THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY IN WELLNESS SERVICE DESIGN: THE CASE OF RETREATS

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This Master thesis has been compiled independently. All works by other authors used while compiling the thesis as well as principles and data from literary and other sources have been referred to.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Group retreats can attract people seeking deeper meaning and connection to themselves, to others and to the world. The retreat experience shared with others can create community in a supportive environment for exploring oneself in relationship to others. Kelly (2010:111) suggests that "retreat environments themselves are a draw for people, who feel the need for a sense of support/community and interaction as part of their experience". Research examining the sense of community as a primary focus within a retreat context has yet to be examined academically. Furthermore, the relationship between community and well-being is discussed to bring to light its relevance and importance. Service design principles and its implications for creating a sense of community and belonging in retreats is examined in two case studies, Skyros and Shambhala that specialize in offering community experiences. The units of analysis in the case studies include: sense of community as experience, the significance and outcomes in relationship to well-being, and service design principles to consider when creating community experience in retreats.

The purpose for investigating community and subjective well-being is due to the negative health effects that arise from perceived isolation and disconnection. A longing and search for community and belonging is more prevalent and challenging with increased speed, technology, screen distractions and overall fragmentation that is on the rise. Retreats on the other hand are turning up outside its original meaning and context of spiritual settings, and now expanded into various places from workplace, wellness, artist, eco, outdoor adventure retreats. In the health and wellness tourism sector, a plethora of retreats are trending. A brief netnography is conducted to analyze online offerings on Retreats Online with suggested categorization based on community experiences.

Preliminary research was conducted by the author at a rural meditation retreat center in Nova Scotia, Canada in July and August, 2014 to learn how community is experienced and created in group retreat settings and to understand the importance among all involved. The

results of that study provided a basis for the thesis, which is that experiencing a sense of community during group retreat is important, with four factors influencing the sense of community: an emotional aspect, a human element, the physical space and activities. The findings coalesce with sense of community and belonging theory by Chavis and McMillan (1986) where the emotional atmosphere is the most important binding factor. Subjective well-being research points to the relevance and impacts of community and social interactions on health, which is drawn out. Service design theory concepts and processes such as touchpoints, co-creation and experience design help shape the participant journey when developing a sense of community experience in retreats. Two case studies hold the theoretical framework together, offering empirical evidence based examples and application, demonstrating the theoretical application of community, well-being.

1.1 Thesis Aims

- To build on current research and fill a research gap on retreats that focus on community experience.
- Provide case studies that specialize in creating community experience.
- To demonstrate the significance of community experience on subjective well-being in retreats.
- To explore service design implications when creating community experiences in retreats.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

Research Question 1	Objectives
What type of retreats offer social, community experiences?	Identify retreat types that offer community oriented experiences.
Research Question 2	**Objectives**
How does sense of community benefit well-being generally and within retreats?	Explain the relationship between community and subjective well-being generally and in retreats.
Research Question 3	**Objectives**
Is the community experience in retreats important and how is it created and experienced?	Demonstrate the significance of community experienced in retreats. Explore the implications of service design in the context of community created in retreats.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The units analyzed as part of the theoretical framework include community as the core point of investigation infused throughout the thesis as the main theme, followed by research on subjective well-being to explain the significance and outcomes of social well-being and community. Group retreats are the structures and events investigated where community experience can arise, where service design principles are explored to maximize a sense of community. Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Community theory: Sense of community theory highlights shared emotional connection as a key determinant for a sense of community to emerge.

Subjective well-being: Research on subjective well-being shows a relationship with community and social relationships.

Service Design: Exploring service design as it relates to the participant journey in group retreats by looking at co-creation, experience design and touchpoints.

Group retreat: Building on group retreat research with a netnography analysis looking at current trends and categories where community is part of the experience. The case studies chosen have a core community service offering with structures supporting community.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review follows the same sequence as the framework outlined in Figure 1. The chapter begins with the problem statement describing the greater relevance and implications of this research. Following that, community and sense of community is defined, subjective well-being and community is described, looking specifically at social capital, interdependence and worldviews on community well-being as relevant themes to the retreat case studies presented. Human centered design and experience design is explored by looking at co-creation and touchpoints as part of the retreat journey for community and well-being to emerge. Community experience design is a newer discipline and briefly touched on, followed by defining retreat, with examples of retreat communities, and examples of retreat studies.

3.1 Problem Statement

The physical and mental health issues arising from social isolation have been well documented in numerous studies. "People lacking in social connections or report frequent feelings of loneliness tend to suffer higher rates of morbidity and mortality (Brummett et al. 2001; Seeman 2000; Uchino, Cacioppo, and Kiecolt-Glaser 1996), as well as infection (Cohen et al. 1997; Pressman et al. 2005), depression (Heikkinen and Kauppinen 2004), and cognitive decline (Barnes et al. 2004;Wilson et al. 2007) (Cornwell & Waite, 2009b)". A study confirmed how "individualistic values and beliefs within an individualistic culture results in smaller social support networks, lower emotional competence, lower intentions to seek help from a variety of sources, and poorer mental health (Scott et al, 2004). Social isolation is described and measured by two aspects: social disconnectedness (physical separation from others) and perceived isolation (Cornwell & Waite, 2009). Research also indicates that the perception of isolation is found to be more harmful than being physically isolated. For example, depression is strongly associated with perceived social isolation (Hawthorne, 2008). Loneliness described as perceived loneliness is a risk factor for, and may contribute to, poorer overall cognitive performance, faster cognitive decline, poorer

executive functioning, increased negativity and depressive cognition, heightened sensitivity to social threats…that threatens social cohesion (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). A cross cultural comparison study between Australia (individualistic) and India (collectivist culture) indicated with regression analyses that a collectivistic orientation was significantly associated with greater emotional intelligence and better mental health outcomes (Bhullar et al, 2012).

Johann Hari's book on addiction and the war on drugs, Chasing the Scream (2015), discovers the opposite of addiction is not sobriety but rather human connection. Professor, Bruce Alexander a leading researcher on addiction says recovery from addiction has been discussed only as an individual process. "We need now to talk about social recovery - how we all recover, together, from the sickness of isolation that is sinking on us like a thick fog (Hari, 2015)". It can be said that addictions can be a harmful internal type of retreat. This thesis introduces beneficial forms of group retreat to help counter isolated escapism.

Looking at current trends within the health, wellness and spa sector, The Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor Report (2014) indicates that the wellness tourism economy was $494 billion in 2013. This represents a 12.7% increase from 2012. Retreats listed under lodging represent 103.6 billion. Wellness tourism is growing due to the "wellness minded consumer" with wellness tourism defined as "travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being (Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor, 2014:v). This indicates the growth of wellness retreats, as mentioned with trends growing with urban retreats and destination spas offering more integrative wellness oriented retreats. This shows the bigger picture the meaning of retreat reflects complexity and expansion outside its traditional view. Therefore, investigating what is meant by retreat and its implications to well-being, by also looking at the origins and other philosophical perspectives is brushed on.

Retreat originates from a religious and spiritual pursuit practiced among various traditions around the world as a way to deepen in one's spiritual practice from Christianity,

Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Mormonism, Baha'i, Secularism and more. To understand and know oneself truthfully and to bring about transformation, retreat has been traditionally understood and continues to be regarded to not only benefit participants' personal well-being, but also post retreat related to work, community and family, thus extending benefits to society. These retreats can be solitary or practiced in groups, such as commonly practiced in monasteries and other purposeful religious and spiritual establishments. The root and original form of retreat continues to be practised in this way today. However, the word and concept of retreat has transformed and is becoming a trendy term used in the self-help, spa and wellness sectors. Naturally so, the word "retreat" can convey the perfect antidote to the increasing demands of a stressful, fast paced life with increasing demands. It is a term that can become easily confused and utilized for marketing purposes, in the same way that "spa" and "wellness" have become mainstream buzz words. As a result, retreat is a multi-faceted complex term that ironically in reality aims to simplify one's life temporarily by offering an antidote to today's complex, over stimulated and fragmented surroundings. Retreat is a term needing attention and discussion to understand how it may be of benefit in meeting a hedonic or eudaimonic outcome. For most and the mainstream motivation is to relax as a primary motivation. Retreat presented in this thesis is understood as pulling away temporarily from everyday life to reflect, and gain greater perspective while developing strength and resiliency. The type of retreat, the structure, length and activities will reflect what is meant by retreat and its outcomes, holding subjectivity. In some cases, especially in spas where "package" is now being replaced with "retreat" denotes more of an escapist, hedonistic orientation where personal engagement and development is not necessarily integrated in the approach. These aspects on understanding retreat need distinguishing.

3.2 Defining Community and Sense of Community

Community is an obscure concept with varying definitions, redefinitions, debates and approaches. The concept has changed significantly from modern to post modern society. Hillery (1955) found no fewer than 94 different community definitions (e.g., a group, a process, a social system, a geographic place, an attitude, a common lifestyle, and local self-sufficiency) and observed that no complete agreement exists as to the nature of community. There is a danger that when a word conveys everything, it loses its utility and becomes more an adjective rather than a central purpose as Peter Block points out in the foreword of "Deepening Community" (Born, 2014:xi). "It is a term that is also inscribed and used to sell "real estate, markets social technology, and appears in the mission statements of most institutions. There are community recreation centers, community health movements, communities of practice, and community organizers… the idea of community is more on our lips than in our experience". Born (2014:xi) states that "community has the capacity to improve our physical, mental, and economic health, as well as our overall sense of happiness and fulfillment". Hence, retreat environments offer the opportunity for being in community as an active experience. Margaret Wheatley's definition of community is an essential one to come back to where she states that "community is a way life organizes itself, it's the most natural form of existence known not only to humankind but to all species on this planet...there is no other way to live…it's the bedrock of everything else" (Wheatley, 2009). The conceptual framework on how the sense of community emerges in relationship to retreat contexts draws on Community Psychology, Sociology, Ecology and an Indigenous relational worldview.

The sense of community and belonging can be challenging to find in modern society and daily life for many complex reasons and influences. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's chapter on Human Bonds in a Fluid World and Community in Liquid Modernity, he discusses how a consumer based worldview influences human bonds, thus pointing to the challenge and difficulty. "In perceiving the world, complete with its inhabitants, as a pool of consumer items makes the negotiation of lasting human bonds exceedingly hard

(Beilharz & Bauman, 2001: 165)." Peter Block goes on to say that community goes against individualism and that the fear embedded in our modern culture makes community more of a longing than reality (Born, 2014). However, the importance of community and the engagement is vital to survival, not simply an idea and longing to hold onto but a tangible reality that is happening, and is possible if held at the center of intentions set. "If we care about poverty, safety, or well-being, then the experience of community is essential...not a luxury, or a pleasantry, or a memory of a time past...community needs to be at the center of our thinking, no matter what results we are trying to achieve in the world…Community can help shape our identity as a collective and interdependent people... It creates the opportunity for us to care for and about others and, in turn, to be cared for, the key interaction that builds a sense of belonging. When we belong and enjoy strong relationships with one another, we can rely on one another in both good and difficult times as it "makes us more resilient, and it makes us healthier" (Born, 2014:5). The sense of belonging in community is inextricably linked to mental well-being and physical health as suggested in the problem statement.

Sense of community defined by McMillan (1976:9) is "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together". In a world where commitments become more difficult to maintain, Zygmunt Bauman hints to one of the causes, that "men and women are trained to perceive the world as a container full of disposable objects, objects for one-off use… (Beilharz & Bauman, 2001:163)". The sense of community carries the potential power required to counteract the disintegration of human bonds, and restore humanity. McMillan & Chavis (1986:9) outline four elements for a sense of community to emerge: membership, influence, reinforcement: integration and fulfillment of needs and shared emotional connection. "Shared emotional connection" is regarded to be the "definitive element for true community", which is the focus in this study. This refers to members identifying with each other based on shared history relying on contact, quality of interaction, closure of events, shared valent event hypothesis, investment, effect of honor and humiliation, and spiritual bond (McMillan, Chavis,

1986:13,14). The case of retreats presented in this thesis describes some of these aspects where shared emotional connections occur.

3.3 Subjective Well-Being and Community

Research indicates that sense of community is significantly related to subjective well-being, with effects especially important on happiness (Davidson & Cotter, 1991). The study of well-being is a multifaceted and complex subject, and has been a focus across various disciplines and sectors as an approach, view and indicator for deeper understanding of current human and environmental realities. Well-being is described and viewed as "happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment, contentment, engagement, fulfillment and flourishing, or a combination of these, and other, hedonic and eudaimonic factors. Well-being is also described as a process, something we do together, and as sense-making, rather than just a state of being (Haworth & Hart, 2007:1). "Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as an evaluation of life in terms of satisfaction and balance between positive and negative affect whereas psychological well-being (PWB) entails perception of engagement with existential challenges of life (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002)". "Research has shown that it is possible to collect meaningful and reliable data on subjective well-being. Subjective well-being encompasses three different aspects: cognitive evaluations of one's life, positive emotions (joy, pride) and negative ones (pain, anger, worry). While these aspects of subjective well-being have different determinants, in all cases these determinants go well beyond people's income and material conditions. All these aspects of subjective well-being should be measured separately to derive a more comprehensive measure of people's quality of life and to allow a better understanding of its determinants (including people's objective conditions) (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2010:219)". Most definitions and measures of well-being include community and social dimensions as a central lens of this research.

Table 3.3 highlights well-being theory and concepts that include community and social dimensions as indicators to well-being which are bolded. The evidence clearly outlines that human beings need community and social interaction to flourish. For example, Gallup's

research (US based) investigated well-being in 150 countries and revealed five essential elements to well-being, which include: career, social, financial, physical and community well-being. Community in these cases often refers to a physical place where one lives, but other areas point to already discussed actions and aspects pertinent to retreat environments that contribute to well-being including emotional stability, supportive relationships, autonomy, personal growth, contribution, acceptance, resilience, safety and diversity. Many of these aspects have come up in the research which is discussed in the results of the research.

Table 3.3. Community and Social Dimensions in Well-Being Research and Indicators.

(Corey Lee M. Keyes, 1998)	Five dimensions of social well-being involve: **integration, contribution, coherence, actualization and acceptance.**
(Ryff, 1989)	Six dimensions of psychological well-being include: **positive relations with others**, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy.
(Gallup Global Wellbeing, 2013)	Five elements of well-being include: purpose, **social (Having supportive relationships and love in your life), community (liking where you live, feeling safe, and having pride in your community),** financial, and physical.
Gross National Happiness Ura, K., Alkire et al. 2012)	Nine domains include: **psychological wellbeing**, standard of living, good governance, health, education, **community vitality, cultural diversity and resilience**, time use, ecological diversity and resilience.
(Diener, 2010)	Flourishing as a measurement includes: purpose in life, **positive relationships, engagement,** competence, self-esteem, optimism, and **contribution towards the well-being of others.**
(OECD Better Life Index, 2012)	Measures: **community**, education, environment, civic engagement, health, housing, income, jobs, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance.
The European Social Survey (Huppert & So, 2013)	Emotional stability, vitality, resilience, optimism, happiness, self-esteem, **engagement,** meaning, **positive relationships**, competence.
(Villamagna & Giesecke, 2014)	Human well-being is measured with a quality-of-life gradient reflecting material (food, water, shelter) and non-material needs (good health, **social cohesion**, security).
(Halleröd & Seldén, 2012)	Physical health, material and economic resources, **social relations**, psychosocial issues (e.g. depression, anxiety), destructive lifestyles.

(Seligman, 2011)	Five elements using the acronym PERMA (positive emotion, **engagement**, **relationships**, meaning, accomplishment).
EIU QoL Model (European Quality of Life Survey 2012 | Eurofound)	From nine domains **community** and **family life** are included.
(World Happiness Report, 2013)	Six factors include: real GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy**, having someone to count on,** perceived freedom to make life choices, freedom from corruption, and **generosity.**

Additionally, bonding, attachment, appreciation, and affirming messages affects health and enhances wellness through social support (Prilleltensky, 2012:72). Compared to people with lower levels of support, those who enjoy more support from relatives or friends live longer, recover faster from illnesses, report better health, and cope better with adversities (Cohen, 2004). The author would extend the notion of support coming from those outside of friends and family as having significant impact depending on context such as retreats. Prilleltensky (2012) adds that social support is not a tool to rely on only in times of need and crises but an area deserving of attention throughout life by enhancing a sense of community.

Furthermore, social well-being is directly related to a person's emotional well-being. As stated by Dr. Kahneman, one's "emotional life depends primarily on their relationships with people" and that "emotional well-being refers to the emotional quality of an individual's everyday experience—the frequency and intensity of experiences of joy, stress, sadness, anger, and affection that make one's life pleasant or unpleasant (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010:16491)". The shared emotional connection could also best reflect the essence that is offered in retreats and wellness service contexts in part due to the shared motivation, interests and/or struggles. Creating environments and conditions for an emotional connection is discussed further in the case study results.

3.3.1 Social Capital

Helliwell and Putnam (2004) mention the value of social capital and how it has been addressed in numerous studies as a multifaceted concept addressed by social scientists in many countries, and how social networks (and the associated norms of reciprocity and trust) also have powerful effects on levels of production and well-being, and they have used the term social capital to refer to these effects (Coleman, 1988)(B. Y. R. Putnam, 2001)(Woolcock & Narayan, 2000)(Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Social capital has been defined as "a by-product of social relationships resulting from reciprocal exchanges between members involved in social associations or networks and can be recognized as a public good that generates positive externalities facilitating cooperation for the achievement of common goals (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 1997)". Bringing social capital to the table adds weight in the argument toward community, in that social capital measures the value and outcome of social connection which community accommodates, enhances and facilitates as part of the process. Community and social capital could be likened to a dance where community is the music and the dance and interaction the social capital which both co-exist as a result of the other, making the dance possible. Social capital brings about further opportunities in having one's need being met (tangible or intangible) from the community or conversely fulfilling someone else's need, boosting their social capital. Social capital is an outcome or result from engaging in community. (Glaeser, Laibson, & Sacerdote, 2002) describe that social capital outcomes may include a higher wage, better employment prospects or reduced transaction costs, while non-market returns may include improvements in the quality of the individual's relationships and improvements in health or even happiness. Empirical studies confirm that social capital affects people's learning and health (Fujiwara & Kawachi, 2008) and also identifies the community to be one of the significant determinants of well-being for individuals as well as families and communities (Putnam, 2000)(1993).

Retreat contexts and other wellness environments can help counteract harmful social habits by creating temporary places, activities and structures that re-instill a sense of place by training to engage and interact more meaningfully. For example, Detox Retreats ("Digital Detox®) have gained popularity for people needing to "disconnect to reconnect" and to "create balance in the digital age". Retreats offer a sense of temporary community where a 'community of meaning' is created. Cohen (1985:118) outlines how community is constructed symbolically where people are "making it a resource and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity'. Based on the above discussion and argument, the human quest to find meaning and a sense of belonging to belong through emotional connection is relevant and especially challenging today. Thus understanding how to create a sense of community where human bonding and connection can arise within wellness organizations, such as retreats (as a specialized example), offers great potential in addressing a considerable need.

3.3.2 The Relevance of Interdependence

The notion of interdependence and one's meaning and impact is easily lost diluted in modern day society, where one's choices and actions may feel insignificant. To know and understand one's own worth also affects and influences the whole. Dr. Martin Luther King, JR. explains interdependence in a matter of fact and eloquent way: "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied together into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality…Before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured, this is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on Earth until we recognize the basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality ("Martin Luther King on his day: The Book Haven, 1999).

Buddhist thought and philosophy on interdependence needs to be mentioned and discussed as a basis from which this thesis draws. The reflective inquiry includes the author's experience in Buddhist retreats where interdependence is understood experientially within the retreat context. Buddhism offers tools such as mindfulness, awareness and compassionate practices as a gateway for developing greater awareness of ourselves, others, and how our experience of suffering and joy come from the natural phenomena of interdependence. Community provides the opportunity to reflect on one's behaviors more clearly in retreats. Therefore the community created in retreats supports lifestyle shifts and views. Buddhism examines the ways in which suffering arises. One way is having an essentialist view which refers to an assumed "discrete, fixed self and identity, independent of external environmental influences or internal physical processes…one that also assumes a fixed other, resulting in a dichotomy of self versus other…on the other hand, dialectical emergence, unlike essentialism, does not rely on a concept of a discrete, independent self. Instead it postulates an infinitely complex and interconnected web of causes and effects simultaneously shaping each other across multiple levels of analyses (Kumar, 2002: 42)." Therefore regarding 'self' and 'other' as connected and interdependent rather than as fundamentally separate provides greater possibility for healing and well-being. Community created in retreats offer the experience of understanding interdependence in a potent and direct way.

3.3.3 Cultural Views on Community Well-Being

In discussing community well-being, various cultural worldviews must be highlighted for the wisdom and benefits that are often adopted in retreats and various other contexts. The issues of separation described reflect habits and constructs of separation, division, individualism, therefore understanding alternate views and approaches is needed. One way is by bringing the relational indigenous worldview to the forefront. A relational worldview focuses on people and entities coming together to help and support one another in their relationship (Graham, 2002). 'Communitism' is described as the sense of community tied together by familial relations and the families' commitment to it (Weaver, 1997, 2001) and

'respectful individualism' denotes an individual enjoying great freedom in self-expression. It is recognized by the society that individuals take into consideration and act on the needs of the community as opposed to acting on self-interest alone (Gross, 2003). "In many East Asian cultures for example, happiness assumes a different subjective form—it is a state that emerges when taking a critical and disciplined stance to the personal self and thus engaging the sympathy of others (Kitayama & Markus, 1999)(Lewis, 1995)(Kitayama & Markus, 1998). The collectivist mindset and habits on togetherness and consideration of others holds some insight how expanding beyond oneself offers benefit to one's own and others' well-being. Greek philosophy's strong ethos on community and ethical living or 'honourable living' involves a commitment to the community. "As Aristotle said that a life in tune with one's spirit and nature, community and sense of purpose - a life, in other words, harmonised with everything visible and invisible involves commitment to the community and to ethical living (Skyros, Andricopoulos, 1999)". There are various examples to be mentioned of cultural worldviews and ways where community well-being is understood and experienced throughout the world, from South Africa, to Kibbutzim in Israel, and many more beyond the scope of this paper.

3.4 Service Design: Co-Creation and Experience Design

Service Design

Sangiorgi (2011) describes services as "less discussed as design objects and more as means for supporting the emergence of a more collaborative, sustainable and creative society and economy". Considering service design in this light helps address the question "how" to create successful experiences that meet users' needs for interaction. How do community experiences and service design methods meet the need for human bonding and social well-being in wellness oriented environments? By examining and understanding that certain retreat environments offer micro temporary community structures, can potentially offer a complementary junction of inquiry within the science of service design.

A human centered design (HCD) process is vital considering community and quality of social experiences. The HCD process "seeks to provide users with a high valued experience when they use the product or system (Norman & Draper, 1986)". With this in mind, designing wellness experiences for social well-being requires investigating users' understanding, needs and requirements. The main SD processes applicable to this particular study are the customer journey, touchpoints, and co-creation for engagement. "A customer journey is seen as the process that a customer goes through to reach a specific goal that involves one or more service providers (Følstad et al, 2013:413)". Customer journeys are typically detailed as a series of touchpoints or interactions between the customer and the service providers (Clatworthy, 2011; Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009). Applied within retreats, the participant in this case would go through a journey, as part of the experience marked by, facilitated activities and teaching (or learning) as central touchpoints, the accommodations, healthy meals, clean environment, support staff, and quality of those interactions, and participants interacting amongst each other.

3.4.1 Co-Creation

Co-creation refers to collective creativity shared by two or more people. It is also a recent and "very broad term with applications ranging from the physical to the metaphysical and from the material to the spiritual (Sanders and Stappers, 2008: 2)". Research highlights that when co-creation principles are applied and practiced, well-being is an outcome. A revealing study was conducted at an elder care facility highlighting the relationship between group decision making on cognition identity with two control groups, where one group decided collectively on lounge refurbishment in the communal living space, and the other group moved into a furnished space. The results are consistent with social identity theory. Group activity improved social identification, promoting cognitive integrity and well-being among care residents (Haslam et al., 2014). An additional angle to consider that Helliwell (2009) points to in a podcast with Paul Born on Community and the Economics of Happiness) is on the importance of altruism and thinking of others by "doing things

together for others…It's not just doing things together, but it's doing things together with a purpose for other people", as a way to grow social capital, which in turn builds community.

Retreat environments demonstrate this process where the right amount of "design" (though it would not be called design in retreat contexts generally) appropriate planning and structure is set up to hold participants in a space granting the freedom to explore and connect by facilitated processes such as the communication structures at Skyros and the meditation practice in Shambhala. The co-created aspect includes participants engaging in the set structure, which is discussed in more detail further on in the results and analysis chapter. (Palmer, 2008) advises in his article on the Thirteen Ways of Looking at Community that "community is not a goal to be achieved but a gift to be received… When we try to "make community happen," driven by desire, design, and determination—places within us where the ego often lurks—we can make a good guess at the outcome: we will exhaust ourselves and alienate each other, snapping the connections we yearn for. Palmer (2008:2) describes this important aspect further to be considered in the planning and design process for creating the possibility for community to manifest "Community begins not externally but in the recesses of the human heart. Long before community can be manifest in outward relationships, it must be present in the individual as "a capacity for connectedness"—a capacity to resist the forces of disconnection with which our culture and our psyches are riddled, forces with names like narcissism, egotism, jealousy, competition, empire-building, nationalism…(Palmer, 2008:2)". The forces of disconnection if they arise must deliberately be addressed as part of the experience. Part of the resistance to such forces would include assessing them in a caring and safe environment, internalizing them and communicating them to others. This holistic approach would avoid further disconnection. The capacity for connectedness is needed, and by developing the possibility for that experience to emerge within retreat contexts is the main point and outcome to consider when designing the service when a group of people come together as Palmer so eloquently articulates that a "capacity for connectedness is both possible and necessary is we are to inhabit the larger, and truer, community of our lives (Palmer, 2008:3)". Service

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design in retreats is explored further on in the structures that facilitate capacity for connectedness set up in the communication structures, the activities, and more.

