, and whether it is supported by other evidence) (Colyer & Watt, 2016). Further AaL, AfL, and AoL opportunities proliferate the investigative process to see whether students are able to give and ask for reasons, combine ideas, develop provocative questions, make connections across disciplines, listen to and build upon the ideas of others, and understand what is currently known (Colyer & Watt, 2016; Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016). Providing moments for debriefing along the way allows teachers to formatively assess students and plan for ways to push thinking forward (Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016). Inquiry journals are great artifacts of the inquiry journey enabling students to track their evolution of thinking through careful reflection probing the importance of their quest,
surprising or contradictory factors, and the effect of their journey on their identity (Barell, 2003; Jagdeo & Jensen, 2016). White and Fitzsimmons (2005) ask teachers to commit to a higher level of dedication by becoming action researchers and conducting inquiries that will yield not only student assessment evidence but assessment of their own pedagogical practice.

Teachers and students might plan to incorporate the creation of an authentic piece or a formal summary (along with AoL criteria) to showcase their learning and help them engage in the next step of the LSI process of identifying a need (which overlaps with this step of exploration). The next step involves pooling class knowledge and brainstorming a suitable service initiative and is, therefore, called “Identify a Need.”

**Identify a need.**

In the previous section, I mentioned KWL charts. More letters have been added to give KWHLAQ charts (Barell, 2008). The ‘H’ stands for ‘how will we go about finding answers?’ ‘A’ stands for ‘what action will we take as a result of our inquiry?’ and ‘Q’ stands for ‘what new questions do we have?’ (Barell, 2008, p. 72). I propose that the ‘H’ between the ‘W’ and ‘L’ double as ‘how can I use what I learn to benefit others?’ Then the ‘A’ or action later taken can be more purposeful and service oriented. At this stage (or even in the previous phase) students can begin to consider meeting a need in their school, local, national, or global community—in other words, benefitting others. The teacher could keep various service site options simmering on students’ mental backburners having pre-emptively assessed for the curricular fit and scope (Case, Falk, Smith, & Werner, 2004). Pragmatic factors like facilities, materials, knowledge, developmental appropriateness, time, parental and administrative support, legalities, accessibility, and
adequate supervision should also play a role in teacher considerations and be introduced to students (Berman, 2006; Case et al., 2004; Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). However, cultivating student ownership is fundamental, not just to avoid student complacency (Gent, 2009) but because ultimately, the students will take leadership roles in serving and meeting the needs of the community partners. Plus, choice and voice fosters student curiosity—even to the point that students offer to help before even asked (Tashlik & Tomaszewski, 2005).

Students may present various ideas gleaned from their explorations, perhaps seeing only a fraction of the whole picture. Alternatively, students may find it difficult to identify a need (Gent, 2009). At this point students begin to project their curiosities into the community and this phase can be guided through various activities. Students can conduct a needs assessment by filling in charts that identify priority areas (like school, public safety, human needs, and environmental issues) with lists of agencies and organizations (Gent, 2009) and combine their own understandings from the exploration phase. In fact, students might initially generate notions of their ideal community and then contrast it with the results of the needs assessment. This process creates an awareness of the “unmet needs in the community and…how the community functions within the local, national, and global landscapes” (Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010, p. 27). Quickly these investigations can begin to border on critical pedagogy where students become more aware of others, themselves, social issues, and the ethics surrounding being an agent of change (Cipolle, 2010).

Simple exercises like conducting a walkabout in the community or school, scouring newspapers, listening to television or radio broadcasts, searching online, or
looking through community bulletins, allow students to become more aware of their own context (Berman, 2006; Gent, 2009). Students can talk to their guardian(s), other teachers, neighbours, and members of service and/or faith organizations with interview questions that they have prepared to scope out needs relating to their inquiry topic (Berman, 2006). Many AaL and AfL opportunities can be incorporated to help students examine their persistence in seeking a variety of resources, being open to differing perspectives, exercising healthy skepticism, having respect for factual information, and being able to clarify information (Barell, 2003). Teachers should formatively monitor discussions (Gent, 2009). These thought processes along with communication with peers and community members stimulate students’ networking skills, they gain more confidence in seeking partnerships with community relations, and become sensitive to noting the “reciprocity level of [possible] community partners” (Berman, 2006, p. 7).

McPherson (2011) broadens the scope of service to embrace city, provincial, and federal agencies or elected officials, the business and financial sector, and university or community colleges. There can be a need in any facet of the community and students can, by creatively using their curricular understandings, help meet it.

All throughout, teachers can model attitudes and behaviours conducive to a service approach that centres on benefitting others rather than fulfilling individual aspirations. Students learn how to “judge the importance of their work by their ability to meet community needs rather than by their own self-interests” (Dymond, Renzaglia, & Chun, 2007, p. 238). Teachers can even explicitly state the ideal of non-attachment to the end product (or value mindful, process-driven work) to create awareness in the students. For example, if there is a celebration at the end, it is still part of the process of being of
benefit to the community partner. Periodically, a teacher might craft prompts for reflection on non-attachment throughout the entire LSI process.

After a class brainstorming session, students might begin focusing on a particular service venue and then complete worksheets that allow students to juxtapose the community wish with their own abilities, and the wishes that the class has in common (Gent, 2009). Teachers could engage in initial conversations with community members to get their input, assess their expectations, establish a relationship, and ascertain whether a possible project is viable (Gent, 2009; Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010). Gent underscores the importance of establishing a “relationship between equals [that] reduces the air of superiority inherent in charity projects and decreases the distinction between the givers and receivers” (p. 102). The community partners should have a large stake in the planning and preparation phase as will be outlined in the next section.

**Plan and prepare.**

By this point, through inquiries extended into the community and consultations with members of various organizations, students would have collaboratively committed to meeting a community need. Students can find out more about the organization by examining existing data, conducting surveys, and interviewing key members (McPherson, 2011). If this is a new adventure for the teacher, it might be wise to start small and look for support from and provide information to members of the school and parent/guardian community (MacPherson, 2011; Thomsen, 2006). The more people involved in the collaborative effort, the more everybody benefits (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). The teacher can fill in more details on their UbD by mapping out the community partner’s needs and the content and skills that will be either taught or enhanced (since
students have already gained considerable depth of knowledge from personal inquiries), locating cross-curricular learning opportunities, and finding resources such as books and artifacts to stimulate more learning (Berger Kaye, 2010). New environments and diverse people might require new skill sets and a depth of sensitivity that have previously remained untapped (Gent, 2009).

Students should be empowered with as much leeway as possible to implement the service project, lead reflection sessions, evaluate the impact and learning, and coordinate the celebrations (Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). The teacher, in a facilitator capacity, orients attention by getting students to clarify the problem and realize its complex nature by acknowledging diverse perspectives and determining various contributing factors (Case et al., 2004). Case et al. (2004, p. 23) recommend that students find out “what has been tried and what were the consequences?” or “what could be tried and what might be the consequences?” Choices for action might be direct/one-on-one interaction (i.e., playing chess or bringing a population to the school), indirect action (i.e., securing and sending resources like food, or writing cards or letters), or taking part in political action (Gent, 2009; Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010). Students can be shown exemplars of past projects (Case et al., 2004) and guided with a menu of possible ideas (i.e., teaching others, creating a product, putting together a performance, or providing the organization with research) (McPherson, 2011).

An idea originating from Mackenzie’s (2016) approach to IBL is to have students ‘pitch’ ideas in groups and then in front of the class. This way, the ultimate suitable service project can be built of a combination of ideas. Peer feedback can be based on whether the scope is manageable and achievable, whether it aligns with course learning
objectives (Mackenzie, 2016), whether it is inclusive of class talents, demonstrates equitable division of labour (Gent, 2009), and how authentically and successfully it responds to the community need. Competition, however, is not an appropriate incentive. Berger Kaye (2010, p. 28) explains that, “a companion to every winner is a loser” and, endorsing intrinsic motivation, states that the objective should rather be “to transform competition into collaboration which always improves the dynamic and everyone wins.” For example, “engaging kids through knowing the underlying causes of childhood hunger has more power to stimulate participation than winning a pizza for bringing in the most food” (p. 28). Accordingly, the incentive for LSI is engagement in the process underscoring the non-attachment section of the selflessness framework.

Significant players in this process are the service partners. It is imperative that they participate in planning discussions so that they have a voice and can provide essential feedback to create a project that effectively meets their needs (Gent, 2009). Members from these organizations may be invited as guest speakers and with a little advanced preparation (i.e., obtaining information regarding the speaker’s background with the organization, constructing meaningful questions, and deciding upon the topics that students want addressed) the session could have a powerful impact on the direction of future work (Berger Kaye, 2010). Positive communication and collaboration may lead to service partners becoming more invested in the project because they start seeing a scope for it as a model for others and are gladdened by the sense of care exhibited by students (Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010). Benchmarks for strong partnerships include ascertaining a shared vision that benefits all parties, trust, respect, and regular communication and evaluation (Jacoby, 2015). In fact, Gent (2009) recommends that
students and service partners draft a partnership agreement to describe, in writing, the roles and expectations of both parties. This pledge supplies a retrospective tool to measure the impact of the service project. Guidelines and indicators to evaluate the impact and results of the project should also be set up (Case et al., 2004).

Students can participate in outlining clear learning outcomes “that require students to be involved in the construction of their own knowledge” (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007, p. 37) with accompanying indicators for success (McPherson, 2011). If they are aware of the learning outcomes and possible review questions during the pre-service period, then they can be alert to the knowledge and potential skills gained during the project (McPherson, 2011). A nice blend of assessment methods suited to the venues and conducive to the nature of the assessment can be mindfully implemented throughout the process. Jacoby (2015) lists a host of learning outcomes that are well showcased in SL that also work for LSI. They include applying conceptual understanding to new contexts, effectively using oral, written, and visual communication, collaborating within diverse contexts, exhibiting sound reasoning and careful synthesis of information to provide multiple solutions to challenging problems, and taking ownership of learning. Finally, students can determine how they will share their newly acquired understandings of service and curricular content post-service in an AoL piece and sketch out assessment criteria so that they can be alert to those elements during the service.

Reflection, such as through journals, discussion, and art is a key AaL and AfL component of SL literature and takes place prior to, during, and after service. Teachers and students may also choose to select their best written/artistic reflection as part of AoL. Pre-service reflection can serve not only to introduce students to the issues, organization,
and the population that the service will address (Jacoby, 2015) but it can also push students to examine their beliefs and attitudes regarding the service site that might colour their conduct and approach (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). Teachers can call student attention to how well they have been collaborating with their peers up until this point and again guide students to become aware of their underlying motivations in all aspects of the project. Well-constructed reflective prompts help students move incrementally towards higher levels of thinking, analysis and reasoning (Jacoby, 2015).

Serve.

The higher the quality of student inquiries and reflections the deeper the experiences of all participants. During the service, students learn to observe and take cues from their teacher, peers or other role models, ask questions, seek feedback, and synthesize the data to solve problems (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). Teachers could monitor student involvement and collect observations on students’ progress logs that can supplement and corroborate student reflections and provide material for future reflection prompts (Gent, 2009; Jacoby, 2015). Self-assessment rubrics, a valuable form of AaL and AfL and ideally designed with students (with criteria like preparedness, task-focused, and collaborated effectively), can prod students to become more aware of certain aspects while getting used to a new environment (Berman, 2006). There can be continued improvements of the service design (McPherson, 2011) by drawing upon feedback from surveys to both students (Thomsen, 2006) and service partners (Jacoby, 2015).

During reflection sessions students share what they have discovered and accomplished, create meaning from their experiences, make connections with the curricula, identify feelings and emotions, self-identify growth, ask questions, and
consider resources they may lean on to find answers (Canestrari, 2005; Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). Students can also specifically reflect upon personal transformations in the arena of pro-social attributes and self-concept. Class or group reflections should be guided by rules that allow everybody the opportunity to get a turn, to be listened to respectfully without interruptions or negativity, and to have the right to pass (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). These discussions are valuable platforms for students to learn from each other’s understandings and speculations (Canestrari, 2005). Open-ended questions and carefully crafted reflection prompts can help draw out important aspects of service (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010), increase the quality of reflections, and the rate at which deep connections are built between the service experiences and curriculum content.

Students can take the lead during group reflection sessions and, with guidance, create prompts and/or activities that target experiences at the service site, personal thoughts and feelings, and connections to the curriculum expectations (Kaye, 2010). There are many cues that teachers can look and listen for to assess for (in an AfL spirit) effective reflection (Colyer & Watt, 2016). There are also vast arrays of activities that can stimulate thinking. For example, pictures from old magazines can spark connections (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). A beach ball with emotions written on it (or prompts like “what…made an impression…?” or “what was something you heard today that you’ve never heard before?”) can be thrown around and when students catch it they choose one upon which to elaborate (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010, p. 77). Berger Kaye (2010) describes a reflection session where students return from their service experience to find their classroom workspace covered in chart paper. Students are instructed to represent their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through art silently. After 10 minutes, students
rotate around the desks adding one word to each piece of art. Students can then choose five words to refocus their personal reflections.

Reflective journals are important in IBL and also figure prominently in SL. In journals students can take field notes and grapple with reflection prompts like open-ended sentence stems, quotes, and other artifacts (Barell, 2003; Jacoby, 2015). The journal entries can assume a variety of formats (Berman, 2006; Gent, 2009; Jacoby, 2015; Kaye, 2010; McPherson, 2011). The format influences the way students reflect. For example, in a three-part journal, the page is divided into three sections; one recounting the LSI experience, another dedicated to making connections with the curriculum objectives, and the final one where understandings in both sections are applied to personal life or future work (McPherson, 2011). The student can draw arrows to connect ideas between the sections (Jacoby, 2015), and the teacher can respond using post-it notes with further questions to push thinking, enhance the attributes of selflessness, and influence future interactions with peers and community partners.

There are many positive outcomes of such continued reflection. Academically, students gain a deeper understanding of the connections between their inquiry quests by applying learned concepts to real-life situations—perhaps with the challenge of solving problems (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). Students become more adept at critical thinking or measuring their reasoning against some kind of standard or criteria (Jacoby, 2015; Whitehead III & Kitzrow, 2010). Since reflection opportunities both support students as they encounter their own prejudices and highlight challenges that develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, they ultimately promote community building (Gent, 2009) and increase their commitment to social justice (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007).
Added to the interpersonal benefits are the personal developments—which in turn enhance the pro-social environment. Students begin to identify personal growth which empowers them to “gain a sense of control in their lives” and connect to community (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007, p. 29). With so much growth on so many fronts, students become excited to formally share and celebrate their understandings which brings us to the next stage.

*Share.*

Post-service reflections look back on the evolution of beliefs and attitudes, track individual participation and group participation, highlight challenging moments, and assess students’ state of confidence in their own abilities (Case et al., 2004; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). Students can rely upon field notes and reflections to provide formal learning summaries to the teachers. All of this documentation could be part of their final product for AoL and be shared with the community partner. Final AoL products include oral summaries of the project at assemblies or at a parent/guardian evening, a hall display demonstrating the purposes, strategies, and outcomes of the project, creating a newspaper article, a report outlining recommendations, or letters composed to appropriate political authorities (Case et al., 2004). The assessment criteria for such products would have been established during the plan and prepare stage. The criteria could allow for the valuing of conclusions that are in some way novel—where differing points of view, problem identification, or deliberating upon a problem in an unconventional way are given merit (Barell, 2003).

Students should refer back to their criteria for evaluating the impact of the project to see whether they had been able to successfully meet the needs of their community.
partners and whether they have had an impact on the community (McPherson, 2011). This evaluation of impact can be carried out with the community partners and could provide insight with regards to the effect of the project on different participants (Case et al., 2004; McPherson, 2011; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007). In fact, the students might be tempted to go deeper by presenting the findings to other organizations or service groups that might benefit or simply contribute their new-found skills in other capacities (McPherson, 2011).

Finally, everybody loves a celebration, not as an end reward, but as part of the process to serve the community. Everybody involved in the project should be invited to any such event as it builds community and provides closure (Gent, 2009). Along with being presented with AoL products and the impact evaluation, it is a nice idea to prepare thank you cards or meaningful gestures of appreciation for the community partners and volunteers (Case et al., 2004). Further awareness raising for the community organization can include media coverage, messages on school web pages, and visits from policy makers (Gent, 2009; Wilczenski & Coomey, 2007).

In summary, I would like to refer back to the indicators of selflessness as listed in the Figure 2.2 framework. There are three areas (benefitting others, transcendent reality, and non-attachment) with a total of ten indicators. The nature of LSI pedagogy already elicits pro-social attributes and behaviours through the inquiry environment and service initiative. As such it necessitates pro-social pedagogy through explicit teaching and direct modelling, often with diverse populations. Also, by virtue of combining inquiry and service in an alternative setting, students are given wide scope to offer their own skill-sets
in a way that provides greater possibilities for them to transcend themselves and make connections with others.

The degree of connections with others is also cultivated purposefully in LSI by its requirement of an inclusive atmosphere that pushes students to manifest a profile that encourages a positive self/other concepts. Finally, the indicators and attributes listed under non-attachment may need explicit instruction and guidance to be sprinkled throughout LSI exploring statements such as, ‘serving for the sake of serving.’ Evidence of student thought (with regards to motivations, attitudes, and metacognitive practices in relation to work) emerges through direct prompts during reflective practices throughout the entire process. With this summary, I have identified all ten indicators of the selflessness framework and with LSI have provided a potential pedagogy for selflessness.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Data Analysis

A grain of sand enters into the shell of a pearl oyster, and sets up an irritation there, and the oyster’s body reacts towards the irritation and covers the little particle with its own juice. That crystallizes and forms the pearl. So the whole universe is like that, it is the pearl which is being formed by us. What we get from the external world is simply the blow. Even to be conscious of that blow we have to react, and as soon as we react, we really project a portion of our own mind towards the blow, and when we come to know of it, it is really our own mind as it has been shaped by the blow. (Swami Vivekananda, 1893/2009, Vol. 3, p. 403)

Epistemological Perspective

Resonating with perspectives as illustrated in the quote above by Swami Vivekananda, I methodologically align with a social constructivist/interpretive view. In this view we, as individuals constantly engaged in interpreting the world, develop subjective meanings of our experiences and construct a view of the world that differs from that of others (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). As a result, “there is no single, observable reality—rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations of a single event” (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). This type of qualitative perspective, where reality is experientially and socially constructed, emphasizes the importance of context and the meaning that is made through participant interactions (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Gleaning participants’ views through open-ended questioning and gathering field data allows the researcher to make meaning and construct understanding through an inductive process (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The task of the inductive researcher is to “work
from the particular to the general” (Merriam, 2009, p. 16) or “extract the general from the unique…and connect the present to the past, in anticipation of the future, all building on pre-existing theory” (Schwandt & Gates, 2017, p. 345).

My study is rooted in a conceptual framework that focuses on the phenomenon of selflessness. The inductively derived findings that I gather and organize into themes informed by my conceptual framework, should ultimately develop, test, and enrich my theoretical ideas (Merriam, 2009; Schwandt & Gates, 2017). To clarify, the methodology I initiate to explore selflessness is not intended to unequivocally validate the framework. Rather, through gathering rich data, I intend to build upon what is already relevant, consider data that suggests something new, and take a deeper look at the stated domains of selflessness that seem to be at odds with the data. For this process, I have selected a multiple case study methodology.

A Multiple Case Study Methodology

A proper understanding of case study research should rightly precede a discussion of a multiple case study. Creswell (2007, p. 73), however, helps to link both by stating that “case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes.” A system can be bounded by time, place, some physical boundary, or a social system where the phenomenon of interest exists (Chmiliar, 2010; Schwandt & Gates, 2017). In my methodology, the bounded system, or unit of analysis (Merriam, 2009) for each of the 10 cases was an elementary student from one
Grade 6 class. I bore in mind Stake’s (2005, p. 444) rejoinder of, “[it is] hard to say where the child ends and where the environment begins.” It is through the activity and interactions of these 10 learners with all other members of the class system and through understanding their context and experiences that I explored the development and cultivation of selflessness within the larger class system.

In my research, I aimed to understand how the three domains of selflessness (Kurth, 1995): (a) being and feeling connected to others and the remainder of the natural world through an awareness of and/or belief in a transcendent reality, (b) an interest to enhance the well-being of others and transcend one’s own self-interested desires, and (c) non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions; found expression and were cultivated in students participating in LSI. I asked:

1. How is selflessness expressed in students of a classroom engaged in LSI?
2. How closely do these manifestations of selflessness align with the indicators as informed by the domains of selflessness?
3. How does LSI operate as a vehicle to promote the cultivation of selfless attributes within and among the learning community?

A case study research approach is particularly useful for coping with ‘how’ questions within real-life contexts (Schwandt & Gates, 2017) where there will be a myriad of variables (Yin, 2009) because the case study method honors the diversity of variables by taking “account of context, agency, and temporality” (Schwandt & Gates, 2017, p. 343).

Both Yin (2009) and Schwandt and Gates (2017) laud the case study method’s ability to aid testing of a theoretical construct, like the one I have created, through empirical evidence as the study progresses. However, Stake (2005) provides a cautionary
note against an obsession with causality and favors the perspective of events being “multiply sequenced, multiply contextual, and coincidental” (p. 449). Stake’s (2006) position recalls the social constructivist view and anticipates varied perspectives of different people regarding the meanings of activities. Additionally, Stake (2005) points out that case researchers seek out the particular more than the ordinary and this is derived through close attention to contexts.

A multiple case study approach is used when individual cases share a phenomenon in common and where rich, detailed, and in-depth case descriptions and inter-case comparisons provide further insight into the phenomenon (Chmiliar, 2010; Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2006). For all of my cases, the learners were exposed to an LSI unit and through it I observed the development of selflessness. In a multiple case study, the focus shifts from “what helps us understand the case?” to “what helps us understand the phenomenon?” (Stake, 2006, p. 6) and this was done through studying what was similar and different about the cases through describing “interrelated and contextually bound” “diverse sequential activities” (p. 13). Cases must be purposefully chosen (Stake, 2005) to provide diversity/maximum variation across contexts so that there are “opportunities to learn about the complexity and contexts” (Stake, 2006, p. 23) and to obtain multiple perspectives (Creswell; 2007)—again elucidating the phenomenon further. A multiple case study is, as Chmiliar (2010) points out, the examination of processes and outcomes across many cases that allows for “identification of how individual cases might be affected by different environments and the specific conditions under which a finding might occur” (p. 582). According to Chmiliar (2010), the resulting general categories that are formed and informed across all cases make the results more
powerful and collectively yield a tougher test of the theory or conceptual framework.

Schwandt and Gates (2017, p. 348) further add that if a case is considered to be atypical and confirms the theory, then it “lends strong support to the inference that the theory would be valid in most other cases that are not so extreme.”

Stake (2006) advises that at minimum, four cases should be chosen and places a maximum cap at 10. The general structure of a multiple case study is to provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case and then perform a cross-case analysis where themes are identified across cases from which overall assertions or interpretations are formed (Creswell, 2007).

**Multiple Case Study Methodology for Selflessness through LSI**

**Context.** I chose a Grade 6 class from an Anglophone Catholic elementary school servicing pre-kindergarten to Grade 8 students. A full description of the context is provided in the first chapter of the results section. The Grade 6 class was selected based on the teacher (as outlined below) and I gave preference to a grade level falling between Grades 4 to 8 as I wished to obtain rich journal data in the second stage of my three-stage multiple case study approach. The data for this study was gathered from February 2018 to June 2018. All of the names in this study have been replaced by pseudonyms.

**Participants and recruitment.** The participants of this study were the teacher and the teacher’s students, 10 of whom formed my set of multiple cases. This study required a teacher who: (a) had some knowledge of inquiry-based learning and service-learning, (b) incorporated journaling into their pedagogy, and (c) was willing to guide an LSI unit (spanning up to a maximum of two months) on a topic of their choice. The teacher participant for this study, Mrs. Lavender, was found through a propitious type of
snowball sampling. A colleague had asked me to interview a set of 13 teachers who had participated in a week-long inquiry-based learning opportunity in museums (organized by an intermediary organization) for an evaluation. Some of those teachers had experiences that also yielded a service opportunity. Mrs. Lavender was among the latter handful of teachers.

From the interview that I conducted with Mrs. Lavender for the evaluation, I recognized that she had a friendly and caring disposition and had professed an interest in my study. However, prior to asking Mrs. Lavender to participate in my study, I made sure to: (a) receive ethical clearance from the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University, and (b) consent from the respective school board to conduct my study, who then (c) provided the principal with the details of the study and asked me to follow-up with her. I sent the principal the recruitment email (Appendix A). The principal approached Mrs. Lavender to see whether she was willing and had the time to participate in the study. After Mrs. Lavender agreed, I met with both the principal and Mrs. Lavender (in December 2017) and began collaborating with Mrs. Lavender in February 2018.

Mrs. Lavender’s out-of-class time commitment to the study included a pre-LSI interview, two sessions of collaborative LSI unit planning time prior to the unit (and more time during the unit), and a post-LSI interview. On these occasions (mostly after school) I brought treats to prevent Mrs. Lavender from running on an ‘empty engine.’ I was committed to being in the classroom for full days one week prior to and during the LSI unit, totaling nine weeks (over 240 hours). My time in the classroom began right after the March break. Prior to the March break I interviewed the 10 students who chose
to be part of my study and again after the nine weeks for the post-LSI interview.

All of the students in the class and the teacher were provided with a letter of information and consent form (LOI/CF) (see Appendices B and C). These letters included a description of the: (a) nature of the research, (b) methods and activities that were utilized to gather data, and (c) expectations and additional responsibilities required of the participant. The letter detailed plans regarding data access and ownership, participant confidentiality, and the publishing of research findings (Merriam, 2009). To clarify, all of the students took part in the LSI unit, but only those who opted to participate in my study additionally completed the aforementioned pre- and a post-LSI interview. The teacher could have purposefully selected a diverse sample of students and targeted them with an LOI/CF, as per Stake’s (2005) recommendation. However, I opted to provide all students with the opportunity to participate because I felt that both interviews could provoke deep thinking and self-reflection around all three domains of selflessness. I did not want to exclude any student from these experiences. Of all the students, ten self-selected to be part of the study.

Fortuitously, Mrs. Lavender felt that the 10 student cases constituted a diverse sample of the class. The sample of 10 students represented varying academic levels as well as varying needs (including emotional, learning, and technical). Although the students also represented an even split between male and female, I felt that one student displayed proclivities towards an alternative gender role within the diverse LGBTQ+ spectrum. However, since this student had not identified with anything other than being male or female yet, I have only kept to two gender distinctions.

**Data collection.** Data collection occurred in three stages: (a) pre-LSI, (b) during
LSI, and (c) post-LSI. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the types of data collected during these three stages.

Table 3.1.

Three stages of data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Stages of Data Collection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1: Pre-LSI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3 meetings with the teacher including 1 interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 10 student interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1 week of classroom observations with 2 journal entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collecting images for post-LSI interview</td>
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First stage (pre-LSI).

I met with Mrs. Lavender three times in the few weeks prior to the start of the LSI unit. In the first session I conducted a forty-minute interview with questions that probed into the dynamics and environment of the class and Mrs. Lavender’s teaching philosophies and pedagogies. The questions (included in Appendix D) were emailed to Mrs. Lavender five days prior to the interview so that she could have some time to consider them. We spoke about the LSI unit and shared resources. I had brought some samples of journals that I wanted to give to all of the students to garner Mrs. Lavender’s opinion (I presented her with her own bound Queen’s University journal). I also provided Mrs. Lavender with a copy of the development of my framework for selflessness (as found in this dissertation) and a shortened version of the principles of LSI.

The second session with Mrs. Lavender lasted around one and a half hours. I had made notes on the previous interview’s audio recording, and on separate sheets of paper
wrote out key words and phrases (i.e., “respect,” “cohesive family,” “life-long learner”) that Mrs. Lavender had mentioned. I also wrote out each of the three parts of Kurth’s (1995) selflessness definition on a piece of paper. I taped the latter onto Mrs. Lavender’s white board and asked her to match her own phrases to Kurth’s definition segments. Through this process we came to a mutual understanding of the three domains of selflessness and it later led to Mrs. Lavender’s suggestion of simplifying Kurth’s three areas to kid-friendly regions of feeling, acting, and thinking selflessly. During the second session I also provided Mrs. Lavender with some resources on inquiry. We continued to plan the LSI unit and began thinking about possible community service initiatives.

The final session that I conducted with Mrs. Lavender lasted almost an hour. We continued planning the LSI unit by considering the social studies curriculum document closely and laying out the days in more detail. We discussed the logistics of IBL and SL and the worries that Mrs. Lavender had regarding the process. We considered the students with individual education plans.

All of the pre-LSI interviews (see Appendix E) with the students occurred prior to the March break during school hours. The pre- and post-LSI interviews were based on questions initially formulated under the three domains of selflessness (see Appendix E). On average, each interview lasted about 20 minutes. The pre-LSI interview included a scenario, two additional questions to gather student contextual information and some questions to prompt student thinking and gauge predispositions towards the indicators in my framework of selflessness. All audio-recorded interviews in this study were conducted in an unoccupied classroom or resource room to ensure participant confidentiality. I transcribed all of the interview recordings verbatim myself.
One week prior to the start of the LSI unit, I began spending full days with the class. I stepped into the role as a participant observer. I introduced the journal tasks, provided feedback, and helped students with any class work. I closely observed classroom dynamics with particular attention to the behaviour and interactions of the 10 case students. These observations were recorded in the form of field notes on a simple tracking page (see Appendix F) broken down by class blocks. This method was the easiest as the context would not have to be continuously re-described and I could just identify the student and their actions within the context and actions of others.

Context descriptions are vital since activities influence people’s experiences (Stake, 2005, 2006). I collected photographs of the classroom which provided a greater depth of insight into the “ordinary happenings” (Stake, 2006, p. 29) influencing individual student behaviour. This included observations of the documents and artifacts present in the room and on desks, observing students and listening to oral histories that they shared with me in passing, multimedia or online platforms where the students engaged in conversations, and archival records like portfolios initiated from the beginning of the school year that provided clues regarding the nature of the student (Chmiliar, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Evers & van Staa, 2010; Flick, 2017; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Context observations were made throughout the day intermittently on the same template as above to keep everything in one place and in chronological order.

Merriam (2009) further refines researcher focus during observations to conversational dynamics, nonverbal communication (e.g., dress and desk space), other subtle factors (e.g., informal and unplanned activities, and symbolic and connotative meanings of words), as well as the researcher’s own behaviour within the given context.
Merriam’s (2009) guidance includes having the ability to shift focus from the individual to the interaction reducing extraneous activity to background noise, to identify key words in remarks that might trigger memories later (including first and last remarks in conversations), and to mentally replay scenes during breaks. Many of these types of details emerged in the thick descriptions captured in my reflections that were completed on the morning following the day they occurred.

During the week prior to the start of the LSI unit, all students completed two separate journal entries on two separate occasions reflecting upon two questions (see the week 1 of the weekly lessons chapter). These entries provided student positioning relating to each of the three domains of selflessness (benefitting others, positive self-concept, and non-attachment). All students were given journals in which to write entries in order to keep their work for the LSI unit in one place. However, I only closely examined the entries of the 10 participating student cases to track the evolution of selfless attributes. From this point forward, I also looked at other work produced by these students (i.e., language arts projects and poems), and produced a set of audit notes. I also chatted with other teachers, support staff, and students.

