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Organizational Culture and Outward Bound: Perspectives of Instructors and Participants

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND OUTWARD BOUND:
PERSPECTIVES OF INSTRUCTORS AND PARTICIPANTS

by

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Abstract

Outward Bound stands out amongst the rest of the wilderness organizations not only for its time-honored contribution to the field of wilderness education, but for its fundamental process and theories which contribute to its success. Academic attention in the field of wilderness programs largely overlooks the role of organizational culture. To fill the gap in our knowledge, this study synthesizes the academic conversation on Outward Bound programs and integrates it with the most consistent findings about organizational culture. Interviewing the participants and instructors of a 72-day long Outward Bound course conducted in 2015 provides clear insight into the role of organizational culture on Outward Bound, its formation, management, and impacts, as well as overall course outcomes for participants. My research finds that the culture within organizations that are built to dissolve can create meaningful and lasting cultural shifts in its members including increases in interpersonal dimensions such as open-mindedness, patience and improved relationships, as well as in intrapersonal dimensions such as independence, confidence and motivation. Drawing on participant responses, I further find that the role of subgroups, conflict, and exclusion can be contentious, contributing to instability and division in organizational culture. Conversely, shared values, familial themes, and compassion can coalesce to unify the culture so strongly that all participants reflect back on the culture as net positive and their experience with Outward Bound as one of growth and positive transformation.

Keywords: Outward Bound, organizational culture, wilderness programs, experiential education, interpersonal dynamics

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Introduction

Sitting amongst some of the tallest redwood trees in all of California, I joined an Outward Bound group in amazement gazing up at their magnificence. The humbling effect of feeling so small in comparison and hearing nothing but wind rustle through the trees and birds sing deep in the redwood forest had us all in a state of silent appreciation. As we sat in stillness thankful for full bellies and a chance to rest our aching feet, one of the instructors came over to our group holding a single redwood cone and passed it around the circle. As we took turns studying and feeling the cone in our hands, the instructor told us that these types of cones, despite being the smallest in the world, can produce some of the largest and toughest trees on the planet.

Intrigued by this information, the students questioned the instructor on how such massive trees could possibly come from these little cones far smaller in size than pine cones with which all the students were familiar. After learning the science behind such a remarkable natural process from our instructors, we were encouraged to each go out and find our own redwood cone and a rock too. Upon returning to the circle with redwood cones and rocks, the instructors questioned the group on what happens when these items are thrown into a river. The students timidly offered that the rock would sink, and the cone would float on.

With this in mind, the instructors asked us to take a moment of silent reflection and think of something which weighs us down that we would want to release into the bottom of the river and something which we want to improve on or manifest in our lives that would be carried on and represented by the cone. After the reflection, the students were encouraged to each tell the group what it is that is represented by their "rock" and

what is their "seed" that they want to focus on in their lives. Students talked about wanting to release their rocks of insecurity, anxiety and bad habits. They mentioned wanting to plant seeds of self-confidence, making time for hobbies and self-care, and working harder in school.

The following morning at the beginning of the hike, we walked up to the edge of the river as a group and each student had the opportunity to throw their rocks and cones into the river and see what happened. Once all the rocks had sunk and all the cones had floated away we continued on with our hike for the day with a sense of clear intentions and a closer feeling community within the group.

This story is just one of my many personal experiences on wilderness adventure programs. It is representative of the kinds of metaphoric activities used to connect participants' current experiences with their daily lives back home, while simultaneously creating opportunities to bond the group more tightly. I have participated in eleven wilderness experience programs as a student and had the privilege of going on two Outward Bound programs in a chaperone role during the summer of 2017. Through these experiences, I acted both as participant in and observer of Outward Bound courses. While I related to the experiences of the students which I chaperoned on a personal level, I focused on studying the instructors' specific characteristics and strategies used to teach lessons and handle tough situations. With my experience in the various roles involved in wilderness experience programs, I am able to act as a bridge between the participant perspective and the instructor perspective. These dual lenses provide analytical leverage in my ability to study wilderness experience programs.