3.4.2 Experience Design

Arnould and Price (1993) define extraordinary experiences as those characterized by high levels of emotional intensity (usually triggered by an unusual event) and disclosure over time. Since retreats are not mainstream, the potential for an extraordinary experience can be an outcome. The researchers describe how the customer is never sure what the exact outcome will be due to the context, behavior of others, and unclear expectations. Therefore as part of the experience design it is important to leave some unknowns and mystery, otherwise unreasonable expectations may be set too high hindering the natural arising of experience in its own way. On the other hand, the basic structure and theme is necessary to disclose to allow for the extraordinariness to arise as described in the retreat examples above. Skyros encourages participants to choose activities that are of natural interest and to also choose an activity that is new to open pathways of learning and new discovery to explore that edge of comfort and discomfort promoting extraordinary experience. In Shambhala retreats, extraordinary experience is generally experienced by relating and coming back to what is ordinary, by engaging in simple activities such as sitting, walking, sharing meals, cleaning up, caring for each other, etc. In a complex and hurried society, simplicity can be extraordinary. For example paying attention to the food eaten, and feeling the senses and emotions could be considered a luxury among certain people. In Shambhala retreats, extraordinary experience is generally experienced by coming back to what is ordinary, by engaging in simple activities such as sitting, walking, sharing meals, cleaning up, caring for each other, etc. In a complex and hurried society, simplicity can be extraordinary. For example paying attention to eating and tasting food properly, and feeling emotions, opening and awakening the sense perceptions, promoting mindfulness and awareness counteracts the speed and aggression. At the same time, connecting with simple experience and exchange becomes easily transferable to everyday life after retreat

3.4.3 Community Experience Design

The study of community design is defined as "the shape, patterns, processes, and issues in human and natural communities. It explores the world as a system of interconnected and mutually-embedded communities linked by cultural and natural processes (School of Planning - Dalhousie University, 2015). This definition of community design can be applied to wide ranging sectors, and worth considering especially where wellness and well-being services are a core offering. The intersection and role that design brings into community, socialization and interaction is a growing and expansive field that also includes community service design and community experience design which is discussed further below. It is fair to mention that experiences may not be pleasant, hedonic or enjoyable, yet may be good and still a healthy contribution to personal and collective well-being. For example, certain medicines may not taste good, and the experience of taking them may not be pleasant, yet they will help with the condition. The gauge and measure is to examine whether there is harm or not. Discomfort is often a precursor to growth and healing, like a wound that may sting or itch as part of the healing process. The same could be said for experiences within health and wellness contexts such as retreats, since there may be unpleasant experiences as part of the detoxification and growth when removed from certain "comforts". Hence the significance of support and community becomes even more relevant. In researching 'community experience design' the International Conference on Design Principles and Practices was one of the few sites that came up in an online search. Dr. Amber Howard and Kirsten Southwell describe community experience:

"community experience goes beyond the individual user to instead foster the growth of entire communities, both online and in person. These communities are more than groups of like-minded individuals; they are passionate people who want to achieve a vision beyond the reaches of any one person alone… we see design as a vehicle for seeking out, amplifying, and encouraging collective strengths... and finding unorthodox yet practical ways of working together... it builds up from within each person and becomes a wave of collective progress…with a strength-based approach to experience design, our aim shifts from fixing problems to bringing people closer together and doing great things (Community Experience Design: Bringing People Together to Do Great Things, 2014)".

Community experience design within the context of retreats and wellness services is relevant as it engages the meaningful connected experience that many seek, while drawing out the inherent human strengths and potential in people, as is highlighted at Skyros, and emphasized in Shambhala. The design includes a vision or ethos that people are drawn to as the basis. Following the principle and purpose of the retreat set, structures are set up for formal and informal interactions.

The community experience created in retreats can help instill habits to continue on after retreat. Retreats provide the learning, insight and inspiration to see how it can be applied to one's life after retreat within relationships and people encountered day to day as mentioned in the meditation interviews on social outcomes outlined further on. One learns habits and ways to engage with people in a real way post retreat. The support can help deepen values and develop strength and capabilities. Learning to be among others with presence, by listening fully and being heard is also suggested to counteract individualistic tendencies, and isolation that both cases, Skyros and Shambhala offer.

3.4.4 Defining Retreat

Taking time away from daily life and pulling back can look and mean differently based on the individual; as a result there are various retreat offerings from spiritual, lifestyle, holistic, eco, health and wellness, work, digital detox, weight loss, with plenty of themes to address needs. An online Google search on "retreat" posts 159,000,000 results showing that people are seeking to retreat. With numerous guides placing retreats in virtual platforms making them easier to access and find, organized by location, date and type. Retreats Online classifies retreats as "yoga, spiritual-religious, health-wellness, personal creativity, destination-getaway, outdoor-adventure, business executive, and meeting space (Retreats Online, a Worldwide Directory).

The concept and understanding of retreat is not a simple linear one, as the meaning is subjective and has transformed and continues to shift, and reflect present societal issues and

needs as to how much and in which way one retreats. A basic and common understanding is that retreats convey "a sense of respite, refuge and rest, and this often forms the essence of this type of wellness tourism provision (Kelly, 2010:109)". A retreat center can serve various purposes, where it can be a place for quiet reflection and rejuvenation, an opportunity to regain good health, and/or it can mean a time for spiritual reassessment and renewal, either alone, in silence or in a group (Retreats Online, 2007)". Kelly (2010:109) explains how "some visitors may choose to seek refuge, peace and rest; whilst others may seek learning, education or the honing of an established practice. For others yet, retreats are toe-dipping, exploratory holidays, with no specific expectations.

Retreats are niche experience offerings with specific outcomes that can be distinguished from other tourism and wellness offerings. With the growth and demand for retreat and little research more detailed investigation is needed in understanding the potential wider reaching benefits. Kelly (2012:208) elaborates "retreats provoke their visitors to reflect upon themselves, before and after their holiday…to contextualize who they are, often, in relation to where they are in their lives and where they would like to be. Individuals can use this touristic experience to ask questions of themselves that do not usually arise in mass tourism contexts." Retreats can be solitary, or shared with family, friends, as a couple or in groups with strangers. Solitary retreats tend to be associated with spiritual and religious purposes both historically to the present day. Group spiritual and religious retreats are also longstanding traditions that continue today among monks and nuns. Spiritual group retreats have expanded to lay practitioners and to secular people among the various traditions holding their own unique retreat evolution stories.

Today retreats have molded into specially crafted experiences designed to meet specific outcomes and needs, and are increasingly becoming more attractive and appealing as demand increases within the wellness industry. The 2014 Wellness trends indicate wellness retreats are on the rise ("2014 Trends Report: Wellness Retreats Rise... & Urbanize Spafinder Wellness 365™) and in 2015 again "specialty wellness retreats" that are tailored to specific goals and interests are on the trends list (Top Wellness Spa Travel Trends for

2015). Luxury spas are also packaging "retreats" as a promotional brand replacing the term "packages" with numerous examples such as hotels offering a "rejuvenating retreat" (Spa Retreat Toronto, 2014). Distinguishing and understanding retreat types and what they are offering could be further discerned between hedonic or eudaimonic purposes and outcomes.

Again, Kelly (2010) distinguishes retreats more generally where they offer a "special combination of activities, relatively small group size, and a sense of safe, listening community". Understanding the relevance of community can help distinguish retreats further, and perhaps help visitors choose retreats based on what they are seeking as an outcome. Kelly's ground research on retreats encourages future research to "deconstruct the visitor experience even further" which this study addresses. The importance for social and community aspects in retreats is mentioned in Kelly's (2012) research yet is elaborated on further here.

3.4.5 Retreat Communities

As mentioned, it is the special combination of all aspects together that create the retreat experience that will contribute to well-being (people, specific activities, schedule, meals, accommodations and environment). Exploring the social connections and community created has received little attention. Retreats that offer community and interaction as a prominent feature is explored.

A pilot study investigated acute coronary syndrome patients and their levels of depression during and post a non denominational spiritual retreat, and found that hope was increased and depression decreased post retreat (Warber et al., 2011). Quality of life and spiritual well-being improved in another pilot study during a week residential retreat for breast cancer patients incorporating mind body practice, photographic art therapy and psychoanalytic therapy (Vella & Budd, 2011). A study on women cancer survivors participating in a healing odyssey retreat measured women's well-being with Quality of Life scores measuring physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being, with

increased scores during and after the retreat. Most noteworthy is how social well-being was significantly greater after six months (Rutledge, Raymon, 2001). Additional group retreat examples that emphasize community is the Center for Courage and Renewa (Palmer, 2008) where circles of trust and safe spaces are created to restore wholeness by breathing deeply, finding voice and expression without risking judgment, or being fixed in a false or ego driven way. The Healing Circle offers retreats to people with cancer, offering the opportunity to gather with others in a circle of healing and sharing of stories, reflecting resilience and strength each has while learning various self care methods (Healing and Cancer, 2008).

4. METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The methodology described in the following chapter describes the author's view and approach to research, along with the research processes adopted and applied. The mixed methods are discussed where both quantitative and qualitative data are applied in measuring both subjective and objective data in order to understand the units of analysis applied in the case studies providing a holistic lens. The data analysis explains the methods applied to draw out the data collected from the questionnaires and interviews. All the methods applied: netnography, case studies, interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation are described in this chapter.

A reflexive approach is applied with the author adopting a holding a particular view and experience of community in retreats. Pragmatism is the adopted epistemological and ontological approach that uses a deconstructive paradigm by focusing on what works using mixed methods. The researcher applies both subjective and objective points of view (Wahyuni, 2012).

The methods applied include two explanatory case studies to apply the theory and research findings and describe the application, providing real life context and examples (Yin, 1994). The units of analysis in the case studies include: sense of community experience, the importance and outcomes in relationship to well-being, and suggested service design principles supporting processes and outcomes of community experience**.** Phenomenology investigates the lived experience when investigating certain phenomenon, and in this study the lived experience of community and well-being in retreats is examined. The researcher also interprets the findings which are not pure description alone (Van Manen, 1990). Abduction logic is used to construct descriptions and explanations that are grounded in the everyday activities of, as well as in the language and meanings used by, social actors (Blaikie, 2004). The researcher adopts both an interpretive view combined with aspects of post-positivism. The interpretation comes through due to the bias of the subject holding

personal and shared meaning with the subjects in the study. The study also explores community in greater depth to explain its role within retreat contexts. The post-positive streak identifies patterns in the responses where some objected truth. Although the proposed truths and observations presented are evidence based rather than set as absolute truths (Guest, Namey, Mitchell 2013:5,6).

4.1 Research Methods

The research methods are mixed drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods for a more complete, valid and reliable outcome. "Quantitative research provides an account of structures in social life but qualitative research provides sense of process (Bryaman, 2006)". It is a multi-strand study drawing on several sources of data. The research framework relies on case study examples that tie in with existing theories on community, subjective well-being and analyzing service design theory applications. Supporting evidence is drawn out from two questionnaires examining types of retreats where community and social elements are more prevalent, along with identifying the most important areas that contribute to a community experience in retreats. The Likert scale is applied to measure the significance of community and how it is experienced by previously identified findings from the first questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaires apply both open and closed questions, gathering qualitative and quantitative data. The first questionnaire captured a sample of n=102 responses, with 31 questions. The second questionnaire captured a sample of n= 48 responses, with also 31 questions. See Appendix F: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods, outlining the methods in detail.

The qualitative data includes interviews by experienced subjects confirming the theories presented on community and research on retreats. The first interview included a sample size of n=6 experienced meditation retreat practitioners, the interviews are semi-structured, with both closed and open ended questions in person face to face with notes taken and responses analyzed. The second interview was with a sample size of n=3 experienced professionals specializing in the areas of community and well-being as leaders in the sector.

The interviews were semi-structured allowing for ease of conversation and to discuss relevant and interesting aspects arising spontaneously in the interview, providing the depth and insight sought into the subject matter.

Triangulation is applied to this research process by using more than one method to prove the hypothesis, in this case, questionnaires, interviews, case studies and a netnography are used to cross-verify findings and processes to enhance confidence in the findings. (Bryman, 2011:1).

Figure 4.1. Research Methods

Research Question 1	Objectives	Research Methods
What type of retreats offer social, community experiences?	Identify retreat types that offer community oriented experiences.	Netnography analysis of retreat types online. Two case studies: Shambhala and Skyros.
Research Question 2	**Objectives**	**Research Methods**
How does sense of community impact and benefit well-being generally and within retreats?	Explain and demonstrate the relationship between community and subjective well-being in retreats.	Theoretical Research Questionnaires I n=102 Questionnaire II n= 48 Interviews (semi structured) with 3 experts and 6 experienced meditation practitioners. Participatory observation.
Research Question 3	**Objectives**	**Research Methods**
Is the community experience in retreats important and how is it created and experienced?	Outline and describe the sense of community experienced in retreats and its importance. Explore the implications of service design in the context of community created in retreats.	Theoretical research Questionnaires I n=102 Questionnaire II n= 48 Interviews (semi structured) with 3 experts and 6 experienced meditation practitioners. Participatory observation.

4.2 Data Analysis

The research undertaken is descriptive research as it explains, describes and interprets conditions (Williams, 2007) examining two case studies where the phenomenon of community experience and belonging is observed as a variable, and the relationship to well-being as part of the experience in retreats.

Coding is the main method applied in analyzing the qualitative raw data gathered from the open ended questions in both questionnaires and the professional interviews. The codes applied are based on inductive logic where codes are applied during and after data collection. For the expert interviews, observations on themes were noted by the author, while being recorded producing direct word by word transcripts, thereafter, each question was isolated with all three interview responses sectioned together to identify common themes and words. These were then placed in a code book to organize the raw data. For the meditation interviews, notes were taken during the interviews. Questions were isolated with all the responses grouped together under each question to analyze common words and themes which were drawn out together. Both questionnaires are on the Google survey form where the quantitative data is automatically generated and the open questions are chunked together to draw out common words and themes for the qualitative data (Appendix B and C).

The elemental coding method is used as descriptive coding, and in vivo coding. The descriptive codes summarize the passage in a word or phrase, and in vivo uses the actual words from the data. Affective methods include values coding which looks at participant's values and experiences in this case (Hvass, 2014). The coding process analyzes the professional interviews and the open ended questions from questionnaires I and II. Quantitative data comes from both questionnaires where percentages, ranking of importance and the Likert scale evaluate the importance of community.

4.3 Netnography

An online research and analysis of retreat types is studied to develop categories that highlight retreat types with a shared, community/social aspect. Also due to the limitations of accessing and experiencing different types of retreats directly in person, netnography provides the ability to understand what is being offered for retreats around the world.

4.4 Case Studies

Denscombe (1998) describes case studies as 'holistic', as they can deal with a full variety of evidence, allowing for multi-method approaches and triangulation or crystallisation. In this study one of the two case studies examined is Shambhala that specializes in group retreats as well as solitary retreats with communities of meditation practitioners in operation for over 40 years and grown to an international network. The study began as an exploratory case study while the author spent the summer at a meditation retreat center, asking participants to fill out an online questionnaire, while conducting interviews as a pilot to the thesis. Building on the results further, Skyros, a holistic holiday that emphasizes community as a core of the experience which has been offering personal development getaways since 1979 is added to support the hypothesis, shifting the research into an explanatory case study where the variables of community, well-being and service design are compared by matching patterns. Yin and Moore (1988) suggest the use of a pattern-matching technique in such a research wherein several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition.

4.5 Interviews: Meditation Practitioners and Professional Experts

In July and August of 2014, the author volunteered at a meditation retreat center (Dorje Denma Ling) in Nova Scotia, Canada gathering primary data by conducting interviews, and asking retreat participants to fill out an online questionnaire. Interviews were held with six experienced meditation retreat practitioners and leaders to describe how the community experienced in retreats has benefited personal and social wellbeing and how they think shared retreats contribute to the world in this way. These interviews were conducted face to face at the retreat center which was an advantage to capture fresh responses from the recent experience. The interviewees consisted of all experienced meditation practitioners including a senior teacher with over 20 years experience teaching and leading retreats, an Assistant Director of the retreat center, a retreat leader and organizer, a participant, an Assistant Director of retreats, and a Buddhist nun living at a monastery. The interviews were conducted to understand how community in retreats contributes to the quality of relationships, well-being and society. The questions are open-ended questions, except for the questions that capture experience level and roles. The questions are few purposely to leave time and space for the researcher to inquire further based on the responses, allowing for a conversation. Also considering that some of the people interviewed may have limited time with their roles. Notes were taken during the interviews and reflections jotted down afterwards. The interviews were not recorded, and text analytics was applied by clustering all responses together under each question to facilitate cross comparisons, highlighting common words and themes.

Meditation Retreat Interview Questions

1- Does the community experience during retreat influence the quality of your relationships outside of retreat? (work, family, friends) If yes, how so?
2- How does participating in group retreat affect your personal well-being?
3- How does participating in group retreat affect your social well-being?
4- What are your impressions on how engaging in retreat affects society?

Professional Expert Interviews

The expert interviews are semi-structured with both formal and open ended questions with three experienced professionals in the fields of creating community experiences that contribute to well-being. The interviews were conducted by Skype face to face, with a one hour time slotted for the interview in February, 2015. The advantage is that a conversation was possible from being in distant locations and the interviewees were very open and interested to share and contribute their experience and knowledge. There was a good rapport established with them beforehand. The disadvantage was that because of the technology being dysfunctional at times, some of the interview was lost in the recording with words disappearing occasionally. The author took notes during the interview, and sent the transcripts for review and confirmation by the interviewees who were able to correct and add anything that may have been lost. Jane Arthur's interview recording failed to work, explaining the shorter transcript. The responses were analyzed using the coding process, found in Appendix E: Expert Interview Questions, Responses and Analysis. Interviewees were asked to describe their roles and responsibilities, their understanding of community experience within their context, the process of creating community, what is needed for a sense of community to emerge, how community impacts and benefits well-being, the importance, along with the challenges and if it's for everyone, again refer to Appendix E.

Dina Glouberman, Founder of Skyros retreats that focus on the community aspect as part of the holistic vacation. www.skyros.com, www.dinaglouberman.com

Jane Arthur, Director of Residential and Retreat Centers in the Shambhala tradition offering group retreats with community experience as a core value and outcome. www.shambhala.org, http://shambhalatimes.org/2015/02/17/lots-of-invitation/

Michael Lium-Hall Owner/ Director of Hemma a neighbourhood acupuncture clinic and yoga business with the mission to foster meaningful health-care, work and employment for staff and providers, and enhances and strengthens the spirit of community and cooperation among all. http://hemma.ca/our-staff-2

4.6 Questionnaires: I and II

Q1: The Community Experience in Retreats

A preliminary questionnaire gathered 102 responses online from people who participated in group retreat to understand how community is experienced and created in group retreat settings and the importance of community as part of the retreat. The benefits and satisfying aspects of retreat are revealed.

Q2: The Significance of Community in Retreat

The second questionnaire aims to understand more deeply and accurately based on results from questionnaire I the most important factors for a satisfying community experience identified in the questionnaire, by gathering 48 responses. The questionnaire attempts to capture a more diverse range of retreat types identified online to understand the relevance of community within other retreat types listed.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results and analysis are presented in the order of the research questions and objectives, starting by identifying retreat types experienced in groups where there is potential for community. Netnography is applied to categorize and analyze current online offerings. The second question addresses the relationship between community and subjective well-being in general as described in the literature review, and after applied to retreats based on the case studies and results from interviews and questionnaires. The significance of community in retreats is ranked high in both questionnaires and the interviews. How the experience of community emerges is discussed based on participant observation, the questionnaires, interviews and the case studies. Exploring service design such as co-creation, touchpoints and experience design and the implications influencing community well-being in retreats is also discussed. Table 5 outlines results from the research questions.

Table 5—Results from Research Questions

Research Question 1	Results
What type of retreats offer social, community experiences?	*Netnography analysis of retreats on Retreats Online categories with suggested community experiences based on types. See Table 5.1.1
Research Question 2	**Results**
How does sense of community benefit subjective well-being generally and within retreats?	*Most subjective well-being indicators include community and relational dimensions. *Emotional well-being is the binding factor between sense of community and well-being, as identified in sense of community theory research and also indicated in results from both questionnaires. *Interviews describe community experience in retreats and wellness contexts benefits well-being drawing out themes on openness, connection and support.
Research Question 3	**Results**
Is the community experience in retreats important and how is it created and experienced?	*The importance of community experience is indicated in both questionnaires and confirmed in the interviews found in Appendix B,C,D,E and reasons why in Figure 5.7 * Designed services for community experience in retreats considers human centered design, with co-creation, touchpoints and experience design supporting the participant journey with examples drawn from the case studies see Table 5.8.

5.1 Netnography on Retreats

The netnography on retreats and the types offering group and community like experience is examined with Retreats Online as one of the main retreat catalogues that's been operating since 1997. This site is the first retreat listing that comes up when "retreat" is typed into a Google search. The retreat types are classified as: "yoga, spiritual-religious, health-wellness, personal creativity, destination-getaway, outdoor-adventure, business executive, and meeting space (Retreats Online). Additional searches on Google related to "retreat" types come up as "wellness", "luxury", "healing", "natural", "Buddhist". The retreats listed under each type from Retreats Online showcase a number of places for retreat, although many of the same places overlap within several categories such as yoga and spiritual-religious and health and wellness. Many of the retreat centers on the website meet various aspects and themes that are generally sought in a retreat experience. Figure 5.1. shows the number of retreats that fall under the retreat category from Retreats Online as of December 29th, 2014 and is verified again on April 20th, 2015 showing the variance of types growing or declining in numbers. Personal-Creativity increased in number while Destination-Getaway decreased along with Spiritual-Religious.

Figure 5.1. Retreat Online retreat types and numbers.

December 29th, 2014

Retreat Type	Number	Retreat Type	Number
1) Destination-Getaway	185	2) Spiritual-Religious	179
3) Personal Creativity	174	4) Outdoor/Adventure	160
5) Health and Wellness	124	6) Yoga	120
7) Meeting Space	88	8) Business Executive	44

April 20, 2015

Retreat Type	Number	Retreat Type	Number
1) Personal Creativity	183	2) Destination-Getaway	180
3) Spiritual-Religious	177	4) Outdoor/Adventure	156
5) Health and Wellness	121	6) Yoga	117
7) Meeting Space	90	8) Business Executive	47

5.1.1 Online Retreat Classification

From a linguistic perspective defining retreat categories fall under descriptive words with different angles of focus that the author has broken down as experience based, activity based, result oriented or with an aim to reach a certain demographic. To illustrate this further: Experience based retreats describe an experience or result from going on that retreat which may be the most common type of description in attracting retreat users within the wellness industry: getaway, health and wellness, healing, luxury, creativity, adventure, detox, weight-loss. Activity and practice based retreats would include meditation, yoga, fitness, outdoor. Demographic focused retreats include words such as business executive, women's, cancer patients.

The author would suggest that destination-getaway not be used as a main retreat category because it is too general a description that could easily fit under any of the other retreat types since most retreats are getaways anyway. It might be more useful to add urban, rural, village and include destination in conjunction with a more specific type of retreat listed above. Interestingly the word holistic is not included in the types mentioned, but when typing "holistic retreat" in Google, 11,200,000 results come up on March 4th, 2015, and increased up to 11,600,000 on April 21st, 2015. The author would add (w)holistic as a category where the complete dimensions are addressed and where there is not one specific focus of the retreat, but instead a more general type offering a wider range of activities addressing the various wellness aspects (e.g. Skyros, Cortijo Romero). In order to organize and draw out the classification further, retreat types are briefly described with examples that correspond with types supporting social and communal processes in Table 5.1.1.

Table 5.1.1. Retreats Offering Community and Social Experiences.

RETREAT TYPES	DESCRIPTION EXAMPLES	COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE
Secular Spirituality-Religious	Interfaith, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Zen, Native-Aboriginal, Muslim, Quaker, Hindu, Yoga.	Shared Support: Group meditation, prayer, contemplation, discussions, celebrations, rituals, healing.
Health and Wellness	Healing, Yoga, Bodywork: fitness, tai-chi, chi-gong, massage, detox, spas, weight-loss.	Shared Support: Practicing health and wellness activities, exercises, healing.
Personal Creativity	Personal development, stress management, artistic pursuits: writing, sculpting, music.	Shared Support: Learning new skill or practicing, processes, experiences, and encouragement.
Outdoor Adventure	Designed to connect and be with the natural environment: eco, nature, wilderness, farm, ranch, hiking, fishing	Shared support: Practicing, interest and experience.
Leadership, Business Executive	Inspiring spaces and people for career and leadership development.	Shared support: Group learning and development.
Holistic	"Characterized by physical, social, emotional, mental, environmental as interconnected (Oxford dictionary, 2015)".	Shared support: A combination of activities and processes that address and involve the physical, social, emotional, mental and environmental aspects shared.

The second aim of the thesis to provide case studies that specialize in creating community experience, here Shambhala and Skyros are described.

5.2 Retreat Case Study: Shambhala

The case of Shambhala retreats is a situated learning case study whereby the author has been involved in practising retreats in this particular tradition and community for 16 years. The reason for choosing this case example is that there is an emphasis on group retreats,

although solitary retreats are also commonly practised as part of the tradition. There is also a strong sense of community as part of the experience, and being part of a shared vision that resonates with one's own values, that the author has personally benefited from. The case study is appropriate for this research because it offers depth, insight and a holistic perspective that could not easily be captured otherwise. The community of practitioners and teachers are accessible and available to share experiences and knowledge in this particular area of study.

5.2.1 About Shambhala

Shambhala has been offering group retreats for over forty years based on a vision that is "rooted in the contemplative teachings of Buddhism, yet is a fresh expression of the spiritual journey for our time; it is available to practitioners of any tradition" (Shambhala: Making Enlightened Society Possible). The vision is based on creating "enlightened society" and "making the impossible, possible". "An enlightened society is an awake and friendly association with others". The experience of possibility and connection that retreat offers gets infused with society by softening and opening to oneself and others with genuine kindness. The main activity of Shambhala retreats are meditation practices, grounded in shamatha-vipashyana, contemplations, teachings, principles on arranging an uplifting environment and relating to others with kindness and dignity. Shambhala is a global community of people inspired by the principle that every human being has a fundamental nature of basic goodness. This nature, our innate wisdom, can be developed so that it benefits our own lives and helps meet the many challenges facing the world.

Shambhala welcomes people from all walks of life, faiths, and backgrounds. They come together to practice meditation, gather, and celebrate in order to develop a global culture that cultivates dignity and sanity in an increasingly chaotic and stressful world. Each individual, each group, and each Shambhala Centre around the world is linked together by the Shambhala teachings and lineage, making a worldwide community of shared inspiration". In addition to meditation, study and contemplative practices, Shambhala

centres and groups offer teachings in the arts and offer a range of cultural and social activities that cultivate wakefulness and creativity.

There are thousands of members and friends of Shambhala on all continents. There are online communities and more than 200 Shambhala centres and groups, as well as individual members, located in major cities, towns, and in rural settings in over 50 different countries.

With 8 retreat centers; 4 retreat facilities, and 220 centers and groups worldwide, the types of retreats and programs offered are varied and reach a wide range of interests. The retreats vary in length and topics, city and town centers offer weekend and week retreats. Retreat land centers offer weekly, monthly and weekend retreats.

Figure 5.2.1. Shambhala Worldwide (Shambhala, 2015).

Unit of analysis and data collection

i.   In the first questionnaire, on "the community experience in group retreat", 88.3% of the 103 respondents participated in Buddhist retreats with the majority from the Shambhala community.

ii.   The interviews were also informed and conducted by six experienced meditation practitioners from the Shambhala community.

iii.   One of the expert interviews was conducted with Jane Arthur who was the Director at Karme Choling, one of the main retreat centers for seven years. She now holds the position Director of Residential and Retreat Centers, and was recently appointed as an Envoy for Leadership and Mentorship for the Shambhala community.

Both validity and reliability is adequate with 88.3% of the sample size from the 103 respondents being Buddhists mainly affiliated with Shambhala, see Appendix B. The six interviews conducted with experienced meditation practitioners along with a long time leader in the community, in addition to the situated learning of the researcher.

5.3 Retreat Case Study: Skyros

Skyros Holistic Holidays emphasizes community as part of the experience, which Skyros terms as a holistic holiday, designed and structured based on Greek philosophical principles for personal development. The author met Co-Founder Dr. Dina Glouberman at a conference where she was the keynote speaker and addressed the importance of community and connection at Skyros and how that type of experience emerges. The researcher's Supervisor, Melanie K. Smith also knows Dr. Glouberman and had participated in a Skyros holiday in the past. Catherine Kelly who has written about retreats academically (that this study draws on), had participated in a Skyros holiday as well. Due to these reasons, Skyros has been selected as a case model, adding to the validity and reliability as the first alternative holiday in Europe in 1979, along with the materials available written over the years with participant experiences to draw on.