Second stage (during LSI).

The second stage of data collection began with the start of the LSI unit. I started playing a more active role in teaching social studies classes including creating displays, modelling the inquiry process alongside Mrs. Lavender, putting together teaching resources, creating reflection prompts, and providing journal reflection feedback. The first journal prompt allowed me to gain insight into the students’ personalities and interests. The second one helped me to gauge how prosocial the students were and was
crafted included nuances from the school’s social studies textbook. The rest of the prompts were created in ways that either blended both the inquiry unit on the Canadian identity and immigration with the domains of selflessness or focused specifically on the domains of selflessness (i.e., making three wishes, creating a persuasive argument for or against having an allowance, and creating a story about superheroes that promoted respect versus selflessness). Mrs. Lavender was instrumental in creating many of the prompts.

With regards to the inquiries, Mrs. Lavender and I discussed ideas with students and coached them through various stages of their research work. I positioned myself as a teacher’s aid and would let Mrs. Lavender handle disciplinary matters in order discreetly note how other students were reacting or making efforts to resolve situations. I continued to observe and take detailed field notes (as described in the first stage) for, as Stake (2006) advises, detailed observations outlining the individual’s activities and how they function within various contexts “constitutes central findings of the multi-case study” (p. 27).

I wanted to conduct a photo-elicitation interview (PEI), for all of the post-LSI interviews for it has been used with success in global service-learning initiatives (Kronk, Weideman, Cunningham, & Resick, 2015). For a PEI, participants take pictures during the research phase (or in this case, the LSI stage) that are then used to prompt dialogue and discussion during the interview (Torre & Murphy, 2015). To have the same pedagogical experience, every student in the class would have needed access to a device with which to take daily photographs of meaningful moments. However, I could see that this would be logistically challenging and not necessarily worth the investment of time
since the service session was only on one day. Instead, I decided to lean on a set of volunteer photographers (a couple of students from each interview group on the service day) to take pictures in a ‘natural’ way—meaning that they could choose moments, scenes, and events that triggered their interest, capturing them as meaningful moments of their experience (Kronk et al., 2015). I used these pictures along with ones taken by the teacher and ones that I took of the classroom and combined them with snapshots of lessons and/or presentations, various artifacts (including samples of student work) to create a collection of significant moments throughout the entire LSI adventure for the PEI.

PEI has been shown to complement and enrich verbal-only data with deeper and more elaborate perspectives (Padgett, Smith, Derejko, Henwood, & Tiderington, 2013) and in the process provides researchers with a greater understanding of school communities and those who function within them (Torre & Murphy, 2015). The benefits of PEI include building trust between the researcher and the interviewee, empowering interviewees, and increasing data validity (Torre & Murphy, 2015). The latter point of data validity or investigator triangulation (Flick, 2017) occurred because the students, in part, controlled data collection during the service by identifying and photographing what was most meaningful to them.

**Third stage (post-LSI).**

The third and final stage of data collection took place after completion of the LSI unit and was comprised of the post-LSI interviews. All of the PEI artifacts mentioned in the previous stage (such as the students’ own journal, their secret selfless experiment data, and colour pictures ranging from the class posing with the anti-racism sign, to the
service day with the immigrants) were laid out on a large table in chronological order like a collage of memories from the past nine weeks. The impact of the sight was enough to take each interviewee’s breath away and bring a smile to their faces. The word “wow!” escaped many mouths. The students were given time to choose three to four photographs that were the most meaningful to them from the entire LSI experience. The artifacts helped stimulate their memories, increased the scope for interpretations, provided focus on topics of interest, and motivated participation (Stake, 2006). After discussing their artifacts and answering associated questions, I continued with a fairly structured interview using questions designed to align with facets of my conceptual framework (see Appendices D and E). The post-LSI interviews lasted, on average, 40 minutes for the students. Mrs. Lavender had so many insights that her interview had to be spread over two days with each session lasting around one and a half hours.

All of the pre- and post-LSI interview questions were formed to elicit experiences, opinions/values, feelings, and knowledge and have been drawn from Merriam’s (2009) work on effective interviews. Some were couched as hypothetical questions, devil’s advocate questions, interpretive questions, and questions that sought to ascertain a student’s ideal situation. In some instances, I pursued answers with prompts like “tell me about…tell me more…give me an example of…” and “tell me what it was like for you when” (Merriam, 2009). Brinkmann (2017, p. 577) reminds the researcher to pay attention to how “micro exchanges” can generate “macro-oriented interpretations of context.” I tried to note small interview details because, as Brinkmann (2017) put it, such details in the final write-up can elicit understanding of the modern contemporary context.
**Internal Validity**

Internal validity comes from triangulation, soliciting feedback from those whom I had interviewed, constant reflection on my position as a researcher, knowing that I had collected enough data when understandings are repeated, and actively seeking alternative explanations to support data (Merriam, 2009). In this study I was able to meet all internal validity checks including soliciting feedback from the teacher on my results section. Mrs. Lavender carefully read through each line of each results section to ensure that what I had mentioned (outside of the student interviews) overlapped with her memory. My dissertation committee played a key role in confirming that my findings are consistent with the data presented. External validity confronts the issue of generalizability. In qualitative research, the practice is to provide enough detail so that the reader is empowered to make a decision as to whether there is enough of a “fit” with their own situation (Merriam, 2009, p. 226) and I have striven to do so in this work.

**Data Analysis**

A large amount of data was generated as a result of this study. Along with the pre- and post-LSI interviews with both the 10 students and the teacher, there were observations that I made each day, lesson plans, students work and class products (including but not limited to journal entries, personal inquiry projects, and selfless experiment record sheet with reflections), my daily reflections, and my personal audit trail. I started with the examining the interviews and later moved into working through the other material systematically. As I worked through the data, I incorporated both inductive and deductive analysis at separate times which would cause both an explosion and then a culling of themes. In total, I went through three massive data analysis cycles.
A detailed description follows Table 3.2, which provides a brief summary of each cycle.

Table 3.2.

Three cycles of data analysis

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<th>3 Cycles of Data Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycle I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial notes were created from student interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts were uploaded to NVivo software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 major concept codes (from conceptual framework) were created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nested coding and simultaneous coding were performed on the interview data and annotations were placed on the transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotations were printed out and used to sketch out preliminary themes, which were then separated out onto 3 Word documents according to the 3 concept codes</td>
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**Cycle I Analysis.** One of the first things I did with the student interviews was to listen to them and make notes and compare the general factors that stuck out to me as I compared the students’ words across the interviews. This is one of the initial stages in cross-case analysis in multiple case methodologies (Stake, 2006). I then uploaded all of the interview transcripts into NVivo software and did two things simultaneously. As I worked through the interview files, I created three major concept code bins; connections,
prosocial, and non-attachment (Saldaña, 2016). Concept codes are informed by the theoretical framework. I then took the quotes and placed them in each bin and as I did so, I made sub or nested codes that seemed to fit the type of nature of the quotes (Saldaña, 2016). For example, under the concept code ‘connections’ were subcodes like ‘collaboration,’ ‘community and family,’ and ‘identity.’ Nested under ‘community and family’ was the subcode ‘contextual awareness’ and so on. I also practiced simultaneous coding as some quotes fit into more than one concept code (Saldaña, 2016).

At the same time as parsing out quotes into bins, I worked through each student interview and created annotations. I compiled all of the student annotations together and the teacher annotations together on separate Word documents and used them to inductively sketch out preliminary themes. Once I settled on the initial themes, I separated them into three categories, again going back to the general concept codes of connections, prosocial, and non-attachment and assigned a separate Word documents to each one. I then worked backwards and reassigned quotes from NVivo to those initial themes by cutting and pasting them from NVivo back onto the pertinent Word document. This step was crucial for, having initially parsed out quotes into various concept and subcodes on NVivo, by reading through them as a set, I could more closely examine how the 10 students were responding in relation to each other under the subcodes. In other words, I could perform a more detailed cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006). According to Stake (2006), this type of juxtaposition allows for a comparison with attention to the importance of its relation to the phenomenon. Pretty soon I had three Word documents the size of booklets, (connections, prosocial, and non-attachment) with initial themes (inductively ascertained) and masses of quotes underneath each. I also created a fourth
document dedicated to direct quotes on selflessness or the secret selfless experiment.

**Cycle II Analysis.** I printed out the four Word document booklets and got out my pencil and eraser in order to move into a deeper coding cycle where I employed descriptive, In Vivo, and process coding (Saldaña, 2016). Descriptive codes summarize the basic topic of a passage, In Vivo codes assign words or phrases from the participants’ own words, and process codes exclusively use words ending in ‘-ing’ to capture the “actions intertwined with the dynamics of time” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 296). Large margins on the right-hand side of each page of the booklet gave me plenty of room to form three columns and perform those three types of coding techniques on passages.

The quotes loaded under each theme were already a compilation of ideas articulated by an assortment of the 10 student cases. As such, and whilst employing this second layer of coding, I began seeing what Schwandt and Gates (2017) refer to as patterns of similarities and differences that can be examined for causal conditions effecting outcomes but tempered with an appreciation for the particular factors and conditions present in differing cases. For example, with regards to emotional self-regulation, I began seeing how often students would use phrases like “I got better at thinking” (In Vivo codes) or describe how they were “feeling angry” (process codes) and then realized that the students were learning how to make intentional choices (descriptive codes).

The second cycle of coding led to a further refinement of themes, appearing under the broad three concepts: connections, prosocial, and non-attachment. What happened next was, for me, astonishing and is unpacked in more detail in the final chapter. I laid the three separate Word documents, each dedicated to one of connections, prosocial, and
non-attachment and their now associated refined themes, on the carpet of my living room, side by side, and noticed something unusual. I noticed that three over-arching themes appeared, now results section III, IV, and V, with each theme borrowing material from each of the three documents that had been laid side-by-side on my living room carpet. In other words, the three main results sections of this dissertation represent a combination of ideas from connections, prosocial, and non-attachment.

**Cycle III Analysis.** Once I had my overarching themes and possible subthemes resulting from the second analysis cycle figured out, I dove into the rest of the data (the lesson plans, observations, reflections, student work, and personal audit notes). I created an excel spreadsheet with sheets dedicated to connections, prosocial, and non-attachment, case descriptions, school and service information, and summaries of student work. For the first three sheets, I included columns for the date, the source of data, a description, and codes dedicated to descriptive, process, and emotional codes. The latter code (emotional) was necessitated by the fact that a lot of my observations included descriptions of emotional incidents. Emotional codes are labels that I inferred from participant experiences and are particularly important in interpersonal and intrapersonal exchanges (Saldaña, 2016). I also included a column for additional possible themes related to the overarching themes resulting from my second cycle as well as a column to place codes as I finalized my list of themes that fell under the overarching themes. The other sheets had summaries that were somewhat similar but with less columns.

By this point I already had overarching themes with subthemes that were primarily inductively ascertained through the analysis of all of the interviews. The additional data served two purposes: triangulation and substantiating existing subthemes.
Triangulation is the “development of converging lines of inquiry” (Evers & van Staa, 2010, p. 749) based on the premise that findings are more convincing if they are drawn from multiple sources of repetitious evidence (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Not only does triangulation help construct more valid interpretations, it also shows how similar meanings can be generated in several ways leading to clarifications and deeper insights (Evers & ver Staa, 2010; Stake, 2005). What I aimed for is what Flick (2017, p. 456) called a “fuller picture” with complementary data with the ultimate objective of “combin[ing] theories and methods carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth or depth to the analysis” (p. 447). In a few instances, the additional data, those other than the student interviews, led to extra subthemes (i.e., the influence of the selfless wall).

On a final set of three Word documents, now with each one dedicated to the overarching themes, I piled the remaining data (including quotes from Mrs. Lavender’s interviews). These Word documents, along with the student quotes from cycle II analysis, formed the skeletal framework of results sections III, IV, and V. Results sections I and II, pulled from all of the data, set the context and provide background information to further elucidate the aforementioned remaining results sections.
Chapter 4: Results

An analysis of the data led to the emergence of three themes: (a) realizing existing potential, (b) developing an ‘other’ orientation, and (c) the influence of the Learning to Serve through Inquiry (LSI) unit. However, these three themes can be better appreciated after having gained an understanding of the school context and weekly lessons. As such, the full results section is presented in five parts. The first two parts describe the context (of the school and the class, including the teacher and the 10 student cases) and the weekly lessons. The remaining three parts elaborate on the three themes by drawing on participant data.

Part I: The Context

St. Mary’s Catholic Elementary School. Set in the middle of an affluent Anglophone suburban area, away from the heart of a mid-sized Ontario city, and surrounded by parks and trails, St. Mary’s Catholic Elementary School boasted a small population of around 360 kindergarten to Grade 8 students when I began my research. The majority of the seasoned staff of about 19 teachers had been there for a long time with the teacher in my study, Mrs. Lavender, being among the newest staff members (having joined the school 13 years ago).

From an aerial view, St. Mary’s School is shaped like a jacket with the arms stretched upwards. Visitors step through the neck of this jacket into a warm and welcoming foyer with a vaulted ceiling and high windows capturing streams of sunlight. The sense of peace and serenity that radiated in this space was enhanced by two friendly secretaries seated in an adjoining room. Equally warm and welcoming were the principal, Ms. O’Sullivan, and vice principal, Ms. Fontaine.
Being a Catholic school, faith-based rituals were practiced with regularity. At times they figured as routine fixtures (with morning, lunch, and after school prayers), but during some practices, such as confession, the air hung heavy with mystical solemnity (“you’re talking to God through the Father,” Mrs. Lavender would say). Holy week, occurring directly prior to Easter weekend, saw the story of Christ’s Passion reiterated numerous times not only in class and assemblies but early in the morning prior to the announcements for a handful of teachers who wanted to begin the day centered fully in their faith. Wall murals taught the golden rule, monthly masses would be held in the gymnasium, and students would periodically be bussed to a church to attend short services.

The school ethos was also inclusive of other belief systems. Morning announcements, read by Ms. O’Sullivan, included daily quotes that ranged from the light-hearted (‘even the toughest dogs are afraid of vacuums’) and touching (‘the best things in life can't be seen and touched but can be felt with the heart’) to powerful statements made by leaders of various faiths. Answering the Catholic school board’s push for equity and inclusivity, Ms. O’Sullivan endorsed a ‘Me to We’ spring campaign, a response that happily aligned with my research on selflessness. The campaign was powered by a quote by the Dalai Lama, ‘Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects.’ The campaign was put into action by the school’s Social Justice committee. The student community contributed to a display showcasing struggles faced by children all over the world and the efforts made towards positive change. The campaign finale, a talent show, incorporated Malala’s story,
a Muslim Pakistani woman who fights for female education. Funds raised through baked goods and plant sales went to a school in Myanmar.

At first glance it would seem that perhaps there was nothing left for me to work on—that in such an environment, the students must already be shiny child-saints. However, the gravitas with which Ms. O’Sullivan accepted my study proposal and Ms. Fontaine’s initial discussion with me pointed to some underlying issues that became more visible as I began my observations. Ms. Fontaine, and later almost every teacher I questioned, described the general student population as being ‘entitled.’ Since a greater proportion of parents worked in arenas that placed import upon status, student wealth and ability also contributed to maintaining hierarchies. In other words, a family was socially judged on their wealth and whether or not their child needed an Individual Education Plan (IEP). I began seeing how student friendship groups were informed by IEPs and how, early in my study, students proudly advertised recently acquired brand-named clothes or toys and trips to far-off places. During the first week, I spotted a couple of nice scooters resting in the back of the classroom. One student brought his in and I said, “here are some other brand-new scooters.” He indicated that his own was better because it was more expensive.

The school hallways, at the end of the day, heaved with jackets, water-bottles, bags, and shoes; things that generally need to be worn or taken home daily. The elderly caretaker informed me that he donated a number of bags filled with items last year saying that it is the same in the other two schools where he worked.

The parenting culture was a bit of an enigma. In Mrs. Lavender’s class, I met a few (and read about a few in the students’ journals) who seemed charming and involved
in their child’s life. Some tried really hard to be there for their kids, while dealing with personal traumatic relationships. On the other hand, there were some parents who seemed to have minimal contact time with their children. Once, I spent an entire recess session helping one student figure out how to get her cross-country form signed during the week. In Ms. Fontaine’s experience, parents were placing full ownership of their child’s learning on teachers and not providing much support at home. One teacher felt that parents were spending too much time on their own devices.

Other teachers and the school counselor characterized parents as ‘fixers’ of problems. Many kept their child at home if they did not want to participate in given school activities. In fact, on several occasions while I was there, parents of students in Mrs. Lavender’s class lied for their child. On one occasion, Mrs. Lavender caught two parents lying for their child because the lies were different.

One retired teacher bitterly blamed the ‘me’-centered culture of the parents who grew up fulfilling their own parents’ dreams of getting a university education and then regarding themselves as superior. From the counselor’s perspective, these parents’ expectations for their children led to overscheduled kids suffering under a lot of pressure. Seven Grade 7 students withdrew from participating in the regional track and field meet (on the day of the meet) because they were too scared to lose. Sometimes students decided to take a ‘mental health day.’ During my nine weeks with Mrs. Lavender’s class a total of three students took a mental health day.

As for the students, some were shockingly masterful in the bold art of abject denial, even when caught red-handed. Mrs. Lavender saw a group of 5th Grade girls shoving students on their way out the door at the end of the day. She pulled them into a
classroom and brought it up. The girls flatly (and argumentatively) denied everything. Another time, she spotted a bunch of intermediate students sharing and laughing at photos on their devices on the playground prior to boarding the school bus at the end of the day. Alert to bullying issues on social media, she zipped out of the classroom and caught up with them on the bus. At first, they denied using their devices, but when she declared witnessing it, they countered with the fact that they were using them off of school property. A particularly frustrating situation for Mrs. Lavender occurred when she told a parent that her child had lied to her in the presence of the child and that the parent did not seem to care.

The students, in general, had a strange air of frenetic restlessness, despite the warm and calm atmosphere of the school. Additionally, many students’ ‘kid-glow’ was weighed down by a heaviness packed with what I felt to be insecurity and fear. For some, the negative energy came out as physical hostility. There were days when I would see the most experienced teachers in the hallways talking to students all day as calmly as possible. For some students it was a math lesson or math test that drew uncontrollable tears as they compared themselves to their classmates under the looming shadow of EQAO.

In retrospect I can now understand why teachers responded to my study topic with a cynical ‘good luck with that’ sentiment. It was a frustrated reaction to an ethos of entitlement underlined by the mounting pressures of frequent unmanageable classroom dynamics. Four teachers had recently taken a stress leave because they could not cope with the students and hostile parents. In one case, a teacher bordering on retirement said that she felt like a first-year teacher again. A second glance, therefore, revealed that many
students had major insecurities and fears, some parents struggled with being positive role models, and many teachers were fed up and frustrated. Perhaps my study could make a positive impact.

**Mrs. Lavender.** As described, purposeful sampling led me to Mrs. Lavender, a Grade 6 teacher who was, at the time, completing her 18th year of teaching. I wanted to work with her, and it was not just because she had some IBL experience (in an out-of-school context) that had morphed into a service opportunity. She had a caring disposition, an air of wanting to be of service, and had expressed interest in my study.

Mrs. Lavender had a couple of lovely and bright daughters attending St. Mary’s, a loving husband (who would walk the girls to school), and a dog who ate everything. She had a full house and a full life. Many things were happening in her personal life with extended family that she tended to with care along with giving her time freely to school initiatives. Mrs. Lavender was a behind-the-scenes leader who orchestrated the track practices and tryouts, ironed out details for the ‘Me to We’ talent show, organized the drama tableaux for the stations of Christ’s Passion, tutored students for the school for the EQAO tests weekly, negotiated with the board office to allow teachers to attend a funeral…and the list goes on. On crazy hair day, she was clearly the one with the most spirit, she was out on the court smashing volleyballs in a match against students, and when she saw that her students were exhausted, or without a meal, she gave them food. Her vital flaw might be that she had a hard time saying ‘no.’

Having said ‘yes’ to my study, Mrs. Lavender dedicated hours to being interviewed and taking part in sessions to develop a mutual understanding of selflessness as well as creating a dynamic LSI unit. She was instrumental in role modeling selfless
behaviour through the smallest of actions (picking out recyclables from the garbage) to clearly verbally articulated behaviours (emphasizing the student experience rather than the rewards and the importance of positive groupwork). She built community within the school. Teachers would regularly seek her out to talk (because she was a good listener) and on an appointed day of the week, another teacher and the head secretary would set up chairs around her desk during recess and they would shoot the breeze. To everything I was invited and included (even after school Zumba sessions).

One major difference between Mrs. Lavender and I was that while she was focused on catching and correcting anti-prosocial behaviour, I had the luxury of sitting back and noting various instances of prosocial behaviour. During spare moments I would fill Mrs. Lavender in on those sparkly stories, which inevitably would cheer her up. I think that she found me to be a comforting and uplifting presence and liked having me in the classroom. This study’s impact rested upon securing a phenomenal teacher and I had found one.

Mrs. Lavender’s Grade 6 class. What Mrs. Lavender liked most about her Grade 6 class was that they were, in contrast with her previous class, not so, “judgy,” or, opinionated about things; that they still had a rather “innocent” air. They were quite comfortable with me as they were used to having other adults in the room. I appeared right after a teacher candidate had left. On the whole, this predominantly Caucasian class was very athletic with an exuberance for gym that Mrs. Lavender encouraged by sneaking in a third gym period in an already busy week. In gym, I would see that ‘kid-glow’ peeping out more as insecurities melted away. Mrs. Lavender closely monitored
equitable and respectful behaviour, ensuring that projectiles were passed fairly and that everyone got an equal amount of court time.

The students loved to read and to be read to. In fact, listening to a chapter from a storybook would calm the students down. Mrs. Lavender commented that the students were generally calmer by mid-week as they adjusted to the school routines but were thrown off every Monday since the routine would be upset over the weekends. At times I found that they were moody and tired on Mondays. Windy days seemed to make them hyper—not, I do not think, their food. Their lunches and snacks were generally healthy and not loaded with sugar (although some of them ate strange things like oreo-flavoured yogurt from tubes).

During the previous year, Mrs. Lavender had dealt with major bullying issues. This year the students were grappling more with emotional issues. There were nine students who had moderate to severe emotional needs with four who could, in a moment’s notice fly from zero to ten and erupt in a physically and verbally hostile way. One very intelligent student, in particular, moved like a little storm cloud giving way to thundering tantrums of epic proportions. Once his rage originated from his frustrations with his peers’ illegible handwriting, preventing him from properly deciphering peer feedback. At times like these, Mrs. Lavender would whisk everyone out for a walk around the community, teaching them how to move over for other pedestrians, speak in low tones, and treat trees with respect.

The school day would fly by and Mrs. Lavender would often complain about not having enough time to ‘dig’ into anything. On top of that, the weekly schedule was often interrupted by various assemblies, trips, and alternative sessions that ultimately got in the
way of building a routine. Student absence was an issue. Only after 15 full days of being there did I encounter a full house when everyone was present. In addition to interruptions and absences, another factor that interfered with learning was the students’ abysmal homework record, even though most parents were on the ‘remind’ homework app. Mrs. Lavender compensated by providing students with more class time and keeping them in over recesses and lunches. Finally, a lack of computers was a challenge, particularly when 11 students required technological support and only a handful of laptops remained in the classroom (often borrowed by other classes).

Five students were on a modified program operating between a Grade 2 and a Grade 4 level. These students, and those with severe emotional needs were often either alone during lunch and recess or spent time with each other. Once, a non-modified student verbally protested when placed in a group with modified learners saying, “I don’t want to be with learning disabled people.” One of Mrs. Lavender’s biggest hopes was that by the end of the year, all of her students would be able to respectfully work together.

Table 4.1 provides more information on student needs within the class. I created this table near the end of the LSI unit using my observations of the students and the information that Mrs. Lavender had conveyed. Mrs. Lavender checked the table and added further insight. The colours serve no other purpose except to help distinguish the columns. Pseudonyms (chosen by the students) have been included for the 10 focal students who took part in the pre- and post-LSI interviews. They will be described in the next section.
Table 4.1.

*Summary of student needs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Emotional severe (tantrums/meltdowns)</th>
<th>Emotional moderate (anxiety/mood swings)</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Academic processing needs</th>
<th>Tech support</th>
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<td><img src="image3" alt="Blue Bar" /></td>
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<td><img src="image7" alt="Green Bar" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Blue Bar" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Green Bar" /></td>
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<td><img src="image5" alt="Blue Bar" /></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td><img src="image5" alt="Blue Bar" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Green Bar" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
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<tr>
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<td><img src="image4" alt="Green Bar" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ten Focal Students. The following are preliminary sketches that serve to introduce the 10 students who informed this case study. The information was gleaned through my observations of and chats with the students, student work, my observations and chats with some of the students’ parents, and anecdotes from Mrs. Lavender’s interactions with both the students and their families.

These initial sketches are not complete stories of the transformations that the students had undergone. Rather, they serve as a skeletal guide of the students’ characters and important influences in their lives. As I delve further into the data in subsequent parts of the results, more layers of understanding for each of the following students will be applied through descriptions and quotes so that a general sense of the types of student transformations that occurred overall in Mrs. Lavender’s classroom can be gained.

Amethyst.

Amethyst was a tall, quirky, creative, and sensitive girl with some Dutch heritage. She had straight honey-brown hair, a naturally tanned complexion and a philosophical nature. Amethyst enjoyed playing soccer with the boys at recess and had her nose in a thick book about a schizophrenic girl who saw dead people during reading time. As the eldest of three kids of a single mom, Amethyst spent time arbitrating her younger siblings’ arguments. She also spent a lot of time on the road visiting her father who lived three hours away.

A few years ago, Amethyst had been badly bullied and, having gone to adults for help, had come out victorious and more confident. She poured this confidence into creative endeavors like painting and selling rocks, writing curious puzzles (one of which she gave to me), and studying people’s natural gaits and blending them into new dance
moves. Being a risk-taker, she auditioned for and got into the talent show and was one of
the narrators during the stations of Christ’s Passion tableau drama.

In class, Amethyst often opted to work alone and was sometimes coolly choosy
about with whom she would work when it was necessary. However, she did have an
overall compassionate and thoughtful nature that was foregrounded in her pre-interview.
In it she acknowledged the complexities of being homeless and those peoples’ need for
“shelter and a nice warm bed, some clothes to use as long as they need before they can
afford things.” She would “help them find a job that fits them…help them start their
lives…find some food…vegetables and good things.” “If they need medicine,” she
added, “I’ll go get them some.” Mrs. Lavender suspected that sometimes Amethyst said
things to appear more virtuous.

Having her mother’s attention and praise was a great source of pride for Amethyst
even though sometimes she showed frustration at the instability of her home life. Already
she had moved quite a few times and it looked like she would again be moving at the end
of the school year so that her mom could live closer to her new boyfriend. She knew what
it felt like to be the new kid. To expedite my acceptance into what she called ‘Mrs.
Lavender’s big classroom family,’ Amethyst and her friend made a beautiful and sparkly
name tag for my chair.

Angelina.

Coming from an affluent but rather gruff family that lived in a home situated by
the lake, Angelina was a strong-willed (at times stubborn) girl of Portuguese ancestry
who spoke her mind and knew how to stick up for herself. She had long, wavy blonde
hair, cheerful blue eyes, and a radiant smile that was later decorated with steel braces
(and multi-coloured elastics). Angelina’s older sister, who she generally did not get along with, had a reputation for being a terrifying bully under a seemingly sweet countenance. Angelina was never a bully while I was there and did not seem to be bullied. However, she told me that she never felt included at St. Mary’s and was excited to join a program in another school the following year that could cater to her learning needs.

Angelina’s IEP had her modified to a Grade 2/3 level. Although she was happy to receive and ask for help, she would often get frustrated when she could not understand something and vehemently refused homework. Mrs. Lavender had described how she had difficulty recalling major plot lines of the book that they had read together in class. I remember explaining the metric conversion system to her twice differently (after the teacher had explained it) and could not figure out her roadblock. However, when she did understand something, she would either be very excited or a bit skeptical of whether she had, indeed, understood it. Angelina was also a bit forgetful with her possessions and permission forms but was very careful about completing school work on time. It was with her that I spent an entire recess figuring out how she could get a permission form signed because she had indicated that she had very little contact time with her parents during the week and Friday night was their date night. As planned, Angelina had left the form on the kitchen counter before going to bed for her mom to sign early in the morning.

Fortunately, it worked. Unfortunately, Angelina had put out the wrong permission form.

It is true that during class activities, Angelina initially had a hard time being part of or being included in groups. However, being excluded did not affect her confidence levels. She spoke on the announcements as part of the Social Justice committee’s ‘Me to We’ campaign and took part in the athletic program as a strong runner and basketball
player. Near the end of the LSI unit she was being included more. She spoke of a
memory of working with one of the smartest girls in class in her post-LSI interview as
being among her most favourite.

Ash.

Ash, a boy with part Icelandic heritage, icy blue eyes, freckles, and a mop of red
hair, was a quirky kid who had a passion for dancing (which he did at a public event
while I was there) and could generally be found at the center of classroom merriment.
However, being a bit different and capricious by nature, at times his excessive bursts of
energy would dramatically diminish, and Ash would plunge into a week-long moody
depression. In those times Ash was particularly sensitive to whether people were
laughing with him or at him.

On his good days, Ash liked being the center of attention. He opted for being
Mother Mary during the stations of Christ’s Passion because she was in the most scenes.
On his good days, he was also quirkier. For example, on the schoolyard, if he was not
playing soccer, he would be a siren goalpost, audibly indicating how close the ball was to
scoring. When told to run in gym, Ash would run with his head back and arms reaching
forward. When another boy wanted Ash’s cookie (one that Ellie, the girl sitting beside
Ash, had vehemently refused) Ash offered it to him only after carefully licking the whole
thing, top to bottom, side to side, with his tongue.

Ash was a curious and self-regulated learner, particularly interested in conspiracy
theories (which explained why he would eye me suspiciously whenever I observed him).
He also had some very distinct views. In the pre-LSI interview, regarding helping
homeless people, he said, “if you feed someone and you keep on feeding them, they
know that you’re just gonna keep feeding them and they’re going to…become greedy and sort of like a tapeworm and like suck you.” However, just like all of the others I had interviewed Pre-LSI, Ash believed in his own and other’s potential to assimilate admirable qualities saying, “if I just kept acting like that, I might develop it into my subconscious mind and every time that would happen.” When asked about a time when he was helpful (pre-LSI), Ash described how he served lemonade to people who looked thirsty (for a fee which he deposited into his bank account).

*Aubrey.*

Aubrey was a blonde-haired and blue-eyed girl of part German descent who was sweet, shy, and gentle. She carried into the classroom a more childlike and dreamy nature that was nurtured through her past Waldorf-inspired schooling. She often hid her face in books like *The dork diaries* or *The diary of a wimpy kid* but whenever she made eye contact with me, she would return my smile with a beautiful wide smile of her own.