The Study and Main Findings

Examining these programs through the lens of organizational studies can help us better understand the ways in which the programs function, how meaningful experiences emerge, and how and why programs impact participants the way they do. Presently, most studies pertaining to Outward Bound are focused on the course's outcomes. Rather, I take a step back, asking why these outcomes occur and whether or not they have a lasting effect on participants. Due to time and resource constraints, this study is unable to test the longitudinal effects of these programs, and there is still a great need for research in this area. Instead, the focus of my study is to understand what role the culture of a group plays in the participants ability to create meaning, connect with others, and be impacted by their experiences.

To do so, I explore in depth how culture is created, changed and impactful as reported by the participants and instructors themselves. First, I introduce relevant contextual information regarding the history of wilderness experience programs, the specific process by which all Outward Bound courses operate, and the relevant theoretical implications. Subsequently, I address the pertinent literature and its outcomes, as well as what I perceive to be missing in the academic conversation. Once this groundwork is set, I delve deeply into the focus of this study: how does organizational culture form within Outward Bound groups? What role do the instructors play in shaping the culture intentionally? How does the culture persist even after the dissipation of the physical group? What are the outcomes of the organizational culture on the participants of the group? How do participants of Outward Bound courses make subjective meaning from their experiences and how do their outcomes relate to the organizational culture?

To address these questions my study dives into the creation, impact, and lasting effect of the organizational culture on the fall 2015 Hurricane Island Outward Bound School's Service and Leadership Semester course. Through semi-structured interviews with the instructors and participants of the program, I uncover the significant and specific ways instructors influence culture and the impacts of this culture on the group's participants. Applying an organizational culture lens to the study of Outward Bound, one of the key findings that emerges from my in-depth interviews is the central role of the instructors in creating, modifying, and evaluating the culture as it fluctuates throughout the program. I conclude that, while much is out of the control of the instructors, they can have profound effects on the culture within the group and the interpersonal dynamics of participants through the use of strategic subgrouping, lessons and metaphoric debriefs, leading by example, positive co-instructor interactions, rapport building and by the way they carry themselves. Additionally, I detail the various interpretations by both instructors and participants on the culture of the group. Most of them addressed familial warmth and growth as individuals and as a group. Like a family, there were experiences of interpersonal instability, but all participants found these concerns overridden by the positive aspects of the program. Finally, this study expands on the concrete outcomes and impacts the program had on its participants and links these findings to specific elements of the culture.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 details Outward Bound's rich history and the origins of the field of wilderness experience programs. Chapter 2 delves into each core element which comprises an Outward Bound course and articulates the formulaic process which renders

Outward Bound so successful. In Chapter 3 I explore relevant theories and their evolution within the Outward Bound model leading up to an emphasis on the use of metaphor and prioritizing action and experience. Synthesizing and analyzing the pertinent literature on Outward Bound, Chapter 4 looks at previous studies and their effectiveness as well as shortcomings in the academic conversation on wilderness programs. Chapter 5 emphasizes the importance of an organizational culture perspective and introduces the current study. Chapter 6 explores the results of the study and discusses the findings in relation to the pertinent literature. And finally, Chapter 7 concludes this study.

Chapter 1: History of Wilderness Experience Programs and Outward Bound

Introduction

The rich history of wilderness experiences for educational purposes can be traced back to Plato, who believed that risk taking activities outdoors can teach wisdom and courage (Rubens, 1997) and develop healthy bodies and healthy souls (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). Plato's *The Republic* greatly influenced Outward Bound's innovative founder, Kurt Hahn (Neill, 2006) who agreed with Plato's philosophy that the moral value of outdoor experiences outweighed the physical value (Hattie et al. 1997). The modern-day field of wilderness programs exist as we know it because of the precedent set by Outward Bound and specifically from the "Hahnian" approach to education which is value-centered, not merely experience-centered (Kimball & Bacon, 1993) and will be further expounded upon in Chapter 3.

In Scotland during the 1930s, Kurt Hahn opened the Gordonstoun school, where he developed his values into curriculum emphasizing physical skills, outdoors survival, service, and academic achievement (Richards, 2004). In 1941 Hahn founded the first Outward Bound School in Aberdovey, Wales, as a joint effort with Sir Lawrence Holt, a British shipping baron, who was losing many young seamen to the war. During World War II young merchant seamen were not surviving as well as their older counterparts after their ships had been torpedoed by German U-boats. Despite the assumption that the younger seamen would be more physically fit and inclined to survive, Hahn figured the young merchant seamen's lack of life experience was a severe disadvantage to them (Neill, 2004). Thus, the first Outward Bound School was founded to train merchant

seamen to survive the battles in the Atlantic (Kelly, 1977, p. 7) and it exists today to continue providing meaningful life experience to youth.