5.3.1 About Skyros

Skyros was Europe's first alternative holiday center, established in 1979 by Dina Glouberman and Yannis Andricopoulos. Skyros pioneered a holistic approach to life in tune with the classical Greek holistic understandings and it initiated new community structures which keeps Skyros in balance with its ethos. "The Greek holistic thought welded together Reason and morality, intellect and feeling, body and spirit, inner and outer, culture and nature, science and intuition, individuality and the public realm. As parts of the whole, whether the whole was the planet, civilisation or the individual, they all had an intrinsic value, a purpose determined by their very existence, and an inalienable right to be. Workgroups, for example, are still encouraged because work, as the poet said, is "love

made visible"- it is what creates community. Demos, the daily gathering of the whole group, is still a cornerstone of community life, as are co-listening and Oekos groups, both now essential components of the Skyros tradition (Skyros, an Ethical Philosophy)". Skyros has grown over the years starting at Atsista Bay and the Skyros Center in Greece, now with locations in Morocco, Venice, Paris, Cuba, Thailand, Trinidad and the Isle of Wight. The offerings range from singles, yoga, alternative, holistic, writing and art holidays. The average length of the retreat varies from 1-2 weeks.

"The intention of Skyros was always to create a world that heals…by creating a healthy culture..one that encourages us to come home to ourselves.. and to honor ourselves in relation to others. One key to this world that heals is the word community. The Co-Founder Dina Glouberman been longing for a community Skyros is also a 'symbolic community' as opposed to a long term living community. It offers the short term educational and transformational experience of becoming a member of a tribe without sacrificing individuality. The intention of a symbolic community is not to retreat to a new world, but to inform, illuminate and expand everyday life in the world we live in. To foster a sense of community, a commitment to truth and honesty with oneself facilitates 'real talk' and 'real listening' with community meetings, the staff groups, the oekos or home groups, the courses, the work groups, co-listening in pairs, enabling presence with one another and onelself (Skyros Soul)".

The Oekos groups as described by Glouberman on the Skyros website are groups of six to twelve people who get together with a commitment to communicate with each other openly and honestly. The meetings begin with a 'round' in which members take 3-5 minutes each to speak from their heart about where they are at this moment in their life. The space is then open for feedback, discussion, exchange of ideas and planning of activities on whatever level the group feels committed to.

Co-listening referred to as Demos, involves meeting a partner once a day for a period agreed upon between the two partners, in which each is given an equal amount of time to talk while the other listens, and to listen while the other talks. The basic format is that one

talks and the other listens, then they switch roles, and give each other feedback. The effect of co-listening is also to spread the possibility of 'real talk' in the community generally and to speak deeply.

"The purpose of co-listening is to enable the individual to have time with one other person so that he or she can go deeply into themselves and talk 'real talk' without observing social forms, and without being intruded upon by advice, interpretations or even approval or disapproval. The fact is that most conversations are totally uncreative while making sure social relationships are safe. But by opening up to real talk, and real listening, we are opening up to our creative ability to work through our situation and come to our own positive way through (Skyros Soul)".

Both case studies hold very specific worldviews, which will influence community experience and well-being, as discussed in the literature review where collectivist and individualist views could affect experience. The Greek philosophical foundations at Skyros and Buddhist perspective in Shambhala could shape and impact the emotional atmosphere where interaction and engagement are part of the structure and experience. The following section discusses the relationship between community experience in retreats and subjective well-being, emphasizing the emotional connection created.

The third aim is to demonstrate the significance of community experience on subjective well-being in retreats.

5.4 Subjective Well-being and Community Experience in Retreats

The results presented in this section begin by pointing to the relationship between subjective well-being indicators which include community, social interaction, engagement and positive relationships, and more, see Table 3.3. As mentioned social well-being is directly related to a person's emotional well-being and one's "emotional life depends primarily on their relationships with people (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010:16491)". McMillan and Chavis (1986) point to the "shared emotional connection" to be the "definitive element for true community". The following results from both questionnaires

confirm these findings within shared retreats where participants share on benefits, along with most important factors that contribute to a satisfying community experience. The interviews discuss how the shared retreat and group experience creates community.

5.4.1 Factors for a Satisfying Community Experience in Retreat

For a satisfying community experience, silence is mentioned often combined with time to communicate openly and share formally in both organized ways and informally over meals, work, and open time in the Shambhala context. Table 5.4.1. Factors for a Satisfying Community Experience outlines the main factors that contribute to a satisfying community experience in a group retreat, see Appendix B for responses to the questions.

Table 5.4.1 Factors for a Satisfying Community Experience in Retreat.

Emotional Atmosphere "Even though we didn't speak much we developed an emotional closeness".	Safety: Ensuring a safe space for people to be without judgment, and that personal /emotional safety is not threatened. Container/structure: A container includes a structure: physical space, schedule, silence/conversation, activities, roles and responsibilities given. View: For a safe emotional atmosphere, the view is that everyone matters, and that genuine compassion, kindness and wisdom are the guiding principles to be practiced with oneself and others.
Physical Infrastructures	The facilities and infrastructure is designed for community inclusivity. With adequate space that accommodates both shared interactions and time alone. Inclusive design principles accommodate diversity and access.
Human capacity	Creating opportunity for interaction, and shared experiences. Adequate support is available to hold the retreat. Qualified and experienced teachers. Facilitators and Coordinators are available and helpful. Fellow participants share a similar view and purpose.
Activities	**Contextual activities**: An uplifted and joyful atmosphere created. Examples: Welcome social, celebrations, shared schedule, rituals, neighbourhood camps. **Ordinary activities**: Preparing meals and cleaning up, eating, preparing activities, events together. **Intentional activities**: Discussion groups both structured and unstructured to share. Co-listening activities, affinity circles, pro action dream building groups. Expressive exercises: art, song, poetry. yoga, walking.

5.4.2 Creating a Sense of Community in Retreat

The factors are visited again in the second questionnaire to learn the most important factors for creating a sense of community in retreats, results shown in Figure 5.4.2 followed by a description of each one. The emotional atmosphere ranked highest at 54.2% again confirming the sense of community theory previously discussed by. The categories for shared emotional connection include: members identifying with each other based on a shared history, relying on contact, the quality of interaction, closure of events, shared valent event hypothesis, investment, effect of honor and humiliation, and spiritual bond. These aspects are applicable to retreats especially highlighting the quality of interactions due to the communication structures developed at Skyros and Shambhala, the analysis can be found in Appendix H. The second highest factor is the human element at 47.9% which refers to the leaders, teachers, facilitators, and staff.

Figure 5.4.2. Most important factors that create a sense of community during retreat.
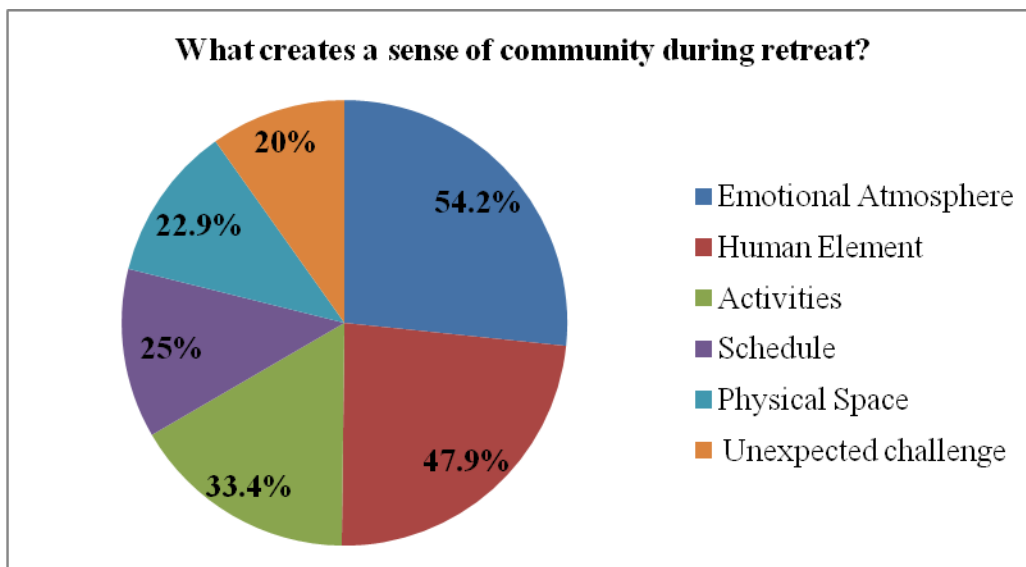
1- The emotional atmosphere is the sense of care, safe, non-judgmental, and kindness felt in the atmosphere.

2- The human element includes the qualified, experienced, inspiring, strong leadership, which involves the teachers, facilitators and coordinators. The participants must also be prepared, qualified for a particular type of retreat.

3- Activities include intentional activities such as co-listening, group discussions, and ordinary activities such as cooking, cleaning, and contextual activities such as rituals, celebrations.

4- Physical space refers to cleanliness, and whether the space accommodates interactivity, privacy, and the option for co-creation in that the space offers ways to participate and engage in creating the experience in both tangible and intangible ways (i.e arranging the space, caring for others).

5- The schedule considers the timing of activities and considers a balance between engaging with others, being alone, contemplation, periods of silence and discussion.

6- Experiencing an unexpected challenge with oneself or with others, followed by learning, resolution and growth.

Additional responses include: *sharing, communication, and a sense of care and support. There are many ways to share, and here the examples for sharing include: "space, living, information, meals, a vision, and experiences, activities, ideas, spontaneous occurrences of sharing and contributing, challenges, and journey"* see Appendix C. These all in turn enhance the sense of care and support.

A respondent from the second questionnaire shares how the importance of communication, by ensuring adequate preparation: *"clear and concise communication before, during and even after the retreat helps with expectations, and accommodates the needs of individual participants".* The communication structures are emphasized for developing rapport and the emotional atmosphere. Communication during the retreats in both cases presented here involves structures for listening, sharing feelings, experiences and silence. Integrating time

for silence in Shambhala retreats supports deeper connection by allowing more space to settle within and feel what is happening, noticing oneself and others more fully. A participant from the first study mentions how *"even though we didn't speak much we developed an emotional closeness"* (Appendix B).

Lastly, compassionate care and support contributes to the emotional atmosphere and sense of belonging, which comes through in the communication structures, and also in allowing the space for people to participate and create within the structure and schedule. A respondent clearly shares this aspect *"giving people permission to have a voice, to be seen, observing who doesn't seem to be fitting in while checking in with them to see if it's what they want*"(Appendix C). This ties in with co-creation which will be discussed in the next section as part of experience design. An additional outcome from support is social capital, where people may open up to new opportunities which could be tangible or non tangible, perhaps leading to a new career as mentioned in Dina Glouberman's interview (Appendix E) or meeting partners and best friends. In retreats, support can be physical with a shared schedule, having meals provided, and the activities to create the necessary structure needed and emotional or psychological support in sharing a common activity or interest. The ways that community is experienced during retreats is vast and as varied as human beings are, however two main themes repeated numerous times: the shared experience and the support. A respondent goes on to say that *"everyone participating in the same thing day after day, there is a relaxation and trust in each other, along with a deeper appreciation that comes from getting to know each other more genuinely"* (Appendix C).

5.4.3 Benefits, Outcomes and Challenges in Group Retreat

The experience of connectivity, care and compassion were the predominant responses and theme when asked about the most beneficial outcomes in group retreat in both questionnaires (Appendix B,C).

The challenges emerging in group retreats indicated by respondents in both questionnaires is in working with others and clashing personalities, followed by the same themes outlined in Appendix G, such as the schedule, the environment, the communication, such as silence,

or not enough, etc. The interview with Jane Arthur, mentions that the challenges that may arise for participants are not discounted but rather aspects or experiences to be worked with as part of it (Appendix H). A respondent from the second questionnaire reflects how *"negative experiences can lead to growth. Some of the more difficult things that have happened in group and solitary retreat have led to good things when reflected on later"*. Challenges arise as fuel for the retreat experience, not necessarily something to prevent, manage or "fix", but rather to address the challenges by providing the accommodation and willingness to work with them as a holistic perspective and approach.

Understanding the benefits of community during and after retreat is also explored in more detail and asked as an open ended question for a more personalized response to see whether similar patterns emerge. Themes of belonging, sharing and support are mentioned again, however more prominent in the responses is learning from others, and learning to better communicate. "*We can learn, heal, grow, and experience joy and celebration best through relationship. Thus community experience creates expansion of self and others. It also creates synergy!"*(Appendix C).

Benefits post retreat mentioned in the questionnaires include: *renewal, energy, connection, inspiration, vibrancy, sharing learning and discovery.* Retreats are a tremendous resource in supporting human well-being to flourish not only on an individual level, but offer ripple effects to others. Respondents reveal how they "*feel more connected to working with others"* and "*knowing what is possible inspires me to contribute toward creating aspects of this community in my "outer" everyday world. It makes me want to help out in the community at large"* (Appendix C, G).

The type and theme of the retreat is dependent on the participants need. For those seeking retreats for leisure and ways to spend a holiday, the group and shared experience is common for health and wellness purposes. In some cases, retreats can be hard work and challenging, yet still refreshing as mentioned by a respondent in the second questionnaire, where eudaimonic motivations are more prominent. This harder inner work is more commonly found in spiritual and personal development type of retreats.

Interestingly, though it makes sense from individualist cultures that the motivation for group and shared experience is not generally a priority based on Kelly's research and findings in the questionnaires. Although the group and community created is still important, and tends to be valued and appreciated during and after the retreat. Kelly's research (2012) on motivations for attending a retreat places social reasons at 35%, yet the number one reason is to unwind and de-stress. In the first questionnaire, the motivation for group experience is to deepen the personal practice at 65% (meditation in this case), and being of benefit at 39%, and having a sense of belonging with shared values and vision at 19% (Appendix B). Even though motivations are more for personal reasons, the connection created is a natural outcome that is not predetermined as a motivation.

5.5 Expert Interviews

The purpose of the interviews is to draw out the relationship of community well-being in environments where wellness is the purpose and outcome. The interviews describe a) how personal well-being is supported and experienced from being in community b) how specific types of actions and experiences contribute to community well-being and c) Longer term beneficial outcomes from the community experience. Appendix H highlights main points that support the main inquiry on the experience and impacts of community well-being. Table 5.5 describes the themes, collated responses from each interview and direct quotes supporting it. The important keywords and concepts are highlighted. For example synergy parallels the discussion on interdependence where synchronizing is a common occurrence. Self discovery through others support is a form of social capital gained from being with others. It can be said that all the benefits listed are forms of social capital.

Table 5.5 Expert Interview Results Analyzed

Interview Themes	Collated Responses	Direct Quotes
a) How personal well-being is supported and experienced from being in community.	**Opening** in oneself, towards others and others toward oneself; **deepening** (spiritually); and connection. Two of the interviews mention **acceptance** and **healing**.	"The social rules change quickly where they are open, and you're able to be open and other people open to you (Glouberman interview)".
b) Types of actions and experiences contributing to community well-being.	-Structures that create exchange in **being seen and heard while seeing and listening to others** include opportunities for offering and receiving. -**Supporting** each other. -**Participating** by having some responsibility and sense of mattering. -Being together with a **shared purpose.** -**Developing relationships/friendships**. -**Sitting quietly and being** is beneficial to do with others two of the interviews have this view whereas one of the interviews does not mention this aspect.	"I think these structures for listening helps develop people's relationships (Glouberman)". "Being seen, appreciated and seeing others raises life force energy, cheerfulness and appreciation, where appreciation is offered and received (Arthur)."
c) Longer term beneficial outcomes from community experience.	- **Synergy** and increased life force energy (Arthur). - Recognition of others and expressing care. - **Self discovery** through others **reflections** and **support**. - Life path **changes** made that are more **meaningful**.	"People develop relationships here (Lium-Hall)". "Some people learn to sing and they never dared to sing. A very famous comedian now was here and someone said to him why don't you become a stand up comedian? For some it's a new career, for some it's psychological healing (Glouberman)".

5.6 Meditation Interviews

Six interviews were conducted in August 2014 at a retreat center in Nova Scotia. The interviews lasted 20 minutes in length on average. Experienced meditation practitioners and some teachers that led, participated, facilitated and organized retreats are asked about the shared retreat experience that influences personal, social well-being and society. Table 5.6 describes the benefits of shared retreat on well-being and the outcomes with full results and analysis in Appendix D. The quality of relationships developed inside of retreat is like an incubator affecting the quality of relationships outside of retreat. It is like a blue print or a reference point for quality interactions to apply in daily life. The main themes on quality interactions arising from the interviews experienced in retreat are openness, kindness, awareness, genuineness, see Appendix J for a more detailed description.

Table 5.6 Benefits of Shared Retreat

Personal well-being	- Brings meaning to life and sense of purpose and enthusiasm. Mentally, the mind is clearer and there's an ability to relax into the mind. - Emotionally lighter. - Replenishing, rejuvenation and energizing. - Nourishing and refreshing.
Social well-being	- Silence creates a natural inclination to engage with others. It also develops an ease of being around others. - Awareness of one's relationships is heightened in retreat, in turn that gets noticed in life back home and how to balance both personal and social time is more obvious. - Being with different networks one would not necessarily associate with in daily life. - Exchanges in daily life become more rich and engaging. - Personal control is challenged when entering into a group. - Support structures are needed after retreat otherwise it can become isolating integrating back from feeling very raw and tender. - Community and connection experienced in retreat is more intense and active, and after retreat the experience of community feels more passive.
Societal outcomes	- Creates positive energy to be offered back into society. There is a strengthening and opening in retreat creating more energy to work and offer that strength and openness into the world. - When one's deepest principles are brought forth and aligned with

	action, manifesting the values and principles benefits society.
	- There's a quality of family created with strangers, and human connectedness that is difficult to experience within regular family structures.
	- We are all part of society therefore our experience on retreat affects how we manifest in society and how we view society.

5.7 Importance and Motivation for Community in Retreat

In the first questionnaire, the importance of a community experience during retreat is important overall based on the questionnaire with 35% stating it is very important, 30% important, 22% somewhat important, and 4% not important, see Appendix I: Importance of Community in Retreat Diagrams. The *"deepening of community connections"* is mentioned to be a significant motivation, confirming the previous discussion on deepening community and that it needs to be experienced, not only discussed. The second questionnaire asks for a yes, no, somewhat, I don't know response, showing congruent results in both questionnaires. The first with 65% stating it is important (combining both very important and important responses) and the second 70.8% answered yes. Asked again on a scale from 1-5 with 5 as very important, 45.8% marked 4 as important, and 37.5% marked 5 as very important.

The top three reasons for why it is important are listed in figure 5.7 Why Community is Important in Retreat. In order of importance responses include that it is fulfilling and enjoyable; there is shared support; and feeling a sense of empowerment and confidence see, Appendix C. Again, the strongest answer correlates to emotion that describes both hedonic and eudaimonic emotions. The initial reasons selected for the second questionnaire is based on responses from the first one, and the author's research, reflection and observations into community and retreats. Open responses allowed respondents to add anything else not listed for why community as an experience is important, which include: *dialogue; new ideas; sharing experiences and stories with others; learning from discussion with peers; growing through being in a leadership role; rediscovering oneself and cleansing; opening the mind to awareness and peace; sense of belonging; relaxation; inspiration; learning to live with others; to help others; opens the heart.* The responses provide more insight into

the various reasons and benefits as to why the community experience is important that the author did not consider, which most suggest enhancing social capital.

Figure 5.7 Why Community is Important in Retreat.
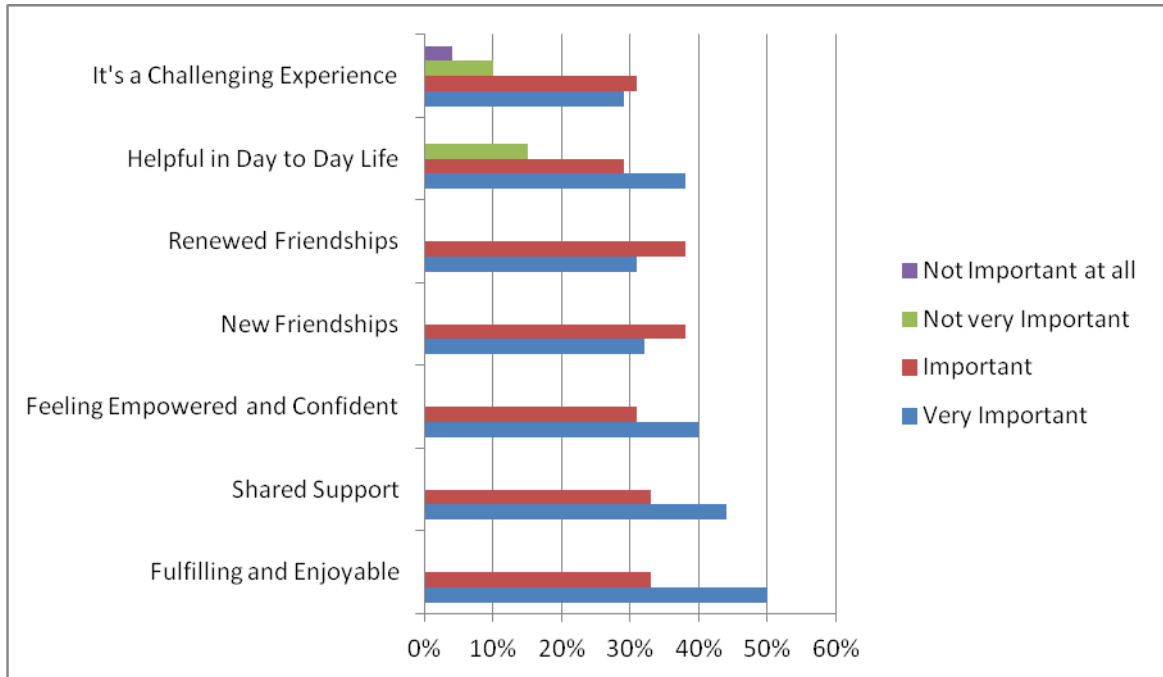
The last aim is to explore service design implications when creating community experiences in retreats.

5.8 Service Design Implications Creating Community Experiences in Retreats

The following suggests ways in which service design can relate to the participant journey considering the community experience at Skyros and in Shambhala, based on theoretical research. The most obvious consideration is adopting a human centered design which is described in more detail in the literature review since human services and experience are best designed considering the need of the user. In this case, the need for connection, belonging through emotional intensity is suggested. Touchpoints, co-creation and experience design are applied to Skyros and Shambhala.

Touchpoints: The touchpoints in the case of retreats in the cases presented here are the areas where participants experience emotional connection and come into contact with others creating a sense of community as part of the participant journey at Skyros and Shambhala. The communication structures, activities, shared schedule, work group responsibility, facilities and teachers are touchpoints described.

Table 5.8 Touchpoints at Skyros and in Shambhala

Skyros Touchpoints	Shambhala Touchpoints
Communication Structures: Demos; Oekos; Co-listening.	Communication Structures: Diads; Group discussions; One to one interviews; Delek system. Balancing silence, contemplation and conversation helps to facilitate deepening connections.
Activities: A wide range of activities to choose from (singing, sailing, personal development, etc).	Activities: Main focus is meditation practice. Contemplative practices and exercises.
Shared schedule: including meals.	Shared schedule including meals and also includes waking up and going to sleep at the same time.
Work group responsibility: Meal preparation.	Work group responsibility: A wide range of tasks from meal preparation, environmental upkeep and maintenance, setting up special events.
Facilities: mostly shared including washrooms and sleeping areas.	Facilities: Mostly shared including washrooms and sleeping areas.
Teachers, facilitators: Participants experience shared learning together.	Teachers, leaders and facilitators: Participants experience shared learning.

Co-creation: Participants contribute to shaping their living environment together by engaging in various activities that could be related to upkeep and arranging the space such as decorating for a celebratory event or helping prepare for a meal. Participants also co-create the emotional atmosphere by sharing, participating, connecting and opening to others and their experience. The structures (schedule, activities, and exercises) facilitate the process of connection and exchange, developing inherent human qualities of awareness, openness, genuineness and kindness (Appendix J) as mentioned from the meditation interviews.

Skyros Co-creation:

- Participants choose two types of activities, one they would naturally like to do and another they would not choose or lean into easily.
- Meal preparation is a shared activity and contribution.
- Communication structures allow for real expression, allowing for deeper and meaningful exchange. Participants are also invited to share and vote with their voice at morning meetings.

Shambhala Co-creation:

- Settling in and synchronizing body, heart and mind in oneself is the first step in Shambhala through meditation practice. Everything else such as co-created expression stems from that place and perspective.
- Practices such as ikebana flower arranging, and uplifting the environment is often co-created with participants guided by staff.
- Shared upkeep of cleaning, and preparing meals.
- Celebratory events will include participant involvement with creative offerings and expressions of appreciation.

Experience Design (extraordinary experience): Is described as high levels of emotional intensity. Retreats can be highly intense emotionally charged places.

Skyros Extraordinary Experiences:

- Choosing an activity less familiar could take one out of their comfort zone, opening the opportunity to discover and learn something new.

- Communication structures could also be unfamiliar, taking one out of their comfort zone to speak from a deeper place. One woman in her 90's mentioned how she never spoke without planning ahead what she would say before in Dina Glouberman's interview (Appendix E).

Shambhala Extraordinary Experiences:
- Extraordinary experience is in the ordinary in Shambhala with simplicity as a guiding principle in the structure mostly. Paying attention and grounding in sense perceptions, awakening them through mindfulness and awareness practices and contemplative exercises.
- Discovering oneself, others and the environment could be experienced in many ways unique to each individual from challenging, awakening, pleasant, happy, sad, frustrating, etc. Seeing one's patterns can provoke intense emotions overall. Therefore, the facilitated support and support of community and companionship could be helpful.

6. CONCLUSION

The aims of the thesis have been addressed and summarized here in the concluding remarks. The first aim is to build on current research and fill a research gap on retreats with a focus on community experience. This thesis contributes a deeper investigation into retreats with community as an experience in two case studies offering spiritual, secular and holistic retreat environments. Additionally a netnography analysis of retreat offerings offers suggested categorization where community experiences occur in the various retreat types listed. An overview of retreats is explained with an analysis suggesting adding holistic as a category.

The second aim is to provide case studies that specialize in creating community experience. Skyros and Shambhala both specialize in offering community experiences with structures that facilitate the process for connection, each in their own unique ways that promotes their particular views (Buddhism and basic goodness) and ethos (Greek philosophy, holism), both holding community as a central core. Communication structures are emphasized that facilitate "real talk" and genuineness. Skyros is highly engaged, whereas Shambhala offers more opportunity for silence and contemplation.

The third aim is to demonstrate the significance of community experience on subjective well-being in retreats. The theoretical research on sense of community and subjective well-being provides a strong foundation to build a case on the relevance and importance community and sense of belonging plays on health and well-being. The ill effects along with the positive outcomes of community are highlighted and described more generally. The recurring theme and most important factor is the emotional connection as the binding factor for sense of community theory (Chavis, McMillan, 1986). The same result appears for retreats in the questionnaires as the most important factor. Support and sharing are common themes repeated in the questionnaires, and interviews, where support is strongly associated with emotional well-being in research.