Although she got along with her cousin, Ellie, who was also in the class, she seemed to not fit in with Ellie’s more outgoing crowd. Instead she was closer to another girl who was even more shy and quiet than herself. In fact, it came to Mrs. Lavender’s attention that Aubrey suffered from anxiety and would often not want to come to school. I remember one day seeing her being overjoyed to leave for an eye appointment. Whenever possible she would stay in during recess and either read, ask me for homework help, or share pictures of her pets. She also required some learning modifications as she had difficulties processing concepts at the level of complexity expected at her age.

Aubrey came from an affluent house (she received private swimming lessons in her own swimming pool) with well-educated parents, one of whom was a nurse and
taught part-time in an institute of higher education. She also had a sister. In the pre-LSI interview, Aubrey’s descriptions of her mother’s dedication and service to the community stood out. For example, her mother was on a roster to help make dinner for a family of ten who had a child going through chemotherapy. Her mother also grew and donated vegetables to a local soup kitchen. Like many others during the pre-LSI interviews, Aubrey’s approach to service initiatives was that they would be fun and social, views that transformed over time. Aubrey’s mom had personally thanked me for carrying out this study on selflessness.

Ellie.

With straight brown hair, a ready smile, and a soft voice, Ellie, a girl with Belgian heritage, was the one who was always chosen to carry out special and important tasks. Her dependability, practical nature, and sense of responsibility made her a sought-after office monitor and technical assistant for both the Stations of the Cross presentation and the talent show. Although Ellie was more assertive and outgoing than Aubrey, with her confidence built through admirable athletic talent (in running and team sports like hockey and soccer), she had a slightly nervous and anxious temperament particularly when it came to mathematical academic performance. There were times when she would break down in tears during tests, devastated that she could not even begin to solve an unfamiliar problem of a complex nature. Sometimes, when working on creative writing, she would self-consciously cover up her work as I approached. Sitting beside Ash helped loosen her up a bit, I think, because he made her giggle uncontrollably.

Ellie’s mother was a special education teacher at the school and sometimes briefly supplied when Mrs. Lavender was held up in a meeting at the office. Her mother had a
powerful, no-nonsense presence that was awe-inspiring to Ellie and she worked very hard to impress her. She read books that dealt with dramas in teenage life and had worries about her own family’s future health and mortality. Ellie was the middle child of three sisters and would feel guilty of losing her temper with them.

In her pre-LSI interview, Ellie indicated that the struggle to assimilate admirable qualities would have to come from within, that it was predominantly an independent endeavor. She initially regarded service initiatives as an opportunity providing “that feeling that someone’s happy because of something that you did.” By the end of the LSI unit, Mrs. Lavender felt that Ellie really blossomed, that she had come into her own, as Mrs. Lavender put it, “quiet leadership” style.

**Hunter.**

Hunter was a fresh-faced, suave, and likeable Italian boy with a general sunny disposition. He was one of the ‘cool kids’ in the class and every boy wanted to be in a group with him, Ash, and a couple of other boys who were considered to be the most intelligent boys in class. Hunter was very athletic, perhaps among the most athletic in the school, having been asked to participate in tryouts in a major Ontario city for soccer and already being in competitive hockey in Grade 6. He admired more than just athletic ability, however. In his pre-LSI interview, he named particular Italian sports stars as heroes not just because of their athleticism but also because of their generosity of wealth.

Early in my study, in class, he seemed to goof-off more frequently, but he was always very particular about paying attention during math class. It was important for him to remain among the higher-ranking kids academically because his buddies were pretty smart. This sense of competition may have been fueled by hockey madness that saw him
attend tournaments in distant places back-to-back. He hit a rough patch, however, when hockey tryouts for the next season did not seem to go so well and suddenly, he was not selected to be part of the elite team and also off of the cross-country team. At the same time, he had missed major lessons in math and, being too proud to use the scaffolded instructions, burst into tears in frustration when he just could not figure out what to do.

Hunter’s transformation throughout the study was the most apparent and surprising to Mrs. Lavender as it was evidenced in so many ways through an increase in prosocial actions and through his written work. He had stopped goofing off and moved more to keep his group and class on track. He visibly supported all of the students in class to be better than they thought they were. For some reason all of the ‘cool’ boys were drawing and colouring in images of super-hero animals to put up on a bulletin board behind my desk. Hunter’s was one of the last to go up. It was a duck that was like the Hulk. He called it ‘Dulk.’

**Joe.**

Joe, a heavy-set boy with gingery-brown hair and of Irish descent, was a person of a few words. He came from a troubled farming family rather far away and had to take a ferry and a bus to school. He passed the commute playing video games. School seemed to put him in a bad mood, except for recess and gym—Joe always looked forward to recess and gym. He avoided homework like the plague. Once, when told to explain a math concept to someone at home he grumbled, “I’ll explain it to my dog.” Although home life was rocky for Joe, his grandfather, who had poor eyesight and lived next door and for whom Joe frequently did chores, was a solid support, providing a listening ear and wise advice.
When I had started my study mid-March, Joe had already missed 36 days of school. He had the potential to operate at grade level but due to the lack of continuity, Joe had to be modified to a Grade 4 level. He had a very low sense of self-confidence. Periodically I would hear him mutter to himself “I have an IQ of a goldfish.” I heard him speak with confidence at least once. It happened on the day he was told of the date of a community dance-a-thon. Joe assuredly declared, “Now I know what day I will be absent.” Joe missed 22 days of the 40 days of my study. The assortment of reasons for his absences included; food poisoning, bronchitis, headaches, eye troubles, issues with the ferry service, ice storms, and a 12-day cruise. There were times that students in the class would look up startled when they heard Joe’s name.

In school Joe had a group of friends, most of whom had IEPs and one of whom would become positively giddy whenever Joe would show up. Joe seemed to make the least visible progress in his thinking and in his actions during the two months I was there. Additionally, his sudden reappearances would be disruptive since he continued to operate in a mental context from which the others had collectively matured. Most of Joe’s time in school was spent half-heartedly playing catch-up.

Johnny.

With a fireman as a father, who Johnny simply adored and patterned himself off of, Johnny was a stickler for following rules, being equitable, and playing safely. During his pre-LSI interview, Johnny described how he was in shock that a visiting sports coach had them playing a game in fast carts without helmets. He was a tall blonde boy with indigenous and French heritage who loved sports. His affable nature and cheerful smile
endeared Johnny to his classmates who responded positively to his advice and generally respected him.

Johnny had a modified education plan but loved to learn. If given the opportunity to have teacher support, he would, with great interest, apply himself and stay on task. During group discussions, Johnny was focused and engaged and displayed a curiosity that stimulated a plethora of well-articulated questions. His alertness allowed him to catch jokes that others would miss. He appreciated nature. Once, Johnny came in from recess pointing to his red cheek and then led me to the window to show me the violent culprit: hail. His interviews indicated that he had loving support at home and that his parents helped him with his schoolwork. They made him feel like he was a good learner.

In the pre-LSI interview, Johnny was clear that an initiative serving the homeless helps students realize that they, ‘should stay in school and…get good jobs so that they [can] pay for food.’ His approach to helping those with less redeeming qualities was to say, ‘stop being this way because you’re going to get arrested for doing what you’re doing and then you’ll be stuck in jail for a long time.’

Michael.

The very first question that Michael asked, as he took a seat for the pre-LSI interview, was whether he could get volunteer hours for participating in the study. He wanted to add to his Scouts badgework. My first impression of this blond-haired slip of a boy with German and Francophone heritage was that he favored rewards. He even spoke of how a service initiative of helping the homeless can benefit teachers’ reputations because their students would end up becoming smarter and getting into respected colleges. However, as time wore on, my observations picked up on Michael’s thoughtful,
caring, and sweet nature, accentuated by a deep love for his mom who was fighting a severe health issue. He was tremendously proud of both of his parents for having served in the Canadian military.

Michael played basketball alone during recess and was often excluded when the class formed their own groups. Although he did have a stubborn streak, Mrs. Lavender was always puzzled by his non-acceptance. Michael’s thoughtfulness early on extended to me. From the school library, he brought a copy of the first ‘Wings of Fire’ book for me since I had expressed interest in it during the pre-LSI interview. Michael loved to show off new/gently used clothing (multiple shirts, socks, a jacket, and slippers), haircuts, and stories from home, and was vigilant about health issues. He would show me his scrapes, and sprains, and share what ADHD medications and modified equipment worked for him. When another student started to explain a muscle injury to me, Michael took over and began advising the other 12-year-old on injury management. When Mrs. Lavender hinted at troubles with feeling sick during fast rides, Michael immediately, and with utmost concern, recommended anti-nausea medication.

In a previous school Michael had been bullied. To me it seemed that he was always careful to be kind to others. Michael would engage in casual conversation with the students who had emotional issues and others avoided (like the little storm cloud). He also believed in the power of a name. He told me that if his name had been ‘Mike’ instead of ‘Michael’ then he would have been a completely different person.

Phoenix.

With an expression of disinterested confidence and shoulder-length strawberry blond hair, Phoenix, claiming part indigenous heritage, had a strikingly erratic energy.
Sometimes she would seem spent, bereft of energy and at other times her mood would be highly positive, and she would be sharing Harry Potter paraphernalia with classmates. In other words, Phoenix had a tendency to display a spectrum of moods but, disconcertingly, could go from zero to ten in a blink of an eye. One moment she would be okay and the next moment she could be scratching people and screaming profanity. Once she had even thrown a piece of eraser at me.

When she was feeling calm and poised, Phoenix was helpful and sweet, sharing stories and pictures of her family and dogs on her second rose gold iPhone 8 (she had cracked the first one). Dyslexia required her to depend upon a laptop, but she typed slowly. If someone scribed, she could pour out evocative stories and complex journal entries immediately, on the spot. She was a busy girl. At one time during my study, she was involved in a community drama, being tutored for the EQAO, and playing soccer. By March, Phoenix already knew and was excited about her summer schedule at several camps and hoped one day to be a camp counsellor herself.

On moody days or moments, Phoenix’s behaviour was unpredictable. She was in danger of self-harm and early on in my study we found a discarded piece of paper on the floor written by her with a list of people that she had wanted dead. She struggled with group work because, as Mrs. Lavender noted, Phoenix had a tendency to be bossy. She could also be belligerent if she did not get her own way; a state of mind further attenuated when her parents had left the country for over a week. With a slightly shaky moral compass, Phoenix had once cheated on a test because her parents had promised her $100 if she got 100%. Given the choice, Phoenix would stay in during recess. Her pre-LSI interview showed both Phoenix’s self-absorbed side (only wanting to pursue fun
activities) along with compassionate perspectives (partially informed by class literature) of those in need.

**Part II: Weekly Lessons**

I spent the first two weeks observing the students, teaching a little, and getting a feel for the class. The students all knew I was conducting a study on selflessness because they had all received the permission form. However, I did not formally touch upon the meaning of selflessness until the third week. During the nine weeks I was there (40 days of teaching), Mrs. Lavender and I explicitly taught about selflessness with activities, led an inquiry-learning based social studies curriculum unit on the Canadian identity and immigration, and organized a service initiative carried out with French speaking immigrants of Canada. At the end of each week’s synopsis I provide reflections and observations that stood out during the week in a bulleted list.

**Week 1: Monday March 19 to Friday March 23.** To track how the students’ thinking progressed throughout the study I had them respond to writing prompts in journals that I had bought for them. The first exercise on Monday was for them to choose the journal that they liked (no two were the same, see Figure 5) and answer the following questions:

1. *Why did you pick this journal? What did you like about this journal?*

2. *Write down 2 or 3 questions that come to your mind while looking at this journal cover.*

3. *Choose one of the questions you have from #2 and write an answer in form of a story.*
All of the students whom I had interviewed wanted me to read over their entries. The first entry helped me gauge their writing skills and thinking. I was impressed with the creativity and innocence in all of the entries. The second prompt, given on Wednesday, was for the students to imagine that they had moved to another city and had spent a successful week at a new school. The students had to write a prayer, letter, or an expression of thanks acknowledging why the week had been so wonderful. Students found this second entry more challenging.

The following day, after having read the second entries, I discussed with the class about how many of the responses were ‘me’ oriented, fixating one’s own needs (getting to school in a Lamborghini, being the smartest in the class, and the stunning school amenities). On the other hand, some expressed gratefulness for the kindness extended by teachers, friends, secretaries, and bus drivers, cherishing the warm and cozy school environment. Mrs. Lavender used the ‘Stations of the Cross’ drama tableaus to also help students to think outside of themselves. She asked questions like, “how do you think the soldier felt when he was ordered to hit Jesus?” or said, “if you could choose the way you would die, it would probably not be this one.” During language arts, Mrs. Lavender had

Figure 4.1. Samples of journals and pens purchased for the students
students examine the compassionate hero of a book they were reading and create slogans illustrating his approach to life.

We then introduced the social studies unit that focused on the Canadian identity and Canadian immigration. The big inquiry question was “What is the Canadian identity?” Mrs. Lavender talked about her Polish and Italian ancestors’ experiences immigrating through Pier 21. She had printed various photos and had the students discuss in groups whether or not they represented Canada and later put them up in a display under the big question, ‘What is Canadian and why?’ I had gathered book recommendations provided by the Ontario Elementary Social Studies Teachers’ Association for the unit as well as posters, teaching kits, and magazines to put up and around the classroom to help students think about the Canadian identity. Their final journal prompt on Thursday was to create a collage of images that represent Canada (using five to seven images), write a list of the pictures, write a paragraph about three traits that describe Canadians, and a paragraph on what is not Canadian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Every student had a popsicle stick with their name on it. To select their journal, Mrs. Lavender chose a popsicle stick and that student came up to the front to pick from the ones displayed. Aubrey was chosen first. One student starting clapping for her but was hit by another student who said, “You’re not supposed to clap if it’s not your name.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I had bought Spongebob pens for all of the students. Many of them were discarded on the floor by the end of the day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Angelina missed the first day. She refused to choose from the remaining journal selection saying, “I don’t like any of them.” Phoenix coaxed her into picking one (the remaining ones resembled her own). Another boy asked me where I got them from and informed me that he would make get his dad exchange the one he was now stuck with for a better one at the store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Although none of the students directly thanked me for the journals, it seemed to me that most of them were delighted with the gift</td>
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<tr>
<td>• For the Canadian collage, almost all of the students included something environmentally related (for example, the cold weather or an animal like the beaver) as well as some type of food and sport (hockey). Canadians were generally characterized as kind, caring, helpful, respectful, and generous people.</td>
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Week 2: Monday March 26 to Thursday March 29 (no school Good Friday).

The week before Easter weekend is a busy one in Catholic schools. Mrs. Lavender’s class, and the other Grade 6 class, put together fifteen tableaus for Thursday depicting the Stations of the Cross, from Jesus being condemned to death to His rising.

On Monday, chart paper (each separately labelled with the factors of structures, industries, environment, and ideals) was handed out to four groups of students. Within each group they had to brainstorm Canadian examples to explore the Canadian identity through visible features on the land as well as nonvisible values. The charts were circulated so that each group had a chance to think about each factor, ultimately piecing together a Canadian identity. A chart including all of the factors was typed up, projected, and taken up by Mrs. Lavender on Thursday. She allowed all of the students to voice their opinions without judgement, discussed each of the examples, and led a discussion on Canadian values, identity, and community. In a circle every student presented their collages and three Canadian traits. Everyone seemed startled by the reiteration and group identification of being Canadian with prosocial traits (kindness and caring).

Outside of school, I had begun working with the community’s Canadian French Immigration Services (CFIS) to see whether the students, through the use of the skills they would gain in the unit, could meet any needs that CFIS might have. The LSI concept took a bit of explanation but in the end, CFIS was fully onboard. Aveline, a CFIS representative, agreed to come to the school to speak about the services that the CFIS provides to the community. Being an advocate and activist for French speaking immigrants she questioned the fairness of having to learn English in what is called a bilingual country. Aveline wanted to teach students about empathy and provide stories of
how her clients had been discriminated against in the predominantly Anglophone Canadian city. She was excited to come up with a service initiative for the Grade 6 students that would benefit CFIS and teach students about empathy.

Aveline presented me with a sign created by the city as part of a campaign to welcome immigrants. She wanted the class to take a picture with it and send it to her. When I brought it back to school and asked Ms. O’Sullivan whether it could be placed on the front lawn, she recommended that it be displayed through the classroom window fearing vandalism from those who live in the community. The Grade 6 class’s French teacher, Monsieur DuPrie, was excited about serving CFIS due to the cross-curricular potential. Finally, at CFIS I spied a copy of a government publication called Discover Canada: The rights and responsibilities of citizenship (meant to help immigrants study for the citizenship test). I wrote to the government of Canada to request a class set of the guides.

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- I observed negative groupwork dynamics. During the chart-work exercise, people like Amethyst, Phoenix, and Angelina commanded the markers while others goofed off. In dance class, everybody wanted to be in Ellie, Ash, or Hunter’s group. Michael tried many times to join various groups and was finally matched with another boy who, embarrassed, spent the rest of the class avoiding Michael. Phoenix sulked in a corner even though Amethyst offered to work with her (I believe at the dance teacher’s suggestion). Angelina (who was wanted in another group) tried but did not make it in to Ellie’s group. Aubrey did.

- Behavioural issues (perhaps prompted by a sense of insecurity) abounded on Wednesday when a supply teacher was in. There was: (a) a fight in class, (b) Phoenix, Michael, and another boy felt physically ill, (c) another boy ended up punching a kid during the last recess, and (d) Angelina was remarkably angry for not understanding a question on an assignment.

- When discussing Canadian factors and examples Ash said, ‘health care is not free for the rich people because the rich people pay for the poor people.’

- Mrs. Lavender led a thoughtful brainstorming session (with the tone of non-judgement) to create a chart listing Canadian features and values
Week 3: Tuesday April 3 to Friday April 6 (no school Easter Monday). I finally introduced students to the three-part definition of selflessness. On sticky notes, students first provided an example of and then defined selfishness. They were all posted on the front board and students read them out. Definitions included not thinking about others, only caring for yourself, wanting something in return, and being greedy. Students then carried out the same exercise on another set of sticky notes with the word ‘selflessness.’ Definitions for selflessness included giving or sharing concrete things (particularly food and money) and service (the military and volunteering). Some students drew upon examples from books read as a class. We discussed what it meant to act selflessly, feel selflessly, and think selflessly.

Since most of the definitions focused on acting selflessly, I touched upon that first. I showed a video, *Teach your children to care* (Fosterhjem, 2017), where students shared food with a child who did not have any. We talked about looking for opportunities to act selflessly around school (being inclusive, playing with kids who seem lonely, and cheering up those who seemed sad).

To address feeling selfless, I described Strenta and Dejong’s (1981) study where people labelled as kind and thoughtful tended to act that way (see chapter two). Growth mindset and belief in one’s own and each other’s infinite potential was mentioned along with an examination of Jesus Christ’s words, ‘the kingdom of heaven is within us.’

For thinking selflessly, we discussed what it might mean to not be reward-oriented and unattached to results while performing actions. We discussed the military’s peacekeeping missions and examples such as helping a person carry groceries. The videos *Joy and Heron* (JD.com, 2018) and *Lily and the Snowman* (TheCGBros, 2016)
were also shown to evoke appreciation for being unattached to the results of actions. A selfless wall, including a three-part kid-friendly definition of selflessness and examples created by the students and myself, was put up in Mrs. Lavender’s religion corner. It became a permanent growing fixture that we could add and refer to as the class underwent various experiences during the unit. Figure 4.2 shows what the wall looked like on May 16, 2018 (near the end of my study).

![The selflessness wall](image)

**Figure 4.2. The selflessness wall**

The next day, the students extended their understanding of thinking, acting, and feeling selfless by connecting it to literature that they had read as a class together. I drew upon the books *Number the stars* (Lowry, 1989), *A long walk to water* (Park & Knowlton, 2010), and *Egghead* (Pignat, 2008), as well as the stations of the cross to find examples of selfless behaviour. I printed the examples, cut them out, and placed them all
into little bags. I gave each group a bag and a large sheet with three columns; thinking, acting, and feeling. The groups had to decide together in which column each example fit and paste it there.

Social studies lessons continued. Students voiced, in a circle, whether or not they felt that the classroom was a community. Students shifted perspectives to the school, local, and global community and came up with examples of how St. Mary’s school has an impact at each level. The video United by food (Whirlpool, 2017) was used to demonstrate how kids can create class community through sharing and segue into Canadian immigrant cultures. For the birds (Pixar Films, 2013) introduced discrimination and stereotyping—impediments to community building. This led to discussing and taking a picture with Aveline’s anti-racism sign and a newspaper article on the sign was assigned for homework. An examination of discrimination in Canadian history then began through Canadian Heritage Minute videos (including Nellie McClung, Viola Desmond, and Chanie Wenjack). Journal entries included commenting upon how the pictures in previous week’s collage linked to the Canadian value system and choosing one of the Heritage Minute videos to address the following two areas: (a) How do you think the actions took affected the community? (b) If you could go back in time, give three examples of how you would show these people that you are happy to be their neighbor.
Week 4: Monday April 9 to Thursday April 12 (Friday PA day). A series of historical pictorial artifacts associated with Canadian immigration (such as prairie advertisements and pictures of landed immigrants, home children, and Chinese CPR workers) were given to students in groups to list what they knew from the pictures and then ask questions (or ‘wonderings’) about what they would like to know. However, students were not used to this IBL technique, so Mrs. Lavender went through the pictures one by one and modeled it (with the students’ input). To further unpack the pictures, the groups were given pages from the textbook that partially addressed the artifact. They were asked to create a summary and then write more questions or ‘wonderings.’

Noting that students needed more help with gleaning information from artifacts and then creating wonderings, we had the students, as a class, practice with a historic picture of a local city park and then juxtaposed it with a modern-day picture. Three

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<td>• Groups based on ability and friendships work well. I started noticing more prosocial acts (‘popular’ boys sat around a lonely one for lunch, inclusive playing during indoor recess).</td>
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<td>• Hunter demonstrated several kind actions including getting a calculator for an upset classmate, encouraging people in gym, and passing around an object for language arts.</td>
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<td>• At first, students were unsure if the class was a community. Following a discussion, it was clear the next day that many more students felt that the class was a community. Ash, Michael, Phoenix, and Amethyst were vocal about community creation.</td>
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<td>• One boy started reading out words of wisdom from a book to anyone who would listen.</td>
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<td>• A supply was in on Friday. Students were somewhat nervous and silly. However, students assumed the guise of caring role models with their Grade 1 reading buddies.</td>
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<td>• Most of the journal entries dealt with discrimination through advocacy-oriented actions such as writing a letter to the newspaper. None of the students mentioned stepping in when Viola was being dragged out of the theater or when Chanie was being abused.</td>
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<td>• Hunter and his father spotted the anti-racism sign on another lawn in his neighbourhood. Hunter asked if he could put one on their lawn and his father said yes.</td>
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newspaper articles were handed out (one assigned for each student) so that they could read it over and start piecing together a picture of the park’s association with Irish immigration. We talked about trustworthy sources and how research had changed since we were kids (as a justification for IBL). Mrs. Lavender and I also talked about what we knew about our own family’s immigration history and accompanying wonderings. Students were asked to do the same for their families.

Almost a week had passed since the first selflessness lesson and Mrs. Lavender felt that it had not made the slightest difference in the students’ attitude and actions. To make selfless practices more habitual, we first introduced a prompt during their brag and drag circle time (where students shared a good thing and a not-so-good thing happening in their lives). We asked students to reiterate what the person before them had said, talk about themselves, and then end with, ‘I wonder how ____ is doing.’ The students, to my surprise, did listen to each other.

We then introduced a 10-day Secret Selfless Experiment (SSE) (see Appendix G) using the video, Dad and Andy (Whirlpool, 2015). We provided students with a template where students were to identify a member of the family for whom they would carry out kind actions and describe the action. Students were fascinated and wondered whether they would have to lie if they were caught. Mrs. Lavender clarified that the project was also about being a good observer with the ‘secret’ part being that they would not be seeking credit. They were asked to perform the action daily and take note of the reaction. The actions ranged from writing notes, making parents’ lunches, and asking ‘how was your day?’ to cleaning things (laundry and dishes) and walking pets.
When the SSE was introduced, Angelina was worried that her sister would be not only given the credit but take the credit. As the SSE progressed, some students realized that their parents were not noticing, acting confused, or getting angry. Some older siblings reacted with hostility to offerings of food and small talk. Amethyst got in trouble for loading the dishwasher herself as her mother thought that she did not want to cooperate with her brother. Some students were forgetting to do it and filling in the template with normal chores. I asked, ‘would you forget to have dinner?’ and talked about honesty, intentionality, and making it a habit.

This week’s journal entry covered whether or not kids should receive an allowance, what would be a fair amount, what would it be given for, and whether the students received an allowance at home. During reading break one girl asked the others, “Would you take payment for homework?” A girl matter-of-factly replied, “Yes.” Ellie asked, worriedly, “but then, what would you do in college?” In his journal entry, Hunter struggled with the idea of wanting an allowance, explicitly questioning whether it would be selfless to receive one.

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- During a language arts lesson on hyperboles and metaphors, Mrs. Lavender drew connections to how such expressions could be a challenge to immigrants and new language learners
- Those students from class who were not running in cross country, were all playing soccer together during recess
- Michael was surprisingly irate when he found out I had already read the second ‘Wings of Fire’ book saying, "Don't take out the next book and read it before me!"
- Gym: Angelina wanted to be in Ellie’s group and asked one of the girls who got in. That girl replied, “Ellie's the boss.” Angelina asked Ellie and Ellie told her to ask the other girl. Angelina said that the other girl had said to ask her with the other girl reiterating, “Ellie, you're the boss” and Ellie replied, “I'm not the boss.” An awkward silence ensued.
Week 5: Tuesday April 17 to Friday April 20 (Icy roads Monday). This week, during the brag and drag circle time, the students were paraphrasing each other better and Mrs. Lavender taught them how to be more empathetic. Hunter, knowing that his buddy beside him was sick, put a consoling hand on his shoulder. Johnny shamefully confessed that he had seen Mrs. Lavender outside of school but did not say ‘hi.’ Mrs. Lavender’s drag was that the sun had not being out for a while and Amethyst cheered her up by gently reminding her that it had peaked through the clouds earlier in the morning. When the dance teacher arrived, Mrs. Lavender invited her to participate. The teacher expressed that she was going through tough times. In response, Mrs. Lavender used a word from the selfless wall and called her ‘resilient.’

The study guides (Discover Canada: The rights and responsibilities of citizenship) arrived and were passed around during reading time. Mrs. Lavender asked the students to deduce the purpose of the book. When they did, the students began to worry about whether the immigrants would know English well enough to use the books. Phoenix felt that the average Canadian would not know the information. Michael felt that the guides would help immigrants feel more comfortable knowing “what we do and our laws.” The class brainstormed what the immigrant experience must be like for modern-day newcomers and created a list of things that would help support them (see Figure 4.3). Some of them showed the guides to their parents. We later tried a sample citizenship quiz online and were startled by our incorrect answers.

Students were asked, using the resources with historical artifacts we provided (including online resources), to find a picture, newspaper article, or letter dealing with an immigrant group of their choice, summarize it, and come up with 10 to 15 wonderings.
Their inquiry was being laid out in stages and this was the first stage (we created a template for them). Mrs. Lavender and I later modeled this stage so they could see our approach with two different cultural groups and thereby both learn about the cultural groups we chose as well as the depth to which they could pursue their inquiries. Noting the amount of work needed to guide students new to inquiry, Mrs. Lavender said to me “I couldn’t do this without you.”

Figure 4.3. A list of what a family immigrating to Canada would need

In Aveline’s presentation to the students, she at first spoke purely in French with Monsieur Duprie. The students tried to follow along. She asked them how it felt to not be able to understand everything being said. She showed the videos *If we could see inside*
others’ hearts (Cleveland Clinic, 2013) and Too quick to judge (Time Vision, 2014) to explore the concept of empathy. She spoke of her own experiences as an immigrant and handed out a map of the city in French (which fascinated Monsieur Duprie). Aveline led a discussion on French advocacy asking, “why is it so hard to live here with just French?” Michael piped in, “every public place should have French and English” and later shared stories about his own family with Aveline. Near the end of her presentation, Aveline told the students that she needed help finding out what her clients’ experiences were like post CFIS settlement. She asked the students if they would be willing to help her find out. The students were taken aback by the fact that an adult would appeal for their help and stared back speechlessly. After I reiterated the question, they said yes.

The SSE was concluded at the end of the week. The students did not want to reveal the experiment to their parents because: (a) then it would not be selfless, (b) their parents might be disappointed since they were doing things because they had to, and (c) they might then feel forced to continue. I asked if the students felt forced to do the SSE in the first place and those that answered said ‘no’ and that it was ‘selfless.’ They all filled out a reflection sheet to further unpack their experiences.

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- An unconventional French play had been performed in the gym. Most classes disrespectfully laughed at the actors. Comparatively, Mrs. Lavender’s class behaved extremely well with Phoenix, Ash, Michael, and Hunter helping out in the performance.
- Prosocial actions during the week included a self-absorbed student holding a door open for others, a popular student talking to people outside her own friendship circle, and various students cleaning up after themselves or for others.

Week 6: Monday April 23 to Friday April 27. Mrs. Lavender and I modelled various stages of the inquiry process as the students moved through examining an
associated artifact related to their chosen immigrant culture to investigating ‘push-pull’ factors (reasons why immigrants felt compelled to leave their homeland and come to Canada), what life was like for the immigrant culture when they arrived, the contributions they have made, and significant events that have occurred in Canada related to their culture. Mrs. Lavender focused on the Polish culture and I, interested in the Komagata Maru incident, focused on the Punjabi culture. While Mrs. Lavender spoke of Polish orphans displaced by the war, language barriers, and the uptake of manual labor positions, I spoke of the discrimination felt by the Punjabi people (including the continuous passage regulation and the bombing of a Punjabi home in British Columbia which shocked students) and modern day contributions (such as having hockey shows on the radio in Punjabi, turbans being introduced in the RCMP, and Maritime bhangra dancers who raise money for charities). Mrs. Lavender and I connected to ideas on the selflessness wall whenever possible.

We had large and small knowledge-building circles where students could share what they were learning, ask questions, and provide feedback. Hunter and Johnny in particular had many questions. In the smaller circles, students had feedback templates to state what they had liked, questions, and suggestions and they stuck them on the students’ work that was displayed at the back of the classroom so everyone could read and learn from them (see Figure 8). Topics covered included residential schools and Japanese and Italian internment camps. The boy prone to tantrums was absorbed in readings about Chinese immigration and greatly angered by the head tax. The lack of computers was a challenge as was the degree of attention needed by students with special needs. Fourteen students needed greater guidance and many students had difficulty choosing credible
sources and grappling with missing contextual understanding (including dynamics between cultures during WWI and WWII, the concept of British India, and the Pearl Harbor bombing). Some students opted to study family members’ immigrant experiences.