Hahn's curriculum formed around his belief that character development was just as important, if not more so, as academic achievement (Richards, 2004). In this way, the following four core values of Outward Bound serve as pillars and ideals by which participants are expected to live: compassion, integrity, excellence, and diversity and inclusion. By adhering to these values, Outward Bound fosters spaces for participants to experience character development, adventure and challenge, experiential learning, social and environmental responsibility, and compassion and service (Fischer & Attah, 2001).

Focus on Youth

Due to Outward Bound's prominence in the field of wilderness experience programs as well as the precedence it set for the field as a whole, the current study focuses solely on Outward Bound, with a specific attention on its programs for teenagers and young adults.

During the 1930s and 40s, Hahn perceived that youth were experiencing a deterioration of skill and care and that the modern world was making life too easy for them. He saw young men and women lacking enterprise, adventure and–most disappointingly–compassion (Bacon, 1983, p. 99). Hahn believed that through his value-centered curriculum he could help ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and compassion (p. 99). While Hahn may have thought the mid 1900s were a time where technological advances and the modernizing world made life too easy on adolescents, the world we live in now, characterized by faces glued to smartphones and machines that do

everything we need, has never been in more dire need of these programs. His sentiment was largely echoing that of the 19th century Romantics who believed that a return to the wild was the remedy to the lethargy of modern society.

In 1962 Outward Bound launched programs in the U.S. targeted at juvenile delinquents as an alternative form of incarceration or treatment for adolescents (West & Crompton, 2001). Wilderness therapy in its foundational stage was therefore coupled with Outward Bound philosophies and the "Hahnian" vision. Outward Bound's wide-reaching successes proliferated over the next several decades. Now, in 2017, there are 11 Outward Bound schools in the United States and 30 worldwide. Over the rich 70-year history of the organization, it has reached over seven million people ("In the World," 2017).

What is a Wilderness Experience Program?

The field of wilderness programming is vast and encompasses many sub-genres of programs. Within this wide umbrella lies a variety of vaguely defined and often interchangeably used terms including: wilderness experience programs, wilderness adventure, wilderness therapy, adventure therapy, wilderness treatment programs, challenge courses, adventure-based education, therapeutic wilderness camping, and wilderness education. While there are clear distinctions between some of the terminology, broadly speaking these terms can be classified into two main categories: Wilderness Experience Programs (WEPs) and Wilderness Therapy Programs (WTPs). For the purpose of this paper in reference to Outward Bound's programming models, WEPs will apply to all of Outward Bound's general or unspecified programs and WTPs will apply exclusively to the Intercept and veteran courses. More specifically, WEPs are

outdoor programs in wilderness settings for the purpose of education, leadership, personal growth, therapy or rehabilitation (Russell, 2001, p. 71). WTPs share these traits and often also incorporate the use of traditional therapy techniques, clinical assessment-based selection of potential candidates, treatment plans, individual and group psychotherapy by qualified professionals, and formal evaluation and assessment of participant progress (Russell, 2001).

While Outward Bound's Intercept WTPs provide some of the most intriguing data for research because of the populations they cater towards, by analyzing the experiences of participants from WEPs my research can produce more broadly transferable results. Though participants of general WEPs through Outward Bound are not classified as at-risk or struggling, as they are for WTPs, often times the participants of these WEPs are facing challenges or significant transitions in their lives at home, at school, in relationships, or on an intrapersonal level. The specific components of an Outward Bound program offer participants opportunities to reflect, alter behaviors which do not serve them, find motivation and purpose, or any number of other similar benefits.

Chapter 2: Elements of an Outward Bound Course

Introduction

Not only does Outward Bound stand out amongst the rest of the wilderness adventure programming organizations for its time-honored contribution to the field of wilderness education, as we learned in Chapter 1, but it is also exceptional for the fundamental process and course characteristics that make it highly successful. The following sections in this chapter detail, piece by piece, each attribute and its importance and relevancy to the formulaic method used by Outward Bound. These elements are the wilderness setting, individual participants, instructors, group, challenge activities, reflection time, solo, duration, and course conclusion.