The importance of community as an experience in retreats is examined through the lens and existing research on subjective well-being presented in the literature review. Theory on community and sense of community and belonging is juxtaposed within retreat environments. The relationship between community and well-being is also explored and applied to retreat contexts with questionnaires and interviews conducted by the author online, at a retreat center and with experts in the field. Service design principles are discussed to understand how the experience of community can be structured, facilitated and created when the longing and search for belonging is a prominent issue as discussed in the literature review. Not to mention the adverse health implications of perceived isolation, fragmentation and disconnection that research points to.

Lastly, exploring service design implications when creating community experiences in retreats is addressed by looking at human centered design as a main principle, along with experience design, described as an extraordinary experience, the touchpoints that make up the participant journey during retreat where connection and community is experienced, and looking at ways co-creation contributes to well-being in retreats is described and outlined at both Skyros and Shambhala.

This research brings to the table the importance of community for well-being, by exploring the context of retreats as a way to nourish meaningful face to face human interactions. The significance of community in the context of retreats has been confirmed in this research whereby participants, teachers, leaders and facilitators describe their experiences of community in retreats that parallel subjective well-being and community theory.

Retreats offer set structures for learning infused with valuable habits that are beneficial not only during retreat but in life afterwards. There is a need for community today even if temporary and symbolic, where retreats offer the learning and possibility for community and engagement. It is an anti-dote counter the stream of disconnection, fueled by speed, aggression, competition, and screens in the modern day. Retreats can and do offer a deeper

experience of community and a lived reality instead of a concept or idea. Experiencing community is needed in order to deepen connection and understand its relevance and benefit which retreat environments can offer.

6.1 Limitations

Due to the wide and complex subject of community and retreat, this research carries certain limitations. There is a bias from the researcher's personal experience of retreats in the secular, spiritual type of retreat offerings. This view and approach to retreat is a traditional one that the researcher feels is important to distinguish and highlight due to the natural outcome of deep community. The author has more knowledge and experience on the Shambhala retreats than Skyros. It is unclear if a same sample size from a different type of retreat such as adventure/outdoor for instance would reflect a similar or different response and pattern on the community experience and its significance. Another limitation is in understanding the experience and benefits of other types of retreats in more detail.

6.2 Future Research Opportunities

1. Future research could investigate perceptions on retreats both generally and in more detail by looking at whether retreats are viewed negatively, positively from both retreat participants and those who have not participated before, and whether motivations are hedonic (pleasure and escapist motivations) or more eudaimonic motivations that focus on meaning and self development. Are retreats viewed as escapist pleasure seeking holidays or more engaging and meaningful? Are there demographic and segment variables to distinguish?

2. Investigating and testing groups of people with identified perceived social isolation, and other health related issues mentioned in the literature review (addictions, depression) to test whether retreats improve well-being and psychological sense of belonging.

7. Résumé

L'importance de la communauté dans la conception des services de bien-être : le cas des retraites

De nos jours, le besoin d'appartenir à une communauté devient plus rare, mais de plus en plus important (même si c'est de façon temporaire ou de façon symbolique). Les retraites offrent des possibilités d'apprentissage et d'investissement dans la sphère communautaire. Elles sont des antidotes contre l'isolement, les causes de ce dernier étant la vitesse, l'agressivité, la concurrence et l'exposition permanente aux écrans qui caractérisent la journée moderne, loin du contact direct qui permet une communication plus significative. Le désir d'appartenir à une communauté peut être influencé par la fragmentation et la consumérisation comme l'a noté Bauman (2001). Les répercussions de l'isolement perçues sur la santé ont été associées à des taux plus élevés de morbidité et de mortalité (Brummett et al 2001;. Seeman 2000; Uchino, Cacioppo, et Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996), ainsi qu'à une augmentation du risque d'infection (Cohen et al 1997;. Pressman et .. al 2005), la dépression (Heikkinen et Kauppinen 2004), et le déclin cognitif (Barnes et al 2004; Wilson et al 2007) (Cornwell et Waite, 2009b)…

Le terme retraite prend racine dans le spirituel. Mais aujourd'hui, cette définition change avec toutes les sortes de retraites mises au service du corporatif et des vacances aventures ou créatives. Dans le secteur « Spa, santé & bien-être », le nombre de retraites est en hausse avec une offre de plus en plus variée répondant à des demandes plus complexe qu'elles soient hédonistes, eudémonique ou les deux. Le tourisme de bien-être, dont font parties les retraites, est un secteur en forte croissance (Spafinder Wellness 365, 2014). De là l'importance de démêler toutes ces offres visant à répondre aux besoins de mieux-être.

Les objectifs de la thèse sont les suivantes :

- Approfondir la recherche actuelle sur les retraites en mettant l'accent sur les impacts portant sur le bien-être des personnes et des communautés.
- Fournir des études de cas portant sur la conception d'une expérience de communauté.
- Démontrer l'importance de l'expérience de la communauté sur le bien-être subjectif que procurent les retraites.
- Explorer les implications liées à la conception des retraites qui favorisent les expériences communautaires.

Les résultats :

- Une analyse netnographique est menée pour démontrer l'offre sur « Retreats Online », décrivant les différents types de retraites et soulignant les expériences visant à créer le sens de communauté.
- La thèse se fonde sur deux études de cas : Skyros qui offre des vacances « retraite » holistique orientés sur le développement personnel en communauté et basée sur la philosophie grecque où la communauté est au cœur de l'expérience. Shambhala est ouverte à tous et se dit laïque bien qu'elle prend racine dans une tradition bouddhiste où l'appartenance à la communauté est à la base, surtout dans les retraites de groupe.
- La recherche théorique sur le sens de la communauté et le bien-être subjectif constitue une base solide pour démontrer la relation entre la communauté et le sentiment d'appartenance et leurs conséquences sur la santé et le bien-être. Les effets néfastes ainsi que les résultats positifs de la communauté sont mis en évidence et décrits de façon plus générale. Le thème le plus central et le plus important est le lien émotionnel en tant que dénominateur commun dans cette étude base sur les résultats et le thème théorique sur la communauté (Chavis, McMillan, 1986). Le soutien et le partage sont également des thèmes centraux dans les questionnaires et les entrevues. Plus particulièrement, le soutien y est fortement associé au bien-être émotionnel.

- La conception de retraites accentuant l'expérience de la communauté est centrée sur l'humain, avec la co-création, les points de contacts et un « design » de l'expérience qui soutiennent le participant durant son parcours, grâce à l'appui d'exemples concrets que l'on retrouve dans les études de cas.

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Appendix A: Abstract ATLAS Conference

Group retreats can attract people seeking deeper meaning and connection to themselves, to others and to the world. The retreat experience creates community in a supportive environment for exploring oneself in relationship to others. A preliminary pilot finding by (Kelly, 2010) suggests that "*retreat environments themselves are a draw for people, who feel the need for a sense of support/community and interaction as part of their experience*". Primary research examining community more closely within the retreat context has yet to be studied in detail. The aim of the research is to learn how community is experienced and created in group retreat settings and to understand the importance of the community element in the overall retreat experience. With the recent TIME magazine article on the Mindful Revolution (Pickert, 2014) and the Dalai Lama as the honorary guest speaker at the 2013 Global Spa and Wellness Summit, mind practices such as meditation are gaining significant mainstream attention; even though meditation is a deeply rooted spiritual, secular and religious practice practiced among Centuries old traditions, including the Western world for decades. The Dalai Lama mentions that "*there are a few things that are necessary in order to achieve a happy life apart from physical well-being, and these include a happy mind, compassion, trust, friendship and affection* (Global Spa & Wellness Summit Day Two, 2013). Zygmunt Bauman's work on community, individualism and the longing for community in market driven ideologies, and 'community as a craving' rather than a social reality, serves as a relevant juncture within the context of group retreat where community emerges even if staged. Bauman comments, *"we may well look longingly at the notion of 'community – it is the 'kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly love to inhabit and which we hope to repossess'. However, in a world where market ideologies have become dominant and infused all areas of life, we have increasingly lost a sense of working together to make change."* (Bauman, 2001:3). He concludes that *'[i]f there is to be a community in the world of individuals, it can only be (and it needs to be) a community woven together from sharing and mutual care'* (Bauman, 2001:150). In order to learn more about the importance and relevance community plays in retreats along with the motivations and outcomes in experiences shared, an online questionnaire was sent to retreat participants at Dorje Denma Ling, a rural retreat center in Nova Scotia, Canada in July and August, 2014.   The questionnaire was also sent to various online retreat communities, mainly affiliated with Shambhala International- an organization leading group retreats for over forty years based on a vision that is *"rooted in the contemplative teachings of Buddhism, yet is a fresh expression of the spiritual journey for our time; it is available to practitioners of any tradition"* (Shambhala: Making Enlightened Society Possible). Observations and interviews are also recorded during the same time frame to further reveal the community experience in retreat settings and the implications to personal and societal well-being.

Appendix B: Questionnaire I Questions and Responses

Questionnaire I link to the online form:
 **https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M4BxGWE2-
nSssDAzkNMKhjOHcrF1CI1qH9oweezXBWM/viewform**

The Community Experience in Group Retreat

Group retreat can draw people seeking deeper meaning and connection to themselves, to others and to their world. The retreat experience shared with others creates community in a supportive environment for exploring oneself in relationship to others. The aim of the research is to learn how community is experienced and created in group retreat settings and to understand the importance of the community element in the overall retreat experience. The following questionnaire should take 7-12 minutes. Thank you kindly for your time and consideration. If you wish to learn more about the final results, please leave your email at the end.

What is your gender?

○ ○ Female

○ ○ Male

○ ○ Other: [   ]

What is your age?

[65 and over ▼]

What is your profession?

[   ]

What is your nationality?

[   ]

Have you participated in a group retreat before?

○ ☐ yes

○ ☐ no

How many group retreats have you participated in?

[▼]

What is your approximate average household income?

○ ○ $0-$24,999

- ○ ○ $25,000-$49,000
- ○ ○ $50,000-$74,999
- ○ ○ $75,000-$99,000
- ○ ○ $100,000-$124,999
- ○ ○ $125,000-$149,000
- ○ ○ $150,000-$174,999
- ○ ○ $175,000-$199,999
- ○ ○ $200,000 and up

What type of retreat center(s) have you participated in group retreat? (check all that apply)

- ○ ☐ Buddhist
- ○ ☐ Ashram
- ○ ☐ New Age
- ○ ☐ Eco-resort
- ○ ☐ Christian
- ○ ☐ Other: [   ]

Which community are you practicing with?

[   ]

Which roles have you taken on in group retreat?

- ○ ☐ participant
- ○ ☐ teacher
- ○ ☐ facilitator
- ○ ☐ paid staff
- ○ ☐ volunteer staff
- ○ ☐ work study
- ○ ☐ Other: [   ]

What is the average duration of the retreat(s) you've participated in?

- ○ ○ 2-3 days
- ○ ○ 4-6 days
- ○ ○ 7-12 days
- ○ ○ 2 weeks
- ○ ○ 1 month
- ○ ○ Other: [   ]

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What is your motivation for participating in group retreat from the following statements? On a scale from 1-10 (1- not important to 10 the most important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To have a sense of belonging with shared values/vision	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To learn applicable skills sets (i.e communication)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To make new friends and counter isolation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To meet a significant other	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To share the experience with others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To deepen and enhance personal practice	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
- To be of benefit	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have other motivations not mentioned for participating in group retreat?

```
┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
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What would the retreat need to contain for a satisfying community experience?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
```

How important is the community experience for you during group retreat?

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Somewhat important
- ○ Not important
- ○ Other: ┌──────────────┐
         │   │
         └──────────────┘

What does "going on retreat" mean to you?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
```

Why do you participate in group retreat?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
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What does community mean to you?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
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Please describe the most recent community experience during group retreat

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
```

Does the notion of community affect your decision making process whether to participate in group retreat? If yes, how? (please explain in "other")

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Other: ┌──────────────┐
         │   │
         └──────────────┘

What are the most rewarding/beneficial outcomes from group retreat?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
```

What are the most challenging experiences from group retreat?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
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What activities would you say are necessary during a group retreat to experience community?

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
```

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Do you have additional thoughts or ideas to share about the community experience in group retreat?

> [ ]

Thank you kindly for offering your time. If you wish to learn more about the results, please leave your email here.

> [ ]

Questionnaire I Results

1- **Gender:** Female 67%
Male 29%

2- **Age:**

18-30   **7**   7%

31-43	**14**	15%
44-56	**17**	18%
57-64	**26**	28%

65 and over   **10**   11%

3- Profession (in order of most frequent responses):

Health (yoga, nurse, wellness, OT, acupuncture, massage, physician, coaching, mental health, spa professional) Education	Arts IT Consultant Business Government Retired	Student Trades Design Entrepreneur

4- **Citizenship (order of highest responses)**

American
Canadian
European (Swiss, Estonian, British, German, Polish, Ukrainian, Dutch, Finnish, Spain
Indian
South African
Australian

5- **Household income**

$0-$24,999	**22**	23%
$25,000-$49,000	**16**	17%
$50,000-$74,999	**15**	16%
$75,000-$99,000	**7**	7%
$100,000-$124,999	**7**	7%
$125,000-$149,000	**9**	10%
$150,000-$174,999	**5**	5%
$175,000-$199,999	**1**	1%
$200,000 and up	**4**	4%

6- All respondents except for 1 has participated in group retreat

7- **How many retreats?**

1	**0**	0%
2	**4**	4%
3	**2**	2%
4	**6**	6%
5	**6**	6%
6-10	**12**	13%
11-21	**20**	21%
over 21	**39**	41%
none	**1**	1%

8- **Type of retreat**

Buddhist	**82**	87%
Ashram	**10**	11%
New Age	**5**	5%
Eco-resort	**7**	7%
Christian	**1**	1%
Other	**15**	16%

Other: holistic, women's retreats, firewalks, work retreats at conference centers, cultural, MSBR, Christian, counseling & personal development, mindfulness, Catholic, Kripalu, plant spirit medicine, medical wellness, art, spiritual retreat center, rented ho

9- **Communities:**

Non-denominational professional community Shambhala Vipassana shambhala Shambhala Buddhist and Satyananda Yoga Shambhala Buddhism HSC Jewish Reconstuctionist congregation World Community for Christian Meditation Shambhala	Padmasambhava Buddhist Center/ Shambhala Buddhist Vajrayana Buddhist Brentwood Buddhist Society Buddhist Shambhala Hfx Shambhala-Buddhist skyros Seattle Shambhala Ewam & Tara Mandala Progressive Women's Spiritual Council, Yggdrasil	Shambhala Buddhist Budhist community none Pärnu Buddhist; Centering Prayer Shambala madison shambhala different ones Theravadan Buddhist, mostly Ontario Vipassana Centre (Dhamma Torana) Davis Shambhala Center

10- **Roles:**

Participant	**85**	90%
Teacher	**26**	28%
Facilitator	**29**	31%

paid staff	**17**	18%				
volunteer staff	**59**	63%				
work study	**17**	18%				
Other	**3**	3%				

Other: facilitator

Average retreat length:

2-3 days	**7**	7%		2 weeks	**16**	17%
4-6 days	**13**	14%		1 month	**3**	3%
7-12 days	**47**	50%		Other	**3**	3%

Motivation (1 not important to 10 most important)

1- To have a sense of belonging with shared values/vision

1	**2**	2%
2	**4**	4%
3	**8**	9%
4	**6**	6%
5	**4**	4%
6	**8**	9%
7	**18**	19%
8	**17**	18%
9	**4**	4%
10	**18**	19%

2- To learn applicable skill sets

1	**5**	5%
2	**6**	6%
3	**6**	6%
4	**3**	3%
5	**14**	15%
6	**9**	10%
7	**13**	14%
8	**9**	10%
9	**8**	9%
10	**14**	15%

3- To make new friends and counter isolation

1	**20**	21%
2	**7**	7%
3	**16**	17%
4	**7**	7%
5	**13**	14%
6	**8**	9%
7	**6**	6%
8	**6**	6%
9	**2**	2%
10	**2**	2%

4- To meet a significant other

1	**56**	60%
2	**10**	11%
3	**4**	4%
4	**4**	4%
5	**4**	4%
6	**4**	4%
7	**4**	4%
8	**0**	0%
9	**0**	0%
10	**1**	1%

5- To share the experience with others

1	**2**	2%

2	2	2%		7	19	20%
3	2	2%		8	14	15%
4	4	4%		9	10	11%
5	6	6%		10	15	16%
6	13	14%				

6- To deepen and enhance personal practice

1	0	0%		6	1	1%
2	0	0%		7	2	2%
3	0	0%		8	5	5%
4	0	0%		9	16	17%
5	1	1%		10	60	64%

7- To be of benefit

1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
5	4	4%
6	5	5%
7	9	10%
8	13	14%
9	16	17%
10	37	39%

Other motivations:
1- Teacher connection
2- Lifestyle habits, self development, "enrich my life", reconnect with myself, to better understand the teachings.
3- Mention of support and being with others: "re-connect with old friends", support from practicing meditation in group, benefiting the greater community, learning from others, creating enlightened society, power of group practice, experiencing community without attachment, the container, working with obstacles to compassion, synergy of the group intensifies the practice, listen to others perspectives, interactions with others on retreat can be encouraging and heart-opening, and at other times challenging and revealing which is also really valuable
4- Relaxation, simplifying, break from routine, ,
5- Recharge connection and practice
6- Experiencing community without attachment
7- Path requirements
8- Deepen meditation practice
9- To care for the earth

What would the retreat need to contain for a satisfying community experience?
Based on the responses in grey, the following themes have been extracted:

Emotional atmosphere: wisdom, compassion
Physical atmosphere: Enough facilities, rural setting, quiet space

People: Qualified teachers, practitioners, practitioners,
Organization, Facilitation between processes (i.e silence), good leadership
Group activities: sharing meals, chores, ROTA, meditation, food, not too much ROTA,
Balanced schedule
Silence

meaningful and true foundations with wisdom, compassion, and are for the earth

rural setting; ample facilities (housing, food, bathing...); excellent organization; qualified teachers

Willingness of participants to engage open heartedly and as much as body/mind permits

Shambhala practitioners

Various opportunties to engage with other community members - sharing meals, chores etc. as reminder that we share many group activities.

rural setting, quiet space for practice

Fellow Buddhist practioners

food, meditation

a graduated, facilitated process for starting talking again after a silent retreat. Having no structure for that I always find very challenging, and unsatisfactory; in fact alienating and contrary to the sense of community built up during the silence

Shared values and intention; structure; good leadership; opportunities for interaction.

compassion

well organized, not too much rota work, good food, if crazy people participating there are staff to relate well with them, not too rigorous a schedule--enough time to sleep and enjoy nature

good leadership and lineage

silence

Balancing interaction and solitude.

a convincing, life changing lesson

a strong container, qualified teachers, organized staff and program, a sense of safety, like minded practitioners

Practice, discussion, social time, teachings

good communication, shared spiritual or ceremonial experience

less talking - lol and sometimes better accommodation

Shared meals, shared meditation

practitioners all at the same level of experience

good food and enough for all

practice and opportunities to share experiences

Enough willingness in the group to follow routines and forms (such as silence) in order to leave behind a more habitual way of interacting to get a taste of what's possible in terms of communication and compassion between very different people.

harmony

Silence

atmosphere of acceptance, tolerance and warmth

opportunity to dialogue one to one

group meditation practice, dharma teachings

A good balance of teaching with the meditation times

respect for others and good organization.

people who can behave in a professional manner regardless of pay or not

Free time for integration and serendipity.

cooperation and sharing among participants

openess

Motivated participants

reasonable hours of practice, meaningful practices, ezxcellent teachers, good food, affordable price

Silence, shared meals, conversation, shared work

Unstructured free time

Some time to share some activity or communication that is from the heart, non judgemental.

the community aspect isn't what i look for

like-minded people

Balance of : Practicing together, time alone, informal time with others, sharing chores, discussion groups, mentors

the above plus other dedicated practitioners

Mpre practice, less social interractions

shared reasons for practices

at least 5 participants

less biting insects

unknown. life surprises me.

good container, good support

I had a great time, the group was cohesive

rota, shared housing, shared meals, discussion groups, group activities

I don't know, as it is not that important to me.

Practices and study sessions, empowerment

Silent time to reflect, followed by time to interact with others, then more silent time. It allows me to see the fantasy of my judgments of self and others, and that these are the same.

other people doing the same practices, silent and commmunicative time

trusting atmosphere, openness

Shared committment to practice

shared roles and responsibilities, social gatherings/tim

collective engagement; good leadership; decent conditions; quality of interaction; qualityh of environment

kindness, respect

Decent accommodations; manageable food lines at meals; a relatively quiet atmosphere in which to enjoy a meal; breaking down artificial barriers that exist amongst members over years of practicing together; not having to rush around from one thing to another

A well-connected group understanding of one another

Personal communication

Skilful direction

Motivated practitioners

shared view

Loving Kindness

How important is the community experience for you during group retreat?

Very important	**33**	35%
Important	**31**	33%
Somewhat important	**21**	22%
Not important	**4**	4%
Other	**0**	0

What does "going on retreat" mean to you?

Increasingly it feels like a reset
no talking
Setting aside some time go delve deeper into inner life.
taking time from my life to do intensive meditation practices
leaving regular routine and surroundings
changing perspective
to leave behind my everyday routine
spending time with my teacher or his senior students to receive teachings in my lineage and following an intensive daily practice
schedule; a solitary retreat to simplify daily activities and deepen practice following an intensive daily retreat schedule
Mostly for me it's about solitude but you specify group so I'm focusing on that.
Unplugging from my routine at home
Removing myself from the normal distractions. Putting myself in an environment where I can deepen my experience of a particular
practice
Intense study and practice
what I work to be able to afford to do
It means that I disengage from habitual daily activities and engage on deep practice.
It means to go to a place for a specific purpose or to work towards a goal
I love solitary retreats too, but for a group retreat, it needs a strong container, a clear schedule, with practices that keep it from just being a
casual social gathering. It should be a complete day/week/month with a fully structured day. Frankly, I appreciate half-day silence or
more, with specific times for socializing.
deepening practice (more than just daily). not relating to the office
essential
Learn and teach

Spending time working on myself away from the distractions
of everyday life.
Removing the distrations of everyday life and seeking stillness,
preferably away from the city
A chance for deeper meditation
container
observing myself, changing the habits of the mind
Taking time away from my "too busy" life to sit and learn how
to benefit others
giving up focus on usual activities to go deep into
content/context of retreat
time out of my daily life to deepen my understanding of the
dharma
to get away from "life" with others of like mind in nature and
silence
meditation intensive
Being in a contemplative environment, hearing teachings,
meditation.
to further my path

Reconnect with myself and a chance to regroup and reenergize
engaging
getting away from everyday life, being involved in a
discilpined environment, being offered a practice and teachings
that I am drawn to
focusing energy on sacred world away from usual rutines
Time to strengthen practice and *give back to others*.
individual practice and *being in community*
learning new practices & deepening old ones
individual retreat
Getting back to my equilibrium
PRendre un temps de pause dans ma vie active, me donner le
temps de relaxer.
taking time out from my usual and busy life, to make space for
meditation and contemplation, and to consolidate my
individual meditation practice
leaving the rest of the world and outside pressures.
getting in touch with reality
to deepen practice, to fill up so that I can extend myself further

Reatrat form everyday life and turn inward
Usually solitary retreat.
pulling away from mainstream
practicing meditation (and studying) with a group, daily, for a period of time
being alone with self
It is sort of experimental- I don't know what's going to come up, what it's going to be like, but I have a basic orientation toward getting familiar with the way my mind works and training to become more open to all of my experiences through meditation.
reset button, refresh, leaning in to open further
meditate or pray with others on retreat
studying and practicing the Shambhala Buddhist teachings
learning, experiencing, sharing the most important stuff in existence.
Leaving my usual day to day routine
Learning & practicing
Practicing and studying in a contained and focused environment
being able to drop my day to day concerns
refreshing, going out from usual
focus on practice/break from ordinary routines
sharing, developing, learning
meditation and periods of silence
deepening practice

Getting away from everyday activities
self-compassion
a focused growth experience away from everyday world
having a safe supportive container in which to deepen my experience of practice, the teacher and sangha
practice
Going into intensive practice.
That you go away for some time to do some spiritual practise.
Individual solitary retreat
Deep and intence practice
Going into an intense study and practice situation.
extended meditation, ngondro practice time
Inner stillness
away from the every day
taking a break from day-to-day routine to deepen practice experience
Intensive practice

Going on retreat means: Deepening, Intense, Meditation, Engaging and refreshing, Getting away from daily routine, learning, development, silence,

Why do you participate in group retreat?

Because the power of group practice intensifies my own experience of practice. It really leads to a strong experience of sangha and clan
Support of other like minded people is helpful
improve myself, become happier
requirement to continue studying
Personal practice is easier when there are others with similar goal and values.
It's in keeping with the vision of our community. Group retreat has really grown on me over the years.
To refresh my inspiration.
Because that is part of the structure of our path, and because it strengthens the view and experience of interdependence and lessons the focus on individual liberation.
deepen meditation and understanding; an opportunity to be with my teachers and my guru
for transformation
To deepen my practice and understanding of the teachings
train my mind
To further my meditation practice ultimately; to preserve my teachers' time so that they can benefit as many as possible.

to deepen prac and understanding, benefit from group practice - normally v isolated
It is satisfying in many directions. And I have a good time
Being in community is part of my practice.
It's an engaging experience with a lot of opportunity for personal growth
shared vision & practice
knowledge
as above
community/support
to continue to learn how to practice and tread on the path; to
maintain inspiration and counter isolation
Same answer
Intensive practice multiplied by group
to move along the path
fun good yeah
to deepen practice
Because I like sharing and learning from others.
container & silence
all of the above
Intensification of energy; community experience
essential to maintaining momentum on the path

Mental health
develop open heart and mind, practice silence and togetherness
to learn new practices and **deepen community connections**
shared wisdom
partly requirements, partly choice to be with community
Community.
to continue my practice with others who may offer me new
techniques by observing
Partially because that is where the teachings I'm interested in
are being presented
To heal, learn from others, personal development, experience
I want to develop myself and meet interesting people
To benefit all beings
communion of Spirit
Recieve teachings and practice meditaiton in an organized
For the opportunity to practice intensively.
all the reasons above
rich experience to practice with others
to deepen practice, connect with my teacher(s); connect with
other practitioners
Experiencing the shared practice; revisiting and remembTo
broaden my perspective and challenge my assumptions by
discovering how others experience things toering the
teachings, learning from others; sharing experience as
appropriate and relevant; feeling less isoloated with my
spiritual practice
for personal growth, opportunity to share skills and connect
with others
To continue growing in my learning and practice
It helps me learn about myself and others to make a better
human society
to practise & to study dharma

to develop towards helping build awakened society caring for
all of our earth's beings
o.
I feel I need it
it benefits my personal practice and adds to the group energy
no time to lose
To work on myself so that I can better benefit others in my
everyday life.
nothing else contains the teachings and experience I seek
Given the path that I am on, participating in group retreat is
choicless. Connecting with others on this path during group
retreat is so beneficial personally.HOW?
Taking practice to a deeper level.
to learn and to connect/find new sources of support for our spa
to to progress along the path
to help me focus and deepen my practice.
Being with other people as they experience their heart or mind
opening can be very encouraging. It can be easier for all of us
to follow challenging routines when we are doing it together-
we create a supportive environment together. Small
interactions can feel very significant and touching- realizing
how connected we are to each other and how possible **it is for**
us to create better society through working with ourselves.
They had programme I as interested about
To help others on the retreat
deepening
personal "growth", reachrage of practice and riding the power
of the group as support
see above
For the above reasons
to deepen my practice

What does community mean to you?