Figure 4.4. Knowledge-building display

The service initiative for CFIS progressed with students creating and signing a pledge, patterned off of an example by Gent (2009), outlining how they could use their skills to be of help to the organization. They wanted to welcome and host the clients by conducting a tour for them in French, interviewing them in French, and hosting a little party in the classroom. The students also agreed to analyze the resulting transcripts and organize the information for Aveline. The students all formulated focused questions individually on post-it notes, which I organized under three categories: life in the country of origin, push-pull factors that brought immigrants to Canada, and the quality of life in Canada. Aveline considered and added to the list. In Monsieur Duprie’s class we created
the tour together and practiced the French words. I reminded the students that they were school and Canadian ambassadors. The students were nervous about speaking in French.

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- In their journals, students had to write about what wishes they would make if they had three. Over half of the students had selfish wishes. When they went around the circle the next day to share their wishes, some of them changed selfish wishes to selfless ones.
- Ash was disturbed by the fact that in the early 1900s Punjabi immigrants needed to have $200 to enter Canada while Europeans needed only $25. He asked about it again the following day.
- Joe came back this week from his cruise having missed the entire SSE and service introduction. He was the only one in class who was not excited about the CFIS service.
- Prosocial actions this week included Ash and Hunter wanting to clean up the pond next door and a popular girl laughing at jokes made by Michael. Mrs. Lavender bought gifts for the secretaries for secretary’s week. She frequently left lovely notes on my desk with sayings like, “I love having the opportunity to work with you” with little gifts like muffins and chocolate.

Week 7: Monday April 30 to Friday May 4. During brag and drag circle time, the students remembered to talk about the previous person on their own! When it was my turn, I talked about a research-related drag that I turned into a brag. Students commented upon my experience with words like ‘perseverant’ and ‘resilient.’ I used the phrase, ‘I think I can…I can!’ and related it to a hero of a book they had read together. All of these phrases found their way onto the selfless wall. April 30th marked the yearly commemoration of Lord Buddha. Since the Dalai Lama’s quote was being used in the ‘Me to We’ campaign, I told the story of Lord Buddha’s four noble truths and connected them to selflessness (including self-regulation).

The students continued to independently work through the various stages of their inquiries and meeting in small circles to receive feedback from their peers, Mrs. Lavender, or myself. A culminating task was assigned where students had to choose
among three media platforms to convey the main findings of their research. We handed out the rubric as well.

The biggest event of the week, the day of service, fell on Friday. To prepare for the tour and the interview, we talked about prosocial actions that would make our immigrant guests feel welcome. Aubrey asked if the class would be marked on the service and I said that doing it for a mark would not be selfless and that instead students individually would be reflecting on their experiences. The students practiced their French phrases and vocabulary. Four immigrants had agreed to participate so we divided the class into four groups. Each group had a leader who took charge of introductions, keeping the tour going, and keeping track of time. Some students were in charge of technology to take pictures and to record the interview. All of the students were assigned questions from the interview sheet and rooms that they were responsible for showcasing during the tour. Each group practiced the day before with me as the immigrant guest.

On Friday, students filled out a pre-service reflection where they had to answer questions about its link to the inquiry unit, how they would help the clients feel comfortable, whether they felt nervous or excited, and how they would expand upon their learning skills. Half of the students thought that this was either a chance for them to practice being selfless or an extension of learning about immigration and practicing being selfless. The remaining students spoke of this as an opportunity to extend their understanding of immigration. Over half of the students talked about the importance of speaking in French and almost all of them described prosocial actions (i.e., have a “relaxed body language” being “welcoming” and making them “feel comfortable…and happy”). Most of the students admitted that they were pretty nervous. Most students
thoughtfully deconstructed how they would apply and expand upon their learning skills through the service.

In the post-service reflection, which also took form of a journal entry where students answered questions, students spoke of learning about their clients’ perspectives and stories and creating a welcoming atmosphere. Very few students focused on themselves and the fun that they had. Almost all of them were able to make the link between the inquiry unit and this service and some went further to talk about immigrant struggles, language barriers, and discrimination. A few students again mentioned that this was a chance for them to be selfless. There was a palpable shift in energy that day. The students were united in being other-oriented (in actions and in their writing). Their air of excited nervousness was mixed with an anxious desire to be kind, welcoming, and helpful. They knew the guests might be nervous and wanted them to feel supported and comfortable enough to tell their stories.
Week 8: Monday May 7 to Friday May 11. Over the weekend I transcribed all of the immigrant interviews. I gave each student a printed copy of the interview they had conducted with the audio file on a memory stick (bearing the Canadian flag). I was extremely impressed by the students’ conduct, kindness, and initiative on Friday and spoke at length about all of the positive things that I had seen and heard. The students seemed taken aback and surprised at my observations (so much so that the Monday morning sleepiness left them, and they sat up straight). Perhaps they were so focused on their guest and pronouncing words correctly on Friday that they were oblivious to their responsible behaviour. I hoped that the students would listen to the interviews and read over the transcripts with their families. On the back of each transcript I left a spot for the parents to provide a comment and their signature.

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- On Monday the students were very moody and at times were off task (except for Ellie). Phoenix plagiarized a poem. Ash remained despondent the entire week.
- Prior to the service, two students with high emotional needs had a breakdown. Mrs. Lavender decided to keep both of them in her group.
- Joe excused himself from the service in the morning due to eye-issues. The excuse had been pre-arranged with his mother who came from the island to pick him up.
- Two groups finished the interview early but two were running late. The leaders of the groups at separate times, from their separate interview rooms, asked me what they should do. I said ‘improvise.’ Each of them squared their shoulders and improvised.
- Alain, an immigrant from Burundi, almost engaged his group in a basketball game while touring the gym and I had to prevent it due to time (to the students’ disappointment)
- Aubrey proudly reported that one educational assistant from another class was impressed, exclaiming, “you’re conducting an interview and you’re only in Grade 6!”
- Two immigrants articulated a desire to return next year and do this again (delighting the students when they found out)
As a class, we listed all of the ways by which the students tried to be selfless and make the immigrants feel welcome and comfortable enough to not only share their difficult stories but also want to come back again next year. We also listed all of the selfless actions modeled by our guests. All of these phrases were showcased on the selfless wall.

In class the students gathered into their interview groups, read over the transcripts, corrected any mistakes, and then conducted an analysis of the information. On chart paper, in point form, they wrote out their client’s demographics, why they came to Canada, positive and challenging experiences that they have had in Canada, and contributions they have made to the society. The template mirrored what the students had been pursuing in their own inquiries, enabling perfect alignment with the 6A social studies curricular expectations.

The charts were placed around the room and the students took part in a jigsaw to learn about the immigrants they did not interview personally. Ash pointed out where the immigrants’ countries were on the world map. Through recounting their immigrant’s stories, the students were able to grasp the significance of the hardships they faced in Canada, having left a home country that was so different. We talked about how Nadia’s daughter felt isolated in her Canadian school. They came from Egypt. Ines, who came from France, spoke of her difficulties with cultural and language barriers here in Canada even though she had a Masters degree in both French and English. Masimba sacrificed a prominent position in Zimbabwe so that his kids could have a better education here. He had a thought-provoking story about language barriers he faced at the hospital. Alain, a refugee, was quiet about his experiences in Burundi but openly discussed how he was
overcoming social challenges in Canada through sports with community members and attending church. He had been teaching French to others in return for English lessons. The students were surprised that there are countries other than France that have French as a national language. The charts with pictures from the day were showcased on a hallway bulletin board for members of the school community to read and appreciate.

I addressed the journal entries as some students still had difficulties understanding the meaning of French advocacy. I spoke of the importance of language and how one can think and look at the world differently because of it. I also spoke of the harsh realities of language death by the strong sentiment, ‘if you want to destroy a culture, take away their language.’

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- Only around one third of the class had brought back signed transcripts on Wednesday even though they were all due the day before. However, within a couple of weeks, 19 out of 27 transcripts were returned with encouraging and appreciative parental comments.
- Group work difficulties persisted—during the chart exercise, some students in each of the groups were goofing off while others were on task
- Ellie asked if we could invite the guests back before the year closed for a basketball game since Alain obviously loved basketball and used it to be socially connected
- A supply teacher was in on Tuesday. The students were much more self-regulated compared to the previous time a supply was in. One student, however, was behaving disrespectfully. I reminded the student that the supply teacher was like a guest in the classroom. Later, the supply teacher came up to me looking shell-shocked because the student had apologized to him.
- One parent in the school tutored Alain. She thanked Mrs. Lavender for the class’s community involvement and asked for a copy of the interview.

Week 9: Monday May 14 to Thursday May 17 (Friday PA day). The feedback from CFIS was remarkable. Aveline told me that she had tears in her eyes while reading through the transcripts, realizing the impact that it had made on the both the immigrants and the students. CFIS falls under the purview of a general city-wide immigration service
and when the latter heard of this school collaboration, they were floored. They wanted to find out how they could get involved on a larger scale. CFIS asked if the students could put together one more product related to this service experience (apart from the chart synopses that had already been sent). Mrs. Lavender proposed that the students write ‘what I learned/thank you’ letters directly to the clients (individually or in groups) which they did and were sent to CFIS. I brought up Ellie’s suggestion for a sports day with the clients before the end of the year and they enthusiastically agreed. Five students in the class, including Amethyst, Hunter, and Ellie, worked together, with my help, to create a newsfeed for the school summarizing the CFIS collaboration.

The students, by this time, had completed their inquiry products and were eager to present. However, due to the shortage of time, we paired students up to present to each other and fill in a comparison template (one that Mrs. Lavender and I modelled with our personal inquiries). On the templates, the majority of groups outlined the harsh realities that pushed immigrant groups out of their own countries as well as the various types of discrimination they faced when settling in Canada. We also conducted a final large knowledge-building circle where all of the students had a chance to share highlights of their inquiries and answer classmates’ wonderings. In some cases, I was disappointed by the lack of depth. I realized that the ones who were able to dive deeply into their topic were those who received support and guidance from Mrs. Lavender and myself. A few of the students had fallen through the cracks and did not receive as much attention or were not as self-regulated.

After presenting a celebratory PowerPoint, showcasing all of the awesome feats the class accomplished over the past two months, Mrs. Lavender and I unhappily noticed
the same rocky non-inclusive group work dynamics during a language arts activity. Mrs. Lavender and I stopped the groups and acted out, dramatically, what we were seeing with Mrs. Lavender being the one who was being excluded. We also reiterated the importance of honesty. This reflection provoked a shift in the classroom. The air was heavy with embarrassment and regret. Afterwards, Mrs. Lavender started seeing improvement in
groupwork dynamics.

Part III: I Think I Can…I Can! Realizing Existing Potential

In these next few sections of the results, I look at the data from the student and
teacher interviews, classroom observations, lesson plans, reflections, my personal audit,
and student work that coalesced into the theme of overcoming obstacles and arriving at a
“better place” (as characterized by Mrs. Lavender). First, I address how students

What stood out: Highlights from my observations of this week

- Students wrote stories involving two superheroes, one nurturing respect and the
  other encouraging selflessness. The selfless superhero was characterized as humble
  and with an interest for doing things for the greater good of the community without
  self-interest. The superhero for respect was inclusive and engaged in creating
  respect between people. One student saw respect and selflessness as inseparable
  facets of the same thing.
- The last journal entry asked students to reflect upon the LSI unit. Students enjoyed
  the service and/or the inquiry and especially being given the autonomy to choose
  their own inquiry topic. The biggest challenge was speaking in French during the
  service.
- Ash wrote the journal entry on the LSI unit in the middle of his journal as a tribute
  to its importance because, according to him, the most important part of the book is
  the middle.
- Several prosocial moments stood out. A boy who had left the class earlier rejoined
  and was welcomed warmly by many students (including Michael and Ash). A
  student who experienced emotional trauma at home got a basket during gym and
  everyone clapped for him. During soccer baseball, Aubrey tried to kick the ball
  several times and missed but everybody in the class kept on encouraging her. One
  boy wandered into the girls’ changeroom by mistake and Ash and Johnny spent
time comforting him.
theoretically look at their own and other’s potential to improve as well as the actions that enable such improvement. Then, I examine the types of improvements students professed to have made under the influence of the LSI experience, noting the general impact of metacognitive coaching. Finally, I explore the variety of student fear factors that laced the service initiative, how they were mitigated, and some retrospective comments concerning self-confidence made by the students.

**Can a mean kid become nice?** In both pre and post-LSI interviews, after asking students what types of qualities they admired in others and whether or not they felt they could cultivate those qualities within themselves, I asked whether or not a mean kid can assume such qualities. The purpose of these questions was to ascertain whether students recognized their own capacity for growth and could extend that belief to others. Having faith in one’s inner potential and recognizing that same potential in others connects to growth mindset (Dweck, 2008) and forms the foundation for the initial component of the selflessness definition where one feels “connected to others through an awareness of and/or a belief in a transcendent reality” (Kurth, 1995, p. 15). In other words, having faith in an intangible and growable potential, equally available in every human being, serves as a step towards the feeling of being connected and then wanting to help others.

So, can a mean kid become nice? The answer was overwhelmingly positive. Not one student interviewed pre- or post-LSI denied their own ability or that of the vilest kid to cultivate more redeeming qualities and even become the hero that they admire. This subsection examines the effect of the LSI unit on the quality of the answers given before and after by first comparing the admirable qualities enumerated and then how students feel they can be achieved.
**Admirable qualities (pre-LSI).**

Most of the qualities listed pre-LSI were inspired through thoughts of heroes (like Terry Fox) or family members (mothers, fathers, and grandparents). The menagerie of qualities held such varied responses that I created a word cloud (see Figure 4.5) to provide a visual. Kindness was the quality most reiterated. In some cases, the qualities were indicative of the students’ personal challenges.

![Word cloud of admirable qualities pre-LSI](image)

*Figure 4.5. Word cloud of admirable qualities pre-LSI*

For example, Angelina, who often struggled with academic work, admired those who helped others in a non-judgmental way. Aubrey, being nervous about peer groups, admired people who do not “go behind your back” and are respectful, kind, and funny. Joe, being unconfident about his abilities, admired his grandfather who “always figures out the way to go through problems.” These are all prosocial qualities that can be role-modeled.
**Cultivating qualities (pre-LSI): Role modeling vs. “Do it yourself.”**

According to most students pre-LSI, the way forward would be to provide a mean kid guidance and prosocial role-modeling while a few felt that the burden of improvement rests on the shoulders of one trying to improve. In the case of the former, guidance might precede role modeling by saying things like, as Angelina suggested, “no that’s wrong don’t do that” or with more immediacy such as Johnny with, “stop being this way because you’re going to get arrested for…what you are doing and then you’ll be stuck in jail for a long time.” According to Ash, who was less extreme, reminders for being prosocial are imperative because “someone has to keep reminding that person to keep doing it.” The point is to break old habits and build new ones, or as Michael pointed out, “they need someone’s help” because “it’s just impossible to do it by yourself if you don’t know how to do it.”

Aubrey’s prosocial role modeling solution, which was voiced by a few others, was to help mean people by “being nicer to them instead of being mean to them…and then they might learn from you to be nice.” Further, she felt that role modeling nice behaviour in a way that incorporates humor would develop friendships. Those dubbed as “mean” need, as Michael said, “people to give them a chance and not be like a bully.” This chance could be encouraging empathy as Hunter surmised, “you’d probably have to convince them and say, ‘put yourself in their [shoes].’” Ultimately, as put by Amethyst (touching upon the idea of a transcendent reality), if someone has faith in you, or if you have faith in a personal hero, then somehow that faith will “bring out” the faith in yourself. Then, together, people can move forward as a community of practitioners having fun (the latter being of prime import to Phoenix).
Some students, however, underlined metacognitive approaches, placing an emphasis on personal effort. Ellie felt that “people could try to help them, but they also have to do it themselves…and get only a little bit of other people’s advice.” Ash’s own prescription for self-transformation would be to try “really hard” and think, “if I just kept acting like that, I might develop it into my subconscious mind and every time that would happen.” To Hunter, who paid tribute to shifting perspectives, “it’s really all about what you think.” In this context of self-improvement, Michael emphasized perseverance, that it’s “like an axe splitting wood in two—it’s just going through and coming out. As long as you keep on trying and if you don’t get it, you take out the axe, but you take out your chance and then you bring it back in.”

**Admirable qualities (post-LSI): LSI influences.**

Post-LSI answers to identifying admirable qualities were profoundly influenced by the LSI experience. Having been exposed to stories of discrimination occurring in Canada’s past and present through both the inquiry unit and the service initiative, many students equated admirable qualities with non-discrimination. Students like Amethyst, whose inquiry dealt with Japanese internment, now placed emphasis on valuing equity, being respectful and caring for others. About an admirable person she said, “if you were, say, transgendered, they’d still help you. If you were black, they’d still help you. If you were white, they’d still help you. If you were English, French, Japanese, English, Chinese, Egyptian, Portuguese—it doesn’t matter, they’d help you.” Hunter, who studied Italian internment camps, responded to this question saying that you “just can’t exclude people from things, like [no] matter [the] race, colour, nationality, or anything—you just gotta welcome them and be nice.”
Along with being smart and respectable, Ash, who had struggled with the concept of French advocacy, added the word “likeable.” To be likeable meant, “to learn more stuff about foreign countries” because “if someone’s like Mexican or something, then I would know not to say any stereotypes about them.” According to Ash, therefore, being open to various cultural perspectives allows for a type of knowledge and understanding that promotes harmony. Even Joe, who had limited contact with his inquiry topic of Japanese internment camps, focused on “respect” as an admirable quality which, to him, meant “not judg[ing] other people.” Finally, Johnny, who looked at the residential school system, specifically spoke of how his dad “keep[s] himself on the same height” as his cadets by not yelling at them angrily like the others. Rather, his father commands respect by “get[ting] to know them more” and “help[ing] people with what they need help with.”

For some students, their understanding of selflessness affected their answers. In their post-LSI interview, Aubrey, Ellie, and Phoenix, all listed admirable qualities that they had mentioned in the pre-LSI interview (being kind, nice, funny, helpful, thoughtful, respectful, patient, and knowing how to share). However, when nearing the end of their list, they all paused and turned to me with startled expression. With eyes all lit up and hands in the air, they triumphantly declared, “they would be selfless!” Here Aubrey added that selfless people will help when they see a need—with a focus on action orientation. For Ellie, the most important bit was that such a person would not just be kind to her but to everyone, again going back to what it might mean to not discriminate against others.

A couple of students did not directly refer to the LSI unit in their answer about character qualities they admired. However, there was a subtle change in orientation. For
example, Angelina had previously mentioned the qualities of being helpful in a non-judgmental way with an edgy, accusatory air, perhaps recalling past experiences. However, this time she simply stated “kindness,” with a degree of understanding. In addition to his previous list of qualities, Michael added a few others like being open-minded and empathetic, perhaps attributed to his studies on how Canadian Germans were discriminated against during WWII and the CFIS service.

*Cultivating qualities (post-LSI): Wanting, thinking, being with, and acting.*

When asked about how a person bereft of admirable qualities could gain them, Joe summed it up in seven words: “they would have to want to change.” Post-LSI, students, having tried themselves to inculcate selfless attributes, recognized the challenge. Wanting to change must be preceded by noticing exemplary role-modeling. Johnny referred how others, upon seeing his own dad might say, “whoa I want to be like that guy and not yell at the cadets.” This would be followed by noting the difference between one’s own and another’s behaviour, and then wanting to emulate that desirable behaviour. Phoenix acknowledges a spectrum of change that a person would have to undergo and that making it even halfway through the spectrum might be a challenge when “all you know” is to “lie, cheat, being dirty” and “if you lie and cheat and be dirty all the time, people aren’t going to want to be your friend anymore.” Ellie also conceded to the difficulty admitting that in the process of trying to be more selfless, “I would probably still get mad sometimes, but I’ll try,” or like Michael, who would be “working to it.”

The challenge of graduating through the spectrum of change posed by Phoenix could be mitigated by patient empathy on the part of the helper and also on the part of the
one who wants to change. Ellie, who had formerly mentioned that the hard work has to somehow come from within and through feedback from others, now referred to empathy as a vehicle. She mentioned that a mean person could become better “if they tried harder and if they felt like what it would be to be someone that they were being mean to.” Hunter, who had previously recommended cultivating empathy in the other, this time mentioned modeling empathy and further to “just be nice to them…maybe that’ll change them, and they’ll want to be nice to other people.”

In fact, to hang around or be with nice people as a way to become a better person was the top answer in all of the post-LSI interviews with even Ellie and Ash now appreciating its central importance. Ash recommended, “work and help from other people” including “being around friendly people …[because] they’ll have an influence on them.” Ellie admitted, “if I spend a lot of time with them and we…just kind of did the same thing and tried to be like them.” Plus, as Phoenix put it “they can support you and then you’ve people to be nice to.” Johnny, with his father in mind, was determined to “follow in his footsteps and not get angry at people…hang around him more.” For Amethyst, the influence of the community to encourage and support positive behaviour was simple: “If, like you have one really mean person in a world of good, sooner or later, they will turn good...” Angelina, convinced that one needs to, “hang around nice people,” cautioned that, “if you don’t, then you just become meaner.”

Aubrey went the furthest with her response. Selfish people, according to her, can change with proper guidance from a friend and through service. She said, “You could organize a community event and say like, ‘you can help me with this and you can do this…’ and then they might be like, ‘oh, well, that’s really nice of her and she’s [being]
nice’ and then maybe they’ll do something on their own and then and then they’d be more of a selfless person.”

**Intentional choices for emotional regulation: Intellect over mind.** Following my questions examining admirable qualities and how one can instigate positive change in others, I asked students to examine a photo of the Selfless Wall and pick the words or phrases they felt that they had improved upon the most. I also asked them whether or not the LSI experience had made a difference in their lives. These questions led to a host of surprisingly similar answers demonstrating that students had cultivated a greater capacity to note and check their emotions using a metacognitive framework favoring prosocial intentions. They spoke of how the unit influenced behaviours consistent with considering consequences to actions, perhaps originating from our cognitive coaching of being non-attached to rewards in the process of performing actions (activating mindful orientation towards the purpose and consequence of any decision). The answers fell into two categories of being emotionally regulated at home with family and with their friends. I explain each of these below and then relate Ash’s story. His transformation was remarkable and worth a doubletake.

**Family.**

Ellie and Johnny both felt that they had a better grip on handling their emotional outbursts on the home front. In her pre-LSI interview, Ellie had, at three various times indicated, with mannerisms belying anxiety and shame, challenges associated with being in a house with two other often impatient sisters who provoked her anger. Post-unit, Ellie felt that the whole LSI experience helped her become a better person saying, “…when I’m mad at [one of] my sisters or something I sometimes leave her and don’t help her
because I’m upset with her…then I realize that I should help her because she does things for me too.” In this case Ellie was now practicing how to negotiate her anger and her own loss of patience with the remembrance and gratefulness of her sister’s past kind actions. In fact, the phrase from the Selfless Wall that Ellie wanted to work on moving forward was “wanting to share and wanting to please.” Johnny also felt that throughout this unit he “got better at thinking” and explained, “…when someone’s like annoying…I …go up [to] my room and just sit there for a little bit…[so that] I wouldn’t get angry at them [there]…[I] kind of get angry but then I’m like “no I should just go up [to] my bedroom and sit down for a little bit.””

**Friendships.**

In answer to my question, “what kinds of things do you [now] do that are different?” Angelina simply replied, “like, I double-think.” When I asked her to explain, Angelina expanded with, “like, not just think about it once or going with it. Think about it twice instead of doing it or saying it.” To put things into perspective, this answer was remarkably complex for Angelina who generally stuck to simple, brief statements or declined to answer if she felt too taxed. I probed further with, “what kinds of things do you double-think on?” and ascertained that Angelina now questions whether or not she should say something before saying it. It had seemed to me through my own observations that Angelina was experiencing less friction with other students, particularly other females, and I wondered whether it was due to her metacognitive shift. She said that she now, more often, sported a friendly smile and was being honest more frequently (choosing phrases from the Selfless Wall). Having the tools to shift the pattern of her social interactions might have been the key to her successful and self-proclaimed “most
memorable experience” of working together with two other girls that she rarely chanced to work with otherwise, near the end of the inquiry unit. Mrs. Lavender, in her post-LSI interview, felt that Angelina seemed more confident and was getting along with people a bit more.

Phoenix, as mentioned, fell prey to severe emotional outbreaks. Just having a ball thrown at her in a way that would hurt her fingers when caught would draw uncontrollable tears. Once, in anger, she scratched students in gym, screamed profanity at them, and stormed out, only to be found later on in a small nook in the library lying down. She had even thrown a piece of eraser at me when I explained why she needed to choose a more suitable topic for her inquiry as it had to fall under Canadian immigration. By the time a month of the LSI unit had passed, I remember that I was startled observing Phoenix not make a scene when two balls got past her in gym. Close to her post-LSI interview, I witnessed something astonishing. Phoenix had baked cookies for the talent show and some were left over in the staff room. They were brought into the classroom as a treat for those who were being tutored for the EQAO after school. When Phoenix spotted her cookies, she joyfully jumped up and started passing them out to all of the students. The EQAO tutor saw her with the plate of cookies and reprimanded her for selfishly diving in like a “vulture” to help herself. Incredibly, Phoenix said nothing in response and just stood calmly. There was no scene, no rage, no tears. When the others realized that Phoenix was not going to say anything, they defended her and explained the situation.

In the Post-LSI interview, when I asked Phoenix whether she had a chance to develop any of the qualities on the Selfless Wall, she indicated a whole host of phrases
including self-regulation, friendly smile and posture, honesty, willingness to share, and willingness to please. When I followed up with, “Can you give me examples of how you were able to do at least one of them?” Phoenix replied, “Self-regulation—like if I was getting pretty angry, I would like take some time or I would just calm down” and in social situations, “…ask them nicely to be quiet.” Even Mrs. Lavender noticed a difference in Phoenix saying, “I haven’t seen her not wanting to work with people anymore…I haven’t seen those meltdowns.” “She still struggles with friends,” Mrs. Lavender added, “but it’s not as peaks and valleys as it was before.”

In addition to feeling like he now maintained friendly body posture and good body language, Hunter indicated a heightened awareness of his emotional state and a willingness to be more mindful saying, “Well, sometimes when I’m not feeling that well or I’m feeling down, I’m not that nice but then I try to change my attitude and everything and just be better.” He now wanted to “act the right way—not to be negative, stuff like that. Be positive not negative.” Hunter felt he had learned how to construct successful work teams saying, “I pick a person I worked well with and then a friend so I have both—so if I’m stuck, I can just ask the person I work well with…if I’m feeling down, a friend would probably make me positive.”

Hunter felt he now took more care to focus on “what would be the nicest thing to say to someone instead of saying something negative.” He described how he has noticed that, “Some people are always like sad or mad, [if there is] a question that they can’t answer or are stuck.” Hunter’s solution would be to tell them, “it’s okay—you can do this…[on] a test, if I can’t do a question or am stuck on it, I just put a star beside the question…and when I’m done the whole thing I just go back…because I’ll probably
remember.” As another example, Hunter described how, “in hockey someone makes a mistake and then the other team goes and scores.” Hunter’s reassurance would be, “that’s fine, don’t worry about it. Just go back on the ice and make up for that or do something that’s gonna change the outcome or something…positive.”

Notably, near the end of the unit, Hunter gave a temperamentally volatile student (who had just accidentally broken a favourite toy) a huge high five during a soccer baseball game with encouraging words. The student reacted with a distasteful shudder and avoidance, but Hunter’s kindness touched Mrs. Lavender who later thanked him for his prosocial gesture. “I’ve noticed a shift in Hunter,” she said to me, “he was pretty, pretty negative actually…he’s changed for the positive…he’s not as me-focussed…[and has] more motivation to do work…he is more regulated.” According to Mrs. Lavender, both Hunter and Amethyst seemed to be in “a better place” post-LSI.

**Ash’s transformation: An increase in emotional regulation with the help of Amethyst.**

Prior to heading into the CFIS service day, it was clear from Ash’s pre-service reflection that he was less than enthusiastic about the whole thing. Responding to the question, “are you nervous or excited?” Ash was the only one who wrote, “I am bland. I don’t care. It’s not really interesting.” When asked how this service initiative connected to the inquiry unit, Ash, to match his bland disposition, wrote, “It is important because it will increase Canada’s population and variety for culture.” All of the other students’ answers (with the exception of Joe’s) demonstrated eagerness and were emotionally charged. I had noticed Ash’s weeklong moody dip, but on the day of the service I had no time to take him aside and talk to him.
His service group noticed Ash’s disengagement. In her post-LSI interview, Amethyst said to me that Ash was, “not really into it. He was a bit like loopy, didn’t want to do it, he just wanted to go eat…” “So, did the group members help?” I asked.

Amethyst replied, “Um, kind of. I helped Ash like get back into it and stuff.” I wondered if she said something like, “Snap into it and behave!” Probing deeper, I found out that Amethyst used kindness and understanding, consistent with her advice about influencing a mean kid to change. She said, “I helped Ash get back up and like, enjoy it while he can because we’re only doing this for a certain amount of time… he was like really bummed-out and upset. So, I told him to look on the bright side. They’re happy and they’re pleased that we’re doing this and they’re understanding… we’re understanding how they felt when they were coming to Canada and stuff. I gave him the bright side.” She felt that her pep talk had helped, using it as evidence for herself of having learned to become a better collaborator. Near the end of their guest’s interview, I remember standing at the door and listening to the conversation and feeling surprised that Ash was asking the guest questions. On that day I remember feeling relieved that he had come out of his moody dip.

In his post-LSI interview, Ash revealed that the CFIS service influenced him to become a more helpful person saying, “I now know how to, like, work with people in interviews and stuff… like just be nice and uh, just try to understand them.” However, what was most surprising to me was Ash’s further comment of, “[if] I see someone having a real bad day then I help… because I know how to understand if they’re having a bad day.” Apparently prior to this unit, things were different because, as Ash admitted, “…when I saw someone… not having such a good day I wouldn’t really help because I
couldn’t understand them and see if they were having a bad day.” Now if he notices others in distress or feeling down, he understands the power of simple actions like proximity—just sitting near them. He paid tribute to his classmates saying that, “I know they’re helpful because like sometimes when I’m feeling down, they help me lighten up and stuff.” Although Ash may still be coping with recognizing factors contributing to his own moody dips, the fact that he has the awareness to recognize mental anguish in others and an interest to alleviate their pain is a major step forward, from a selfless perspective.

**Growth mindset goals moving forward.**

Six of the ten students I interviewed, including Ash, chose to continue working on becoming more growth-mindset oriented (another phrase on the Selfless Wall), recognizing the power in such a transformation. They wanted to go from “I think I can” to “I can!” I remember once complaining to one of my monk mentors (who had read Dweck’s book on growth mindset) that so many people say that they operate from a growth mindset but actually act with a fixed mindset. The swami stopped me and said, “To have a growth mindset is to be spiritual; that is why the percentage of such people is less.” My mentor’s comment helped me understand my journey better. It was refreshing to note that so many of these Grade 6 students naturally realized that they were operating on a continuum and looked forward to further cultivating a growth mindset orientation rather than feeling that they had achieved it all.