Sense of sharing all - tears and laughter.
being on a similar path, sharing values,
Helping others
Community means a willingness to share and be available 24/7
Working with others
Others to share the experience of living.
mutual support for practice and application in daily life
practicing in the same space as others
connecting with others for a short or long-term purpose and
commitment
Community is an experience of interdependence where one is
challenged to expand ones cap it's to care for others whether or
not they are your "friends".
very important to feel the sense of life and harmony
A group of people with some common ground.
Connection to others and sitting with the sanga
Important to be with people who have similar views
People relatively equally committed to taking responsibility for
their own kleshas
shared vision, kindness to and support for each other

Support and engagement of others/sanga
sharing experiences in which we organically begin to
appreciate each other and be able to begin to see each other as
individuals who matter to each other
a group of people who share a commonality, whether they like
each other or not
a place to be honest and /or explore with people and a place to
compromise in a good way
sharing vision and taking care of each other
knowledge
all beings in the universe - but especially those I have personal
connection to
being with people with shared view
gra group of indivuduals who support each other and share
common interests and values
a **diverse group** with some common needs and inspirations
Human communication and sharing of experience
a group of people that share my values and a simian social
context.

fellow travelers on the path who guide and help each other, a culture that supports practice, a sense of belonging, source of inspiration

group of people with a similar view

shared vision and/or values or coming together for a shared purpose

sharing ideas, beliefs, questions

all ages, finding common values, family

Living in harmony with those around me

sangha of like-motivated individuals

all sentient beings

Working together with appreciation and **respect to create a meaningful social situation**.

sharing experiences, supporting each other

to share and to have continuous contact

Being with people with similar goals ...spiritually mentally and chemically.

groups of people (2+) who exchange views, help & support each other, **who accomplish something together that's beneficial to others**

remembering that we have more in common than in difference that

group of people with common interests and goals and who want to help each other

It means a gathering of people who share similarities and differences

fellow travelers on the dharmic path

people of differnt backgrounds who share certain core beliefs.

I like to relate it to the verb (to commune):To be in a state of intimate, heightened sensitivity and receptivity, as with one's surroundings or with other people.

a group of like-minded people moving in the same spiritual direction. By each other's examples we unconsciously support one another along the path

Supporting each other as we learn together; reflecting each other lovingly and courageously- so we **experience the best of ourselves and learn to see it outside of retreat also.**

Sense of connection with others

developing trust of others and celebrate being human

Support, empathy, kindness

A home, a family; in Shambhala we work on "Creating Enlightened Society."

A sense of belonging, I guess.

being with like minded people

shared values

sharing

group og people who work together for common goal

Support

everything that sangha means

food, conversation, meditation

A feeling of love, responsibility, and accountability.

where people are friendly, kind and considerate to one another

being genuine with others

diversity of experiences shared within a common context or environment

Shared values and intention. Loyalty.

like-minded individuals

We cannot become enlightened alone, and serving others is a very important part of my path.

I don't have a definition at the moment

sangha

The Shambhala Buddhist community

People coming together to join in a collective experience of transcendent mystery.

a sense of belonging with shared values

Common themes: sense of sharing values, goals, belonging
feelings: belonging, love, home, responsibility, being genuine
support: learning together
development/process: seeing best of ourselves, working with others,
diversity vs. like mindedness
experience: friendly, kind, considerate

Please describe the most recent community experience during group retreat

i met many people more that the others before. And met some from before It was a great feeling.

We had a wedding seremony

At Dorje Denma Ling sharing in hearing the teachings of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

During an MBSR teacher training retreat in 2013: the facilitation was superb, safe, sensitive, welcoming, challenging, revealing of shared humanity; joyful

the experience was wonderful however painful to see that at a practise center people are unkind, demanding and self centered in their perspectives. even at a buddhist retreat people are often rude to one another. senior students seemto be the worst although some others are just emotional and it is heart wretching to experience & to watch

experienced deep contentment and joy of sharing insights and empathy for others

bonding by working together on the retreat and sharing experiences during discussions
shared last supper of retreat
fun, loving, heartwarming
Sharing a bath house with 30 other women (limited space to hang clothes, waiting for a sink to become available to brush teeth. No, standind in line in the heat of the day with many others while awaiting the next available porta pottie. Now that's community!
shared purpose to learn qi gong
Meditation, practice, and teachings
h
often a feeling of contentment, satisfaction, simple interaction, less responsibility to meet demands of one's own life & livelihood
Most of our community in my last retreat formed around preparing and cleaning up for meals, group discussions during talks, and a short break in the middle. It was just enough to give me fuel for stuff I have to work on on the cushion.
I witnessed my own courage and strenghth and **was inspired through both sharing with others and being in a wild landscape**.
A talent show at the end of a weeklong silent retreat proved, beyond any doubt, that my conceptions of others were completely wrong.
Family Camp at KCL with 230 participants and staff--quite an AMAZING experience
Jostling with 150,000 mostly patient, kind people at a Kalachakra empowerment with HH Dalai Lama
most wonderful sense of kindness ever
Meetings around a table centering around a common theme
sitting together in meditation for two weeks. Even though we didn't speak much we developed anot emotional closeness.
learning from each other during study & discussion
sense of fellowship and shared experience.
SSA6 lots of fun
I felt a tenderness and care for the very people who were most annoying to me. I saw the group begin to move in a way that suggested one organism integrated in its environment.
I was a participant in a staffed meditation retreat. The community experience was mainly with my follow retreatants, practicing and eating together. I felt huge appreciation for my fellows and a strong sense of shared discipline.
celbratin with a feast at the end of a group retreat
Scorpion Seal Assembly 3
10 days of deep practice simple food clear communication full participation
I was in the Catalan Pyranees on a group retreat for around a month. I have done this on three or four occasions, but each time there is a different scope. Two were working retreats where we uilt a house or worked the land ready for the community who were just starting to grow. Another time was focused mainly on connecting to the wild place we were in, with days of silence and a lot of meditation.

Isn't group retreat a cimmunity experience? Not sure what the question relates to. To nbe in a group for retreat is alreday a community experience.
intense, joyful, frustrating, heartening
Was serving on a 10 day Vipassana; helped cook meals and other chores and sat l-hr meditations 3x daily and evening discourse
Dorje Denma Ling, advanced training program. Approx. 120 participants in rural Nova Scotia
belonging to something bigger than all of us
Excellent and heart felt
the final banquet---very social, fun and delicious food
smooth, supportive, joyful
engaging with others in dialog and debate during my teacher's annual retreat program, just sharing activities of daily living
planning the feast
harmony, appreciation, feeling of "at home"
having to rely on each other in the absence of the teacher to maintain and uplift the environment for each other and carry on with devotion and faith
2 weeks with a cohort I've been practicing with for 5 years+
Got back on August 10th from 2 weeks at "Enlightened Society Assembly," where we learned profounds practices and practiced, celebrated, learned and experienced teachings together. **Great but also very challenging; a microcosm of life.**
This is the last day of a group retreat, and I'm about to head off to practice. It's small, only about 15 people, but very deep, close-knit community experience. Most of the people I have known for years, but not well, and it's powerful to settle into intensive practice with them.
Warmth, humour, caring and cameraderie during a closing banquet.
Sadana practice retreat with teachings
making tsa tsa's for a stupa
Did Level V Open Sky with the Ottawa Centre
joint labrynth making and walking experience with whole group attending our most recent Women's Spirituality Retreat at Hearthaven
sharing our deepest and most moving experiences
In short - I was talking about some teachings with others at the table and later in the teachings, Lama described the same thing I had said. That was somewhat reassuring for me.
The retreat is the group experience
Centre for Femininity
Isolation
attended SSA III
When we all understood something about the teachings together
Mutual caring and kindness; fun; common values and interests.
Casazen in Costa Rica....all in Spanish and despite language barrier I participated in Zazen . It was a humbling week.
Taught me that at 78 I am still mentally and physically strong.
I was at a Buddhist retreat held in silence. I opted to take a private cabin with a shared bath. We were up at 5 am and

finished at 9 pm. The retreat was with about 30 others and held in silence, except for the teacher's talk at the end of the day. sharing teachings, sharing meals, sharing work and study

I participated in a very loosely disciplined retreat and found a lot of friendship with other young people in the group. There's a really nice kind of familiarity with each other and appreciation of our different characters, and I plan to keep in touch with several of them now, over facebook (we have a page for everyone to join, with pictures etc.). I am also staying with a fellow retreatant for a week on vacation now.

True North Insight in Arnprior

Close to 230 people shared space at a land centre - we became closer and closer physically during the 10 days as demonstrated by sharing the entirety of the final day

Working together, sharing experiences
Challenging: Painful- emotional, unkind
Sharing meals, practice, activities of daily living
Discussions
Taking care of each other
Celebrating
Spontaneous activities
Inspiring, uplifting
Engaging in dialogues
Learning from others

heartfelt

I went to encampment and felt the way the community took care of one another. The point of the entire retreat was just to live as a community in the mountains. My role was as Desung so I was seeing how people were just stepping up to support one another without needing "someone else" to do that Spontaneous group dance and group aspirations of how to benefit earth & society

Retreated with a bunch which included many beginners to meditation - strangely a very mature and settled group (in my exp) - very uplifting and inspiring. Kind.

Does the notion of community affect your decision making process whether to participate in group retreat? If yes, how? (please explain in "other")

Yes	**21**	22%		Maybe	**21**	22%
No	**18**	19%		Other	**29**	31%

Other: to share the experience is enhancing; C'est puissant une expérience de retraite en groupe. Quand j'y pense, ça me motive à en faire une autre!; If the notion of community is absent, it is merely a crowd; I only attend retreats that a nearby and in my community.; Feeling not known and isolated has discouraged me but not prevented me from partitiping. Over focus on the individuals experiencing of the teacher rather than a group experience has only added to exclusivity of cliques; meaningful awakening of uplifted society; I wouldn't be interested in participating in a retreat which was a community of people who did not share my views; If I know that a particularly divisive spirit is likely to influence the retreat, I don't go; "No man is an island...." It depends on the practice. I love solitary retreat, and it is a different experience. I do solitary retreat every year. But the practice of community is important to me, and so I do a group retreat every year as well.; Compatibility of Sanga surrounding particular teacher; Really important to note: I would not go to just any retreat; It's not "community" if there sin' communication; I am becoming more interested in group retreat and less in solitary, although I think both are necessary..; yes, in the sense of wanting to practice in my lineage; At this point on my path, I would not practice outside of my community; depends on how it is facilitated and how the closure of the retreat is facilitated; I find support from group practice; I live remote from a sangha it is great to be bouyed by the community; Being with others in such a setting is such a good way to understand myself more deeply.; If there is NO community element, it is unlikely I will have any material to work with, besides what I bring with me from my life. Current experiences are more poignant than prior ones.; I never know who will attend; loss of ego-based separation; If I know there will be a good sense of communilty with those attending, I will be more likely to attend.

What are the most rewarding/beneficial outcomes from group retreat?

shared vision, understanding
Feeling of support of community. Connection to group realization.
deepen practice

it depends, but often group discussions are extremely rewarding. Naturally the chance to be with teachers and senior practitioners

Mentally healed when heading back to the real world of suffering

The sense of closeness

renewed commitment to my individual practice; ongoing connections with other participants sometimes

Connection to others, realizing other=me

More time to practice and receive teachings.

to know I am in the company of others in a safe environment

feeling new eenergy to pursue the practice path I am commited to

refreshment

growing of more benefit

appreciation and caring

A renewed appreciation for the diversity of people and for what I can contribute by sharing with others.

the sitting, talks by directors, communal experience

touching in w/ those I have not seen for a year

renewed inspiration for practice and study

That I become more calm and collected.

Les moments de célébration sont des événements très stimulants. Le sourire des autres m'encouragent.

Learning profound practices, bringin the sense of community and belonging home, feeling part of a chosen family who shares my vision for how to live.

Deeper understanding

working together, discussions about common goals, learning new meditation techniques, group meditation practice

experiencing coexistence and interdependence

the magic that can happen when **a co-creative flow evolves in a group**

A feeling of having worked through something together, **a shared inner journey.**

renewed determination for practice in life

Sense of community and shared experience

opportunity to practice kindness, development of friendships, inspiration.

simplicity, quiet, reflection, slowing down

the commeraderie from practicing in a group

feel closer to others

practise adn teh deepeningprocess of heart

becoming close to people with shared experience

renewal of trust and confidence that others care about things that matter to me

probably different for different people at different times. I like walking barefooted the whole time.

strengthening and deepening of practice

energizes my practice both on and off the cushion.

Personal development, learning from others, experience

Amplified heart

sense of belonging, how the practice of others amplifies the benefit of my practice, adding blessings to the place where the retreat is held

the lifetime connections that are hard to describe **- often it's not about the content of conversations but shared experiences**.

Learning from others and being appreciated for the qualities I bring to the retreat as well.

to accomplish group cohesion and syergism

renewed focus to generate bodhichitta

Insight you get from sharing your experiences with other who do the same practice

professional and personal development

new connections, new learning

energy, focucs

connections

if I can use the lessons learnt

Getting outside myself, deepening in the ability to harmoniously and insightfully be with others.

beneficial: softening the heart, working with others becomes more palpable

clarity, understanding myself and others better

Feeling the support and importance of the third jewel

Strong understanding of the practice that I can take out into the world and continue by myself until the next retreat.

being with new and familiar people

sanity

Sense of belonging and a way to express caring for others.

connections with people in the community

New friendships; learning.

A greater sense of belonging and alignment with the vision

Stillness. Softening up. Being in the world more authentically afterwards.

Increased discipline and sharing common goals

New insights, practices, friends

Emmersion and deepening

strengthening motivation for practice and inspiration

One develops one's equanimity towards others. It strengthens ones commitment to be of benefit to others.

Connection

optimism and willingness to be with others in this world.

relizing interdependence

you don't have to cook, maintain environment. enforce schedule

Making meaningful connections, sharing common human experience.

feeling of compasion, understanding

intensity of focus since we are doing the same thing with similar goals.

A sense of common purpose and bonding

group mind

Intensification of practice environment.

The unanticipated connections made, and new lifetime friends I make (especially since I'm not looking to add more people to my life)

sense of being part of something and having a sense that you share a common view with others and drawing encouragement and strength from that

sense of belonging being part of something; connection; interdependence; intensification; understanding oneself and other; shared experiences/journey
compassion developed
 renewed focus, renewed confidence that others care
shared vision
support

What are the most challenging experiences from group retreat?

Participants who flake off, do not take it seriously
feeling excluded for some reason (usually not external)
Allowing others to be who they are
Learning tolerance and acceptance
unpredictibilty
when I sense some bias in the group and unwelcome
being dependent on others
Observing my unattractive thoughts about others, completely fabricated
The schedule.
being silent and communicating well
the schedule
Not having enough personal space or time (if that occurs).
Becoming irritated with others when I perceive them as acting "flakey" "new Agey" or hypocritical. At other times the most challenging thing is also the most powerful: feeling completely vulnerable, transparent to others, or raw in my own experience and being really uncomfortable with the intensity of my emotions being exposed to others. It can be the most powerful thing also because I have learned to trust others so much more through that process and actually try not to avoid the discomfort.
bugs and constipation
feeling intense emotions and discord at times
Depression and embarrassment
to do something which I do not like to do
the first day and the last day
Over socialization
Pain
ego of self and other
realizing interdependence
pettyness and self-centeredness
not isolating myself
Other people.
inadequate facilities for ageing retreatants
working with the various personalities
not sure there are special challenges associated with a group retreat
Seeing my own habits more clearly,.
Finding accomodation as there is no Shambhala Centre in my city.
Lack of privacy, no "time of"
Irritability.
feeling totally isolated at the end of it, when we are expected to start talking about 'whatever' again, which just doesn't make sense after sustained silence and depth of experience

claustrophobic personalities.
Facing chanllenging interactions, people that pushes our bottons.
conditions; fatigue; facing myself in the context of a group & of teachings
Living communially
people who are distracting/attention-seeking during retreat, or those who don't understand the idea of silence
getting over-stimulated and over-interacted. I'm an introvert by nature so the group experience can be a bit overbearing
Having to schedule in proper breathing proper eating proper exercise proper meditation and proper positive thinking.....
You have to fit in all the retreat experience with your family work and friends. A huge challenge which lasts about 6 weeks before you cannot keep up. !
dealing with my shyness
being annoyed by others sometimes.
the long daily scheduler
wanting more personal space; experiencing aversion towards certain people
Participants/staff who deny responsibility for their own kleshas
Too much discursiveness. Irritation.
not talking and being kind to my body
the tight schedule
For me, honestly, is when there are some physically attractive women! :) Then I get easily distracted.
distractions of other people
Camping & extended sitting are hard for me due to physical problems--lots of pain; oh, and lots of emotions come up, but we don't see that as a problem.
other people
Holding both "being a student" and "being a good role model" at the same time as a more advanced practitioner.
Retreat structure. Accommodating needs. Habitual patterns being challenged.
including everyone in the way they want to be included
isolation and rejection relative to established cliques and the exclusivity it implies
Developing/furthering realization. Uncovering obstructions and sadness.
conflict, wanting time alone
Working through issues with other people that are emotionally charged or jarring.
environment
I do like the coffee that I make in the morning - it's always good to work with that challenge on retreat.

keeping to schedule

Meeting the parts of yourself you don't like, in others

In the past, I just wanted to sit, no talks but this time was different, I was engaged with everything.

Not quite enough time to myself

dealing with participants who are in great resistance to the experience

ineffectual leadership

Working together as a group, working towards personal growth

getting enough sleep and bending my legs

Because it is silent, not being able to speak with others during the retreat.

seeing yourself

if there is too much discursiveness / talking

community/people

There can be difficult personalities, but working with that is part of my practice. I love learning how to collaborate, connect with others, even if they are difficult.

Too much everyday socialisation.

lack of participation on any level.

see above

Les groupes de discussion peuvent parfois être pénibles pour moi car en échangeant sur notre compréhension des enseignements, j'ai souvent l'impression que les gens ne les ont pas compris de la même façon! En même temps, ce n'est pas un gros problème car c'est normal que les gens comprennent ce qu'ils ont besoin de comprendre en temps et lieu. C'est seulement un peu irritant à l'occasion lorsque nous n'arrivons pas à nous comprendre entre participants. C'est alors le rôle du modérateur (de l'animateur) de diriger la discussion mais souvent, il ne joue pas son rôle adéquatement. Donc, le groupe de discussion part à la dérive et j'ai l'impression que ça mène nul part

Themes: Others
Oneself
The environment: Schedule

What activities would you say are necessary during a group retreat to experience community?

disscusion groups

A group creative project, though I hate them :-)

chance for dialogue/discussion

talking, eating, practicing, listening

prayer, meditation, conversation

sharing meals, social and not social time, working on things together

participants and staff working together, being helpful, caring for each other

sitting in room together, safe space to be together

meditation, shared work and study

sharing space during meditation and working together

Accomplishing things together, either working in the retreat (learning together) or on it (doing chores).

Participate...in the here and the now. Leave the real world and your suffering behind..it is still there when you go home.

Eating together, sleeping in same place

Periods of silence

Structures group discussion, and unstructured discussion.

Communal activities such as dining. Looking after each other.

Eating together with conversation

meditation

expressive exercise; sharing food, schedule, boundaries for minimal talking or forming sub-groups

Group practice, dialogues, social time, group work commitments, common practice disciplines and norms.

meditation, exercise, contemplations

Simply practicing together in silence creates a surprising amount of connection, but in Enlightened Society Assembly, we engaged in meditation practice discussion groups,

"neighborhood" camp groups, and affinity circles as well as "pro-action" dream-building groups.

just sitting in silence is enough

more time dedicated to know each other

introduction of the participants; farewell

social activities, intimate communication workshops, co-listening

Discussions; shared work load; good leadership; structure.

working together

Activities that involve communication, interaction and also activities that focus on oneself

Spending time together in different ways - silent, discussion, fun

Chanting

Leadership. Practice focus. Challenging study that is profound.

simply gathering

chanting together

Practice, work, and celebrate together

Could be sitting together to meditate, work together, sing or dance together or participate in a cerremony together. Also sharing a meal, even if it is in silence.

working together, practicing together, studying together, receiving the teachings together

Shared meditation, meals and conversation. Ideally having people all stay in the same place (i.e. on the land) is good as it supports the container too.

sharing transformative experiences

ROTA, planned social times/activities

Discussion group, shared tasks.

That we share duties and communicate.

uplifted living environment, all pitch in to work to maintain that

meditation practice and teachings

meditation, food, conversation, study and ROTA

meals together; silent meditation (sitting and walking)

<mark>demonstrations of caring for others</mark>

time to connect with others both in silence and being able to talk with each other and work side by side

some social time

very well and strongly facilitated discussion groups / interactions

shared purpose for participation, shared activities such as study & discussion

<mark>Following a schedule together.</mark> Some mix of socializing and disciplined spiritual practice. Taking on roles to support the retreat happening certainly creates a stronger sense of caring and belonging.

Meditation; discussion; communal meals

being together for activities like eating and meditation. Some talking some of the time.

Group meals, some in silence. Time for socializing.

At the end of the 10 days, students are able to break Noble Silence and speak with one another. I think this is helpful in being able to connect, share and Validate one another's experience during the retreat

discussion groups

A spacious meditation hall is always nice

practicing together, simple proximity

discussion groups, socializing

shared rituals, conversations, discussions

sharing

time to share our experience in a safe and welcoming and safe emotional environment

Yoga, being together for meals, having private time

group practice and meals

shared commitment

Group discussions and sharing groups

<mark>safe spaces</mark> for small group dialogue, shared circle time, creative time to make art, offer song, poem, blessings, games

none are necessary per se

Pratices sessions, study sessions, a good teacher that can transmit the essence of the teachings.

Variety, movement, talking stick style sharing (to ensure that all get a chance), good organization and facilitation vs leading

Practice, discussion, sharing

periods of silence and talking, meals too, good food

See above

Sharing meals, sharing time in meditation

both shared experiential activities and the opportunity for open honest communication which includes safety and listening with full attention and acceptance

Meals together, discussion groups

practising together

Smaller group gatherings; keeping the numbers down so the individual doesn't feel dwarfed in the process and unseen and a competitive atmosphere overwhems the situation; dyad interactions do very little to renegotiate social boundaries; whatever can be done to help both those in and out of the cliques get beyond their identified groupings.

Challenges: cliques
Simple living activities: eating, chores, etc
Safe space
Specific examples for exchange:
Mix between silence/dialogue and engaging

Do you have additional thoughts or ideas to share about the community experience in group retreat?

I'd like to do more. Aging is an important issue. Being able to accomodate aging participants is a growing need and becoming more pressing

no

I love the kinds of connections which become possible with others while I am in retreat and I find it socially nourishing when otherwise I can grow frustrated with feeling too weird for more conventional social situations. Over time I have become more and more comfortable with myself and that is less of an issue. I feel like I bring mindfulness and caring intentions into other group situations now, which people consistently respond to positively.

It,s difficult to progress on an entirely individualistic basis.

good exercise in creating enlightened society

Silence is hard for monkey mind but not impossible

Just go...by yourself for. your journey.it will be one of you most rewarding "holidays" for yourself

Sharing a work rota is really the only way you get to know new people.

It can be life changing but the problem is that the physical support of the community is often only available during the retreat. Afterwards, online contact is good but not the same. Regular meeting up or forums may be needed so that individuals do not feel even more alone after a retreat has finished.

No.

good, nourishing food is helpful

I think mixing up seating more would be an interesting experiment. Rather than having the inner circles always placed together. Relooking at the usefulness of the rationales for

grouping people in trying to honor hierarchy. Why can't a somebody sit next to a nobody in a meditation hall?

no.

No

the charnel ground is delightful

discussions have to be inclusive and relevant. work needs to be shared and responsibility taken.

I think that community experience can arise from the culture of the organization that is hosting the retreat. Shambhala recognizes the power of culture and tends / cares to ensure that there is a culture of kindness

sharing some cultural narratives from one's experience in own or different cultures

A progression over time is needed. A deep connection to nature is essential, one that is tactile and honored.

It's a great growth experience, but growth experiences often include challenges as well as joys--be prepared. Don't do a long retreat until you've meditated a while.

Thanks for researching this!

some recent retreats have insisted on silence, which hinders connecting with old friends and prevents effective sangha-building

you don't have to talk to have a sense of community. Silent retreats are very powerful in community experience

Yeah. If there are some people who are "annoying", then it is interesting to see, how people react to that, bearing in mind what the Lama has just tought us :)

Gratitude that group retreats are available.

people really need to be reminded to be kind to themselves but also to one another - that could mean being more considerate and less selfish!!

At first I preferred practicing on my own - interesting how much i enjoy group retreat - a rich opportunity to look more about myself

When I first connected with Shambhala close to 15 years ago, I was not a big fan of group retreat. I preferred practising on my own. I attribute this shift to the power of group retreat and the brilliance of my teacher.

Set out confidentiality and communication guidelines at the start.

be kinder

Having clear communication about group decorum is important.

already identified above

Appendix C: Questionnaire II Questions and Responses

Link to the form online:
**https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1MbsGCFxZ0_ML11HtSUmX9k38lmSyGXktJ1Ri8A
KE2Fg/viewform**

The Significance of Community in Retreat

My name is Josee-Ann Cloutier, I'm currently researching and writing my Master's thesis on the Significance of Community in Wellness Service Design: The Case of Retreats. The purpose of the following questionnaire is to investigate the significance and benefit of community in retreats. It is also to learn how community is created and experienced within the retreat context.

Screening note: Only those who have participated in retreats please respond.This questionnaire is anonymous unless you leave your email at the end to receive final results.It should take between 7-10 minutes. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

What is your gender?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Other

What is your age?

What is your profession?

What is your nationality?

Have you participated in group retreat?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Have you participated in solitary retreat?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If no, why not?

How many shared group retreats have you participated in?

[dropdown]

Please check the types of retreats you've participated in as a shared experience where a sense of community was formed at the retreat.

- ☐ Spiritual & Religious (Christian/Interfaith/Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native/Aboriginal, sacred journeys, spiritual growth/self realization, silence, meditation)
- ☐ Health & Wellness (spas, yoga, holistic, detox, addiction recovery, weight loss, fitness,)
- ☐ Personal Creativity (women, couples rejuvenation/family, men, youth, personal development/destress, art/writing/music
- ☐ Outdoor/Adventure (nature-eco, wilderness, farm/ranch)
- ☐ Destination Getaway (weekends/getaways/vacations, exotic destinations)
- ☐ Business/Executive
- ☐ None

Please check the types of retreats you've participated in alone as a solitary experience.

- ☐ Spiritual & Religious (Christian/Interfaith/Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native/Aboriginal, sacred journeys, spiritual growth/self realization, silence, meditation)
- ☐ Health & Wellness (spas, yoga, holistic, detox, addiction recovery, weight loss, fitness,)
- ☐ Personal Creativity (women, couples rejuvenation/family, men, youth, personal development/destress, art/writing/music
- ☐ Outdoor/Adventure (nature-eco, wilderness, farm/ranch)
- ☐ Destination Getaway (weekends/getaways/vacations, exotic destinations)
- ☐ Business/Executive
- ☐ None

Please check the types of retreats you've participated in within your own circle (friends, family, partner, co-workers).

- ☐ Spiritual & Religious (Christian/Interfaith/Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native/Aboriginal, sacred journeys, spiritual growth/self realization, silence, meditation)

90

- ☐ Health & Wellness (spas, yoga, holistic, detox, addiction recovery, weight loss, fitness,)
- ☐ Personal Creativity (women, couples rejuvenation/family, men, youth, personal development/destress, art/writing/music
- ☐ Outdoor/Adventure (nature-eco, wilderness, farm/ranch)
- ☐ Destination Getaway (weekends/getaways/vacations, exotic destinations)
- ☐ Business/Executive
- ☐ None

Other retreat types not listed?- please describe

[   ]

Which role(s) have you taken on during retreat?

- ☐ Participant
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Facilitator
- ☐ Coordinator
- ☐ Paid Staff
- ☐ Volunteer Staff
- ☐ Work-Study
- ☐ Other: [   ]

Is the process of creating community important to you as part of the retreat experience?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ I don't know
- ○ Other: [   ]

How important is the community experience for you during retreat?

1- not important 5-very important

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

If important, please list reasons why experiencing community is important on a scale from 1-5

Shared support

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

New friendships (connections)

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

Renewed friendships (connections)

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

It's a fulfilling and enjoyable experience

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

It's a challenging experience

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

It's helpful in my day to day life

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

I feel empowered and more confident

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

Other reasons not listed

[   ]

What motivates you most about sharing the retreat experience with others?

[text area]

In order of importance (1-least 6-most), in your experience, which of the following aspects contribute to creating a sense of community during retreat?

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Emotional atmosphere (sense of care, safe, non-judgmental, kindness.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Physical space (clean, balanced space accommodates interactivity and privacy, co-created space)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Human element: (qualified/experienced/inspiring/strong leadership, teachers, facilitators. Participants are prepared, qualified for a particular type of retreat)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Schedule (balanced time between engaging with others and alone, including silence and discussion)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Activities (intentional activities such as co-listening/group discussions, ordinary activities such as cooking, cleaning, contextual activities such as	○	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5	6
rituals, shared schedule, celebrations)						
Experiencing an unexpected challenge/difficulty/obstacle with others followed by resolution and growth.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Anything else in addition to the aspects mentioned in the previous question that creates a sense of community during retreat?

Could you describe the ways in which you experience community during retreat?

If the community experience is beneficial and significant to you DURING retreat, please describe how you benefit.

If the community experience is beneficial and significant to you AFTER retreat, please describe how you benefit.

If the community experience is not beneficial to you DURING retreat, please describe any challenges.

13. If the community experience is not beneficial to you AFTER retreat, please describe any challenges.

Additional thoughts, comments, questions?

Thank you for sharing your knowledge, experience and time. If you wish to receive final results on the research, please leave your email here.

Responses

Demographics

Female	**36**	75%
Male	**12**	25%
Other	**0**	0%

Age

18-30	**4**	8.3%	44-56	**11**	22.9%	65 over	**8**	16.7%
31-43	**6**	12.5%	57-64	**18**	37.5%			

Have you participated in group retreat?

Yes	**44**	97.8%		No	**1**	2.2%

Have you participated in solitary retreat?

Yes	**29**	67.4%		No	**14**	32.6%

If no, why not?

Group retreats are part of the next steps on the Shambhala Buddhist path. No time in my schedule for an additional solitary retreat.
I like being in groups better.
Have not had the opportunity yet.
Because I have not yet felt the urge to do so, although I will want to do one in the future.
Money
Never considered the possibility..Busy with other things.Group retreats offer a lot of energy and focus.

not advanced enough yet
Haven't had the and have not felt ready for a solitary retreat.
no interest.
Haven't taken the opportunity for that yet, but it is on my to-do list.
Just not had the opportunity
Yes
It was not yet appropriate for me on my path, but I expect to do a solitary retreat in the future

How many group retreats have you participated in?

1-5	**10**	22.7%		21-30	**2**	4.5%
6-10	**2**	4.5%		Over 30	**11**	25%
11-20	**18**	40.9%				

Please check the types of retreats you've participated in as a shared experience where a sense of community was formed at the retreat.

Spiritual & Religious (Christian/Interfaith/Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native/Aboriginal, sacred journeys, spiritual growth/self realization, silence, meditation)	**40**	90.9%
Health & Wellness (spas, yoga, holistic, detox, addiction recovery, weight loss, fitness,)	**17**	38.6%
Personal Creativity (women, couples rejuvenation/family, men, youth, personal development/destress, art/writing/music	**12**	27.3%
Outdoor/Adventure (nature-eco, wilderness, farm/ranch)	**14**	31.8%
Destination Getaway (weekends/getaways/vacations, exotic destinations)	**11**	25%
Business/Executive	**7**	15.9%
None	**1**	2.3%

Please check the types of retreats you've participated in alone as a solitary experience.

Spiritual & Religious (Christian/Interfaith/Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native/Aboriginal, sacred journeys, spiritual growth/self realization, silence, meditation)	**31**	79.5%
Health & Wellness (spas, yoga, holistic, detox, addiction recovery, weight loss, fitness,)	**3**	7.7%

|		
Personal Creativity (women, couples rejuvenation/family, men, youth, personal development/destress, art/writing/music	**2**	5.1%
Outdoor/Adventure (nature-eco, wilderness, farm/ranch)	**5**	12.8%
Destination Getaway (weekends/getaways/vacations, exotic destinations)	**5**	12.8%
Business/Executive	**0**	0%
None	**7**	17.9%

Please check the types of retreats you've participated in within your own circle (friends, family, partner, co-workers).

Spiritual & Religious (Christian/Interfaith/Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native/Aboriginal, sacred journeys, spiritual growth/self realization, silence, meditation)	**29**	70.7%
Health & Wellness (spas, yoga, holistic, detox, addiction recovery, weight loss, fitness,)	**16**	39%
Personal Creativity (women, couples rejuvenation/family, men, youth, personal development/destress, art/writing/music	**8**	19.5%
Outdoor/Adventure (nature-eco, wilderness, farm/ranch)	**8**	19.5%
Destination Getaway (weekends/getaways/vacations, exotic destinations)	**10**	24.4%
Business/Executive	**4**	9.8%
None	**4**	9.8%

Participant	**43**	95.6%
Teacher	**19**	42.2%
Facilitator	**14**	31.1%
Coordinator	**19**	42.2%
Paid Staff	**10**	22.2%
Volunteer Staff	**26**	57.8%
Work-Study	**10**	22.2%
Other	**2**	4.4%

Which role(s) have you taken on during retreat?

Is the process of creating community important to you as part of the retreat experience?
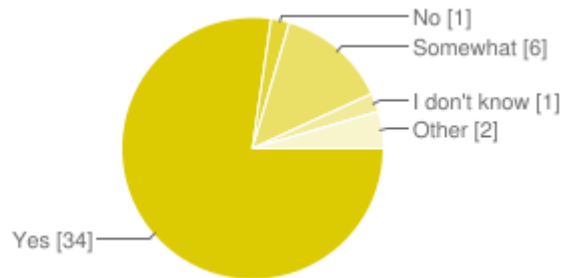
Yes	**34**	77.3%	Somewhat	**6**	13.6%	Other	**2**	4.5%
No	**1**	2.3%	I don't know	**1**	2.3%			

How important is the community experience for you during retreat?

1	**1**	2.2%	3	**3**	6.7%	5	**18**	40%
2	**1**	2.2%	4	**22**	48.9%			

If important, please list reasons why experiencing community is important on a scale from 1-5

| 1 | **1** | 2.2% | 3 | **6** | 13.3% | 5 | **21** | 46.7% |
| 2 | **1** | 2.2% | 4 | **16** | 35.6% | | | |

| 1 | **0** | 0% | 3 | **9** | 19.6% | 5 | **15** | 32.6% |
| 2 | **4** | 8.7% | 4 | **18** | 39.1% | | | |

| 1 | **1** | 2.2% | 3 | **9** | 19.6% | 5 | **16** | 34.8% |
| 2 | **3** | 6.5% | 4 | **17** | 37% | | | |

| 1 | **0** | 0% | 2 | **3** | 6.8% | 3 | **1** | 2.3% |
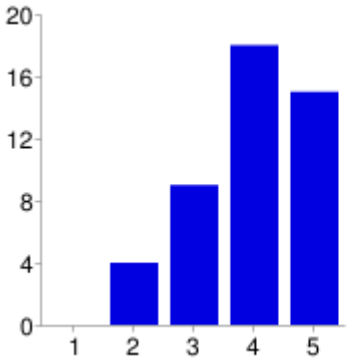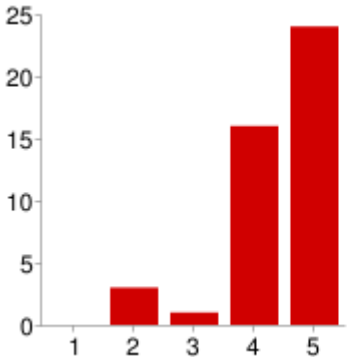
4   **16**   36.4%   5   **24**   54.5%
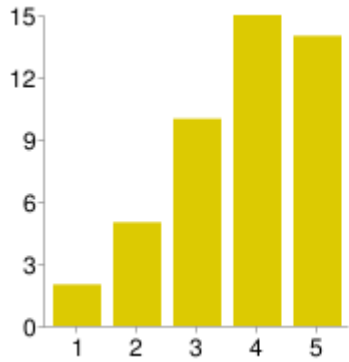
1   **2**   4.3%   3   **10**   21.7%   5   **14**   30.4%

2   **5**   10.9%   4   **15**   32.6%
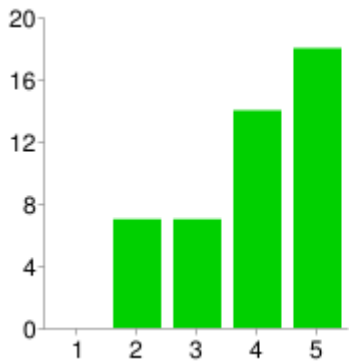
1   **0**   0%   3   **7**   15.2%   5   **18**   39.1%

2   **7**   15.2%   4   **14**   30.4%

1   **0**   0%   2   **3**   6.5%   3   **9**   19.6%

4 **15** 32.6%   5 **19** 41.3%

Open questions

Other reasons not listed:

group retreats, community is v important, solo retreats the opposite applies!

My answers, of course are only for retreats that are not personal as in meditation retreats.

connection is what it is all about

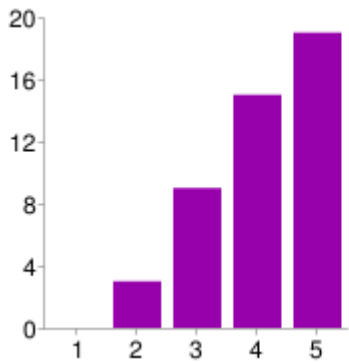Dialogue, new ideas, anecdotes with others is always interesting

Learning, from discussion with peers; growing trough being in a leadership role

rediscovering yourself and cleansing the mind for more opening the mind to awarenss and peacefulness

sense of belonging, relaxation, inspiration

learning to live with others

to help others

Opens the heart

What motivates you most about sharing the retreat experience with others?

The support and the sharing of joy and sadness with others. Studying and discovering with the wisdom present in everyone.

sharing, a sense of ease, connecting with others who have had lifer challenges, and others who can share joy and positivity it can depend v much on how the retreat is run, and or 'held'

shared knowledge about my practice/religion; encouragement/advice if difficulties are encountered with the practices

Shared learning strengthens the experience, especially if you stay in touch with some people after the retreat.

Discussion and analysis with different people deepens understanding. Networking is also good - I like meeting people from different cities. Going with friends helps you retain and incorporate what you've learned - maybe they'll remember the parts you forget and vice versa - so you can teach each other when you get back.

Creating a memorable experience that can be shared

Actually the group energy during practice and teachings is strong, but it is also challenging to be with a group, I often find myself seeking to get away from the large group during social times. And Sometimes I can relax into the group.

Support; enrichment trough the ability to discuss with peers; sometimes powerful because of collective energy of a group practicing together. More openness, from working with others.

Ineffable quality of connection and transcendence - love, healing

support and connection with others on shared journey

Getting away from regular day-to-day life, being in nature, walking on the Earth,

hitting the pause button to connect and slow down...create consciousness in life... set goals, enjoy community and sharing

Retreat experience can be great for reconnecting to humanities in general, and nature if held in such an environment. I feel these are both connections our everyday experience generally misses sorely but is actually essential if we want to go, as a global community, in a more sustainable, healthy and wholesome direction.

The development of personal and cultural sanity.

sharing experiences and insights

Openness, kindness

sharing the experience potentiates it/makes it richer for all/allows experience to settle in more deeply

It's a two-way learning experience.

Anything else in addition to the aspects mentioned in the previous question that creates a sense of community during retreat?

sharing of information

celebration or feasting

taking the time to know yourself and appreciate that you can give and help

strong teachers, facilitators, good container, balanced schedule

Sharing, togetherness

ritual - creating sacred space - in circle creating intension of safe space, welcoming

Appreciation of collective wisdom of the group

Group mind and shared space.

No

Gentleness, kindness and humour.

Beautiful, safe physical space is definitely optimal for a retreat setting but in facilitating many retreats that have involved travel I feel that creating sacred space is most essential and that can be done almost anywhere. To do this group bonding/community is extremely important.

shared living quarters, so it's like a sleepover and gives a lot of chance to chat

Giving people permission to have a voice, to be seen, observing who doesn't seem to be fitting in while checking in with them to see if it's what they want.

Clear and concise communication before, during and even after. This helps with expectations, accommodation of the needs of individual participants, creating a safe & healthy "container" for the retreatants...

Good task assignment where everyone is assigned a task and do it for the benefit of the group (without complaining when possible!!!). Taking turn in giving care to someone sick

Surviving the shared experience as a group.

A shared vision among everyone involved.

mutual humor sharing experiences and challenges together

I think the correct age group also affects the sense of community or the type of community that is created. It is easier to share and hear stories from the same peer group, rather than those above or below me. I think these type of retreat settings help me hear people outside my own peer group, but I've mostly only engaged in or continued to act on advice that came from my own peer group. I also tend to follow the actions of my own peer group so that I feel that I fit in, rather than those above or below.

Inspiration from teachings and practice communication with others

mutual journey of the whole group, humbleness

structured schedule group commitment to the shared space and intentions of the retreat

Unexpected kindness and sharing that spontaneously happens. Discovering connections and similar experiences amongst each other.

ensuring balance of 'heavy and light' so not one aspect dominates too much..inner looking reflection balanced by outdoors for example

Having time to chat in small groups with people, without a rigid topic

Could you describe the ways in which you experience community during retreat?

Deep connection to common truth

Group Meditation chants and prayers. Discussions are important as well as listening. Experiencing the outdoors is important to me and respect for the environment.

a chance to talk with others a chance to share feelings

Over all, over many yeas, I feel an accumulated sense of shared group experience, which then is supportive in daily life. But during the retreats I find it hard to make lasting connections with people , sometimes because there is not time to really get to know each other. Ultimately I find my community to be those who I have shared life changing experiences with, like raising children, etc. But I do enjoy that I have participated in the richness of a retreat, the content of the retreat is not really available anywhere else. I hope that doing something with a group lessens the negativity of the world and increases its connectivity.

Each group retreat is different. But since most retreats are in silence, community is experienced non-verbally and thus perhaps more genuinely.

The wonderful sense of working together to create a space where everyone can participate in the program. Setting up the environment; sitting together; hearing and discussing the teachings and life experiences together; eating together; cleaning up together; helping each other out in various ways.

By everyone participating in the same thing day after day, there is a relaxation and trust in each other, along with a deeper appreciation that comes from getting to know each other more genuinely.

Mostly a feeling, of connection with other people.

Communicating and working together moves the group and the project forward.

Shared chores, 'affinity circles', shared challenges and goals, working w/ differences and conflicts, emotional reactions. Simple shared presence.

communal meals and activity schedule rotating service roles to support fellow retreatants entertaining one another through a theme event or talent sharing event meaningful conversations discussing the retreat experience or teachings

a couple of times I have watched a program where they have discovered an recluse tribe. the rituals, chores, etc that they have and getting along with each other and how they cope without stress. it feels much the same. plus strengthing spirtual beliefs and increasing desire to help others, making and deeping connections.

Cleaning the mind without running to the next thing.

We work and play together. Share spiritual, psychological, intellectual and philosophical ideas.We support one another and affirm similar values. We regain strength and sense of worth. We share the challenges of retreat.We operate on a code of human decency, kindness and respect. We have a chance to practise these principles in anticipation of taking these renewed and stronger ways of operating in society back to our families, work and soccietal groups of which we are a part.

slowly at first, then seeing who you are drawn to, being part of a group meditation without speaking for example, is a way to experience community and oneness without necessarily making relationships per se. sharing mealtimes and evening downtime with others, sharing life stories..these are the v diverse ways of creating and doing community..

any interation

Several deeply connecting moments with one person at a time, sense of glowing of the group when you look at each other and know what you are going through

warmth, humour, learning new information

circle channting, singing Sharing meals and outdoor experience yoga practices, dance and meditation

Discussion groups, shared meals, spontaneous conversations

-many hands make light work I love participating in work, that benefits many -opportunity for casual contact-- being with people and getting to know them just by being in close proximity -experiencing a potential of what society could be if we all worked together -opportunities to hear teachers and share this experience with others

In many different countries the experiences of having meals in people's homes, sharing questions and conversations between the retreat group and local people. Taking part in ceremonies, rituals and daily work life. Chanting and singing together. Providing and participating in small group sharing where people practice high quality listening skills.

Meeting people, making friends, shared hardship strengthens bond when we struggle to learn together, having your experience validated by talking with others about it, figuring things out together

Doing shared tasks. Sharing physical space. Eating together.

If the retreat is related to studying teaching and conducting meditation practice I appreciate the support of others simply doing the same thing and the support of the schedule having meals provided making them. These make the physical context of a retreat easier and just the fact of the schedule and the surrou ding activities create a strong container for the experience

Hard to say.

I feel a sense of looking forward to being with the others in the retreat - I feel motivated and inspired. I feel no hesitation in the effort required to make a retreat possible - such as rota or the intensity of the schedule due to the "shared experience".

Meals are really important both for social and personal bonding, reviewing/discussing the content of the retreat. A buffet style works well because people get their food quickly so more time for social connection or private time. Having people responsible for clearing their own dishes helps to put everyone on the same level too. An introduction to the cooks or chef creates a special connection, especially if they can participate in some of the group activities. I suppose it creates an awareness that everyone counts and is making a special contribution to the group. Retreats where people sit on a floor and in a circle subconsciously softens armoring while grounding people if there is facilitated seated awareness exercises now and then to boost energy. Some kind of talent show is a fun thing to do if it's a week long workshop and one night can be devoted to such community created entertainment.

Preparing food together between time of practice. Practicing together. Solving problems related to difficult relationships. Laughing with our inmates.

preparing meals, discussion groups

Physically by being around them; emotionally by sharing with them and having them share with me; spiritually by connecting with them and feeling as though I belong

Sharing meals - silently or in communication Listening and reflecting on the group process during Q&A sessions Sharing conversation and listening to others experiences of the present moment during the retreat helps everyone involved to build insight

walking with someone from place of retreat to accommodations off site doing rota together practicing together chanting together learning together having fun together/celebrating exercising together sharing meals sharing silence

Non-aggression and curiosity about others, being willing to be kind to others, sense of humor about life/the human condition/suffering. Being able to stay attuned to the present with forward vision.

Claustrophobic discipline. I prefer solitary retreats, even though they are harder -- but in a different way. Just you and your mind.

see above

If the community experience is beneficial and significant to you DURING retreat, please describe how you benefit.

brings out flexibility, meet new people, learn from others, challenge oneself.

I have time to focus on my own growth without the usual obligations of daily life interfering.

learning new information about my practices; chance to study material and ask questions about it

Energy, good spirits, joy , wisdom

I feel supported by the environment...container I see others as "just like me..."

peacefulness, living in the moment

sorry, but I think this question is the same as the previous one. If it isn't the same question, then my answer is the same!

I feel that I have friends and companions sharing my journey.

Community experience opens the possiblility if gaining clearer insight regarding the constitution of my own obstacles and deepens my experiential understandings of the teachings

It helps me to feel settled. I can focus on what I'm there for. I can relax with what's happening and learn and grow from that. With the support of a community behind me, there's a freedom and inspiration to go further and help in any way I can.

Again, mostly a feeling, hard to describe. A feeling of belonging, feeling home.

Sharing experiences. Learning to give up personal territory.

feeling part of a nice group and place

We can learn, heal, grow, experience joy and celebration best through relationship. Thus community experience creates expansion of self and others. Synergy!

I think the shared energy of people help propell you over personal challenges that you would find difficult to face when by yourself. At least in retreat you have an experience that is greater than your individual challenge. I love it when a whole group calms down and experiences a shared moment or a prolonged period of understanding.

Keeps focus on the intention of the retreat and what happens there.

There is always the "irritating person", but seeing how others relate to this person can be informative.

The sense of being cared for by others work.

Potent and intimate to practice on a group. People open up a lot. It builds powerful new friendships and deepens or re-ignites old ones.

I'm an introvert, so I dont always speak up, but doing group activities and discussion groups obligates me to say certain things. Sometimes I learn about myself by my reaction to voicing things as opposed to just thinking them. Words aloud are so powerful. Talking with others forces clarification of thoughts. We can have an idea for a long time and then realize it's not as clear as we thought it was if we can't describe it to someone.

Opening, companionship

Having fun, feeling good.

support, challenge points to work with

it is hard to be on a spiritual retreat and do the same routine day after day. Knowing the courage it takes to put aside one's own life to do a retreat, the courage of everyone is very supportive.

a sense of supporting each other and learning from each other Sharing

It is good to share an experience with like-minded people; to meet and befriend others who share the same interests. Retreat brings together people who might not otherwise have met.

I benefit from the shared experience that we create during the retreat. The things we learned about ourselves together that maybe no one else knows, yet or ever. I also benefit from their vulnerability, as it makes me more likely to be vulnerable.

Learning about self, others in interpersonal milieu. Maslow-Belonging needs, spiritual experiences, shared meditation , seeing life as practice.

the others act as a mirror and also provide feedback

I often feel that my (Buddhist / meditation) practice is enhanced and enriched by the other retreatants.

Processing our experiences and understanding is definitely beneficial to me, and this deeper understanding lasts over a long-term.

I learn how to better communicate with others

Build a stronger commitment to my spiritual path.

renewed inspiration, dedication & energy

Same as above.

As above

If the community experience is beneficial and significant to you AFTER retreat, please describe how you benefit

I can have the energy to live properly and cheer up all together.

Renewal, sense of belonging, re-invigorated faith in humanity. Renewed self- insight and compassion if conflicts arose.

I have a renewed connection with people I already knew, and new connections. Can sometimes draw on others for support after.

Being calmer and centred makes daily life more enjoyable for me and those whom I am in contact with.

Energy and enthusiasm, aliveness, well-being, vibrancy

Continue to study and practice the learnings. Bringing to mind memories of the retreat. Connecting with fellow participants

Ongoing and deeper friendships and community, having shared difficult challenge. Always haunting post retreat.

What I learned being in community during the retreat would help me in future community-like activities.

Some friendships are crossing the space-time continuum and when we see each other we feel a deeper connection.

knowing what is possible inspires me to contribute toward creating aspects of this community in my "outer" everyday world

It makes want to help out in the community at large, be it my religious group or in the wider social community of my town.

use of learned tools including breath work, yoga, creative exercises, poetry, reading lists of books and different teachers to connect with after the retreat

affection, sharing things that need context to be shareable

Sense of connection that carries on. Sangha, one of the three jewels.

by bringing what I've discovered to my community outside of the retreat

(Same as above:) I often feel that my (Buddhist / meditation) practice is enhanced and enriched by the other retreatants. Processing our experiences and understanding is definitely beneficial to me, and this deeper understanding lasts over a long-term. A sense of collective wisdom which enriches my personal well-being. I feel more grounded after retreats.

Connection to others

I feel more open towards working with others

Usually there is joy and a longing to reconnect and reform that community of friends again.

The continuation of growing and expanding sharing and relationships.

Opportunities to study, practice and talk together.

Applying the teachings in every day life becomes more spontaneous and genuine.

Follow up and practicing new skills with colleagues is helpful after the workshop. Also, FB groups but FB groups shouldn't be the primary source of education and connection thereafter, only a tool for people to connect.

It becomes an inspiration to take into the world. You begin to see how it can be like retreat in some ways even when you're not on retreat. It's like a very beautiful way of living that you want to share with everyone.

I feel re-connected to some of my basic principles. renewed and refreshed and able to appreciate both retreat and ordinary life

Afterwards, the community provides me with a support network to reach out to when I struggle with being vulnerable in my everyday life. They support me when I get hurt by the unsafe environments I may choose to be vulnerable in or celebrate with me when I am rewarded from being vulnerable in a safe relationship. They are my cheerleaders.

Again, mostly a feeling, hard to describe. A sense of bonhomie that stays with me after the retreat, in particular after longer (1 or 2 weeks) retreats.

Carry all of the above to the post-retreat eperience

Creates friendships and emotional connections.

After retreat, I think i work on trying to get into a bigger mind , having been introduced to it in retreat. Also it is very helpful to get outside of my habitual daily life, I get an energy and a clarity with how to see and act sometimes.

It is a huge reminder to how I want the rest of my life to be formed in terms of community. It offers a direct experience of how I would like my every day life communities to feel.

greater sense of confidence about the practices, more knowledge, greater sense of inclusion in the community

Same as above.

take the time to breath and not to get caught up in the negativeness in the world

remembering that others have harder lives than you

I don't always connect with the pope at the retreat after as they are widely dispersed. In my experience daily life takes over and it's hard to continue those connections. But when one sees those people again it's as if there was no time in between as the sense of shared experience remains

see above

If the community experience is not beneficial to you DURING retreat, please describe any challenges.

The challenges, i don't like living in a large group, it is hard to connect to people.

Hanging on to ideas having arguments trying to get noticed.

This is difficult to answer because negative experiences can lead to growth. Some of the more difficult things that have happened in group and solitary retreat have lead to good things when I reflected on them later.

NA

I have had some difficult experiences on retreat with observing behaviour that is not compassionate and is self-serving, disregarding other people. This, of course, is not specific to being on retreat but is a challenge. Having clear communication and skilled staff makes a huge difference in the resolution of these challenges. (Desung and kasung in Shambhala retreats, e.g.) This is a very specific challenge: the fragrance issue is a challenge for me in retreat settings. I am very sensitive to fragrances and chemicals and it is difficult to get this across adequately in retreats. I have asked for assistance in communication about this ahead of retreats (to leave ample time for prep) and this has proven difficult to carry out.

sometimes over zealous or damaged people can take over

It may be difficult if you find you do not connect with the others. Or, I did a retreat in a different country and really connected with the others, which made it difficult to leave because I didn't know how to find the same in my own country.