**Overcoming the fear of serving.** Although the service initiative seemed to offer a type of interesting diversion: “I thought it was fun to take a break from school work and then just go tour people around…” as Angelina later put it, it was not until I read the students’ pre-service journal entries and conducted the post-LSI interviews that I realized
just how nervous and fearful the students had felt in advance. I knew that they wanted to help CFIS and had signed a pledge committing to service saying, as Hunter did, “It’s being selfless—just doing something nice to welcome them to our country.” However, over half of the pre-service journal entries included phrases like “what if I mess up?” or “I am nervous they won’t understand me.” This section examines the factors that contributed to the students’ fears and how they felt afterwards, having carried out the service. I briefly introduce how the students managed to overcome their fears and will further expand upon what I believe was the main reason in the next section, “developing an ‘other’ orientation”.

**Avoiding the challenge and not facing the fear.**

Joe was the only student in the class who did not take part in the CFIS service. He had initially come to school but had devised an escape plan with his mother beforehand should the need arise. In the post interview he admitted that he was confident on the day of the service saying, “I knew I was going home because I was sick. I knew I wouldn’t probably have to do it.” His health issue was a blurry right eye, which, in the end was fine. Looking back, it is hard not to notice the patterns of avoidance and low self-confidence, coupled with long absences that made the process of building resilience virtually impossible for Joe. He would avoid challenges by saying, “I can’t do this,” and not engage in academic activities (particularly mathematics) with other students. Having worked with him one-on-one on mathematics and his never-completed inquiry project, both Mrs. Lavender and I knew that he could function at grade level and even extract enjoyment from it, but he shirked from those experiences, remaining skeptical of his potential. Joe’s disappointing post-LSI comments were, “I don’t have anything to be
happy about at school” and “I don’t think I have done anything this year to be proud of.”

With such splotchy attendance, he did not even remember most of what he had done and what he did vaguely remember, he said that he did not understand.

**CFIS service fear factors.**

Over half of the students indicated in their journal entries that they were nervous about speaking in French. They were worried about not pronouncing words properly, messing up, and not being able to understand the guest immigrants. Hunter explained, “I was kind of nervous because I felt that I wasn’t going to say my question right or something.” Aubrey wondered, “What if they don’t understand what I’m saying?” and “what if they ask questions that I don’t know how to answer?” Johnny wrote, “I hope I don’t screw up.” Even the ever-confident Michael who was used to hearing French at home, during the service session, kept thinking, “how am I supposed to pronounce these questions?” Many of the students who were interviewed post-LSI indicated that they would have benefitted with more practice time. However, the majority of the students, most of whom had an aversion to completing homework, not only practiced at home and at school before the day but even enlisted their parents’ help. Aubrey was worried when she had gotten the longest question and said, “I practiced it and I wrote…out…what it sounded like and what it was actually like, so I wrote for, savez-vous, SAAAAAVEHHHHHHVOOOO.”

Stemming from the worry of language barriers was the issue of unknowingly offending the immigrants. Ash, at first did not want to help Aveline saying, “I didn’t really want to speak in French because I didn’t want to do anything bad and hurt the person in anyway…I just didn’t want to, like, offend the person.” Amethyst also wrote in
her journal that she was “nervous because you don't know if they'll like you or if you might say something against them by accident.” Somehow, every group ended up with a strong translator and students like Hunter were relieved noting, “Alain knew little bits of English which was pretty good…the translator also helped because she made the questions clear.” Angelina’s stress originated from wanting to be organized and not lose the camera that she was tasked with using. She wanted to be responsible, and thereby, I believe, provide the clients with a good impression of the students.

Some students were worried that the immigrants would be disinterested in the whole interview and according to Michael, “would be like, not wanting to answer the questions.” Amethyst said, “I was worried that they would think that we’re just kids…you know how there are some parents that are like, when there are kids…they complain and say ‘okay but later’ and then they never do…kind of like ‘oh, I’ll just pretend I’m listening’ kind of like that—that’s what I was afraid of.” On the other hand, students like Ellie worried that the students in the class would behave inappropriately because her hope was that, “we would all [help them] feel welcome and they would want to come back.” Amethyst’s group had issues (like Ash) but she said, “…at the beginning, everyone was kind of fooling around…[but] it changed after when everyone snapped into it—we were like, ‘okay, we got to do this now.’ They were getting it.” Phoenix actually thought that everybody involved would be disinterested saying, “I was expecting people not to talk at all, that it would be very awkward, and that we would have to do this much work and we’d just read through it and it’d be very boring but it wasn’t.”

Phoenix’s dominant fear, however, was of being around people that she did not know. In fact, initially she would not sign the pledge, telling me that she felt shy around
strangers. She said, “I did want to help but I sort of didn’t at the same time because um I didn’t really want to go in front of strangers.” Mrs. Lavender and I did not push her to sign the document. In her own time, she came around and said that she would give it a try. Ultimately Phoenix said, “I don’t like talking to strangers…but it was better than I thought it [would be].” When I asked her what helped she said, “I have no idea.” The impact of the service event played out in Phoenix’s final journal collage of images that represented the Canadian identity. She had added the CFIS logo.

**Mitigating fears.**

There were some factors that mitigated the students’ fears as they were carrying out the service. A couple of factors were parental support and encouragement and class pride. Many of the parents helped the students with the French pronunciation. Michael’s mom urged him “to be nice, welcoming, and kind.” Both Michael and Johnny felt honoured that the students were all participating in speaking in French, a language that was part of their own family heritage and were keen on participating in a successful event. According to Michael, his parents said that it was, “cool that it was going on” because “they didn’t know that schools would do this” which probably made him feel especially eager to put his best foot forward. The unusual nature of the event also bolstered Hunter’s keenness to contribute to service success saying, “It made me proud that I was in Mrs. Lavender’s class and that we got to do this interviewing and all of this stuff. [The other Grade 6] class—I don’t think they got to do this…” For Hunter, this was the class’s “big highlight of the year.” Mrs. Lavender noticed the students taking more ownership—“they HAD to speak [in French]…we were recording it!”
Sometimes a way to overcome a fear is having the worst come true and, in spite of it, prevailing. Hunter explained, “I was thinking like, I hope someone doesn’t mess up or something or say the wrong question but that did happen—Jacob accidentally asked my question so I had to say his question but nothing really mattered…it all worked out, so yeah.” The students learned how to work as a team serving the best interests of a third party. Having more classmates in the group, reduced the pressure as Hunter said, “when it’s just face-to-face sometimes with someone that you don’t really know it’s kind of uncomfortable but then when you’re with more people it’s more comfortable.” Students realized that they were in it together and that they could lean on each other for support. Aubrey explained, “we had to work together with our questions, people would be like—“who’s after this?” and we’d be like…it sort of just flowed on” so that even if “it sort of was hard at the beginning” it “got a lot easier as you went on.” A sense of comfort arose from settling into group roles as Amethyst described, “we need[ed] to know a lot more about everyone and so when I did, I realized who liked being the leader…who liked to be the camera people…and then me and Ash we were just like, the talkers.”

However, from my estimation, and by the fact that the next section is entirely dedicated to looking at the “other orientation,” a great deal of nervous fear and tension was relieved through the students and the immigrants building relationships with each other and by the students viewing the world from different perspectives with care empathy. Finding things in common and being absorbed in the immigrants’ stories alleviated the pressure of worrying about one’s self and messing up. For example, Ash began feeling more connected to Nadia when he found out that she was from Egypt because he had done a project on Egypt the year before. Aubrey and Ellie cheerfully
reminisced how Alain wanted to build a relationship with their whole group through his favourite language of basketball. These types of connections, ones that the students could hardly anticipate, helped them relax into the interview knowing also that the immigrants, “felt comfortable and they felt safe.” This enhanced community made Amethyst proud. She said, “they were actually listening…they were enjoying our time.”

Service confidence in retrospect.

Looking back on the service experience during the post-LSI interviews, many students described how their initial fears paled in comparison to the great vibe they experienced. As Aubrey explained, “At first, I was like ‘oh my gosh, this is going to be like so hard! Like, how am I gonna—speak French—how am I going to do this?’ But then at the end…like on the day I was like ‘this is a really nice thing that you’re doing for someone and people are coming from different countries! So just, like, embrace it!’” For her, Alain was no longer an imposing, scary, faceless immigrant who spoke French. Rather, she said, “It’s just, like, him and what’s so [scary] presenting in front of like just him?” Johnny also looked back on the interview as his favourite memory saying, “It was my first time doing it and I didn’t screw up on anything.”

Johnny, Phoenix, and Ellie described a sense of pride and confidence in their class’s ability to work as a team and connected their self-concept to that of the class. Ellie described the class as being resilient saying, “I felt proud of everyone who did the CFIS because…some people might have been really nervous like I was about talking French…” and that “even if we messed up we would try and keep going we wouldn’t just go ‘argh!’ and leave because we messed up on a French word that nobody really knows well.” Later Mrs. Lavender described how, during the LSI unit, Ellie had really “come out of her
shell” revealing a soft leadership style that had, until then, been hidden. Johnny seemed relieved and happy to see that, “everyone was trying to help out people—they were not just like [trying to] make the other person mess up.” Phoenix felt proud seeing that “everyone was thanking us and saying that they were happy.”

The novelty of the situation became more palpable with time, increasing the value of the event and the students’ experiences. Ash, who was initially “bland” about it all, was later tickled pink saying, “we got to…talk to a real Canadian Egyptian and that was really fun.” Ellie remarked, “I really liked the CFIS clients. I think that was like a good opportunity because we had never done anything like that before. We will probably never do anything like that again.” Aubrey felt more connected to the local community and, as a result, wanted to help out at the local humane society.

I could not resist asking the students whether they felt their confidence had increased after the LSI experience. I asked them to rate their confidence before and after on a scale of one to five with five being the highest. Aubrey, relating it back to the service, said that she was a two before but now, “…a four and a half because, um, after interviewing the clients was like a really, really big step, I guess because you’re interviewing someone that doesn’t speak the same language as you—that’s really hard but when you did it, you knew it and you were like ‘oh! Like…I can do it!’ and it was just all of a sudden you were like, just have relief because…I guess I knew what they were saying.” All of the students I asked felt more confident afterwards except for Joe (who did not feel that the experience increased his level of confidence) and Michael and Angelina (who both felt that they were at a five before and after the experience). Johnny broke the rules by stating that he started at a five but ended up at a ten.
Part IV: Developing an ‘Other’ Orientation

A lot of factors combined to produce understandings in every student by the end of the LSI experience. It is hard to identify any single factor that led to changes of heart and mind as all of the factors accumulated uniquely within every individual. However, I did see a noticeable change in the students on and after the service day. This section of the results provides, through an analysis of the students’ words and actions, a deeper perspective into how and why the students’ thinking may have shifted. I first contrast statements and actions made during the pre-LSI interview with post-LSI comments and actions by highlighting the building of relationships and the appreciation of the ‘other’ through the service experience. I then focus on how an appreciation for the ‘other’ was augmented through the inquiry material and explicit lessons on the Canadian prosocial identity. Finally, I address the story of groupwork in Mrs. Lavender’s class where, despite all of the learnings in the LSI unit, students still continued exclusionary practices with their classmates. I explain how Mrs. Lavender and I strove to resolve that issue.

The selfless makeover: Pre-LSI. In the pre-LSI interviews, the students were provided with the following short scenario:

*You hear from a friend in another class that, as part of their inquiry unit on food and nutrition, some students did research on hunger, local food banks and soup kitchens. One thing led to another and the students in the class held a school-wide a food drive, made soup to serve at the local soup kitchens, and even redecorated the waiting lobby of a soup kitchen because the community organizers of the kitchen wanted the place to look prettier.*
I asked students questions such as, “why should one help?” and “who benefits and how?” In most cases, without substantial context, the student responses scratched at surface perspectives benefitting one’s self or airing tokenistic phrases. Only one student dove into deeper understandings.

**In pursuit of a reward.**

The most popular reward that was reiterated by several students was the fact that the knowledge of having been helpful makes one feel good and that such service initiatives are fun for those who are serving. Aubrey said, “You make yourself feel better as a person to know that you’ve helped someone that needs food, and you can do it with your friends so it’s…social [and] fun.” Ellie described the benefit being, “that feeling that someone’s happy ’cause of something that you did.” Angelina recounted a similar experience that she had taken part in starting with the celebration the group had after all of the work they had done collecting and counting food. She also said that it was fun doing things that she liked such as cooking and baking and that students could learn from such service experiences while helping someone out in the process. Michael, having established that participating in my study could earn him volunteer hours, (for the chief scouts’ award) went on to say that the students in the scenario could get volunteer hours that can get them into college. He explained that students can get higher marks, “because this means to your teachers that you’re responsible, you’re a volunteer, you do a lot of stuff for the world” and ultimately, “it can get you into Harvard and other universities.” Michael added that if students do well that it would reflect well on the teachers too. In other words, many of the responses demonstrated an attachment to an end reward as a motivator for service; from a “feel good” factor to those more concrete.
Dehumanization and pragmatic factors.

Ash and Johnny revealed prejudices in their responses, not having had the chance to unpack the perspective of the ‘other.’ According to Ash, feeding the homeless was not a great idea because, “if you feed someone and you keep on feeding them they know that you’re just gonna keep feeding them and they’re going to come and like become greedy and sort of like a tapeworm and like suck you.” Giving the homeless money was risky too because, “you don’t know what they’re going to do with that.” For Johnny, the students would benefit by realizing “that they should get good jobs so that they could pay for food.” In other words, exposure to the homeless would ultimately frighten students into staying in school. In these cases, there was a complete disconnection from the ‘other.’ They both offered additional service suggestions that were more pragmatic in nature and did not involve association with the homeless (such as putting up posters in the neighbourhood to raise awareness and canvas for food and money).

Indebted Transaction.

Hunter looked at service as an opportunity to give back. He said, “…think of it kind of like Christmas. You get some stuff but then sometimes you kind of want to give back and give presents to other people and stuff.” Phoenix approached it from a similar perspective but further calculating out beneficial future consequences by saying, “it’s a benefit because…[there] might come [a] time where…you need that help and that you’ll feel good because you helped someone else and now you’re hoping that someone else will help you.” Phoenix’s comment alludes to a type of “karmic currency” for the future, revealing a more calculated approach to service.
**Deeper perspectives.**

After a bit of pushing and prodding most students provided a deeper, but rather tokenistic perspective, on student learning. Phoenix added that students would learn about, “how much people are struggling to get food for their family and kids and get jobs and stuff.” Ash felt students would learn that, “not everybody has the stuff that they…like, some people have a harder life than they do.” Even Joe mentioned that the students were, “learning to be thoughtful and care for other people not just themselves.” Amethyst’s answers, however, belied a more contextually rich insight into the difficulties of financial destitution. She listed support structures for the homeless, including “clothes to use as long as they need before they can afford things, help them find a job that fits them,” and that she would spend her own money “to help them find some food…some vegetables and good things.” She said, “If they need medicine, I’ll go get them some.” For her, rather than having the homeless, “just thrown away like garbage,” these initiatives would demonstrate care and equitable treatment for all humanity. Glimmers of Hunter’s future focus on positive thinking are conveyed through his belief that such projects, “make other people feel better and make their day.” Amethyst, thinking big, said, “if they do succeed with this and they probably did, they could continue doing this and adding more…to a whole big collaboration all over the world.” These types of ‘deeper answers,’ those that I believe provide greater capacity for perspective shifting and spiritual growth, were more ‘other’ oriented, leaving personal benefit aside.

**Actions pre-LSI.**

As mentioned in the first section of my results, my initial couple of weeks, prior to launching into the LSI unit, made me privy to a lot of ‘me’-oriented behaviour where
students favoured high-priced goods (much of which was left over in school after hours) and trips, being unsupportive of each other during the journal selection process, and behaving churlishly about being stuck with unfavourable journal choices—even throwing a tantrum. The teachers all described the students as being “entitled” with one inconsolable teacher exclaiming, “who’s going to take care of us?” I remember the blank looks I received when I presented the students with my analysis of their second journal entries where many students focused heavily on ‘me’-oriented descriptions of a stunning first week at a new school rather than paying tribute to those who made it possible. Watching them with a supply teacher was painful. However, the full picture, of course, contained strokes of kindness. The students were remarkably attentive, caring, and in some cases even loving towards their little Grade 1 reading buddies. They were respectful towards their undaunted teacher, together reveling in story time and gym, and welcomed me into their classroom with genuine kindness.

**The selfless makeover: During and after serving.** Unlike the pre-LSI interview, this time when I asked questions regarding the purpose and benefits of service, students could draw upon a rich and lived service context and their answers revealed how important it was to be welcoming, to gain new perspectives, and build friendships. The energy of the day of service, the students’ attentive demeanor, and their earnestness to be of genuine help astonished me—it was model citizenship. The students may not have expected it of themselves either, but they were so busy focusing on the immigrants and being responsible ambassadors of Canada, they forgot themselves. Evidence of change in orientation from ‘me’ to the ‘other’ surfaced in their post-service journal reflections where almost all of the entries recounted the immigrants’ tales and what they had learned
from them. When asked about their most memorable experience, most spoke of the immigrants’ stories. Others spoke of creating a welcoming atmosphere, touring the clients, developing open mindsets, and how enjoyable and “cool” the experience was.

Mrs. Lavender, like me, was taken aback saying, “Wow...they really loved it! I wasn’t expecting it to have such a positive [impact] on both ends.” She elaborated, “I wasn’t expecting CFIS to be so engaged and I wasn’t expecting the kids...I thought they might lose interest, you know? But they were...pretty engaged. I did see them step up. The service was very powerful.” The service ended up being a turning point. Mrs. Lavender explained, “it got them thinking outside of their bubble, right? Like that’s the biggest piece that is important there. They’re looking at what they can give to other people rather than what they can get out of it.” On the day and the days after, the students seemed calmer and more cohesive as a community unit with a belief in their ability to pull through as a group. Perhaps a decreased fixation on personal needs made them appear lighter, confident, and more carefree—similar to the nature of the students I had taught overseas.

The following sections reveal the general themes of the students’ answers during the post-LSI interviews when asked about the purpose and benefits of the service. In almost all of the cases, students framed the answers from the perspectives of the guests and/or what they were hoping for their guests.

*Being welcoming.*

Students like Ellie and Hunter wanted to help CFIS because they felt that it would be “selfless—just doing something nice to welcome [the immigrants] to our country” without “getting anything in return.” Johnny empathized that the immigrants, “…were
probably nervous about coming to Canada ’cause they were like leaving their families behind them…” and stated, “you shouldn’t exclude the people—put yourself in their shoes and think, ‘it’s not cool to exclude people because this could be me when I move somewhere else and have no friends.’” The students wanted the immigrants to feel comfortable, happy, and welcome to the point that, as Ellie and Aubrey hoped, “…they would want to come back.” Angelina injected extra kindness into their group’s tour thinking, “maybe, like, her kids would go here…if, she, like, really liked it?” Noticing that her immigrant, Nadia from Egypt, was camera shy, Angelina made sure that the recording device pointed away to alleviate any stress during the interview. To Aubrey and Amethyst, it was an honour and privilege to learn from immigrants who came from so far away. As Ellie said, “it was cool they actually volunteered to come here and like tell people about their life.”

In their post-service journal reflections, students outlined the importance of trying to speak French and also embodying a multitude of prosocial skills such as being friendly, open-minded, polite, and cheerful. They had a variety of pointers for future hosts including “not to make jokes unless they know really good English,” “smile all of the time and nod if you understand,” “if you don't understand what they are saying, just shake your head,” and “[do] not speak too fast in English or French because they won't understand.” Mrs. Lavender also noticed that the students, “really understood that they don’t know what you’re saying when you talk really fast [or] phrases that they wouldn’t get because English would be their second language…it made it really real to them” As a result, Mrs. Lavender found that the students had to “[back] up when you’re talking to someone and giving them time to think.” It became clearer from the students’ answers
that the purpose of the service was not a one-off fun venture that was solely personally rewarding, but an opportunity to be an attentive host and build lasting friendships.

**Gaining perspectives through building connections.**

“I think they were coming [in] with the same stereotypes,” Mrs. Lavender said about the students, and “afterwards they were like, ‘yeah, this might be hard’…service is HUGE for the kids because they’re putting themselves in someone else’s shoes and they’re seeing and doing something for a greater good.” Perhaps the reason why Aveline from CFIS had tears in her eyes listening to the interview tracks was that she was noting how students were coming to terms with the immigrants’ stories by relating their experiences to what they could understand from their albeit brief lives. Aveline’s lesson on empathy was put into practice. She must have noted how telling their stories to interested youth was a therapeutic experience for the immigrants. Amethyst explained, “I felt I could help other people understand and help myself understand what they went through…you learn a whole bunch of new stuff and you get to be in their shoes.”

Nadia’s group was in awe of her background. Amethyst asked her, “…is it like in the movies [with] the pyramids of Giza and riding, like camels, and she was like ‘no it’s different, there’s actual towns, there’s water and stuff.’” Nadia stole the students’ hearts when she spoke of the isolation her daughter was facing in the Anglophone school because she could only speak French properly. Amethyst had reassured her and later said to me, “I know how her daughter felt…I went to an English school and at recess they were only speaking French…so, I know how she felt.” Amethyst continued saying, “I would always come home and say, ‘mom I don’t have any friends right now. No one ever talks to me. I don’t understand them.’” Ash, who connected with her through his own
understandings from a Grade 4 project on Egypt, explained, “[Nadia] said that Egypt wasn’t too easy for her because Egypt was going through a hard time.” Michael praised Nadia for getting involved in the community, later saying to me, “I learned that immigrants have a hard time coming to different countries instead of having a super-easy time.” This was a common theme for all of the immigrants and students commented on it.

Alain opted not to say much about Burundi when questioned. The students, sensitive to his privacy, did not push him. Aubrey mentioned to me that, “I was sort of wondering why he didn’t want to talk about it but then it sort of clued into me that like, you know, he just didn’t really want to talk about it.” Rather, the students celebrated the information that Alain proudly shared. Johnny completely sympathized with Alain’s experience of seeing snow for the first time because, as Johnny reminisced, “I hadn’t seen it in Victoria—only on the mountains but I was like ‘Is that clouds?’” As for Alain’s experience, Johnny remarked that he, “[saw] snow for the first time coming off of the plane—and he’s like ‘what’s this stuff?’ He ran into the airport and he was like ‘oh it’s a lot warmer in here.’” Ellie marveled at Alain’s initiative as a newcomer to Canada saying, “he would go play sports because everyone would just welcome him and they’d play basketball.” These interactions had students thinking more about their lives before Canada. Phoenix wondered if, “…[Alain] had a gym and certain stuff we…might not have.” Students began realizing that, “that it’s really hard to come into a country where you don’t speak the language” and, because of it, how difficult it is to get a job as a cashier or a waiter. Additionally, as Phoenix summarized,
…not everyone is happy with the way they live so they have to leave and that it can be hard for some people to move…you have to realize that when you’re walking by [them without] being selfless…[and] without thinking about [them].

Student learned that Ines, having come from France and having a degree in English, still had difficulties acculturating to Canadian ways and finding a job. Students were impressed at how happy she was despite her challenges and the adjustments that she had to make in Canada. Aubrey recognized similarities between her family and Ines’s life. She said, “[my dad] immigrated because my mom was in Canada…Ines—she immigrated ’cause her boyfriend, like lives in Canada and she wanted to visit him…[my dad] is German, they’re French, but they’re both immigrants.” Similar empathetic connections were made with Masimba’s stories about his life in Zimbabwe and his struggles to acclimatize to life in Canada.

**Building friendships.**

“I like [this student’s] picture [with] Masimba…and I like the group one here,” said Mrs. Lavender (the latter of which she had organized and taken). Angelina had chosen the group photo as one of her most memorable moments of the LSI unit saying, “it was just a photo that we all kind of got together for a finishing kind of thing and uh, I felt like that was right to do too. So, we have a memory in a photo.” As the students connected with the immigrants through the new perspectives, they tied a bond of friendship with them and the immigrants had played a large part in making the bonds tighter. Aubrey said, “…we sort of connected like with our group…Alain connected with all of us sort of together…it was really fun and then when we showed him around, he just really liked that—he really enjoyed it.” Hunter felt that if anything could have been
tweaked to make the service day even better, he would have invited another class to participate so that there would be more students to welcome the clients and honour their countries.

The immigrants’ childhood stories allowed students to live vicariously through them as Angelina, in her post-LSI interview explained with a giggle, “one of her stories that I thought was kind of cool was that she did gymnastics when she was younger…when she was 3 and uh, one thing that everyone laughed at was that Ash said like ‘Can you dance?’” I remember hearing Ash phrasing it carefully in French for Nadia. It was right at the end of their interview and they were having a nice time just hanging out together, asking more questions and deepening mutual understandings. Ellie was really happy to engage with Ines in the way Ines preferred saying, “I thought it was nice that I could be with one of them where they just spoke French because then it wouldn’t be just like talking about someone coming to Canada—we’d be talking about it in French, like with their own culture.” Within a couple of hours, these immigrants became friends—so much so that Nadia and Ines stated that they wanted to come back to participate in such an event in the following year. When the students heard that, they were delighted. Amethyst said, “I didn’t expect [them] to actually come because you know they’re different and I thought, maybe you don’t know what they’re thinking. But now that I’ve learned about a new person that I’d never met before and someone that was really interested enough in us that they’re coming back next year.”

In fact, Ellie suggested, soon after the service day, that the students hold another event for the same immigrants so that they could spend more time with them. Thinking about Alain’s love of basketball, she suggested a basketball game. Hunter added,
“Masimba likes soccer—maybe we could have like teams—like maybe split into like 4 teams and we could do soccer baseball, like outside on the big field for gym or something and then we can have some people on the basketball court.” All of the students supported the idea and great strides were made to make the event a reality but unfortunately it did not, in the end, come to fruition. When Mrs. Lavender thought of having the students write letters of thanks to the immigrants in response to a request made by CFIS, the students were really excited thinking about what the immigrants might like to read.

Mrs. Lavender declared that the service was, “well worth the time…as opposed to ‘here’s the textbook, read [it] and answer some questions’…to me, this [service] is more meaningful.” She noticed a really sense of community develop, although at times it crumbled and she again would see “glimmers of the old.” Overall, however, she felt that, as a class, they had grown. However, it is important to note that they have also had a chance to be and evolve together over the course of an entire year.

**Post-service behaviours.**

Immediately after the service I was flustered and worried since there were cameras and recording devices everywhere and I needed to make sure that everything recorded properly. Two students (Amethyst and another boy who had thrown a massive tantrum prior to the service) calmly sat by my side during the entire lunch hour keeping me company and helping me. I felt that they realized I needed some support and calmed me down. That small gesture meant a lot to me. As I will explain in the next section, I had been noticing more and more prosocial gestures throughout the unit and that certainly continued after the service with fewer overt instances of anti-social behaviour. Here I will describe some of the general behaviours that caught my attention post-service.
It seemed to me that the students were treating each other in a kinder fashion. Johnny developed an older-brother demeanor with the more emotionally sensitive students and the kids were outwardly supportive of them in gym class, even in the presence of a supply teacher. They were beginning to be more thoughtful of others. For example, when I was sick, the students took notice and were sad—a big step forward, especially because they never seemed to take special notice of anyone who was away. When a student, who had started off the year with the class but had to move, returned, students welcomed him back cheerfully and he was picked the most during a “heads up seven up” game. When he spilled his ginger ale on the ground by mistake, Ash picked up his blazer and wiped it up for him. Realizing that Fred, a class mascot made of straw, was to soon be returned to the original owner, several boys got together and created a life-size paper version of him so that he could be preserved on a bulletin board behind Mrs. Lavender’s desk. Phoenix brought in cupcakes to celebrate her birthday and she handed out one to everyone, keeping the rest for her little Grade 1 reading buddy (without calling attention to her gesture). I noticed more mixing among the female students with a popular one making it a point to wish Phoenix a “happy belated birthday” since she had been away the day before. I felt that the students were, on the whole, behaving better. For example, they were not as moody on Mondays and on Friday, while the rest of the students in the school were really, really loud, Mrs. Lavender’s class was calmer.

It was harder for Mrs. Lavender to catch many of these exchanges. I had the luxury of sitting back and observing both prosocial and less prosocial actions. Mrs. Lavender admitted, “I feel like I’m hyper sensitive to seeing when people are misbehaving so I might miss the kids [behaving well, they] fall under the radar and
probably are doing that but I just miss it.” She was frustrated saying, “I feel like by the end of the day I’m seeing a lot of all of the negative things that happen instead of ‘way to go—that was good’ and ‘thanks for doing…’ you know, stuff like that.” Even on the day of the service Mrs. Lavender said she was, “furious with the boys who were [throwing tantrums]. So I didn’t see—I needed you to say ‘look—like stand back and look at this’ and then I was like ‘yeah, you know what, that was pretty good’ and when I looked at the charts and when we were reflecting on it I was like ‘yeah, that was all—it was all positive’.” Mrs. Lavender said, “so that’s one of my things to work on.”

**Tracking prosocial change: Two key contributions.** In the above sections, I provided snapshots of the students pre-LSI and during and after their service day. In this section I expand upon two major factors that contributed to the behavioural transformations and perspectival shifts occurring during the LSI experience prior to the service that collectively manifested on the service day and onwards. The first deals with the examining the Canadian identity. The second variable was our attempt to, through explicit instructions, teach students how to engage with the immigrants.

**The Canadian identity.**

By negotiating their present identity in the reflections of the Canadian past, students created a sense of who they wanted to be. By and large, students seemed convinced that Canadians are prosocial. However, they were beset with surprise when studying cases of discrimination in Canadian past and, I believe, were influenced to make amends through their upcoming opportunity to serve the immigrants. Students also examined, and admired, Canadian activism that led to national prosocial change which also influenced their notions of what it means to be Canadian.
Canadians are prosocial.

We asked the students, in a journal entry, to list three traits associated with Canadians. According to the students, Canadians are extremely prosocial. They are caring, helpful, generous, kind, friendly, welcoming, and nice. In fact, when we asked students to voice the traits, “caring” and “kind” appeared most often and hearing them repeated over again made all of us sit back and reflect. A sense of pride developed when students listed what they felt Canadians valued such as land, freedom, food, social services, peace, and languages. Students even began thinking about how the first line of the national anthem represented what it meant to be Canadian.

Such discussions were not without controversy, however. Sometimes the controversies allowed for greater contemplation. For example, sometime after we touched on selflessness, we watched a video on how a Syrian Canadian girl shared Syrian food with her classmates. One student said that the food was probably a bribe. Immediately other students indignantly spoke up against that calculated way of thinking. When the same student voiced that giving a hungry child the food that you liked the least from your lunchbox was selfless, students audibly dissented saying that it was not (and Mrs. Lavender also offered an edifying personal story).