The hardest challenges come from having to deal with the idiosyncrasy of every one (how they eat, how they clean or don't clean after themselves, how they complain about everything) and how we all want to create our little comfort zone. Sometimes I can be a bully in establishing my territory and it hard to let go. Sometimes it's the other way around and I might feel like I have no place of my own.

The challenge I've had is when a member of the community doesn't want to participate or attempts to make the group unsafe. Usually the facilitator will preempt or remove this person, but there are times when this does not happen and it hinders my growth and the groups.

In general it is beneficial, but in the beginning I find it sometimes difficult to talk to new people if it is in a large group, or I feel alone if I see all other people talking and I'm not part of it. This does not prevent me from enjoying the experience though.

If I am trying to complete a particular practice the petty annoyances and endless talking and meetings and group encounters are distracting. Sometimes I feell as if there is too much throwing ones person dramas ourpt for the group to sol earthier than working with ones own mind in the retreat space. I have very limited time and it's precious so I don't want to epwaste the small amount of practice time I have on a lot of community meetings.

Recreational drugs and alcohol can change people's behavior, change the focus, and create cliches.

Being stuck with people who develop grudges or maybe you remind them of their mother

Challenges if participants are uncomfortable in the environment of the retreat.

As an introvert sometimes hard to get enough alone time.

special groups within the group form during retreat and I'm outside, leaders appear elitist

not getting along with others can sometimes be a problem little things become big things

Irritations, conflicts arise, but it's part of the experience.

trying to live in the now and not getting caught up in the fast pace of life

If the community experience is not beneficial to you AFTER retreat, please describe any challenges.

participants disperse to many far away places after a program, hard to keep in touch

The emotional and "practice" benefits are good, however, in relation to the fragrance example I give above (chemical sensitivity), I have suffered very much in the long-term from exposure in a dathun (month long) retreat setting. The effects have lasted over a year and I feel hesitant to do further group retreats, at least in a winter/ indoor environment.

If my community members do not respond to me after the retreat or the tools we have to communicate don't work.

This is also a hard question to answer for the above reason.

NA

If something happens where there is conflict, it's good resolve those issues sooner so that people don't leave damaged and speak poorly of the experience.

I haven't experienced a retreat that was not beneficial. Sometimes I do criticized other people's realization who went on retreat and don't want to relate with other people after their retreat.

As above. I don't think it really continues except when there is some external binding factor such as you work with the people. I do think it's a good or bad experience for people if one lives far away from any community of interest so in that case a virtual community of the participants could continue bro good or bad

I am usually exhausted after a group retreat. When I recover, I can see lots of benefits.

I feel lonely and disconnected at times. Sometimes, it can just be self contained and ring fenced to the experience if the contrast to everyday is too stark..but this isn't the retreats faul

Appendix D: Meditation Interview Questions, Responses and Analysis

Community experience in retreat and quality of relationships

- Creates more **openness, with others** outside of the retreat. **Enthusiastic curiosity** to participate in your life with others.

- **The kindness** that I hadn't experienced before. The teachings embodied in teachers, about good human society and being who you are. Gave me courage to be who I am, and going back to job, rousing courage, and inspired by meeting people.
- Being with people in a genuine, authentic place. Everyday life there's a reference point of genuineness.
- Dynamics that arise in one's life, they arise in retreat container, tempered by the practice so one can see them. Some awareness, capacity, to hold that carries into relationships outside of life.
Seeing one's own patterns on the cushion while these things come up. You get a sense of what you bring, and work with.
-In retreat easier to be open, shared experience, easier to communicate. Leaving retreat communication is difficult with non practitioners.

Community experience in retreat and well-being

    Personal

    -Emotionally. Lighter, more enthusiastic about life.

    - Droping heavy stuff. Connection with others doing the same thing, sharing experiences to do it with others.

    - Coming back to what is most important and bringing meaningfulness to my life. These teachings bring deep truths, brings meaning and sense of purpose of remembering what is most important.

    - Rejuvenated, replenished, clear mentally, energetically.
- It's nourishing, replenishing, arouses a clean energy. The process, of getting to retreat, really see the balls in the air. Insight there, the transition back after retreat. Juggling. Too much to do. Coming back in (life) awareness of that. How to fill the space.. more awareness of that. Appreciation of home that's refreshed. Nice to be home when away.
- It affects how you view yourself and the world. Seeing the sacredness, power and beauty and goodness and the world. Being in retreat, it allowed me to relax into my mind and be comfortable resting and experience the quality of my mind. Flash on that daily helps whith

overall well-being. After retreat it fades, habitual patterns come back. A common, a recurring practice, then it can have a profound impact.

Social

- Because it makes you more open, fearless to engage with others. Enjoying engaging with others. On a buzz after retreat… after being in silence.. engaging with others.
- Shambhala has social vision, challenges social assumptions and habits.. brings up fear, vulnerability brought out.. genuineness is vulnerable. Less stuck in habitual patterns in terms of society. Rawness after retreat, and tender, how to engage afterward. Longer process. Micro society. Clautorphobic and joyfull, full of friendships. Shifts. More confidence, being myself. Spark of innocence of vulnerability shine out.
- It's easy to become isolated after retreat. It can be a challenge, looking for social needs inside of retreat. Fill the need for social outside of connection. Connections inside are different outside of retreat. Fulfilling those needs outside can be challenging. Passive community outside of retreat.
- Being in relationship with people even when silent. Affects relationships in the home. Paying attention to that, recognition, how to have a BALANCE. Being aware of the relationships.. makes me more conscious of it. Keeping some sense of balance, retreat social, personal and how that holds together. Prunes social aspects. Extensive network is different. **Nourishment of being with people in retreat. It's nourishing. Meaningful time with people. Open more, more social with daily life interactions, at grocery store, farmer's market, etc.. taxi cab driver, richer exchanges. Embeded in a fabric of relationship. Socially connected in community outside of retreat**.
- It's difficult to share, challenge to communicate what I was doing to non-meditators, society. Communicating the profundity of the experience of what it does. You can be stigmatized. From the south, going on retreat is a bizarre thing for people to do.

Community experience in retreat and society

- The more of us who engage in retreat, will create, and contribute towards society. **The more we can engage in retreat can take that positive energy into society.** Enlightening society activities engagement as opposed to Tequila all inclusive.
- I think **we connect with what's meaningful for us. The more it is deepened. Act in accordance with those principles. Align actions with convictions with reflections on what's most important. When people's action change, which affects society**. Deepest principles, align actions with that. Manifesting.
- Strengthened more positive and open in retreat. More energy to work/create that in the world.

Hospital people share rooms. Nurses: sharing room with someone you don't know. **Quality of family with strangers, and human connectedness. Nuclear family single dwelling, we don't experience.** Because it opens things up. Personal control and entering into a group. Relaxation about holding things tight. <mark>Less embarrassment about being human. Exposed in some way. Making relationships in day to day that you wouldn't otherwise make. Resilience in conflict. Flexibility. Unconditional confidence.</mark>

- All of us is part of society, so our experience on retreat affects how we manifest in society and how we view society. Everything that happens to us.

Well-being outcomes from the community experience in meditation retreats

Personal well-being

Emotionally feel **lighter**, and more enthusiastic about life. A sense of heaviness is dropped. Coming back to what is most important and bringing **meaningfulness** to my life. The teachings in retreat offer deep truths, bring meaning and **sense of purpose** of remembering what is most important. **Rejuvenated, replenished, clear mentally, energetically**. It's **nourishing,** replenishing, arouses a **clean energy**. An **appreciation** for home is refreshed; it's nice to be home after being away. **Relaxing into my mind** and experiencing that quality helps with my overall well-being when I remember that and do it after retreat.

Social well-being

After being in **silence**, **engaging with others is a natural inclination**. **Being in relationship with people even when silent contributes to an ease in being with others.** Retreats affect relationships in the home by recognizing, how to have a **balance** since there is **more awareness of one's relationships**. **Balancing both social and personal time** in retreats, and how that dynamic works together can be revealing. It's **nourishing and meaningful to be with people in** retreat with different networks one would not necessarily associate with in daily life. Daily life **interactions are more engaging**, at the grocery store, farmer's market, with the taxi cab driver, etc. There are **richer exchanges** embedded in a fabric of relationship. Being genuine is vulnerable which can be diluted in society. A spark of innocence and **vulnerability shines out**. There's a sense of being less stuck in habitual patterns in relationship to society. Feeling raw after retreat, and tender, which can create some uncertainty on integrating back in after which can become isolating without any support structures for after. Connections made inside retreat are different outside of retreat. Fulfilling those needs for social connection outside of retreat can be challenging. The community experienced outside of retreat is more passive.

Community experience in retreat and societal outcomes:

Retreat brings **positive energy** into society, the more people engage in retreat, the more they will contribute to society. Retreat engages in **enlightened society** activities as opposed to the Tequila all inclusive vacation. I think we connect with what's meaningful for us. When people's **action changes for the better**, society is affected**. When one's deepest principles are brought forth and aligned with action, manifesting the values and principles benefits society**. There is a positive **strengthening and opening in retreat creating more energy to work and offer that strength and openness into the world.** There's a quality of **family created with strangers, and human connectedness that is difficult to experience in a Nuclear family dwelling.** Personal control is challenged when entering into a group, so there is some **relaxation about holding things tight and less embarrassment about being human.** Retreat shared is exposing in some way and **opens the possibility of making relationships in the day to day that one wouldn't otherwise make**. We are all part of society, so **our experience on retreat affects how we manifest in society and how we view society**.

Appendix E: Expert Interview Transcripts and Analysis

Interview Transcripts

Online by Skype or in written form, conduct 3-4 interviews with experienced experts in the fields of creating community experiences that contribute to well-being.

February 13th, 2015- Skype Interview

1. Jane Arthur, Director of Residential and Retreat Centers in Shambhala.

2. **Role, functions, responsibilities:**

   I think a lot of my role is in helping us to keep talking to each other. Exploring what it means to live in community. How are we living examples of creating enlightening society. What does it mean to collaborate, creating schedules together? The role is one of shepherding the emotional and energetic support, and sharing the journey of leadership together at the retreat centers. At the retreat once a year with leadership we have evolved to less business being discussed and more being together (mention of horseback riding lessons, doing simple activities together, replenishing).

3. **What is your understanding of a community experience during retreats?** The Sakyong started to shift the emphasis away from solitary to group retreat because he saw that a deep connection comes out of the intimacy of retreat, and when shared it leads almost everyone feeling touched, opened, softened. People arrive generally dried up at the beginning and they leave hydrated. They come into their fullness. People blossom. We are inherently interconnected, and recognize, foster, how humans are. Walled off, out of truth, reality. We are social beings, **we are beings that require connection**. As a nurse, I worked with ill children, infants, and we were concerned about babies being left without human contact, and often they wouldn't do well. We would place a recorder with a voice or, touch and get them out when we could. We are naturally connected, and need to foster an environment to connect.

4. **What is the process of creating community in retreats?** It's not a conscious process, as a meditator, I believe that we come into ourselves and settle our minds, the community gets created naturally, people want to be together. In a meditative environment, there is no speaking which helps people to settle. Community then arises naturally. There are opportunities to speak and not speak, so connection becomes more possible with settling and opening than anything.

5. What is needed for a sense of community to emerge? <mark>The atmosphere, the place, leaders in the situation creates an atmosphere of kindness and warmth</mark>.

6. **How does creating community impact and benefit well-being (both individually and socially? (in retreats).** I miss the kind of community I had at Karme Choling. <mark>Being seen – appreciated and seeing others raises life force energy, cheerfulness mutual appreciation.</mark> Fundamental care of human beings. <mark>**When we can offer and receive appreciation.**</mark> Delight in one another. <mark>**Support**</mark> when times are tough. Not feeling alone, like one has to carry one's own life entirely. It's not all squarely on you there are friends. You feel each other's needs and celebrations.

7. **How important is the community experience during retreats?**
<mark>**It's the whole reason one does retreat.**</mark> A huge piece of it is creating community and energy of the community. <u>A collective life force energy is created – synergy- more than sum of parts. Momentum. When in community doing these activities</u>.

8. **Are there challenges or downsides of community experiences during retreats? Is it for everyone? Are there circumstances where a shared retreat is not recommended?**
Some people may have a strong experience and a reaction and get distracted by others. It is part of the path-- nothing can happen that detracts from community. If someone is not super well practiced it can derail retreats by having other people around. People can ride their lives, it's not a downside. It is proportionate to how much someone is willing to open to their experience. If they can't see or experience the benefit, it can be scary. Some people can get disturbed – irritated by others, which can affect the retreat container. However, those are more opportunity to lean into than push away.

What would you say are some community wellbeing indicators/outcomes that retreats offer? For example:

Healing Odyssey offers experiential learning retreats supporting cancer survivors in a rustic environment with a mission to improve and enhance quality of life maintained over time. The wellbeing outcomes from the community created at this retreat that came from the research include:
- Increased self-confidence.
- Enhanced ability to trust others.
- Enhanced ability to cope with life challenges.

There are short term/long term outcomes

Short term: The glow – <mark style="background-color:#00ff00">more to say on the glow? Warmth, openness access to heart and interconnectedness</mark>

Longer term (from living at a retreat center): Knowing people more deeply, deeper friendships come from being together in a more intensive environment.

Living together there's a quality of living and working together so intensively that benefits people's well-being. Often it is difficult leaving and people have a hard time after such intense friendships and community that is created. At the Leadership Institute in Vermont people have created a stronger knit community in residence by living together, which has a different quality than if they are there shorter term for training only.

Socially, experiencing community in retreats teaches skills to navigate life outside of retreat. It is being a smart human being about relationships.

Jane Arthur Interview Analysis- In describing the relationship between community experiences to subjective well-being in retreat environments Jane Arthur mentions the following descriptive words that affect personal well-being: *feeling touched*, *opened, softened, coming into fullness, cheerfulness*.

The experiences and actions that contribute to well-being in retreat include: *being seen, appreciated and seeing others, offering and receiving, supporting, feeling other's needs and celebrating*.

Description words of well-being outcomes as a shared experience in retreat include: *synergy, and increased life force energy*.

Interview Transcript

Interviews will be conducted online by Skype or in written form, with 3-4 experienced experts in the fields of creating community experiences that contribute to well-being.

February 16th, 2015- Skype Interview

1. Michael Lium-Hall, Founder and Director at Hemma- A community acupuncture and yoga clinic Hemma.ca

2. Could you say a bit about how Hemma started and the inspiration behind it?

   While I was in acupuncture school, I was aware of the fact that there was a need for the services we were providing, the model we were delivering the services was inadequate for addressing people's needs. I had a desire to try to create a way to offer my services that would allow more accessibility and would allow more people to access those services. I had the fortune of attending a small workshop in Portland Oregon in 2007, in the springtime of 2007 on community acupuncture. At that time there were only 4-5 community acupuncture clinics in North America and immediately I connected with the idea, which is essentially we need to rethink how we deliver the service of acupuncture. We needed to awaken to aspects of class and

classism, as they relate to accessibility, with health care. As they relate to how we deliver our services here to individuals. I really connected with it, and literally came home and built with my partner at that time, and found a place, and spent the summer building it and opened in the fall of that year. The goal has always been to create a community space that is open and accessible to a broad range of individuals as possible knowing that there's always some reflection of self and self values, and class within that creation, but to create something as inviting and welcoming to as many people as possible. Making it possible in a variety of ways. One is to make it affordable, or to try to make it as affordable as possible. As you may know we have a sliding scale for our fees, which I feel is something important. It's acknowledging that various people have various abilities in which they can pay for the services. And in just the way we welcome people into the space. I think that's it in a nutshell.

3. What are your roles, functions, and responsibilities?

I'm responsible for keeping it running, financially viable, and I work as an acupuncturist, so I spend 4 days week connecting with people as a practitioner, and connecting in general as a community member or as a leader of that space with the people who come to receive our services. I'm also responsible for managing the staff. There's a yoga manager who manages the yoga side of the business. I have a couple front desk staff, 15 or so volunteers who work for 4 hours a week every week.

4. What is your understanding of the community experience related to what you do?

We provide two services, we are a yoga studio and a community acupuncture clinic. For the community acupuncture clinic my experience of community is that we're trying to bring people together around health, and healing, and even personal challenges. I think that so often in our culture we often see our health as separated and private and so we have some difficulties in talking about our health issues with other people in our lives. When we go to a doctor we go and sit in a room by ourselves with that person for a few minutes and often feel uncomfortable, awkward, and sometimes for some people ashamed, or embarrassed. I hear stories of people being put down, or misunderstood or humiliated, all these different things that separate us from one another and even from practitioners. So, one of the benefits of the community clinic is that it brings people together, first of all people are coming into a common space of healing being together. They aren't aware of what the other person is there for. Even if they don't know why that individual is there – there's a sense of connection and community that exists within that space. The other thing that happens is that sometimes people will even overhear aspects of conversation. Or some people come in and they are just really open about talking about their health and what's going on in their lives. Other people in the room hear that and are touched by that in different ways. They hear something that they need to hear and they connect with some aspect of that person's struggle. We see people

in from all walks of life. There are people with end stage cancer, people that are having babies, people that are depressed and anxious, others are just there to relax, so it's a pretty broad range of people. But there is this effect that people experience and I know this because they tell me, right people will say "oh at first I was a little bit shy, and nervous about being in a room with other people, but now when I come on a day that is slow and there's no one else in here – I miss or it feels weird to be by myself in this room or be with one other person. I like the experience of being with other people. So it wasn't necessarily a goal of mine, you know it was just the way we're delivering this service but I see now that there's this added benefit. I also think that people feel better, and heal just by being in other people's presence, by being together in that space, irregardless of what I'm doing with my acupuncture, so just the act of coming together and sitting quietly in a room together, with some kind of a shared purpose, towards healing or wellness or rest, other people benefit from that.

Interviewer comments on the power of how simple and effective it is.

It's often those simple things in life that are that way right. I think again, we created a structure of healthcare where we assume people want isolation. We assume the way to be and without necessarily questioning what we're losing, or give up when we do that. It doesn't mean that there aren't any inappropriate times for that. I think we need to recognize there are some benefits as well.

In regards to the yoga, it's a similar thing where people come there for their own individual purposes and they feel a connection with the other people that are coming. They feel a sense of place there. I think of it as church, I grew up, I went to church and church was a big part of community. For me, it was a place where people knew one another and would look out for each other, they heard each other's stories. So people are hungry for that in a way. So that's what this has become as well. Not a church but a place where people can come – and experience a connection with other people. It's not a coffee shop or a bar, there's something that connects them on a deeper level—to their spirit, I'm not sure.

Interviewer explains how the research is to also understand the community experience and the process of creating community through co-creation, and whether these can be distinguished at Hemma and how that might look like.

I think both is happening. I think people can experience community and co-create community within the space. I think the idea of community acupuncture in general is that people do participate in lots of different ways. I think because.. how do I describe that? .. I think because people resonate with the idea of what we're doing-whether it's through the sliding scale and accessibility or this community model. They want to participate in some way. So they may do that in a variety of ways. One is certainly by attending and

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experiencing that but also by supporting that in other ways whether that's helping to promote what we do which is a pretty big thing or just participating through volunteering. A beautiful example, I had a patient one day who was having some difficulties, and he needed a tissue and I was really busy, I had a bunch of people in there, and this person sitting across from him recognized his need and got up and gave him a tissue and cared for him in this way. That was really touching to me because it sort of breached that regular kind of way, me providing the service for others but instead this person was participating as well. They weren't my assistant, they weren't my volunteer, they were just another person reaching out to another person in need. I don't know how often that happens. I think there is that sense of connection that people have and they also develop relationships there through that experience as well sometimes. They may recognize each other from the clinic and just talk with one another while they're there. Some people develop relationships outside of that experience as well. So there's that dynamic happening as well. I'm not sure if that got too far from your question.

Interviewer: No, not at all, that's a lovely story and example to illustrate that it can also be very spontaneous. It's like creating the space for that connection to emerge without any particular plan necessarily. This is what's been surfacing from the research so far, that when you create the space and conditions for people to connect you don't have to control it and it somehow unfolds in its own when people are able to relax and connect with themselves which facilitates the possibility for connection. That's a beautiful example of that.

Michael: It's interesting too because we're a business, were a for profit business, although the model is moving towards non-profit more of a social enterprise really. We're not a government agency or service so we straddle this interesting place where we have to pay attention to what were learning and staying afloat.

Interview cuts out..

What I appreciate about the for profit model is that I get to choose how I do this, I don't need to ask from other's how to do it. I don't know if I would want to have a board of directors. I think it's an interesting question. ..creating a model that works economically. I need the number of people I need to see in order for that to work. That's as far as I need to think or strategize about it, the rest I leave it up to individuals to determine how much they are going to pay. There's no way to verify. I don't know unless I go out and look on the computer. I have no idea what people are paying and I really enjoy that aspect actually. It does create a neutrality within that. All I need to know at the end of the month is did I see an X number of people because I already know the average per person for the earnings or I have a pretty good idea from having been doing it for so long. Make it less about that in some way since it does allow to take the business out of it. Other than that, there is a transaction that everyone

understands. Transactions must occur for this thing to happen. They have to participate in that way. The other thing that struck me from what you were talking about. My idea is that you create the space and let people make it their space for them, not run it, but take some kind of ownership of that space in a way that they can use it. I have taken that approach with my staff and employees, and I take that approach with customers. There are many people that come and utilize the space, and many whom I don't know, and they don't know who I am unless they do a little bit of research. They don't know that I'm the owner and its fun to see people come in and utilize the space in different ways and enjoy community in different ways. They don't have to interact with me as a business owner. It's their entity and that's what I said a little bit about nonprofit. Some of the larger acupuncture clinics are moving more in that direction and their making it possible for people to for example, the umbrella organization is now a cooperative. It's called Poca People's organization for community acupuncture. And so with clinic members, patient members, acupuncturist members in this cooperative (inaudible). The community clinic in our neighborhood, and they can actually do that and hire an acupuncturist so it actually does create different ways to implement this

Interviewer: You've touched in on what would be needed for a sense of community to emerge in offering the possibility for ownership, not only from staff but from the user perspective Is there anything else for that sense of community to emerge?

I think there's lots of different aspects to it. There's physical accessibility and space and its location, there is a way in which you relate to people. This is something I talk to my staff about (inaudible).. you can't create a space that resonates with everybody, I'm talking about physical designs. How can you connect with individuals and find ways to make them feel welcome regardless of their differences, and their uniqueness. Whether it be related to age, gender, sexual orientation, or class, so I think that's also a big part of it. (long pause)

I think there's a mistake in thinking in regular business, around who you're trying to reach. If you don't have that perspective, you're just going to attract those individuals like yourself and the other people will feel not so comfortable. And for me the biggest eye opener for that was when I started to explore and understand those issues as it relates to class and classism, most of us as acupuncturists are from middle or upper middle class backgrounds since to become licensed its very expensive to go to school. We're often a very privileged group in many respects and we leave from our schools thinking that we have tremendous knowledge that is of value and that we need to value ourselves, and we're used to a certain level of standard of living so we carry that and project that out into the world when it comes to delivering our services or attracting patients. In my own experience I've lived in a variety of classes growing up, working class to middle class and I've come to recognize distinct differences within each class in terms of needs and values. And ways of being is vast. It's

really important to recognize that when (inaudible) for one group of people.. you have to really be aware of those differences.

Interviewer: Awareness of those differences is key

So another way of looking at that is a lot of acupuncturists don't talk about their fees very much, and in many cases it's hard to find the fees on the website and how much they charge for their services. Fees are talked about after the session. We are taught to think people value their health so much that they will pay whatever it costs, yet it's leaving out this whole group of the population that has to think about money and that needs to think about how much they can spend.

5. How does creating/experiencing community impact and benefit well-being (both individually and socially?

I think it benefits the broader community outside of the space. It's interesting to see what happens with people who become regular users and how they change over time. I've talked with them too about how so and so has opened up. They see how those people are interacting with them at the front desk. You can see it in the way people interact within the space. They begin to feel like it's their space. So they come in, they know what their favorite chair is to sit in, they know to get their blanket and heating pad and the way they connect or converse with me and other people. I've definitely seen examples of that. People are opening up more and sharing more of themselves in that space.

Interviewer**:** You mentioned a benefit to the broader community outside of the space.. can you say more about that?

People appreciating the members of the community other than business owners, appreciating us being there, and the space were providing**.** Walking around and seeing people I know, there' s a positive feeling from that also. There's a recognition and a sense of sharing something.

6. Are there challenges or downsides of creating/experiencing community? Is it for everyone? Are there circumstances where it is not recommended?

Well it's pretty self-selected. It's hard to say for sure. I mean my first thought is that there are no down sides. I wouldn't offer my services really in any other way. It is difficult for us to serve populations who are marginalized due to extreme poverty, addiction, mental health issues, or severe physical health issues.

Michael Lium-Hall Interview Analysis

In describing the relationship between community experiences to subjective well-being, Michael Lium-Hall mentions the following descriptive words that affect personal well-being: *healing, connection, sense of place, connection on a deeper spiritual level, belonging, opening up and sharing more of oneself, more interactive.*

The experiences and actions that contribute to well-being: *listening to others stories, sharing one's story, awareness of diversity, offering various ways to participate, developing relationships, coming together with shared purpose for wellness and healing, presence alone is beneficial, sitting quietly and being alone with others.*

Descriptions of well-being outcomes as a shared experience: *recognition of others and expressing care, developing relationships, sitting quietly and being with others alone is beneficial.*

February 23rd, 2015- Skype Interview

Dr. Dina Glouberman, Co-founder at Skyros, a holistic holiday destination. Skyros.com

Josee-Ann: What are your roles, functions, and responsibilities within Skyros?

Dina: I'm the co-founder with my ex-husband, Dr Yannis Andricopoulos. We ran it together for over 30 years and then we split up and didn't work together anymore. I was running it for awhile and now he's running it. And so right now I am a Consultant. I direct some sessions. You could say I'm the spiritual quality control. Making sure it doesn't go too far.

J: You talk about Skyros as a holistic holiday and the word retreat isn't there—it's not used.

Dina: No we don't use the word retreat. We use holiday.

J: Could you say a little bit about that? Why choose holiday over retreat? Are there similarities or is it completely different?

D: Well it's very much a retreat. There are different kinds of retreat. It's an opportunity for people to step back out of their lives. But holiday is a more mainstream word which people understand, where they have certain periods of time where they go away and do something different. Retreats are much more specific for people who are looking for retreats. We've got people who just want a holiday among like-minded people or to have a community when they are on their own while others are coming to change their lives. People have different reasons. We started over 30 years ago and back then retreat was considered very spiritual just for spiritual people. Whereas Skyros started off as personal development community holiday, more psychological and alternative than strictly spiritual. Our first center, Skyros Center, in Skyros village was at first for personal development, later also for writers labs and painting holidays while our second centre, Atsitsa, in the pine forest

near the sea, was a holistic holiday to nourish mind body and spirit. Both were based on offering courses in a beautiful place within a community atmosphere. Now we have holidays all over the world but with the same principles.

J: Could you describe the community experience at Skyros?