Since I was studying Punjabi immigration through the Komagata Maru case to role model all of the stages of inquiry, I talked about how there was a group of Punjabi bhangra dancers in the Maritime who were famous for their dancing and for their generosity, raising money for charities through their videos. When the host of the video I was showing pointed out to the dancers that some of their videos had upwards of 50 million views, the dancers professed to not being aware of it. The kids were stunned with
disbelief. Joe kept on repeating to himself incredulously, “that is not possible” and we talked about non-attachment as part of being selfless. Students were seeing how many Canadian immigrants were contributing to maintaining the ethos of care and kindness with their simple prosocial gestures. Amethyst equated selflessness with being Canadian saying,

...when I was young, I [thought] everyone else [was]...selfish...but then I realized that anyone could be selfless, whether it’s doing the groceries,...cleaning up someone else’s room or mess...so technically even though you’re not born in Canada, everyone can be Canadian because...being selfless is something that everyone can do.

_Diversity in Canada and importance of non-discrimination and non-exclusion._

Part of our discussions on what is Canadian extended to the diversity of landmarks all over Canada, including inukshuks, various places of worship, and amazing environmental features. There was thinking around inclusivity and appreciation of diversity that extended into conversations of community, what makes a community, and how values shape various communities. Students learned about stereotyping and discrimination, sharing in their knowledge-building circles facts around residential schools and German, Italian, and Japanese internment camps. Students wrote questions like “why were they discriminated against?” trying to come to terms with the Canadian past. They were aghast when I talked about the continuous passage regulation meant to keep out Punjabi people and how their houses in Canada were targets for bombings in the early 1900s.
Such unkind treatment in the past, I believe, made students want to make amends as Hunter said, “some people [had gone] to different countries and didn’t get treated well back then but now it’s nice ’cause they get treated well—like we did—we interviewed [the immigrants] and made them feel welcomed.” Past racism in Canada was juxtaposed against their own interests in discovering the world. When a world map went up in the classroom, students went crazy with interest and brainstormed about immigrant needs when coming to Canada. Aveline’s plea for help was answered with a pledge by the students and they began thinking more about the immigrant experience in Canada by looking at the Discover Canada study guide, trying a citizenship quiz, and writing questions for the guest immigrants.

Concurrently the students dove into their inquiries, topics that they picked for themselves (a fact that they expressly loved) with zeal to further come to terms with the immigrant experience as it has changed through time. Ash, who was conducting an inquiry on Czech immigration, said, “if I ever meet a Czech Canadian, I’ll be able to understand them.” He loved a picture that we had put up of the world where every country had an impression of its own map. Ash said, “I like this one because it shows…how we’re like, part of this huge world with so much diversity.”

One of Ash’s chosen memorable moments from the LSI unit was learning about what hurts a community, like “discrimination, stereotyping, being exclusive, and being selfish.” He said, “we need to stop discrimination and stereotyping and just become one whole,” and that, “when people are immigrating, you don’t want…to be mean to the culture.” Post-LSI, Ash felt that by learning more about other countries he could be more kind. I believe that the shifts that each of the students felt during the LSI unit
accumulated on a broader level affecting the classroom system, building a stronger community as Mrs. Lavender had later commented.

**Admiration of activism.**

The students were nudged to go beyond their self-interested desires and act and think on behalf of marginalized groups. We did this by showing clips of Viola Desmond’s, Nellie McClung’s, and Chanie Wenjack’s struggles and how they fought back. A video about the Chinese laborers who built Canada’s railroad was also included. The content was connected to present day campaigns against racism and the students had a chance to participate in putting up signage to support the community campaign.

Aveline, a bonafide activist for French language rights in Ontario, fired up many of the students asking questions like, “why is it so hard to live here with just French?” and her question “why can doctors only say bonjour?” was a painful prelude to Masimba’s hospitable visit story on the day of the service. The day after I had mentioned that Punjabi people needed $200 per person to enter Canada while Europeans only required $25, Ash approached me to clarify the numbers so that he could make calculations in present day currency.

The strength of the convictions of the role models who operated with a selfless spirit on behalf of marginalized communities may have carried over to the service day. Viola Desmond, a black women who was dragged out of Caucasian section of a theater in Nova Scotia, according to Phoenix was, “selfless…so that others wouldn’t have to go through the same thing and she…didn’t want anything in return…she was doing it for being right…she wanted to make sure that it at least got a voice.” Amethyst watched videos of Japanese internment camps where you could, “see five-year-old [children]
raking or carrying tiny buckets of water just to survive so that they wouldn’t be
punished…that was like REALLY selfish for like trapping people.” A disappointed
Johnny said, “some [indigenous] kids that were from LaTuc’s school [were]…excluded
from school sports which [wasn’t]…nice of people that were excluding them…you should
never exclude people from sports…and other stuff.” I know that the additional role
modeling of the immigrants increased some of the students’ fervor for social justice.
Phoenix put it all together from the standpoint of the pictures she chose as her most
memorable moments saying, “they were all about how to be selfless and how to stand up
against discrimination because we learned about it with [the] immigrants and how they
could have [faced] discrimination when they came so it was good to learn about what
other people went through in our history because not everyone knows certain parts of our
history.”

**Prosocial lessons: Getting ready to host the immigrants.**

Mrs. Lavender felt all of our lessons acted as “little stepping stones to reach the
service piece.” She said, “the videos grabbed their attention, the [selfless] experiment was
like ‘oh, this is neat, we can do it!’ and then it all kind of built—even just you having
conversations with them about it…pretty regularly and pointing them back to the
[Selfless wall]…it made it more real for them.” She was pretty certain, however, that for,
“CFIS, they needed to learn how to be a host—like how to be gracious and welcoming
and like all of the little things that we had to be explicit about…[that] I don’t know that
they would have picked up on, [particularly the]…second language piece.” We had to
teach the students about how the immigrants might not understand hyperboles (which tied
nicely into the students’ poetry unit) or culturally sensitive jokes. I remember asking the
students what the immigrants might be feeling if they saw the students say something to each other and giggle or act silly. Politely, though feeling hurt inside, the immigrants might smile. I asked the students, “…but what do you think they would be thinking?” “They would think that we were laughing at them,” was their grave reply.

To prepare, we first brainstormed what the service day would look like and how we could help the immigrants feel more comfortable and to create a welcoming and hospitable environment. We realized that we would have to speak in French to seek a common language, that we should have open body language, smile, provide a tour of the school, have some snacks for them at the end for a thank you celebration, and write thank you cards. I put up some of these phrases and gestures on the Selfless Wall to remind the students. We conducted mock tours with each one of the four interview groups. I pretended to be the immigrant and they had to approach me, shake hands with me with a slight bow (smiling) and say, “Bonjour, je m’appelle ____ .” The leader had to ensure that everybody was on task and each student was in charge of properly showcasing at least one room on the tour. They had to ensure that the immigrant had a comfortable place to sit in the interview room. Some students were in charge of taking pictures and recording the interview.

On the day of service, I was happy to see that the students were excited. Ellie helped me with carrying the food into the classroom and when a couple of the immigrants started to arrive, Michael stood by them the entire time, chatting with them and making them feel at home. All of the group leaders did a wonderful job getting the thank you cards signed discreetly. The students melted away much of the awkwardness when they shook hands with the immigrants and exchanged brilliant smiles.
The following school day I reiterated what I saw mostly because I was impressed by their comportment and wanted to express my admiration. However, I believe my words emphasized the value of being ‘other’ oriented. I described how they all stepped up to the plate in their own way, whether it was the group leaders improvising when other groups were running slower, Mrs. Lavender volunteering to translate Masimba’s phrases, how students connected with Alain and shot basketballs although they were a bit unsure of it all (and how the others restrained themselves from doing so even though they really wanted to). Everybody was so polite and patient. We brainstormed how we and the immigrants tried to be selfless and put more phrases up on the Selfless Wall. We built an extended community which, according to Amethyst, in her post-LSI interview, needs kindness, perseverance, and reflection. Amethyst said,

…when you don’t have kindness, you’re rude to everybody and you don’t collaborate with anyone,…you need to persevere to actually talk to someone you don’t know, [and]…you need to reflect on what you say so that you can either use that again or don’t.

**In-Class groupwork dynamics: Cultivating an ‘other’ orientation with peers.**

There was one anti-prosocial occurrence that happened so frequently that it was exasperating to both Mrs. Lavender and I. When they were placed in a group that they did not want to be in they complained. Every time they were provided with the liberty to choose their own groups, there would always be a handful of students who would not be included.

After the prosocial progress I had seen during the service initiative and all of the lessons that dealt with discrimination, I was fairly confident that they were, as a result,
more sensitive to being inclusive. However, as I had earlier mentioned, during my last week with the class, when Mrs. Lavender told the students that they could choose their own groups for a rapping assignment in a poetry unit, we both saw the same practices of non-acceptance occurring. We watched as Michael kept on approaching groups, one after another, asking if he could join them and being systematically rejected. Teaching students about selflessness and discrimination did not seem to affect that habit.

Exclusionary behaviour was an ingrained habit. That was what Mrs. Lavender and I did not realize. This behaviour was fully assimilated into the students’ mental classroom behaviour framework. We had not been explicit enough in dealing with it and decided to stop the students before they began their groupwork. We had them come back to their seats and, with unforgiving accuracy, dramatized what we were seeing. I pretended to be the excluder and Mrs. Lavender was the one searching for a group. Their beloved class mascot, Fred, was also an antagonist in the dramatization.

_Mrs. Lavender (nervously and with earnestness): Can I be in your group?_

_Suparna (looking peeved and as unfriendly as possible and without making eye contact):_  
_I don’t know. Did you ask other groups?_

_Mrs. Lavender (shifting uncomfortably): Yes._

_Suparna (with unmistakable hopefulness in her voice): What about Fred, did you ask him?_

_Mrs. Lavender (deflated, goes off to talk to Fred, then comes back with shoulders drooping further): He told me to ask you._

_Suparna (pausing for a painfully long period of time to accentuate the awkwardness, with a heavy sigh of exasperation and a shrug of the shoulders): Yeah...I guess._
The students looked shocked, frightfully uncomfortable and, dare I say, submerged in a wave of shame. I think that they had not imagined that it would look so horrible to an observer and it was doubly disturbing to watch their unfailingly inclusive teacher being rejected. Mrs. Lavender added that I was, in a way, being somewhat nice because at least I accepted her into my group. I further spoke of how the mannerism with which you accept somebody is important. Later I realized that I could have spoken about on-task and off-task behaviours exhibited by those often not included but did not think of it then.

A few weeks after this incident, I asked Mrs. Lavender whether there had been any changes regarding working in a group and if the students were more accepting. She said, “That’s improved, that’s improved.” I further asked, “…and being considerate?” To which she replied, “Open toward, thinking about what other people [think], yep! Not for everybody but for most of them, there is that consideration of, like, yeah, like that could be me, you know? Yeah, but that required the explicit conversation…” “…and the demonstration, the drama,” I returned. “Demonstration, yes.” Mrs. Lavender agreed.

Part V: “It’s Influential” or the Importance of LSI

In this section I explore students’ views on the importance of LSI through their comments regarding why they felt such lessons were influential. I then look at the influence of both the inquiry and the secret selfless experiment in nurturing family ties. Finally, I consider the overall impact of LSI pedagogy as well as another important influence: the researcher (me).
**Selflessness and its influence.** “People just need to know this stuff” was Angelina’s reply when I asked her why things like discrimination and selflessness should be taught to other students. When I returned to the class a few weeks after my study in June and asked the class to raise their hands if they felt that the concept of selflessness should be taught to other students, all of the hands went up without hesitation. They stated their reasons as found below.

1. Students said that they would not have known what it meant to be selfless if they had not had the opportunity to be taught it. Having now been taught about selflessness, they could now practice it mindfully.

2. Students felt the knowledge is influential—that being selfless can influence others to also be selfless.

**Learning about selflessness.**

Surprisingly, three students in their post-interview explicitly articulated how learning about selflessness offered a type of metacognitive strengths-based moral template since they were more familiar with the deficit definition of selfishness. Ellie said, “…I knew what selfish was, I didn’t really know what selfless[ness] was…but it helped me know, like what it is and how you can help people.” She felt that considering selflessness as we did would be beneficial to others saying, “I think that a lot of people would be nicer to others…they would help more people.”

Amethyst embraced the teachings of selflessness with some relief saying, “we were being selfish without knowing and then we learned how to be selfless…without expecting a reward or expecting some ‘good job’ or anything.” For Amethyst, learning about selflessness allowed her to catch herself in moments of selfishness saying, “we
explained it to ourselves, how we were being selfish.” Aubrey was in agreement saying, 
“[while] helping, you might be thinking about getting a reward after…say you’re helping the elderly…like, mow their lawn and then…waiting for money after…Being selfless, you would just mow their lawn and just be like ‘oh no, that’s fine’.” Amethyst felt that she had been, prior to this LSI unit, operating from a selfish principle without knowing and was grateful for having been given the selfless outlook. With empathy she said, “most people are selfish without even wanting to be. So, learning about [what] being selfish is helps some learn then how to be selfless.”

Phoenix highlighted the class lessons on selflessness. She said, “that was fun because if you knew the acting, and feeling but you didn’t know about, like, how to think about selflessness, that helped and we did sticky notes about what we thought was selflessness which was cool and interactive…because we got to see other people’s opinions.” The concept of selflessness arises in a social context and providing students the opportunity to discuss its various guises and ramifications as a class helps build cultural collateral. This cultural collateral acts as a basis for a class’s understanding and rules of conduct, and further exploration of the intuitively resonant golden rule ‘treat others the way you would like to be treated.’

I combined the written definitions of selflessness (created by each student for the last journal entry) and the spoken elaborations of my ten focal students into an expanded version of Kurth’s (1995) definition (see Table 4). I separated the three strands of feeling, acting, and thinking according to Kurth’s work. It may serve as a useful tool for selfless pedagogy.
Table 4.2.

A definition of selflessness enriched with Grade 6 student perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kurth’s (1995) Definition of Selflessness</th>
<th>Adapted from Grade 6 Student Definitions of Selflessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being Connected (Feeling)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being and feeling connected to others and the remainder of the natural world through an awareness of and/or belief in a transcendent reality</td>
<td>Going beyond being self-engrossed and existing in a state of feeling compelled to help others (including but not limited to random people or animals—sometimes unasked and unexpected). This compulsion can be through: (a) love from the heart (b) a consideration of their perspectives (care empathy), (c) an undefined desire (like “wanting to,” or “just ‘cause”), or (d) just out of pure instinct. Such states and feelings open up the possibility of friendships with the receiver and the receiver feeling more positive knowing that someone’s there providing support. As a result, the “world would be a much nicer place.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefitting Others (Acting)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An interest to enhance the well-being of others and transcend one’s own self-interested desires</td>
<td>There is an interest in being kind, helpful, and giving by putting someone else’s needs and feelings before your own and doing “the better thing” for someone else. Various acts of kindness, helpfulness and generosity include, being nice to a new kid in school even if they are not nice to you, holding a door open, helping the elderly, or paying for somebody’s meal without them knowing. Selfless actions may extend to coming to the aid of someone in distress, advocacy in cases of discrimination, or helping minority groups like immigrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Attachment to Rewards (Thinking)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions</td>
<td>Personal rewards may include the knowledge and accompanying feeling of happiness knowing that you have helped someone or cheered somebody up and the satisfaction of keeping the knowledge of a kind act to one’s self. There must be no expectation or caring about receiving any reward (like a gift or allowance) or any ulterior motive that accompanies a helpful act. There is more meaning in the action if you are not seeking attention or fame. It is important to “not make a big deal out of it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The influence of learning about selflessness.*

Thinking about her understandings of selflessness, Ellie said, “…now I know what it is, and I’ll probably use it later on in my life…I think I’ll help more people because now I know what it means.” This was one aspect of the type of influence that the class was referring to—the fact that the information can inform one’s own potential
actions in a positive way. Angelina felt that now she reflected upon the material and was more mindful of her actions while doing other things. Johnny believed that he had become more helpful. In the past, he said that he was only “a little bit” helpful. When I asked, “and now?” Johnny responded with, “A LOT now. Before I was like, ‘I don’t want to do this’ and now I’m like, ‘Yeah, sure I’ll do it.’” The other aspect that the class described was the influence that such realized actions would have on others. Phoenix explained, “…if everyone does it then there’s a possibility that they’ll do it more. If there’s a frequent reminder then it might help them.” In other words, seeing others carry out selfless acts serves as a reminder to the individual to do the same. As such its influence is seen as a tool for the betterment of self and society.

Along similar lines but in further detail relating to friendships and relationships, Ash said that learning about selflessness is important because it is, “influential to be nice.” He expanded, “if someone’s having a bad day, and you do something nice for them, you make them feel good.” To Ash, and considering his personal experience, such actions can make a big difference in a person’s life. Ash looked at discrimination as a lost opportunity. He explained, referring to the video where a gathering of little birds discriminated against a bigger bird, “…if those birds weren’t mean to the other bird, then they would have been selfless and maybe they could have been friends.” Additionally, for Aubrey, selflessness was something to be integrated with advocacy and even a way to honour friendships. She said, “…if you’re selfless, you fight for what’s right for other people. Let’s say there’s one girl being discriminated [against] and her friend helps her out—that would be selfless ‘cause you’re not fighting for you; you’re fighting for someone else.”
The influence of the inquiry and secret selfless experiment on families and the community. Both the inquiry unit and the SSE had an influence on nurturing family ties and creating an awareness of examples of selfless in the community. The extent and quality of the developing family relationships were unexpected for they were not expressed goals for either the inquiry or the SSE. In hindsight, perhaps being more mindful of developing family relationships could have increased the number of positive stories and cultivated a deeper awareness of selflessness in society.

The inquiry unit and family ties.

The inquiry unit led to questions about ancestral immigration heritage and family. Some students had personal inquiries that focused on their own cultural community and we received unanticipated supportive feedback from some parents. Ellie’s mom enthusiastically described the impact of her daughter’s discoveries through a Pier 21 letter and interviews with her grandmother. A strong bond was forged between Ellie and her grandmother through the inquiry (perceptively stronger than what her other two daughters had) and Ellie spends more time talking to her grandmother now. Aubrey’s interviews probing into her father’s Canadian immigration experience from Germany motivated the pair to hold weekly German language lessons. Aubrey hoped to be fluent by the age of 14. Her mother thanked us for conducting the LSI unit.

Some students regularly discussed lessons with their parents and commented upon it in class. Students like Johnny received and benefitted from parental encouragement and Ash and Michael’s families frequently discussed the unit at home. In fact, it was at his father’s suggestion, having just eaten a schnitzel at a Czech restaurant, that Ash took on the study of Czech immigration. All of the 19 parental comments received on the service
interview transcripts were extremely positive and supportive. On the other hand, there was evidence of a general lack of parental involvement. Seven parents did not submit any transcript comments, despite homework alerts sent to parents and most students did not hand in homework on time. Mrs. Lavender’s newsletters were read by less than 50% of the parents and only a quarter of the parents donated something to the class’s silent auction hamper.

*The secret selfless experiment.*

The SSE provided another view into each child’s family life. As Mrs. Lavender said, “I feel like that was a little window into home that I don’t always get. I don’t hear much about it.” Since it was a secret, students were not allowed to explicitly call attention to their actions to seek a reward. Some students washed the dishes and walked the dogs day after day without, so it seemed, any parental recognition. On the other hand, some students received plenty.

The aftermath of the SSE was profound. In their reflections, completed immediately after the SSE, only a few students wrote that they did not enjoy it because they either forgot to complete it or blamed it on family members not being present. Some students were surprised that they forgot as many times as they did, and many students were surprised that they did not receive any recognition from oblivious family members. One student was taken aback when her family finally noticed her actions (of both walking the dogs and washing the dishes every night). A handful of students wrote about how they felt awkward, weird, disappointed, or sad that their family members remained oblivious, even though they knew that expecting a reward can lead to disappointment.
Less than half of the students and only five out of the ten students in my study, indicated that they would continue with SSE actions in their reflections. Many believed that it had not made a difference to their character, but almost half of the students admitted that the SSE had improved relationships with siblings and/or parents. Angelina, who had a rocky relationship with her sister, had written a kind note for her during the SSE and stuck it to her door. Angelina’s observations described how her sister said “cool, thanks” and Angelina went on to say, “…and what I love was how she stuck it on her computer but I don’t know if it will stay there.”

By the time I conducted the post-LSI interviews, nine of my ten cases reported that they had continued with prosocial acts that enriched existing family bonds (even though only five had expected they would do so in their reflections). Joe is the only one of the ten who did not continue. Actually, he did not carry out the SSE in the first place, having been away on a cruise. Joe was the only interviewee who felt that he had not changed throughout the entire LSI unit. All of the nine other students felt that they had made positive strides along the selflessness spectrum. In the following section, I look at how the SSE influenced each of the nine students’ family lives. Most of the descriptions are based solely on the students’ words and cannot be triangulated.

**Positive verbal expressions at home.**

Ash’s and Johnny’s SSE involved wishing their parents a good day or good luck when they knew that they would be facing certain challenges in their workplace. Ash’s parents had never praised his verbal gestures and even though he has continued this action a couple of times a week (rather than daily as for the SSE), he said that he had branched out to other meaningful gestures like putting a flower in his mother’s lunch.
Phoenix asked her parents about their day among other things like doing the dishes and walking the dogs. Phoenix said her parents were, “…just like “thank you” except for the dog—the dog, they were asking what was wrong.” Phoenix has continued to ask her parents about their day. Aubrey also asked her mom about her day for the SSE. When she revealed to her mom that she was doing it for the SSE, her mom said “Oh, I’ve gotten used to that.” Aubrey said to me, “Now it’s sort of routine. I’ll be like, “how’s your day?” and I’ll ask my sister that too now…and my dad…I’ve used it with different people…I’ve learned that it makes people really happy when you do something like that…making people happy is like a nice reward.”

**Housework.**

Several students took on housework as part of their SSE. Ellie’s SSE involved cleaning the mudroom (her family barely noticed). After the SSE she said, “I’ve been just kind of helping around the house—just doing the dishes more, setting the table…” Amethyst emphasized how the SSE changed her attitude towards housework saying, “…before usually I was like, ‘okay I’ll help because you asked me to’ but now I just want to help because it makes me feel good and happy and not just like, ‘ugh, I got to do dishes’ and something like that.” Aubrey, who early on in the LSI unit created journal entries about wanting a steep allowance (of $60 a month) to buy toys for herself, said, “…like before…when I did the dishes in Grade 3,…I was like ‘mom can you give me like $15 bucks, I just did the dishes’” Aubrey’s mom would say, “NO!! That’s WAY too much money!” After the LSI unit, Aubrey would not ask for money “because it’s just a thing that you do, you don’t need money, like you don’t need something in return. You just do it.” Aubrey has noticed that such actions make her parents happier.
For Aubrey and Amethyst, this perspectival switch of helping and doing housework “just because” has helped them be more alert to opportunities of being helpful and assume a positive attitude towards various tasks in life. As Aubrey said, “before I guess if…like my grandma would get me something, I’d be like ‘Oh thanks grandma’ and I would probably just like get in the car. Now I’d probably help her get in the car and like, help her do stuff, I guess. When she’s struggling you just see that and you help…before I’d probably be like, ‘they’re fine, they’ll manage on their own’ and I’ll just get in the car but when they’re like trying to get up you just help them.” Amethyst described her transformation saying, “Like this weekend I just finished landscaping my grandma’s garden and before like the lawn was so long, there was a whole bunch of weeds, there was dog poop everywhere and we cleaned that all up and it looks gorgeous right now.” In the past, Amethyst would do it only because she had to, but now, she said, “I wasn’t even asked to go and I was like ‘oh, can I come?’ ’cause it was like fun.”

Both Hunter and Michael spent time helping their mothers with the laundry and fold clothing among other housework for their SSE. Since the SSE, Hunter said, “…sometimes I wash some of the dishes and do some stuff like cleaning the living room…I don’t like when the house looks like a bomb happened so I just clean it up.” He followed this by saying, “….all of the stuff we’ve done—all of this that’s all selfless—yeah, it kind of makes me want to help more people out.” Michael continues to help his mother with the laundry and fold clothes. Michael said, “I get to help my mom because she usually does all of the laundry and it takes her a long time.” Further, they planned to spend more time together in the future as Michael described, “we might be getting a sewing machine. I might help my mom sew.” According to Michael, learning about
selflessness and conducting the SSE were influential because, “if you’re better at home, sometimes it reflects to school and makes [one] better at school.” He clarified, “…if I weren’t selfless at home, I would sometimes not be selfless at school but if I were selfless at home, I would be selfless at school too…I would help the teacher a lot.”

Noticing Selflessness in the Community.

Some students were transferring the material learned at school into the community context. The anti-racism signs in Hunter’s neighbourhood stood out to him and he wanted to place one on his own lawn. Aubrey described how the community dance event, that brought various elementary schools together, was selfless. She felt that it was a community building activity where all participants were invested in promoting togetherness and creating connections saying, “now we’re all like, together and we’re all doing the same thing.” By the end of the LSI experience, Aubrey expressed greater interest in continuing with prosocial actions through community volunteering. In Amethyst’s post-LSI interview, she referred to a questionnaire that she had just filled out dealing with bullying. Apparently on that survey the students were asked to choose whether or not they agreed with the statement, “I help people because I’m going to get a good review on my resumé or I’m going to become famous.” She saw the connections between what we had been learning about (regarding the motivations behind actions) and what makes an action selfless. Amethyst said that agreeing with the statement would demonstrate selfishness.

Other influences: LSI pedagogy, the selfless wall, and researcher effects.

So far, I have described why the students felt that learning about selflessness is influential and how the secret selfless experiment affected families. Now I touch upon the
influence of the LSI approach itself by addressing how it made an impact upon Mrs. Lavender’s pedagogy. Finally, I describe how I may have influenced the system as a researcher, teacher, and an observer intentionally role modelling selfless attributes.

**The LSI pedagogy.**

The LSI unit influenced Mrs. Lavender’s approach to teaching. She now considered integrating service and selflessness into other curricular areas. She was used to clumping moral issues into religion units. Mrs. Lavender explained,

> I think it’s neat to overlay religion or selflessness with each subject. When we started, I was really nervous about how [you were] going to weave selfless into social studies. I didn’t really see—I knew it would be [with] immigrants some way, but I wasn’t sure how, how it would kind of pan out. So, I guess a shift to me would be like, yeah, there can be [a] link especially with the social sciences. You can bring in community service for sure which would tie into our pillars in religion, right? I typically would isolate them…and same with the French.

Pedagogically, I noticed an additional influential feature of the LSI approach. It opened up numerous possibilities for making connections and relationships in unforeseeable ways. For example, the anti-racism signs were initially not on my radar for the unit. However, at Aveline’s beckoning the double-sided sign was brought into the classroom and placed as a permanent fixture in the window so that it could also be read by those on the playground. We took a picture with it (which was sent to CFIS and displayed on their board) and read a newspaper article on it. I brought a sign back to my student housing complex and asked the university’s community housing department whether we could put it up on our lawn. They enthusiastically agreed and procured
several more signs to put up around their other housing lots. On the sign there was one message written in Chinese. When my Chinese friend’s primary school daughter, who had recently just come to Canada, laid her eyes on the sign she squealed with delight and ran up to it, pointing to her mother and reading out the words. I conveyed this heartwarming story to the class when they had started to become distracted from their task of translating school tour locations into French, our CFIS guests’ native language. The story demonstrated to the students how to: (a) express kindness by honouring something precious to another in a meaningful way, and (b) empower daily practices through connecting with community stories. The students applied themselves with greater seriousness as a result.

_The selfless wall._

The selfless wall became a permanent growing fixture in Mrs. Lavender’s religion corner. She felt that “there are certain things that can come and go on your bulletin board…but then there are certain things that the kids should know all of the time…becom[ing] a benchmark or an expectation in the classroom.” Additionally, she felt that the wall provided a reminder for those who forgot the selfless definitions, “so they could constantly be referring back [like] an anchor chart.” The selfless wall even helped Mrs. Lavender with distinguishing between the three areas of thinking, acting, and feeling selfless. Also, at times when she felt frustrated with students who were not operating at the expected behaviour level, she would refer back to the wall to “find that good in every kid.” She said, “that’s why I like having stuff up because it’s a constant…and if it’s helping me, then it’s probably going to help a kid.” In the future she could see how introducing something like the selfless wall in September, changing the
words or moving them up and down, and integrating the words into students’ vocabulary could make the display an even more dynamic and a living presence.

**Researcher effects: The influence of my presence (and their influence on me).**

From the very first day of my study, I was treated by Mrs. Lavender as a valuable asset and a valued member of the classroom community. At the end of the unit she had said to me, “...that piece is important, to have the right person. That’s what I mean. Like you’re the right person to do [this].” However, she made me feel like I was the right person from the very beginning.

Initially I was nervous. I was an unknown entity entrusted with a lot of power (as a researcher, observer, and teacher) who was placed into an existing dynamic system. I worried that I might be viewed as a bothersome interferer, poking around and putting people on edge with requests—but I was not treated as such. Due to Mrs. Lavender’s respect of and appreciation for me, I quickly settled into thoroughly enjoying my time with the class and genuinely felt that Mrs. Lavender and her students looked forward to having me there. Mrs. Lavender gave me a place to park myself, the students labelled my station with my name, and images of superheroes started going up behind me on the bulletin board, heightening my sense of confidence.

As I had mentioned, the students whom I interviewed instantly felt comfortable enough with me to want to share their first journal entries and comment upon them. According to Mrs. Lavender, Angelina, Amethyst, Aubrey, Michael, and Phoenix had a “special bond” with me and “gravitated” towards me. Many of my student cases started hanging around during recess to talk to me about their interests, things that were happening in their lives, and their family. Often, they would just strike up a conversation.
Their friends began feeling more comfortable with me. Since part of my job as a researcher was to observe and listen, I did so with great interest and that may have encouraged students to talk to me more. I realized that many of them do not have an adult who hangs around with time on their hands to just sit and listen. It may have been nice for them to have a trusted adult ear listening without judgement and ready to help in any way. I helped with any curricular need and was often approached (i.e. for things like poetry advice, math help, comments on choreography, and to scribe).

The students would also help me whenever they saw that I needed it, sometimes with unfamiliar and confounding technology or things like creating a display. I also jumped in when Mrs. Lavender needed photocopies, money counted for trips, or other odds and ends. Our friendship may have also added to the classroom environment as Mrs. Lavender and I leaned on each other for support to make our way through the day, particularly to provide the enormous support students required to work through their individual inquiries. It would be very difficult for any teacher to independently conduct an inquiry unit (closer to a free inquiry on the inquiry spectrum) with such a high needs class comprised mainly of students unfamiliar to IBL.

When I was away, I was missed, and that surprised me. I assumed that students would not notice. Another thing that astonished me was that two thirds of the class wrote an optional comment for me (heartwarming notes of thanks) in their last journal entry. Generally, when it came to writing, most students did the bare minimum. A few weeks after the completion of my study Mrs. Lavender and the students had a little party for me. They went around in a circle and listed their favourite aspects of the LSI unit. The top four answers were (in order): (a) the CFIS service, (b) my presence in the classroom, (c)
learning about selflessness/conducting the secret selfless experiment, and (d) the inquiry. They presented me with a group painting where each of their thumbprints represented birds on telephone wires, symbolizing a crucial lesson in the unit where we learned about the selfish undertones of discrimination.

Mrs. Lavender referred to my impact in her post-LSI interviews. When asked whether teaching and thinking about selflessness helped her become more selfless she responded with,

…the more people you surround yourself with who are positive and have that growth-mindset, like it’s gonna transfer to yourself just like the more you hang around with negative influences, you’re probably going to adapt that mindset or those actions, right? So yeah, just having you in the classroom…people are like ‘she’s not leaving yet is she?’ So yeah, even you, even you just in the classroom, you can just feel—it’s just a lighter, yeah, it’s a lighter mood just to have you here…it’s kind of…radiating out.

My study and presence gave Mrs. Lavender an opportunity to talk about selflessness. She said, “I know it’s part of your research, but it wouldn’t probably have been in my regular conversations if you wouldn’t have come into class. We know [what] “selfish[ness]” [is] but I wouldn’t be paying as much attention to like explicitly teaching it, right? So, our conversations have helped and then it translates just because you’re looking for it or you and I are saying ‘did you notice…?’ or ‘did you pick up on stuff like that…?’ which I wouldn’t do…I don’t have anybody else in my class to talk to.”

Our conversations about selflessness ran deep and carried over to Mrs. Lavender’s personal life, helping her regulate her emotions. Mrs. Lavender described how, in the
midst of altercations, she now felt more inclined to “take a step back, look at the big picture” and be more understanding of others, essentially taking time to alleviate her frustrations.

Mrs. Lavender and her class made me feel like a hero. However, many times I know I was less than one. I asked for too much of Mrs. Lavender’s time and added to her stress. I missed many opportunities to showcase examples of selflessness. Also, I wondered if Joe’s participation in the study was, for him, overwhelming. In the last interview, as mentioned in the methodology, students were exposed to a large assortment of photographs and artifacts of the LSI unit. They had to choose their favourite ones. It was fun for them all except for Joe. To help Joe (who had missed so much) negotiate the unfamiliar images from those that were somewhat familiar, I reduced the number of pictures by at least two thirds by asking him to identify the ones he did not recognize. It must have been traumatizing to see an entire table that was covered with pictures, reduce to only a handful. That process might have added to the turmoil I later realized he was suffering from on the home front. Ultimately, I know that I must have had both positive and negative impacts on the system. However, as mentioned, Mrs. Lavender and her class continuously made me feel that my influence on the system as a researcher, teacher, and observer, was predominantly positive.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The results chapter contained the context (part I), weekly lessons (part II), and three key findings (parts III, IV, and V) that emerged from the data analysis. In this chapter, I relate the findings to the theoretical framework, address the research questions, and discuss future developments for both the framework and this field of research.

The Selflessness Framework in the Findings

In the methodology, I hinted at how I assembled the three key findings but did not supply specifics. The conceptual framework, built on Kurth’s (1995) domains, informed three very basic and broad general concept codes (Saldaña, 2016) that were used, at all three cycles of analysis, to separate out the themes that were inductively generated. The three concept codes were connections, prosocial, and non-attachment and referred to Kurth’s (1995, p. 15) three domains of awareness of a transcendent reality, benefitting others, and non-attachment respectively. The remarkable insight that emerged while I was studying the themes nested under each of these three concept codes was the fact that there were three overarching themes that spanned each concept code. In other words, each key finding is a composite of Kurth’s three domains of selflessness; the unification of the three domains is the core of selflessness.

For example, in the key finding section of “other-orientation,” the parts dedicated to “the selfless makeover, pre-LSI,” which looked at the reasons for helping, I had nested under non-attachment. The part dealing with “during and after service” was primarily taken from connections because it highlighted how students vicariously lived through client stories and built alternative perspectives while trying to be understanding. Finally, the part focused on “tracking prosocial change” was originally nested under the prosocial
concept code. Similar processes occurred for the other key findings of “I think I can…I can!” and “it’s influential.” The power of each overarching theme makes me wonder about the source of that power and whether or not it lies in the fact that each theme embraces all three domains of selflessness.

One observation of the process of determining the themes is that the three framework areas of connections, prosocial, and non-attachment are deeply intertwined and not linear steps in a progression towards selflessness. For example, being prosocial might increase the depth of feeling that one has for the community and vice versa. Being non-attached might spur one towards being more prosocial and prosocial behaviour might stimulate non-reward-oriented thinking. I tried to relate the findings in a way that combined the areas to increase the descriptive density of the whole. In this chapter, in the process of addressing each Research Question (RQ), I will make explicit connections to Kurth’s three domains and parts of the literature review.

**RQ 1: How is selflessness expressed in students of a classroom engaged in LSI?**

**Key findings 1: I think I can…I can!** Initially, the students had given direct and simple advice (such as to have a “mean” kid just try and change or hang around nice people). Post-LSI interview answers bore evidence of the fact that students recognized the inherent challenges in assuming prosocial behaviours and collectively referred to the whole transformation as a process that required commitment, at times self-forgiveness, and the necessity of being more aware of possible role models. Students recognized that being prosocial does not just happen, it requires alertness and effort of wanting, thinking, being with such people, and acting prosocial. In other words, they conscientiously articulated a metacognitive component to being prosocial.
A surprising finding was students’ self-professed successes of becoming more emotionally regulated. Metacognition seemed to have also been a key factor. To guarantee themselves better success in the prosocial realm, students utilized selflessness theory to consider the motives behind their actions and go beyond self-interested desires. They were practicing a type of mindfulness technique. Mrs. Lavender and I incorporated many pedagogical techniques that would have encouraged mindfulness, including those in the spirit of the Jordan et al.’s (2011) study where students considered their immoral and moral behaviour. Being more metacognitively aware and mindful of non-attachment and prosocial thinking may have bought students time to regulate their emotions. Students like Phoenix displayed less eruptive behaviour and Hunter, who Mrs. Lavender had noted as being very negative in the past, began making a concerted effort to be positive.

Ash exemplified a startling change in how he expressed opinions about unfamiliar groups. In his first interview he warily characterized homeless people as “becom[ing] greedy and sort of like a tapeworm and like suck[ing] you…” whereas later he was more concerned about not stereotyping. As such, Ash was beginning to develop an other-oriented relational caring or ‘care empathy,’ where “empathy is an awareness of another person’s internal states and vicarious affective response to another person” (Hoffman in Noddings, 2012, p. 773) but without a “touristic invitation to intimacy’ (Lather, 2009, p. 19) or “empathy constructed [to] reduce otherness to sameness and solidify the structure of discrimination” (Caruth and Keenan in Lather, 2009, p. 20). Care empathy signifies progress towards expanding beyond one’s limited self through breaking down barriers and building more meaningful relationships and connections within diverse communities.
Care empathy also connects with the theory presented in the literature review regarding overcoming out-group prejudices (Henry & Hardin, 2006).

Smith’s (2000) study showed that when teachers transcend themselves and find ways to make the subject matter deeply relevant to students, feelings of alienation, isolation, and fear on the part of the students can be removed. Through LSI, the students, overcame fears and built confidence in themselves in various ways. For example, Amethyst proudly recalled her collaborative skills when recounting her approach to helping Ash through his “bummed-out” phase during the service. Aubrey felt so much more confident in her work through LSI that she was empowered to start volunteering in the community. Most of the interviewed students expressed a positive change in their confidence level and planned on pursuing their progression towards “I can!” from “I think I can,” answering Dweck’s (2008) call for practicing growth mindset. In short, the students, apart from Joe, sported a more positive self-concept—one with greater resilience, courage, and commitment to manifesting their inner potential.

There were a variety of expressions of selflessness that were manifested by the students precipitating out of the key findings focused on realizing inner potential.

1. Students began to articulate their understandings behind prosocial growth.
2. Students implemented metacognitive changes to regulate their emotions in the pursuit of becoming more prosocial.
3. Students developed care empathy to feel more connected to the global community.
4. Students expressed a commitment to work towards building a more positive self-concept.
Even if such changes appeared within only one student out of the entire class as a result of LSI, I feel that LSI would still be worth the pedagogical effort.

**Key findings 2: Developing an ‘other’ orientation.** Previous studies have shown that prosocial interventions lead to improvements in the capacity for perspective-taking (Extebarria et al., 1994; Johnson, Johnson, Johnson, & Anderson, 1976) and increases in children’s awareness of themselves and others (Lozada et al., 2014). The results of this study are consistent with these findings. After having been explicitly taught about selflessness, immigration, and discrimination, and after having pursued their own lines of inquiry into immigrant populations in Canada, the students entered into the service initiative either prepared to be selflessness, to learn from and be welcoming to immigrants, or both. Since they had studied the immigration process and the significant contributions made by immigrants throughout Canadian history, they approached the service not with pity but with a sense of respect and admiration for the immigrants. The students dutifully assumed an ‘other’ oriented persona, embodying a service mentality that shifted the energy of the entire class. Rather than speak of themselves and their own service triumphs afterwards, students were moved, by the stories of the immigrants, to recount those stories and retell the experiences of the immigrants.

When placed in a real service situation, that was meaningful and stretched students’ skill sets, students lived the experience of serving. What surprised the students was how much they enjoyed being with the immigrants and how the immigrants enjoyed being with them. This reciprocated prosocial gesture augmented their own feelings of being connected through their guests’ stories and built stronger ties. The students, consistent with SL and IBL literature, valued these citizens of the community and their
diversity (Cox, 2012; Gómez Gutiérrez, 2018; Kalisch, Coughlin, Ballard, & Lamson, 2013; Long, 2014; Wozencroft, Pate, & Griffiths, 2015). The ties built were so strong that the students were eager to invite the immigrants back for another event. The building of strong school-community ties is also consistent with SL research (Cox, 2012; Gray et al., 1998; Phillips, 2011). In fact, almost all of the positive findings of SL research can be enumerated here. IBL research findings citing greater student cohesiveness, cooperation, on-task behaviour (Cook & Ewbank, 2019) and the creation of a more engaging learning environment (Friesen & Scott, 2013) may have also affected students’ service day conduct.

Going into the service, the students knew that they would not get anything for serving CFIS. However, I felt (particularly after the ensuing days of debriefing) that they realized they had experienced something special. Whether or not it was close to the type of transcendence outlined by Phenix (1971)—an “experience of limitless[ness]” or making “a person aware that every concrete entity is experienced within a context of wider relationships and possibilities” (p. 271), I am not sure. Perhaps, however, the students edged closer to “being and feeling connected to others and the remainder of the natural world” (Kurth, 1995, p. 15) through an awareness of something greater.

All of the little details and lessons that built up to the service day prodded perspectival shifts that accumulated until the entire system self-organized into something different. During and after being with the immigrants, it was like something had shifted, and the class was ready to function at a higher level in community service. Strenta and Dejong’s (1981) study invoked the power of suggestion to increase students’ self-concept (which I had shared with the students when teaching about selflessness). After the service
I was able to use evidence of their actions to provide them with prosocial and empowering labels. The power of suggestion substantiated by evidence, but with the undercurrent of non-attachment, was highly provocative. It is one through which I believe these students began developing and truly embodying an ‘other’ orientation, where they went from knowing about service, to enacting a spirit of philanthropy, and then feeling empowered to continue serving.

However, there was still the matter of students continuing with exclusionary practices with their peers. With all of the work Mrs. Lavender and I had done, we were flummoxed. How could they not transfer these understandings regarding prosocial behaviour to their friends (when they were doing so at home and with strangers)? Not fully assimilating understandings harkens back to Darley and Batson’s (1973) study where theology students had difficulties in perceiving a scene “as an occasion for an ethical decision” (p. 108).

Mesurado et al.’s (2018) study used a computer game called “Hero” to help students from ages 12 to 16 to learn about prosocial behaviour. As mentioned in the literature review, the intervention was effective in promoting prosocial behaviour towards strangers and family members but not towards friends. Mesurado et al. (2018) felt that their program did not make specific reference of prosocial behaviours with “friends” and that adolescents identify with family or even strangers more than with friends. I feel that, as a consequence of habit, the students’ internal frameworks, created a long time ago to deal with certain peers (most of them had been together since kindergarten), had solidified. For Mrs. Lavender and I to begin to effect change, we had to be painfully, and
dramatically, blunt. Extreme persistence and novel pedagogical approaches may be necessary to wear away deeply rooted habits.

The key findings of how students developed an ‘other’ orientation precipitate out further varied expressions of selflessness found in students engaged in LSI.

1. The students focussed on the immigrants on the service day and interacted with them with care empathy in a non-attached way (knowing that they were not going to get anything in return for their behaviour).
2. The students developed friendships with the immigrants and were pleasantly surprised that the immigrants reciprocated prosocial behaviours,
3. There was a shift in the entire class’s energy and comportment during and after the service day that was characterized by a sense of empowerment.
4. There were better peer-to-peer prosocial interactions after a direct dramatic pedagogical intervention.

This study’s duration was relatively short—nine weeks in total. The fact that discernable prosocial changes could be detected bolsters Lozada et al.’s (2014, p. 75) “plasticity of altruistic behaviour.” Prosocial norms can be quickly learned.

**Key finding 3: It’s influential.** In the final results section, I described how students recognized that the knowledge and practice of selflessness were influential because it built character and influenced such traits in others. As Phoenix mentioned, one might know how to act in a prosocial way and try to feel connected to others but might miss a crucial piece of the puzzle; that is, contemplating upon non-attachment, or, thinking selflessly. Being alert to the domains of selflessness also made students conscious of the difficulties of consistently modeling the attributes and, therefore, were
more impressed and influenced by proximal prosocial models. This strong and clearly articulated expression of support for LSI by students was a startling outcome. This research supports Brugman et al.’s (2003) study, which showed that a more unanimous perception of the moral atmosphere is positively related to prosocial behaviour.

Students like Amethyst and Aubrey began finding it invigorating to participate in activities (such as landscaping a grandmother’s garden or doing the dishes) in which they would not have earlier willingly partaken. This cognitive shift in perspective was enabled by looking at tasks differently and realizing that there is a sense of autonomy in how one can choose to think about a task—*you can choose not to be attached to a reward or personal gain*. Exercising this sense of autonomy links to Ryan and Deci’s (2009) work where high autonomy tasks place the locus of causality internally. By conscientiously imposing their will and intellectually choosing not to be attached to a reward, students exercised independence from a tiring game of self-indulgence which, in turn, granted them with the relief of a positive attitude to infuse joy in the process of helping. The students’ statements of wanting to help represent a liberative avoidance from the stickiness of self-orientation.

The IBL component of LSI encouraged students to glean insights from grandparents and parents, garnering deeper connections with family and influencing the creation of stronger family ties. IBL also allowed students to explore their internal world and, through their research, connect it with the outer world. Through knowledge-building circles and IBL activities, students pursued various avenues of interest that spurred their decision to choose the IBL topic they pursued. Overall, the IBL component influenced
students to seek a relational stance from the personal to the impersonal and, due to the nature of the topic, cultivate family bonds.

The SL component of LSI, that of service, along with the selflessness theory allowed students to practice their prosocial skills. By doing so in class and at home, LSI allowed students to continue to nurture the influence of this pedagogy on building family ties. Aubrey felt closer to her entire family, Hunter and Michael spent more time doing chores with their mothers, and a host of students described improved sibling relationships due to the secret selfless experiment. Again, liberated from selfish thinking, the students had cognitive space to devote to their family members at home, and thereby build deeper relationships and connections. For students like Hunter, Amethyst, and Aubrey, their mental preparedness in selflessness allowed them to notice selfless actions in the community and those that warned them of the trap of selfish thinking.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that students understood LSI to be influential and they expressed this in many ways.

1. The students unanimously supported the motion to have other students learn about selflessness, having had the opportunity themselves to experience LSI.

2. The students made the choice to help out at home with a positive attitude.

3. The students built deeper connections between themselves and the world and themselves and their family through LSI.

The first two expressions of selflessness in the students exemplify a committed readiness to be selfless, armed with a powerfully purposeful way to live. This knowledge metacognitively informed each student’s approach to life and the supplemental
pedagogical tools (such as the secret selfless experiment) furnished possibilities to enrich and enhance family connections.

**RQ 2: How closely do these manifestations of selflessness align with the indicators as informed by the domains of selflessness?**

The answers to the first research question furnish the answers to the second research question where I closely examine the indicators/attributes of selflessness related to Kurth’s (1995) three domains of selflessness (see Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2). The selflessness wall acted as a living artifact of the ways the indicators were interpreted and negotiated by the students and how they envisioned enacting them. In this section, I will supply the original framework along with my suggestions that were mined from the data (including the selfless wall) for additional considerations for or elaborations to the original list based on the findings.

**Domain 1: Awareness of a Transcendent Reality.** With regards to the first domain (see Table 5.1) we provided the students with plenty of opportunities to realize and offer skill sets, whether it be through the IBL component, the SL component, the secret selfless experiment, or others (i.e., building the selflessness wall and learning about selflessness). As a result, students became aware of more connections between themselves and others and wanted to continue manifesting a positive mindset. There was close alignment with the original indicators and the manifestations of selflessness.

However, I would like to add some indicators/attributes. Taking curricular risks naturally happens in SL but in some experiences more than others. If the work is just above their comfort level (i.e. speaking in French), then students are given the chance to take a risk in a supportive and monitored environment. Dweck (2008) work on growth
mindset encourages facing the risk of failing. Meeting the risk, living through it (whether successfully or not), and reflecting upon it allows students to build resilience. From the Vedantic perspective, resilience is important because one must have faith in themselves. Having opportunities to manifest this inner potential builds a positive self-concept and motivates students to “bring out that faith in others” as Amethyst had so aptly put it.

Table 5.1.

Domain 1 indicators/attributes: Original and suggested additions/elaborations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1 (original)</th>
<th>Indicators/Attributes (original)</th>
<th>Suggested additions or elaborations*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An awareness of and/or belief in a Transcendent Reality through which one is, and feels, connected to others and the remainder of the natural world</td>
<td>• Positive self-concept and belief in inner potential (growth mindset)</td>
<td>• Provide opportunities for students to take risks, overcome fears, and build resilience*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Awareness of connectedness between self and others</td>
<td>• Embodiment of care empathy (Lather, 2009; Noddings, 2012) and show how it decrease in out-group prejudices and increases relationship-building*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provision of possibilities available in the setting for students/ participants to realize and offer skill sets</td>
<td>• Highlight for students the evidence of emerging deeper connections with friends, families, and the community*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have touched upon the importance of integrating understandings of care empathy as a way forward to decrease out-group prejudices and build relationships with various communities; effectively transcending self-oriented preoccupations. In our study, Aveline took a main role in conducting a lesson on care empathy in the spirit of Noddings (2012) and Lather (2009) and it was fully supported by virtue of both the IBL unit topic and the service itself. There were various opportunities for students to create connections with members of the community and their own families. Reflection on successes is key for the students to maintain momentum and continue to pursue prosocial actions to the point that such habits are solidified.
**Domain 2: Benefitting others.** The findings detail in depth the types of prosocial modelling, pedagogy, and interventions that Mrs. Lavender and I implemented to aid the development of prosocial attributes within students. I feel that we did a decent job covering the original indicators as listed in the second domain of selflessness (see Table 5.2). However, I would like to expand upon these general indicators based on the results.

The students pointed out in their post-LSI interviews that the development of prosocial attributes could sound easier than it looks because it requires individual commitment, cogitation, association with prosocial models, and prosocial behaviours. These stages could be more clearly articulated, encouraged with Lozada et al.’s (2014) statements of how quickly altruistic behaviour can be learned, and included during discussions of anchor charts (like a selfless wall) or during service sessions.

Prosocial behaviour that is modelled by students, as a whole class, and by others (i.e., community partners, family members, peers in the media) should be constantly highlighted so that students are not only alert to various manifestations of prosociality but that they also start valuing those attributes more than others. By reflecting on the immigrants’ prosocial behaviour as a class, the students’ respect and admiration for them grew and that they felt more connected to them as a result.

Finally, it is important to address persistent and sometimes institutionalized non-prosocial behaviour as bluntly as possible. Students want to change but the problem has to be made visible. In most cases students do not change because they just cannot see how they are behaving—behaviours that would be, to us, obvious hypocrisies.
Table 5.2.

**Domain 2 indicators/attributes: Original and suggested additions/elaborations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 2 (original)</th>
<th>Indicators/Attributes (original)</th>
<th>Suggested additions or elaborations*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| An interest in enhancing the well-being of others and in transcending one’s own self-interested desires | • Prosocial modelling & interventions  
• Development of prosocial attributes  
• Pedagogy enacted to enhance prosocial atmosphere | • Unpack the theory of prosocial behaviour (wanting, thinking, being with, and acting) and highlight the “plasticity of altruistic behaviour”*  
• Pedagogy with practical applications like the SSE required as is an anchor chart like the selflessness wall*  
• Develop awareness of prosocial features in service partners*  
• Encourage prosocial behaviour by calling to students’ attention their own prosocial behaviour*  
• Non-prosocial behaviour in school must be creatively and effectively resolved* |

**Domain 3: Non-attachment.** Through explicit lessons and referring to examples throughout the unit, Mrs. Lavender and I talked about non-attachment to rewards and to question motivations behind work while working. As such, we addressed the original attributes (see Table 5.3) and saw student gain a different perspective towards things like housework. We did not predict, however, the increase in emotional regulation that, I think, grew out of all three domains of selflessness but was highly influenced by the metacognitive factors of the domain of non-attachment and the desire to be prosocial. Students should be made aware, through their own reflections, of the progress they are making and the metacognitive factors that have been most beneficial.

In the same spirit, the students could be led through the logic chain of how not being reward-oriented enhances their autonomy over their actions because they are not being controlled by an external factor. They could be asked to reflect upon how they felt when they carried out a task for a reward versus when they chose to do something unasked and for no personal gain. Through the post-LSI interviews, some students like
Aubrey and Amethyst started realizing this liberating by-product. Intentionally reflective pedagogical strategies that link students’ selfless development to knowledge of autonomy and motivation could help them become more empowered.

Table 5.3.

*Domain 3 indicators/attributes: Original and suggested additions/elaborations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 3 (original)</th>
<th>Indicators/Attributes (original)</th>
<th>Suggested additions or elaborations*</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions</td>
<td>• Metacognitive aspects (motivations behind and justifications for work)</td>
<td>• Articulating and revisiting throughout LSI how metacognitive factors can enhance executive functioning abilities and increase emotional regulation*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Positive attitude towards work without attachment to an end reward</td>
<td>• Reflective practices that highlight the liberative feature of autonomously choosing NOT to work for a reward*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflective practices that stimulate non-attachment</td>
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</table>

RQ 3: How does LSI operate as a vehicle to promote the cultivation of selfless attributes within and among the learning community?

I have already described at length in the findings and in the preceding paragraphs how LSI promoted the cultivation of selfless attributes within and amongst students. Here I expand upon how LSI made an impact upon the teaching community at St. Mary’s, the parental community, and CFIS.

LSI’s impact on teachers. Mrs. Lavender described how she used to compartmentalize religion into one subject block and how she could now see weaving morals and values into and throughout all subject areas. She is also keen to develop service components in other subject areas—to make it a more permanent feature in her pedagogy. In future years, she is looking forward to creating a display like the selflessness wall that is as dynamic and established from the beginning of the year.

Although Mrs. Lavender did not judge students, she did focus on the negative behaviours
that perhaps affected student motivation and self-concept similar to Rattan, Good, and Dweck’s (2012) study. LSI encouraged Mrs. Lavender to be more aware of the prosocial actions in class, it impacted her moral pedagogy, and provoked her to reflect on her personal emotional regulation.

Other Grade 6 teachers with whom Mrs. Lavender spoke expressed interest in undergoing a similar experience with their students in coming years as they appreciated the benefits and were impressed with Mrs. Lavender’s descriptions. As Aubrey mentioned, one educational assistant was taken aback on the service day, expressing to the students how impressed she was that Grade 6 students were carrying out a formal interview. This type of comment raised the students’ belief in their inner potential and made visible to the educational assistant the possibilities inherent in empowered youth.

I was privy to conversations between Mrs. Lavender and Mr. Duprie who spoke of how there should be more cross-curricular opportunities for students but lamenting that there does not seem to be enough time in the day to orchestrate such planning meetings. They were both appreciative and somewhat startled at the curricular overlap brought about by the CFIS service. A subject like core French is sometimes not appreciated to the degree that it should be and from my brief observations and questioning of Mr. Duprie, it seemed like the students expressed greater commitment to French afterwards. Cross-curricular opportunities bring to life the selfless domain of building relationships and feeling connected with the world.

The IBL component of LSI presented some difficulties as most students had never engaged in proper IBL and many lacked sufficient self-regulatory behaviours. Since Mrs. Lavender and I opted to start at a level past a strict guided inquiry (Colyer & Watts,
students were provided with the autonomy to choose their own topics and find meaningful research. We found that having almost 16 students with assorted learning needs, many of whom needed intense one-on-one support, was exhausting. A freer IBL approach would not be possible for a single teacher with such a class. Most of the time we had to ‘divide and conquer’ and we recognized belatedly that some of the quieter students did not receive enough support. If those who were more self-regulated had received as much attention as the others, they may have been able to make greater gains in the targeted areas. More time and instruction would have been needed to develop a class community of IBL support.

Nasution (2018) shows that elementary school students with lower emotional intelligence actually benefit more from a conventional teaching approach and that, in order for inquiry-based learning to be effective, students’ emotional intelligence needs to be improved. In my study, there were a couple of students in the class who, after a bit of researching, felt like they knew everything about their topic and did not feel the need to ask more questions to expand their depth of knowledge. They could not grasp IBL’s unique feature of continuously asking and answering questions. Interestingly, my study on selflessness seems to have overall increased many participants’ awareness of their emotional regulation. As such, and having now been through a proper IBL experience, the students might be more prepared for future IBL experiences.

IBL is a mandated component of the Ontario curriculum. Cook and Ewbank (2019, p. 35) argue, “elementary teachers need support for, training in, and successful implementation models” of IBL. Some teachers provide students with an umbrella topic and leave them to their own devices for an hour weekly, asking for some sort of a product
near the end of a few weeks. Yet, IBL is very different from such an approach and teachers need more guidance and professional development to see IBL in practice and understand its ethos. Otherwise, teachers might gain a sour impression of IBL and students might suffer from ineffective pedagogy, affecting the impact of LSI.

**LSI’s impact on the parent community.** By virtue of the LSI unit of inquiry being on Canadian immigration, many parents were already involved in learning about and contributing to their child’s study. Often Mrs. Lavender and I would have students ask or share learnings with their parents. Those students who did were able to also raise their parents’ awareness on issues (i.e., through acknowledging the level of difficulty of the Canadian citizenship test or commenting on raw interview transcripts with their child). Such understandings would have ramifications on how parents would regard and interact with immigrants in the future. I predict that knowing more about immigrant experiences and hardships and having had discussions with their child would allow parents to cultivate an ethos of care and empathy within the community.

Johnny and Michael spoke of how their parents were intrigued by the service initiative because it went against their common stereotypes of school. As Michael, who had in previous years attended another school, said, “…they didn’t know, like, that schools would do this because the other school never did…” As such, St. Mary’s School became distinguished among others for providing opportunities that parents supported. Evidence for parental support came in the form of the comments that parents had been asked to make on the interview transcripts (19 of which had been returned). Parents were only asked to provide a comment and most chose to write about what they had learned from the interview, empathizing with the immigrants, and how wonderful it was that the
students had such an opportunity. A couple of parents actually thanked me for carrying out the study on separate occasions.

One parent (having seen the hallway display of the interview summaries) had asked Mrs. Lavender for a copy of the interview transcript with Alain. This parent tutored Alain in English. The parent was extremely proud of the fact that students at St. Mary’s were expressing care for other citizens within the community and that one of those citizens happened to be the very one she tutored. LSI made these types of connections and community development possible and helped mobilize the knowledge learned.

**LSI’s impact on CFIS and the greater community.** Although it took me a little bit of time to explain to CFIS (Canadian French Immigration Services) the concept of LSI, when they understood it, they were 100% on board. In fact, Aveline had completed a teaching degree in Portugal so she could grasp the possible significance of such a venture. Aveline put together the idea of having students interview her clients post settlement since that is what CFIS needed more information on.

The impact of LSI on CFIS and the immigrants was positive. Two of the immigrants stated that they wanted to come back the following year right after the service, having enjoyed the process and realized the difference they had made in the students’ collective outlook on the immigrant experience in Canada. The CFIS representative also wanted the service to take place again in coming years having noted the immigrants’ sense of empowerment. When I met with Aveline afterwards, she told me that she had read the transcripts with tears in her eyes. I showed her the parent comments. She read through all of them with a sense of wonder.
Aveline mentioned that she had explained this whole service venture to their umbrella organization who immediately asked for contact information to set up more such opportunities. They recognize how such opportunities can promote and build tighter and more accepting communities. Such organizations already have a belief in building connections, they generally work outside of their own self-interest, and hopefully work without attachments to personal rewards. LSI’s impact on CFIS and their umbrella organization, perhaps, renewed their faith in the promise of their core mandates.

**A Pedagogy of Selflessness through LSI: Exploring Contributions to Educational Research**

One major strength of LSI is that it takes existing powerful educational research and knits it tightly together with an unbreakable thread of philosophy vetted by sages across time and across faiths. Growth mindset work is augmented when combined with prosocial pedagogy and those teachings are further enhanced when learners are made aware of metacognitive factors constituting motivational theory. However, without a moral philosophy that is, in this case, unpacking the three domains of selflessness, these various research fields remain disparate and not apparently linked. It is selflessness theory that makes visible the chains of logic that guide learners towards how to command the mind and inform actions and why one path of action is preferable over others. The unique contribution of this work is not only this (that it pulls together varied fields of education research) but that it brings to life an ancient Indian philosophy within a Western educational context.

It is not enough to be empirically unique in a field such as education where theory must be practically sound. This work is the first of its kind to study the operationalization
of IBL and SL combined through selflessness philosophy. IBL and SL are two very popular approaches to pedagogy where one often leads to the other, and I am sure that they have been combined before but not necessarily with the type of intentionality and a proper philosophical foundation provided in this empirical study. LSI takes into consideration the external world and the internal world of the learner and provides lessons to develop both intrapersonally and interpersonally. The findings of this study not only showcase these developments but also that those who participated valued the process and outcomes. Students voiced, in unison, that they want to learn about selflessness and that others should be similarly taught. They understand logically and experientially its value and its prospects for rich, complex, and diverse experiences that correspond to the rich, complex, and diverse venue of the world. As such, LSI showcases alternative views of learning spaces that break down classroom boundaries.

As mentioned in the literature review, recent studies by Dambrun (2017), Hanley et al. (2017), and Pantaléon et al. (2019) have worked towards creating a definition of selflessness and through quantitative methods sketched out associations with other defined characteristics (not necessarily in the field of education). The approach of my study differs in that it does not seek to isolate various factors and discover correlations. This study contributed a view of how various factors related to selflessness operate together as a living whole. I have teased apart various factors to reflect upon them and then highlighted how they have uniquely coalesced in the context of this Grade 6 classroom to produce a story rich in context and personality. Selflessness is not a cerebral property; it should be lived. In this study I found ways by which selflessness could be lived in an educational setting and in the process benefit the community of learners.
Implications and Future Developments for LSI and the Selflessness Framework

Since this study of selfless pedagogy, informed by multiple student cases, was limited to one school context in Ontario, the next step would be to see how such a pedagogy through LSI would function in a different setting with different demographics. I had the good fortune of a talented and experienced teacher who showed interest in developing her understandings of IBL, SL, and integrating moral philosophy in her pedagogy. It is important to find teachers with diverse backgrounds and experience who share the same passion for LSI and moral philosophy. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to integrate prosocial modeling into the fabric of LSI.