D: Skyros is a very consciously created community. We have a limited period of time between 1 -2 weeks in which we invite people into the spirit of community. How do we do it? The first day or two we start we are very focused on integrative activities, community sessions where people will get some of the history and philosophy, and also participate in exercises where they meet each other, talk openly about themselves. In this way we are introducing the idea in the personal development world that you can meet a stranger and open up to them very quickly. The social rules are different. You can be honest with people in a way you can't always in daily life even with people you know very well. My intention is to change the social rules very quickly. In particular very strong social rules on how to talk to strangers, to quickly introduce the idea that while you're here, you don't have to be introduced, you can talk intimately with someone –and you can expect that people will accept you as you are, and it's unnecessary for people to know the role you play in the world. So the first thing is your entering into this world, where the rules are open, and you're able to be open to other people and people open to you--along with having physical contact, touching, even hugging someone. As the days go on, we have a series of structures that support the creation of community. There are work groups where people contribute something. They might sweep, cut vegetables.. they'll do something which is a way of registering that they're not simply hotel guests, that they are part of this by contributing. Other structures we have are called Demos which is the meeting of the people, a community gathering and oral newspaper. We have that every morning at breakfast for 15 minutes to half an hour where people can say how they're feeling about things, make decisions and so on. Participants take turns running this. We also have an Oekos group (Oekos is Greek for home) of about 8 people that get together and each person speaks for about three minutes and is listened to with full attention. In other words, there are a lot of communication structures. Which are intended to open spaces for people to be authentic with each other, and to feel that they are part of something rather than being served by an institution or set up. For me very early on it became very clear I did not want to run a hotel with groups. I wanted to have a community where they felt part of it, where people have some responsibility and have a say with what happens. Instead of voting with your feet, as you do in institutions, you have a say not with your feet but with your voice, and you can make a difference. If you are to have a say, you need to be heard. Skyros was a real trend setter and changed lives. I think this kind of vision gives people the feeling that they're entering another dimension than life back home. One important thing that happens is that people develop friendships, deep ones, often it feels that they've known for life. Often they keep those friendships for life. These are really deep friendships. People often say, "I found my new career, I found my best friend at Skyros, I found my partner at Skyros…it's a sort of hot house for personal and spiritual development.. so people aren't just learning in the courses, they're learning in the whole community.

J: I like how you talk about the process of creating community and that's something I'm drawing on my research as part of service design is this aspect of co-creation, so something I'm distinguishing is this process of creating community and the experience of community. Sometimes you can just enter a situation of community where you're not part of the process of creating it or you can be.

D: Well I think that's an interesting question. I call Skyros a symbolic community where it's not a real community. It's an educational experience of community. There is a structure. People don't make the structure but they can influence the structure though the main form is set up in advance, although in fact it has evolved through the contribution of participants and staff who came to Skyros. Every session has a director and they have leeway with what they can do with that structure, each has different teachers and participants. It's not a community where people equally get together and create, it's more like a structure that looks, feels, smells like community in which you learn community. The hope is that experience can be brought back home. And don't forget that participants are paying and they expect to be provided. At the very beginning we had what seemed more like a real community, with one staff member helping and everyone pitching in. But this doesn't work for everyone. Some people got really irritated that they had to work on holiday. So eventually we recruited a much larger permanent staff and participants work and contribution became more symbolic and voluntary. This example comes to mind in the early days of Skyros. We had a group of Greek participants, and one of the Greek guys said I don't want to work, I'm on holiday. And then the question came up in the community—should he have to work. Some people would say well it's not fair, well if he doesn't work, why should anyone else work? It turned into an interesting philosophical discussion. Finally we decided that he didn't have to work. This man was a designer and on the last day he created these beautiful wreaths and offered one to everyone in the group and that was his work in the end and that was a great experience for him and for us.

J: Question on how the community experience impacts wellbeing. Asking about examples, stories where people's wellbeing is affected. For example the cancer survivor retreats, research shows how a supportive environment has impacted participants by increasing their self-confidence, enhanced ability to trust others, and enhanced ability to cope with life from being in that retreat structure.

D: I have loads and loads of stories. We carried out a survey among past participants and over 85% have lasting positive effects on their lives. Journalistic articles are on the website with stories with their experience. Look under reviews on our guest book. Have a look there. I'm always having people write to me years later saying how Skyros changed their lives. Sometimes it's because they met their life partner. This one woman went on a visioning session and changed careers and thanked me for it.. There are so many other life changing experiences…some people learn how to sing and they never dared to sing. A very famous comedian now was here and someone said to him why don't you become a standup comedian? For some people it's a new career, for some people it's psychological healing. I'm just thinking of someone that I think I mentioned in my talk about a staff member who sat on the beach with a participant. This person was in education, and she helped her

work out what she wanted to do. She decided to become a psychologist. She was depressed, not in good shape. She applied while in Skyros and now she's becoming a Psychologist. She wasn't taking the courses, she was working there and a participant helped her. There's a strong sense of.. (inaudible). That's the sort of thing where we learn from each other. In fact, everywhere I go in the world I happen to meet someone who comes up to me to thank me because Skyros changed their life.

J: I'm curious since you have the activities that people benefit from that—do they make a connection to the value/benefit to the community aspect created?

D: It's interesting that though our two centres in Skyros are very different and in very different settings, at the end of the session in the evaluation forms, what people say they have gained from is very similar and came from the community aspect. I think they know the community is the center of it. People talk about feeling warm and accepted. They say that they made close friends there. Feeling part of something larger, they do talk about that. Sometimes it's more like a background for their experience. I remember talking to a friend of mine and saying when you walk into a place normally, do you feel like the other people or differently? I normally feel like the outsider generally. When you come to Skyros I don't experience that. I think that's a very common experience.

J: I wanted to ask you more about this idea of like-mindedness yet still embracing diversity. It seems like there may be some polarity between those notions.

D: Like mindedness is probably more of a catch word that people use even though people are very different from each other with various backgrounds. It is predominantly white middle class but not completely, there are certain age groups and so on. I tend to say open minded, open hearted, and I think that is a better way of putting it. People who come to Skyros are in some way seekers. Like mindedness tends to be someone who is less conventional, they're usually not part of the status quo. Most people at Skyros have that aspect to them. Although many of them live a conventional life and have conventional success..and so on, they still have another element, where they're looking for something more meaningful.

J: Are there challenges or downsides of community experiences during retreat holiday at Skyros? Is it for everyone? Are there circumstances where a shared experience is not recommended?

It's not good for someone who wants to be on their own (laughter). Some people want to come as a couple or as a family to be part of a larger group. It's not recommended if there's a need to have a more intense experience of being with that person. If you're looking for an experience with loads of space around, to be on your own—it's much more of a busy environment. People who want a silent

retreat—Skyros is not the place. So much of it happens through other people and relationships with other people. It's a very important aspect

J: From this research, it has been interesting to learn that when people can settle into themselves, the connection can occur naturally and the need for facilitation is not always necessary at times.

D: That's interesting. Our structures aim for more real talk for when people get together they're not just making conversation. They're talking about what's real. For example on the first day, they will meet another person and say one thing that's really important about them. And they introduce themselves differently, not based on what you do. They say one thing that's really important that the other person couldn't really know that about them. People go very deeply to that level and then they introduce this person to someone else as a very special person when they talk about them. It leaves a sense of possibility that you can say to people what is real. And I think if you don't deal with that there's more a tendency to have more conventional conversation about your life and not so much about what you're struggling with or what you're yearning for. You could call this soul talk. It's a way to tap into that level as quickly and efficiently as possible in a world where these things are not normally accepted.

J: Could you say something about how this experience of community at Skyros could influence social well-being, society, and the world at large?

D: It's a ripple effect, where you have people who have this experience. Some of them will do this Oekos group I mentioned where people share for 3 minutes, we have co-listening, where two people get together where one person talks and the other listens. It's very deep. People will take these structures and introduce them into their work, family. I started an Oekos group where I live part time in Hastings and I'm part of it when I am there, but they meet regularly when I am not there. They get to go into a deeper level they haven't gone before. One of the rules is to throw away what you planned to say and to see what's on your mind and in your heart. This older woman who is 94 now and has been a counselor all her life, said she had never spoken without planning. That was a profound turning point for her to be that open. You can often see profound changes happen with people. I think these structures for listening helps develop people's relationships but also if you're more open to people, you're more open to people. People who come to Skyros are in influential positions and may make decisions in a more compassionate way. Some people change careers and positions into more socially useful or more creative ones. There are things that change the world but we can't enforce or predict that. We're doing our bit. Some people have said to me that if they met someone at Skyros, they feel a connection with them. Whatever that is … you go into a deeper level with yourself and that changes you, and then we change the relationships in our work, and in the world.

Dr. Dina Glouberman Interview Analysis

In describing the relationship between community experiences to subjective well-being, Dr Dina Glouberman mentions the following descriptive words on how community influences well-being: *making a deeper connection with oneself changes relationships in one's life, more meaningful choices from the support, profound shifts in personal patterns, healing, feeling warm, accepted, part of something larger, making deep friendships, personal and spiritual development as a result of community, opening to others and others open to you, a different experience from life back home.*

The experiences and actions that contribute to well-being: *co-listening activity and listening structures, Ethos and Denos group meetings to express with a voice and be heard, real authentic exchanges with listening structures helps to develop people's relationships, people are given responsibilities/work and are made to matter,*

Descriptions of well-being outcomes as a result from a shared experience: *Self discovery through others reflections and support, changing careers and finding a more meaningful life path.*

Interviews open ended questions - Code Book- Jane Arthur, Director of Residential and Retreat Centers for Shambhala International

No.	Question	Response	Code	Themes
1	Role	Shepherding emotional and energetic support	-------	----------------
2	Understanding of community experience	Deep connection from intimacy from shared experience; leads almost everyone to feel touched, opened, soft. People blossom. Arrive dry leaving hydrated. Come into fullness. Inherently interconnected, require connection. As a nurse, working with ill children, babies left without human contact did not do well. We are naturally connected and need to foster that environment.	SI PI AN IC ST EA	Connection Interconnection Contact
3	Process of creating community in retreats	It's not a conscious process, with meditation we come into ourselves and settle our minds, and the community gets created naturally, no speaking helps for settling. Providing opportunities for speaking and not speaking. Connection becomes more possible with settling and opening.	PR EA PI SI PR SI	Connection Settling Opening Speaking
4	What is needed for community to emerge	The atmosphere, the place, leaders in the situation creates an atmosphere of kindness and warmth.	SU	Emotional Atmosphere; Human Element; Physical place
5	Impacts to well-being (personally, socially)	Being seen, appreciated and seeing others raises life force energy, cheerfulness and appreciation. Offering and receiving appreciation. Fundamental care is expressed. Support is there when times are tough. Not feeling alone in that one has to carry one's own life entirely.	EA PI SI EA	Exchange; Seeing and being seen; Appreciation; Support and care; Increased energy, Decreased isolation.
6	Importance of community as part of the experience	The main reason why one does retreat. Collective life force is created. Synergy. More than sum of parts.	SI	Synergy
7	Challenges, is it for everyone?	Some people may have a strong experience and a reaction and get distracted by others. It is part of the path-- nothing can happen that detracts from community. If someone is not super well practiced it can derail retreats by having other people around. It is proportionate to how much someone is willing to open to their experience. If they can't see or experience the benefit, it can be scary. Some people can get disturbed – irritated by others, which can affect the retreat container. However, those are more opportunity to lean into than push away	CH EA PR PI SI	Distractions Strong experience Irritation; Path of learning and growth.
8	Short term and long term outcomes	Warmth, openness, access to heart and interconnectedness. Deeper friendships come from knowing people in a more intense environment. Living together develops deeper more intense friendships than shorter term. Teaches skills to navigate life outside of retreat, such as being a smart human being about relationships.	SI LT PI SI	Openness; Warmth Interconnected Deepening; Skills

Interviews open ended questions - Code Book -Michael Lium-Hall, Founder and Director of Hemma, A community acupuncture clinic and yoga studio

No.	Question	Response	Code	Themes
1	Role	Acupuncturist and managing staff and volunteers	-------	----------------
2	Community experience at Hemma	Bring people together into a common space of healing and being together. Sense of connection. People talk about their health and what's going on in their lives. People hear something that they connect with some aspect of that person's struggle. Recounts client saying "oh at first I was a little shy and nervous about being in a room with other people, but now when I come on a day that is slow and there's no one else in here—I miss or it feels weird to be by myself in this room". It is just the act of coming together and sitting quietly in a room together, with some kind of shared purpose towards healing, wellness or rest that people benefit from. Yoga people go for individual purposes and feel a connection with others there. Sense of place is experienced. Sharing each other's stories and people are hungry for that. People connect on a deeper level.		Conversations Sharing struggles Diversity
3	Process of creating community and if co-creation plays a role.	People can experience community and co-create community by participating , promoting and volunteering. I had a patient one day who was having some difficulties, and he needed a tissue and I was really busy, I had a bunch of people in there, and this person sitting across from him and recognized his need and got up and gave him a tissue and cared for him in this way. That was really touching to me because it sort of breached that regular kind of way, me providing the service for others but instead this person was participating as well. They weren't my assistant, they weren't my volunteer, they were just another person reaching out to another person in need. People develop relationships there.		Caring Support Recognition of others
4	What is needed for community to emerge	physical accessibility, space and its location, there is a way in which you relate to people. You can't create a physical space that will resonate with everyone so how do you connect with people to make them feel welcome regardless of their differences and uniqueness? Awareness of what we bring and our differences is important to consider.		
5	Impacts to well-being (personally, socially)	Witnessing how people change and open up over time, share more of themselves and begin to feel like it's their space also. Socially, recognizing others over time of sharing something brings positive feelings.		
7	Challenges, is it for everyone?	No real downsides, it is difficult to serve marginalized such as extreme poverty, addiction, mental health issues, or severe physical health issues.		

No.	Question	Response	Code	Themes
1	Role	Co-Founder and now Consultant	-------	----------------
	Community Experience	Skyros is a consciously created community, where people enter into the spirit of community. The focus is on integrative activities. Being honest with people in a way you can't in daily life. Changing the social rules quickly. Rules are open and you're able to be open and other people open to you. There are work groups to contribute to and to be part of something not as hotel guests. Demos groups are meetings of the people every morning. Ethos groups which are smaller groups where each person speaks. It comes down to people having some responsibility and have a say with what happens. People develop deep friendships.		
2	Community Process	Skyros a symbolic community where it's not a real community. It's an educational experience of community. There is a structure that looks, feels, smells like community in which you learn community. The hope is that experience can be brought back home.		
3	Well-being impacts (personally, socially)	I have people write to me years later saying how Skyros changed their lives. Sometimes it's because they met their life partner. This one woman went on a visioning session and changed careers and thanked me for it.. There are so many other life changing experiences…some people learn how to sing and they never dared to sing. A very famous comedian now was here and someone said to him why don't you become a standup comedian? For some people it's a new career, for some people it's psychological healing. I'm just thinking of someone that I think I mentioned in my talk about a staff member who sat on the beach with a participant. This person was in education, and she helped her work out what she wanted to do. She decided to become a psychologist. She was depressed, not in good shape. She applied while in Skyros and now she's becoming a Psychologist. She wasn't taking the courses, she was working there and a participant helped her. There's a strong sense of.. (inaudible). That's the sort of thing where we learn from each other. It's a ripple effect, where you have people who have this experience. Some of them will do this Oekos group I mentioned where people share for 3 minutes, we have co-listening, where two people get together where one person talks and the other listens. It's very deep. People will take these structures and introduce them into their work, family.		
4	Importance of community	know the community is the center of it. People talk about feeling warm and accepted. They say that they made close friends there. Feeling part of something larger, they do talk about that. Sometimes it's more like a background for their experience.		
5	Challenges, is it for everyone?	It's not good for someone who wants to be on their own (laughter). Some people want to come as a couple or as a family to be part of a larger group. It's not recommended if there's a need to have a more intense experience of being with that person. If you're looking for an experience with loads of space around, to be on your own—it's much more of a busy environment. People who want a silent retreat—Skyros is not the place.		
6	Short term and long term outcomes	This older woman who is 94 said she had never spoken without planning. That was a profound turning point for her to be that open. You can often see profound changes happen with people. I think these structures for listening helps develop people's relationships. People who come to Skyros are in influential positions and may make decisions in a more compassionate way. Some people change careers and positions into more socially useful or more creative ones. There are things that change the world but we can't enforce or predict that. We're doing our bit. Some people have said to me that if they met someone at Skyros, they feel a connection with them. Whatever that is … you go into a deeper level with yourself and that changes you,		

	and then we change the relationships in our work, and in the world				

Codes

Personal impacts/outcomes	PI	Social impacts/outcomes	SI	Short term outcomes	STO
Analogy	AN	Story	ST	Is it for everyone?	EV
Experience/Action	EA	Process	PR	Long term outcomes	LTO
Challenges	CH	Importance of community	IC	Supports	SU

Expert Interview Responses

	Jane Arthur	Michael-Lium Hall	Dina Glouberman
How personal and subjective well-being is supported and experienced from a community experience.	*Feeling touched, opened, softened, coming into fullness, cheerfulness.*	*Healing, connection, sense of place, connection on a deeper spiritual level, belonging, opening up and sharing more of oneself, more interactive.*	*Making a deeper connection with oneself changes relationships in one's life, more meaningful choices from the support, profound shifts in personal patterns, healing, feeling warm, accepted, part of something larger, making deep friendships, personal and spiritual development as a result of community, opening to others and others open to you, a different experience from life back home.*
Experiences and actions that contribute to well-being in a community context.	*Being seen, appreciated and seeing others, offering and receiving, supporting, feeling other's needs and celebrating.*	*Listening to others stories, sharing one's story, awareness of diversity, offering various ways to participate, developing relationships, coming together with shared purpose for wellness and healing, presence alone is beneficial, sitting quietly and being alone with others.*	*Co-listening activity and listening structures, Ethos and Denos group meetings to express with a voice and be heard, real authentic exchanges with listening structures helps to develop people's relationships, people are given responsibilities/work and are made to matter.*
Outcomes from the community and shared experience.	*Synergy, and increased life force energy.*	*Recognition of others and expressing care, developing relationships.*	*Self discovery through others reflections and support, changing careers and finding a more meaningful life path.*

Appendix F: Table Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Qualitative	Quantitative
Questionnaire I: - Understanding the community experience in retreat. - Identifying benefits, challenges. - Identifying factors for a satisfying community experience. - Activities that support community during retreat. **Questionnaire II:** - Understanding the significance and benefit of community in retreats and building further on the experience of community. - Comparison between solitary and group retreat experiences. - Motivations asked as an open question. - Description how community is experienced in retreats. - Benefits, challenges, outcomes.	**Questionnaire I:** - Demographics; number of retreats, duration of retreats. - Motivations for going on retreats measured with Likert scale (importance 1-10) - % on the importance of community using Likert scale. **Questionnaire II:** - Demographics; number of retreats and duration of retreats. - importance on a Likert scale 1-6. - Types of retreats alone, within close circles and groups is measured and compared. - % importance of creating community in retreat. - Reasons measured on Likert scale 1-5.
Netnography: - Content analysis examining word usage for describing retreats. Along with examining types of activities and themes listed.	**Netnography:** - Investigating the numbers of retreats and types listed online for analysis.
Case studies: - Offer practical examples describing the ways in which community in retreat contexts are central to the experience and how they contribute to well-being.	
Interviews: - Identify deeper reflection and aspects that could be missed by relying on questionnaires alone, from not knowing the respondents. Drawing on the experience and expertise of the three interviewees. - Confirming results from the questionnaires, and the theories on community and well-being from the literature review.	
Participatory observation: - Researcher has participated in retreats.	

Appendix G: Benefits and Challenges Responses

Challenging Aspects of the Community Experience in Retreat Questionnaire I--

Emotional Atmosphere	Safety: Feeling intense emotions, depression, and embarrassment. Container/Structure: Feeling excluded, being dependent on others, the schedule, annoying loud people, feeling isolated at the end. Unbalanced communication structure balancing time between talking and silence. View: Exclusivity, intolerance of differences.
Physical Infrastructures	Not having enough personal space, bugs, and inadequate facilities.
Human capacity	Participants that do not engage. Biases in groups, living communally, participants and staff not taking responsibility for their behaviors, ineffective leadership.
Activities	Contextual activities: unpredictability, fatigue, unfamiliarity. Ordinary activities: The schedule, no time off to rest. Intentional activities: The schedule (not having enough personal space or time), too much socialization.

Benefits after retreat Questionnaire II

| Key phrases	"Being more grounded after retreat".
"Bringing what I've discovered to my community outside of the retreat".	"Knowing what is possible inspires me to contribute toward creating aspects of this community in my "outer" everyday world. It makes me want to help out in the community at large."
"It becomes an inspiration to take into the world. You begin to see how it can be like retreat in some ways even when you're not on retreat. It's like a very beautiful way of living that you want to share with everyone".	"It is a huge reminder to how I want the rest of my life to be formed in terms of community. It offers a direct experience of how I would like my everyday life communities to feel".
"A good reminder for the everyday after retreat". "Feeling more connected to working with others."	

Challenges during retreat from Questionnaire II

Keywords and phrases:	Conflicts, irritations, exclusion
Not getting along with others, arguments, getting stuck with people holding grudges, holding onto ideas, too much of other people's dramas at times.	Living in larger groups is more difficult to connect with people. It is more difficult to talk with people in larger groups. Sharing space with others.
Trying to get noticed.	Introverts have a hard time finding alone time.

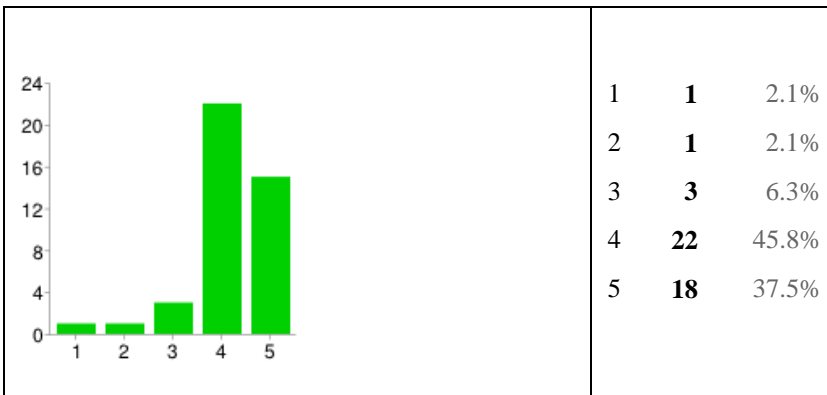| Discomfort in the environment, dealing with other people's living habits.	When someone doesn't participate or makes the group unsafe.

Appendix I: Importance of Community in Retreat I

Is the process of creating community important to you as part of the retreat experience?

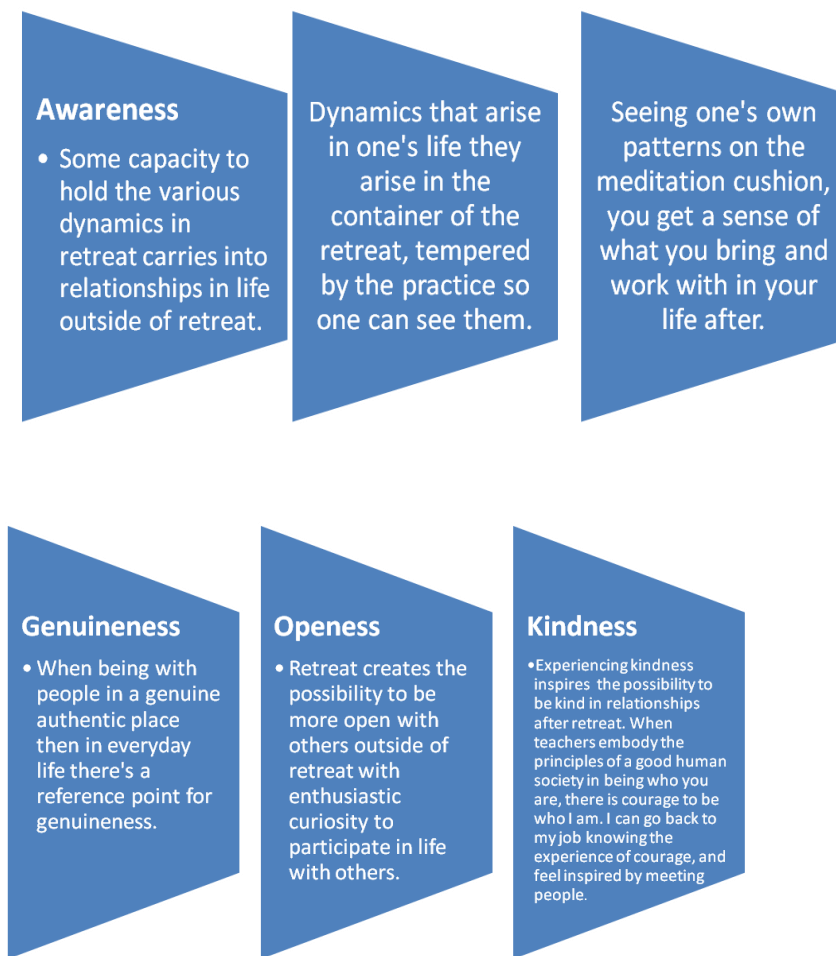|		
Yes	**34**	70.8%
No	**1**	2%
Somewhat	**6**	12.5%
I don't know	**1**	2.1%
Other	**2**	4.2%
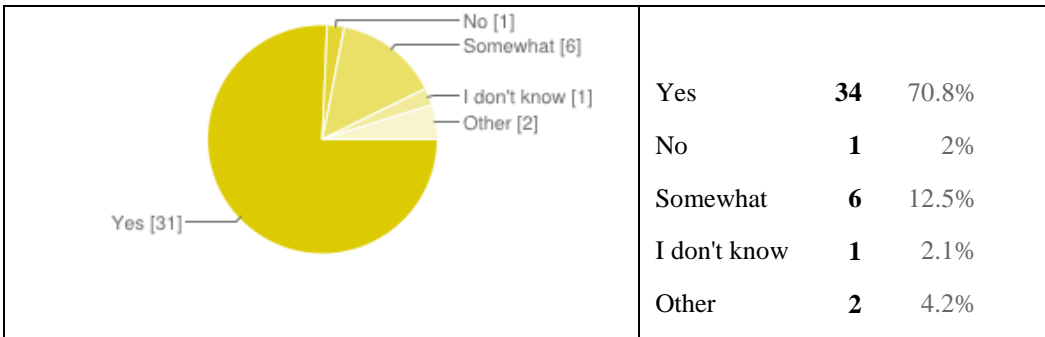
Importance of Community in Retreat II

How important is the community experience for you during retreat on a scale from 1-5 (1-not important 5-very important)?

1	**1**	2.1%
2	**1**	2.1%
3	**3**	6.3%
4	**22**	45.8%
5	**18**	37.5%

APPENDIX J: Quality of Relationships Post Retreat

Awareness

- Some capacity to hold the various dynamics in retreat carries into relationships in life outside of retreat.

Dynamics that arise in one's life they arise in the container of the retreat, tempered by the practice so one can see them.

Seeing one's own patterns on the meditation cushion, you get a sense of what you bring and work with in your life after.

Genuineness

- When being with people in a genuine authentic place then in everyday life there's a reference point for genuineness.

Openess

- Retreat creates the possibility to be more open with others outside of retreat with enthusiastic curiosity to participate in life with others.

Kindness

- Experiencing kindness inspires the possibility to be kind in relationships after retreat. When teachers embody the principles of a good human society in being who you are, there is courage to be who I am. I can go back to my job knowing the experience of courage, and feel inspired by meeting people.