A major implication for future research is to consider the time that is necessary for the logistics behind IBL and setting up SL. If cross-curricular opportunities develop, those also require attention. For even the most experienced teacher, these demands, given challenging classroom demographics, might exceed their physical capabilities and available time. Besides carving out time to meet student needs, often Mrs. Lavender’s pockets of time before and after school were devoted to helping struggling families of students in her class.

One solution would be to utilize existing school board members who may act as full-time consultants with portfolios that include innovative learning opportunities. They could not only help set up SL opportunities and support IBL practice, but also act as a liaison between teachers to cultivate cross-curricular possibilities. It also might be advantageous for communities to support the development of an intermediary brokering organization who would liaise between schools and the community. They could assess teacher and community needs, create suitable matches, and assist in the process of SL—
including helping to make the outcomes publicly available so that the community can learn and feel more connected. Additionally, it would be important that such an organization has a strong core mandate that includes the domains of selflessness.

A next step would be to design and carry out a longitudinal study to track whether or not selfless pedagogy as integrated in LSI contributes to long-term changes. It would have been interesting to follow up with the 10 student cases after a year to see whether they felt their learnings had contributed to an established change in thinking, feeling, and actions even if they had not been exposed to the type of modeling and pedagogy as we had enacted. Referring again to Lozada et al.’s (2014, p. 75) “plasticity of altruistic behaviour,” it could be that with poor modeling students just as quickly dive back into exclusionary and self-oriented behaviour, unhealthy for any community. Thus, it would be informative to study the strength, or longevity of selfless pedagogy.

With the research contributions of Dambrun (2017), Hanley et al. (2017), and Pantaléon et al. (2019), selflessness has had a chance to be studied through various surveys. Future work could combine such surveys, tweaked by the findings of this study, with more qualitative work in the field of education. The resulting mixed methods studies can increase the diversity of studies contributing to a more varied understanding of selflessness pedagogy.

All of the possibilities listed in the preceding paragraphs can help clarify and expand the conceptual framework for selflessness as created for this study. My research not only added some fresh indicators and attributes but also elaborated upon existing, more general, statements. These elaborations helped fill in practical details for educators so that the theory can be readily taken up and translated into LSI practice. Further
refinements could include additions, elaborations, and collapsing similar indicators and attributes together to create a more powerful framework. Additionally, more work could be done to mine various other philosophies to contribute to and enrich the underlying philosophy of selflessness. These enrichments should be represented on the existing framework. The current framework may undergo changes to better suit theoreticians and practitioners.

Lastly, the role of the researcher should be carefully considered prior to entering into future similar research. A participant observer role is difficult in such a study. It is hard to know when to observe and when to intercede and correct behaviour. In my case, I wanted to see how students would react out of their own accord. Sometimes that watchful extra second revealed more than jumping in and providing guidance extracted from selflessness pedagogy. It was a balancing act because in some cases, by the time I wrote down the instance I observed, the chance to rectify it would have come and gone. A way forward might be to take stock at the end of the day and see how many instances were not properly resolved and to address them the following day in general terms. Those who habitually fall into the same self-oriented rut need personal guidance in a kind and prosocial manner. As Swami Vivekananda (1893/2009, Vol. 7, p. 22) said, “Do not say, ‘You are bad’: say only, ‘You are good, but be better.’” Careful detailed observations will reveal the identity of learners who need more guidance.

In closing, this dissertation began with a foundational quote, selected as a source of inspiration. I chose it when my ideas were in their infancy, prior to collecting data—prior to even settling upon a methodology. All I knew is that I wanted to learn more about
what it might mean to be selfless and hopefully, assimilate some lessons along the way.

The quote, found in the very beginning of the first chapter, is as follows:

The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?


For our learners to face the struggles of life, Vivekananda points out that the education that our system provides should cultivate courage, develop a spirit of philanthropy, and build strength of character. This study produced a set of three corresponding results entitled, (a) I think I can…I can! (b) developing an ‘other’ orientation, and (c) it’s influential. The first finding demonstrated how students cultivated a positive inner self-concept that led to more courage to face challenges. The second section showed how students began to look outside of themselves and develop an appreciation for and an interest in being of service to others. In the final section, the students and teacher reiterated how important this pedagogy was for them to cultivate strength of character in a powerful and purposeful way.

The results of this study directly align with Vivekananda’s success criteria, criteria that provoke rich understandings that mature into wisdom. My response to Vivekananda’s question would now be, “Swamiji, learning to serve through inquiry, an education founded upon a pedagogy of selflessness, is, empirically, worth its name.”
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Appendix A: Recruitment Email to Principal

Subject line: Selfless in Education—Conducting a research study in your school

Dear [principal],

My name is Suparna Roy and I am a doctoral candidate with 9 years of teaching experience in math and science from Grades 6-12. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Christopher DeLuca at the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University. My research involves exploring how selflessness can be cultivated and is expressed in elementary school students throughout a unit that blends pedagogies of inquiry-based learning (including journaling) and service-learning. I understand from X (who is XX’s assistant down at the ____ school board office in ____ ) that you have kindly consented to supporting this study and I would like to, first of all, express my gratitude - thank you so much!

As you may already know, this study requires a teacher who is well versed in inquiry-based learning, encourages the practice of regular journaling, and is open to blending a service-learning with an inquiry-based approach into a perspective unit. Through word of mouth, I have identified such a teacher in your school (Mrs. Lavender). To understand how selflessness is cultivated and how it finds expression in students, I would closely observe, interview (twice), and collect data from a purposefully selected sample of 10 students from Mrs. Lavender’s class. I will also interview Mrs. Lavender (twice). Prior to and throughout the entire process, I will be available to help Mrs. Lavender construct the unit, brainstorm questions/prompts, find resources for both Mrs. Lavender and her students (to aid their individual inquiries), and forge ties with perspective community partners. During the class, however, I will remain an observer.

I was hoping that I could meet with you to discuss my study in further detail, clarify any concerns, and seek permission to contact Mrs. Lavender. I know that it is a busy time of the year and so if you would rather we meet in the new year that is absolutely fine. However, if you do have a pocket of time available prior to the holidays, I happen to be free anytime on December 13th, 14th, 18th, and 20th and as well as on the afternoons of December 15th and 19th.

I have attached the letters of information and consent for both the teacher and the 10 perspective student participants for your knowledge.

Thank you again for your support. I am very much looking forward to meeting you. Have a lovely weekend!

Most sincerely,

Suparna 😊

Suparna Roy
PhD candidate
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Phone: 613-331-5149
Email: suparna.roy@queensu.ca
Appendix B: Teacher LOI/CF

Selflessness in education:
Exploring the cultivation and expression of selflessness in elementary school students

Research conducted by: Suparna Roy, PhD student, Queen’s University
Under the supervision of: Dr. Christopher DeLuca, Queen’s University

LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FORM FOR THE TEACHER

Background information
My name is Suparna Roy and I am a doctoral student with 9 years of teaching experience in math and science from Grades 6-12. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Christopher DeLuca at the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University and am keenly interested in exploring how selflessness and can be cultivated and is expressed in elementary school students throughout one unit that blends pedagogies of inquiry-based learning (including journaling) and service-learning.

Participation requirements
With your consent, I would like to observe your class everyday for the duration (plus one week prior to and one week after) of one unit that you choose to conduct in the style of inquiry-based learning blended with service-learning. During this time, I will limit my exchanges with you to a maximum of 10 minutes (unless you request otherwise on any given day) so you may maintain focus on facilitating learning in your classroom. In addition, I plan to, with your help, select 7 students whom I can observe more closely and with whom I can conduct a 30-45 minute interview prior to and after the unit. Your involvement, should you choose to participate, would also include two interviews (each one hour in length) to take place prior to and after the unit. During the initial interview I will provide you with information regarding what inquiry-based learning blended with service-learning and journaling might look like and elicit your help in selecting seven students. All interviews will take place at school during a time convenient to you and will be both audio-recorded and transcribed.

Since your pedagogy already involves journaling, I would also like to collect data pre-, during (intermittently), and post-unit from the 7 students in the form of reflections to journal prompts (that you can vet) on a topic related to selflessness. All of the students can participate in responding to the prompts as part of your regular classroom activities but I will only collect the entries from the 7 students. Throughout the unit I would ask that all of the students take pictures of meaningful moments (as part of regular classroom learning) with the intention of eliciting comments from the 7 pre-selected students during their final interviews. I can lend the class digital cameras to facilitate the process and give each student a USB memory key to store the data (to be kept in a secure place in the classroom). At no time will any of this information be used to monitor student, teacher, or school performance.

Facilitation of the unit will be entirely your jurisdiction but I will gladly help you construct the unit, brainstorm questions and journal prompts, find resources for both you and individual student inquiries, and forge/foster community partnerships.
Voluntary participation
Your participation is completely voluntary and choosing not to participate will not result in any adverse consequences. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study. Further, you are free to choose, without reason or consequence, to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the interview at any time. You may choose to withdraw your data from the study up until June 30, 2018 by contacting me at suparna.roy@queensu.ca.

Confidentiality and data storage
Your confidentiality along with the students’ and the school’s confidentialities will be preserved to the extent possible. There is still, however, a possibility that you might be identifiable due to the small number of students participating. I will use pseudonyms to replace all data used in publications or at conferences. I will also include quotes from some of the interviews when presenting my findings (without real names) and will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the interview, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote. All of the data will be stored in a secure place for at least five years and all electronic data will be password protected. The list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. Only I will have access to any of the data.

Further information
While there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, the results from this study will help inform how selflessness can be fostered in elementary school students through a mindfully crafted unit. You will be provided with an electronic copy of the final dissertation and if you wish, I could meet with you to discuss the results.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature regarding this study, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in NA) or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

If you have any further questions about my research, please contact me, Suparna Roy, at suparna.roy@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Christopher DeLuca, at edeluca@queensu.ca or at 613-533-6000 ext. 77675.

I hope that this letter of information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. Please feel free to ask any questions—all of your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

Please keep one copy of this letter for your records and return one copy to Suparna Roy.

By signing below I am verifying that I have read the Letter of Information, I freely consent to participate in this study, and that all of my questions have been answered.

Name of Participant: ___________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________

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Appendix C: Parent/Student LOI/CF

How can we learn to become selfless?
Research conducted by: Suparna Roy, PhD student, Queen’s University
Under the supervision of: Dr. Christopher DeLuca, Queen’s University

LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Background information
My name is Suparna Roy and I am a Ph.D. student. I have taught math and science from Grades 6 to 12 for 9 years. I want to help motivate students to help others and realize their own amazing potential. With the aid of your child’s teacher, I plan to do this through a unit that blends school learning with community service.

What your child’s participation requires
Everybody in the class will take part in a unit where learning is done while serving. All of the students will write journal reflections and take pictures of meaningful moments during the unit (using digital cameras that I will provide). I am hoping that your child can give me more clues on how kids can become selfless through two 30-45 minute interviews, one to take place before the unit and one afterwards. I will also look at your child’s journal responses and ask your child, for the final interview, to choose and describe 2 or 3 of their most meaningful pictures that they took during the unit. Your child’s teacher will also have access to the journal responses and pictures since they will be created/taken as part of the classroom activities. I will carry out interviews during school hours in an empty classroom or resource room to ensure your child’s confidentiality. The interview will be both audio-recorded and transcribed. At no time will the interview results be used to monitor your child’s, the teacher’s, or the school’s performance.

Voluntary participation
Your child’s participation is totally voluntary. There are no negative effects for not taking part. There are also no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks connected to this study. Your child is free to, without reason or consequence, refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. You can also withdraw your child’s data from the study up until June 30, 2018 by contacting me at suparna.roy@queensu.ca.

Confidentiality and data storage
Your child’s journal will be returned to your child. I will give your child a data stick to store pictures. The data stick will be stored in a locked cabinet after use so that it does not get lost. The data stick will be returned to your child by the end of the school year. I will ensure that your child’s confidentiality, along with the teacher’s and the school’s, will be protected as much as possible. For example, I will change real names to different ones for publications and presentations. If I use interview quotes, I will do so without real names. I will do my best to make sure that your child’s quotes do not indirectly identify your child. All of the information, or data, I collect will be stored in a secure place for at least 5 years and all electronic data will be password protected. The list linking the real names with different ones will be stored separately and securely from the rest of the data. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data.
Further information
My hope is to encourage Ontario schools to try community service as a way to learn school content. To find out more, please watch my video at: http://bit.ly/2h03PEd

This study allows your child’s experiences to make an impact on education in Ontario and maybe even Canada. Also, by taking part in the interviews, your child will have more chance to reflect upon the topic of being selfless than the rest of the students in the class.

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical nature of this study, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-844-535-2988 (Toll free in NA) or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

If you have more questions about my research, please contact me, Suparna Roy, at suparna.roy@queensu.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Christopher DeLuca, at edeluca@queensu.ca or at 613-533-6000 ext. 77675.

I hope that this letter gives you the details you need to make a decision for your child. Please feel free to ask any questions. All of your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not your child should take part in this study.

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records and return the signed portion below to your child’s teacher (Mrs. Lavender) so that it can be given to Suparna Roy. Thank you!

__________________________________________________________________________________________

I have read and understood this request for my child to take part in this study about learning to be selfless. I have discussed this request with my child and I give him/her permission to take part in the study. I also understand that Suparna Roy will ask for my child’s consent prior to the start of the interviews.

Name of Student (please print): ____________________________________________

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print): ___________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: _______________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Pre- and Post-LSI Interview Questions for the Teacher

Semi-Structured Pre-LSI Unit Interview Questions (Teacher)

1. What does a typical class day look and feel like to you?
2. Please provide a general description of the students in your class.
3. What type of atmosphere/environment do you like to have in the class? How do you try to foster this type of environment?
4. Would you characterize the classroom as a cohesive community? If yes, how have they built connections with each other and what types of interactions do they engage in to promote community? If not, what types of factors are preventing the students from building a community.
5. What types of morals and values are of particular importance to you? How do you model these values? How do these values tie into your philosophy of teaching?
6. For what reasons do you feel students should engage in learning? What motivations should drive student learning?
7. Describe your experiences with inquiry-based learning and service to date.
8. Explain the reasons for your motivation to practice inquiry-based learning and service and to participate in this study—they can be practical or philosophical.
9. Do you get the students in your class to self-regulate? If so, how? Why do you feel it is important for students to be able to self-regulate?
10. How do you incorporate journaling into the learning environment? In what ways has journaling been of benefit to the students?
11. What kinds of skills and character qualities do you hope your students gain by the end of this year?

Semi-Structured Post-LSI Unit Interview Questions (Teacher)

In the spirit of the photo-elicitation process, Mrs. Lavender is asked to choose a few artifacts from those that are presented on the table.

1. Please describe each of the artifacts of learning that you have chosen.
2. Explain how these particular pictures are meaningful to you. How are they special? Explain how each one stands out to you.
3. What does being selfless mean to you? What is one way by which one of the pictures/lessons you have chosen connects to being selfless?
4. In what way does one of the pictures/lessons that you have chosen reflect a shift in your perspectives as a teacher or represent a shift in your thinking about pedagogy?

On LSI (Learning to Serve through Inquiry):

1. What are your overall impressions of and feelings towards this LSI (learning to serve through inquiry—blends inquiry and service) unit? What part of this process do you think was most valuable for the students? Was there a moment that struck you as particularly a powerful learning experience? What did the students learn from this powerful moment? What observations/evidence did you see that made you decide this was a powerful moment? Was this powerful moment transformative for the students? Were there any other powerful moments?
2. What kinds of things did the students learn from the inquiry? What kinds of things did the students learn from the service?

3. What was the biggest challenge in enacting this inquiry? What was the biggest challenge in enacting this service component? What was the biggest challenge in blending them together? What other challenges were there?

4. Please look at the following list (student chromatography). How did the overall demographics of your class of students (in terms of social/emotional needs, learning needs, parental support) influence the success of inquiry and/or service? How many students’ parents are on REMIND?

5. How does self-regulation figure into the success of an inquiry and service unit?

6. What ideas do you have currently, if any, about how these challenges might be overcome?

7. How was LSI different from other units you have taught? What did you like most about it, and what could have been better?

8. Which curricular expectations were the students able to meet? What evidence were you able to gather to ascertain that students were able to meet those curricular expectations? How did the inquiry or service processes hinder or help students’ overall ability to meet the curricular expectations? What assessment strategies that we used in this unit worked? What assessment strategies could have been better?

9. What parts of the community collaboration were most rewarding? What parts of the community collaboration were most challenging?

10. Would you attempt LSI in the future? What would you do differently next time? What kinds of supports would be helpful?

11. You have now taught this unit with an inquiry approach and with a more traditional approach. If you were to teach this unit again how would you teach it? Would you include a service component?

On Selflessness

1. Have you seen any changes in your students regarding selflessness?

2. Do you attribute any of the changes you see in your students to their learning about selflessness? On a scale of 0-10, how effective do you think the following teaching strategies were, based on your professional opinion and your knowledge of these students, in teaching selflessness? The direct instruction? Service? Modelling qualities associated with selflessness, Feedback from clients and CFIS, think if there is anything else.

3. How did teaching selflessness directly impact the process of incorporating service into this unit?

4. What are your impressions of the effectiveness of the selflessness wall? What are your impressions of the secret selfless experiment?

5. Do you think that the separate lessons and follow-up lessons on selflessness were effective? Please explain.

6. What other things could we have done to cultivate within students a greater understanding of what it means to be selfless?

7. How would you change the LSI approach/framework to better teach and promote selflessness?

8. In future, could you see yourself explicitly teaching students’ selflessness?

9. How did thinking about and teaching about selflessness impact you?

10. Is there anything else you’d like to add about the effects of teaching students selflessness?

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On Case Student Progress

For specific students:

1. Let’s talk specifically about the journey that each of these students that I have been following have taken through LSI. Please explain with any stories or anecdotes. [Show the list] lets go through the list and describe for me what progress you witnessed for each child, in terms of: social studies learning objectives, selflessness, ....

2. What progress has each student made in terms of; (1) developing a positive self concept, (2) their attitude towards and motivations for doing work, (3) being mindful and helpful towards others, and (4) being able to reflect upon their experiences and relating them to their learning and their personal worldviews

3. Have any of these student developments that you’ve described been unexpected?

4. Did you get a sense that the students (all of them in general) developed in their capacity to feel more connected to others? What did you observe that gave you this sense? In what ways did the setting/situation provided by the inquiry and service enable students to feel connected with others? If not, do you think that you just didn’t observe this? Or that there was no connection with others made? If so, what was it about your circumstances that made it difficult for you to observe this?

At this point, I drew upon observations made in my field notes to follow-up on specific students and their progress. I shared some interview data to probe further insight from the teacher.
Appendix E: Initial Question Formulations (Domain Specific) and Pre- and Post-LSI Interview questions for the 10 Focal Students

Initial Question Formulations (Domain Specific)

**Domain 1: Transcendent Reality**

Being and feeling connected to others and the remainder of the natural world through an awareness of and/or belief in a transcendent reality

- Of what accomplishments during this unit are you most proud? Explain.
- List ways in which this experience has made you a more confident student.
- What kinds of skills were you able to develop and how did you develop them?
- Name a person in this class whom you respect and describe the qualities that you respect.
- Now tell me the qualities that you have that others would respect in you.
- Do you think it is possible for you to develop the quality that you respect in another person?
- Do you think it is possible for another person to develop qualities that they may not have?
- Some people might say that it is impossible for a mean kid to change. What do you think?
- What makes a community? Some kids in another class might say that their class doesn’t feel like a community. How could that happen?
- Explain whether you got a chance to make a real connection with a classmate, a community member, or the environment? How did this happen? Was this surprising for you?
- From where do you think this feeling of being connected with others comes?

**Domain 2: Benefitting Others**

An interest to enhance the well-being of others and transcend one’s own self-interested desires

- Tell me about your inquiry and how you used your understandings to serve others.
- Did you want to take part in the service initially? If not, what changed your mind?
- Throughout this unit, did you get a chance to help a classmate? If so, how?
- What kinds of skills were you able to bring into initiative? What kinds of skills are you still hoping to learn?
- What kinds of things were you afraid of going into service and how did you overcome those fears?
- Was there every a moment where you didn’t feel like serving? When was it? What are some of the reasons for why you might have felt that way? Do you still feel that way? If not, what has helped you to overcome it?
- Do you think you that this experience has helped you become a more helpful person? Who helped you to become a more helpful person in this experience and how did they do so?
- Do you think most of your classmates are helpful? If yes, how? How could people in your class be even more helpful?
- What kinds of things did you see or hear during your experience in class or at the service site that made you even more proud to be part of this classroom community?
- How does being able to use your skills to help others make you feel? What are some reasons for this feeling?
- Would you want to be part of a unit like this, where you get to help somebody else, again? Explain.
- What kinds of things make this classroom a community?
- When you are stuck on a problem and need help, what do you do?
- If somebody in your class has a problem, what do others in the class do?
- What would the most ideal helpful person be like?
Domain 3: Non-attachment

Non-attachment to outcomes and personal rewards while in the process of performing actions

- Give me some examples of not good reasons for serving or helping somebody else. Is it okay to help somebody else so that you might one day be able to ask them to return the favour? Explain.
- What are some of the reasons why people help or serve other people?
- Ideally, for what reason should we help others?
- Tell me about why you enjoyed this experience.
- While you were helping at the site, what kinds of things were you thinking about and hoping for?
- Are you finding that your motivations for being of help to others have changed since the start of this unit? How might you look at things a bit differently now?

Pre-LSI Unit Interview: Scenario and Questions (Students)

I began the pre-LSI unit interview with a bit of small talk to help put the students at ease. I asked questions like:

How was your day? What did you learn today? What kinds of things are you looking forward to this year?

Scenario

I provided the students with the scenario below—ideas from Berger Kaye (2010).

You hear from a friend in another class that, as part of their inquiry unit on food and nutrition, some students did research on hunger, local food banks and soup kitchens. One thing led to another and the students in the class held a school-wide food drive, made soup to serve at the local soup kitchens, and even redecorated the waiting lobby of a soup kitchen because the community organizers of the kitchen wanted the place to look prettier.

Questions on the scenario (targeting non-attachment):

1. Why do you think these students carried out these initiatives? (Follow up questions: Do you think that these student initiatives were good? If so, in what ways were they good?)
2. What are the benefits of doing these types of things? Who benefits?
3. Do you think the students learned anything? If so, what?
4. Would you want to do something like this? Why?
5. If you were in that class, and you could do something differently, what would it be?

Additional questions (context gathering):

6. What kinds of things do you like to do on your spare time?
7. Describe a couple of your most recent memories where you have helped somebody (for example at home, in your neighborhood, or in the community).

Questions targeting transcendent reality:

8. Think of a person who you admire and describe the qualities that you admire.
9. Do you think it is possible for another person to develop qualities that they may not have?
10. Some people might say that it is impossible for a mean kid to change. What do you think?
11. Do you think it is possible for you to develop the quality that you respect in another person?

Questions targeting benefitting others:

12. What kinds of things make this classroom a community?
13. When you are stuck on a problem and need help, what do you do?
14. If somebody in your class has a problem, what do others in the class do?

**Post-LSI Unit Interview Questions (Students)**

In the spirit of photo-elicitation interviews, students were asked to choose around three to four artifacts from the table where various artifacts from the unit were displayed. After they made their choices, they were asked to answer the following four questions:

1. Please describe each of the pictures that you have chosen to share with me.
2. Explain how these particular pictures are meaningful to you. How are they special? Explain how each one stands out to you.
3. How do these pictures relate to our unit (for example, the Canadian identity, the immigrant experience, stereotyping, and discrimination)?
4. What does being selfless mean to you? What is one way by which one of the pictures you have chosen connects to being selfless?

**Questions about the Inquiry and Service**

1. Tell me about your inquiry. What were some of your inquiry questions? What did you learn? How did you use what you learned to serve others? What is the biggest thing you learned from the service?
2. At first, did you want to help CFIS? If not, what changed your mind? If yes, why?
3. How did you use what we talked about in social studies (about not stereotyping, standing up against discrimination, the immigrant experience, etc.) when you helped CFIS?
4. Did you learn more about the immigrant experience in Canada because you helped CFIS? What else about social studies did you learn through serving CFIS?
5. Before the clients came in, what were you hoping would happen?
6. Did you feel any fear or were you worried going into the service? If yes, what were you afraid of? What made you worried? How did you overcome these feelings?
7. While you were helping the clients, what kinds of thoughts were going through your head?
8. During the service, was there ever a moment when you didn’t feel like helping CFIS or your peers? When was it? What were the reasons for feeling like you did not want to help. What happened to these feelings of not wanting to help? If they went away, what helped them go away. Is there something that could have been done or changed that would make you want to help?
9. Do you think the selfless experiment made you think differently about helping?
10. Do you think you this experience (inquiry, selflessness, the service) has made you a more helpful person? What influenced you in this experience to make you a helpful person (something you saw, read, someone you talked to or met, something you did, something you learned)?
11. Do you think differently about helping others now? How will you act different in future?
12. Tell me about what you enjoyed the most in this experience (inquiry, selflessness, service).
13. What homework or assignment did you like best in this unit? What about it did you like? What other homework/assignments did you like?
14. Was this unit different than other units you have done in school? What was the biggest difference? What did you like about this unit?
15. If you were the teacher, how would you teach this unit? What do you think is the most important thing to change?
16. Of what accomplishments during this unit are you most proud? Explain.
17. On a scale of one to five, with one being low and 5 being high, how much more confident are you after this service experience? How were you before? What kinds of things did you do to make you feel more confident?

18. Explain whether during the service experience you got a chance to make a real connection with a classmate, a community member, or the environment? What was it about the experience that made this happen?

19. If you were a teacher, would you make it so your students learn (about school stuff like social studies and French) by helping others? What are your reasons for this decision? Would you want to do a unit like this again, where you are asked to help somebody else?

20. Were your parents involved? How did they like it?

**Community, Selflessness, and Learning skills**

1. What makes a community? What kinds of things make this classroom a community?
2. What did you see or hear during your experience with CFIS that made you proud to be part of this classroom community?
3. Some kids in another class might say that their class doesn’t feel like a community. What might happen that might make them feel like their class does not feel like a community?
4. What kinds of qualities do you admire and respect in other people?
5. Do you think it is possible for you to develop the quality that you respect in another person?
6. Do you think it is possible for another person to develop qualities that they may not have?
7. Some people might say that it is impossible for a mean kid to change. What do you think?
8. Of this list of skills (show them picture of the selfless wall) which did you develop the most? Did you develop any others? Which of them did you bring into the initiative? Which one most? What about from the learning skills (initiative, responsibility, collaboration, organization, self-regulation, independence)?
9. How does being able to use your skills to help others make you feel? What is the difference between using your skills to help others and using your skills to help yourself?
10. What skill do you still hope to learn? Any more?
11. Throughout this unit, did you get a chance to help a classmate? If so, how did you help a classmate?
12. When you are stuck on a problem and need help, what will you do?
13. If somebody in your class has a problem, what do others in the class do?
14. Do you think most of your classmates are helpful? If yes, how do you know? Can you give me an example? How could people in your class be even more helpful? Can you give me an example about how people in your class could be even more helpful?
15. What kinds of reasons do people have for helping others? Are there some not so good reasons? Do you think it is okay to helping somebody else for these [not so good reasons]?
16. For what reason do you help others? Be honest. Did you used to help others for different reasons? Be honest.
17. Now that you’ve gone through this unit, now describe what the most ideal helpful person is like?
18. In what ways is this helpful person that you described also selfless?
19. Tell me about what you did for the selfless experiment. Have you done anything you’d consider to be “selfless” for your family since then? Did this project make an impact on how you think about selflessness?
**Appendix F: Daily Notes Template**

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<tr>
<th>Time and activity:</th>
<th>Student as well as student behaviour based on Selflessness Framework: TR=1. self-concept, 2. connection with others, 3. setting &amp; skills; P=1. prosocial modelling, 2. attributes &amp; 3. reactions to pedagogical approaches; N=1. motivations, 2. attitude/MC towards/during work, 3. reflections; C=teacher comments</th>
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Appendix G: The Secret Selfless Experiment and Subsequent Reflection

The Secret Selfless Experiment

Description:
This is a top secret experiment that you will carry out on human family members. The idea is that you should pick a selfless and meaningful action that will help make your family member’s (or members’) day better. You will carry out this action (or a number of different actions) at least once a day for a week. The experimental participants should, under no circumstances, find out why you are doing this. Please be advised, however, that your family members may be pleasantly surprised.

Some suggestions:
1. Ask your family members questions like, “how are you?” or “how was your day?” Be attentive to their answers. See if you can remember what they said (experimental evidence).
2. Write little notes of encouragement (on post-its) that are meant for a specific family member (or many family members) that you can place in spots where they can be seen. Write down their reactions and your feelings as experimental evidence.
3. Read a book to your sibling(s). Note how their behaviour changes towards you as time passes.
4. Keep a part of the house (an area common to everybody) that gets dirty quite often, clean. This might be an area that a family member has previously expressed frustration over being dirty. Note the family members’ reactions
5. Watch a family member and note how you can help them in meaningful ways (help with cooking, laundry, cleaning, etc.). Remember, you have to do something everyday. Note the family members’ reactions.

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<th>Specific</th>
<th>What exactly do I want to do?</th>
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<td>Measurable</td>
<td>How will I track my progress?</td>
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<td>Attainable</td>
<td>Is this realistic for me? Do I have what I need to make this possible?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>Why am I doing this? How does it matter?</td>
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<td>Time Oriented</td>
<td>When will I have this completed?</td>
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<td>Day</td>
<td>What did you do? Write down how you felt and whether there were any reactions from your experimental participants. This is your experimental evidence.</td>
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<td>Thursday April 19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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The Selfless Experiment…reflect and REVEAL!

1. Did you enjoy doing this experiment? Why or why not?

2. What are some of the things that happened that were unexpected or that surprised you?

3. Did you surprise yourself at all? Did you learn anything new about yourself while doing this experiment?

4. How did you feel when your family did not notice that you did something?

5. What kinds of things helped you remember to carry out this experiment?

6. Did you ever forget to carry out the experiment? If so, why do you think it was so hard to remember?

7. After this day will you continue doing what you were doing for this experiment? Explain why or why not.

8. Has this experiment changed your relationship with a member or members of your family? If so, how?
9. Where else (apart from at home) could you carry out this experiment? Name at least one different place and what you could do as a selfless gesture in that place.

10. Do you think that this experiment has helped you become more selfless? Explain.

THE BIG REVEAL! (homework—students voted NOT to carry this out)
Tell your family about this experiment. Note their reaction(s) below:

Write down a question that you want to ask your family regarding this experiment.

YOUR QUESTION:

Your family’s response:

Have a conversation with your family about what selflessness means. Write down anything that strikes you as interesting from that conversation.