Wilderness Environment

Even though the accomplishment of challenging and novel activities with a group of unfamiliar people in any new setting can lead to positive and perhaps similar outcomes as Outward Bound, the specific wilderness setting is a crucial aspect of the course. Life deep in the woods, the mountains or out at sea is free from the distractions, technology, and constant buzz of modern life (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 25). In essence, life is simplified. It is challenging and demanding, but it also has a simplified character to it which modern civilized life often does not.

For participants who may struggle with authority or accepting consequences in their ordinary home lives, life out in the wilderness has a natural ability to apply its own consequences and rewards for behavior (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 26). For instance, participants who work together successfully and skillfully to secure a shelter will be dry

and safe from a storm. Conversely, participants who plan poorly or fail to skillfully

approach tasks may become wet, hungry or potentially unsafe. While the implications of

nature's consequences are real, the fact that they are administered by the environment and

not by an adult authority figure lends itself as a powerful teaching tool, especially for

defiant youth.

Time spent on a program adventuring through national parks or open waters can

be a powerfully freeing experience for all participants. Physically speaking, there are no

walls, fences, or physical confines out in the wild. Psychologically speaking, a new and

open setting can lend itself as an appropriate space to experiment with new psychological

strategies, behaviors, or identities. Life out in nature can feel and look dramatically

different from ordinary modern life in such a way that it evokes a sense of renewal and

revitalization. In this way, it frees participants from the confines of their past and home

lives. For example, a young teenage boy subject to gang violence within his

neighborhood or abuse within his home can find himself not just free of his personal past

life, but of the entire paradigm surrounding that kind of life. The psychological and

therapeutic benefit of such revitalization can arise for any participant of any WEP or

WTP without prodding or direction by instructions, it happens naturally.

The last aspect of the wilderness setting which can be deeply impactful on

participants is the spiritual and transcendent nature of the environment. While not all

participants intentionally view and conceptualize their experience through a spiritual lens,

the wilderness is a sacred space that can evoke emotions and ponderings of existentiality,

impermanence, and concepts of self. The wilderness is unforgiving, it is difficult to get to

and difficult to travel through (Bacon, 1983, p. 53). While living immersed in it for long

periods of time, Outward Bound participants can become open to the possibility, or even probability, that a profound transformation may be occurring for them (p. 53).

Individual Participant

Since Outward Bound programs cater to such a wide demographic—from troubled youths to returning veterans to CEOs, when referring to the participant in this section I am speaking specifically of teenagers and young adults. Several academic studies have concluded contrasting findings on the most opportune age for a participant to partake in an Outward Bound course. While Hattie et al. (1997) found that the short-term effects from Outward Bound programs were greater for adults than youth, Cason and Gillis (1994) assert that younger participants benefit more than older participants due the physically demanding nature of adventure programming (p. 44). Conrad and Hedin (1981) found that older participants experience greater growth than younger ones.

With the academic community in slight disagreement over which age groups stand to gain the most from an Outward Bound experience, there is another consideration to take here, which is gender. Many studies, particularly older ones, focus solely on male participants. And while more recent studies seem to incorporate female participants into their findings, they speak little about the differentiation between experiences of male and female participants. In contrast, while my study is not intentionally focused on the differing experiences by gender, it does expose the crucial role gender dynamics plays in the formation of group culture.

Moreover, one of the most crucial factors affecting the individual participant is their motivation for participating in the Outward Bound program. Walsh and Golins (1976) clearly acknowledge that a participant's motivation informs their thoughts,

feelings and behaviors indicating that there either is or is not something to be gained by participating. In other words, it seems as though a participant's expectations are highly influential over their outcomes. For instance, a participant who was forced on the program and feels as though they are involuntarily hiking all day long, sleeping on the ground, and enduring high-risk experiences may misunderstand the program as a form of punishment. Conversely, participants who choose to be there and view each activity as a challenge and an opportunity for growth potentially stand more to gain from the experience.

That said, my first-hand work with and knowledge of Outward Bound indicates that how the experience is framed to the participant matters greatly in participant motivation. For example, there are occasionally situations where a family decides the best thing for their child is to go on an Outward Bound program to focus on improving certain behaviors or addressing a specific issue. If framed as a getaway, a breath of fresh air, an opportunity to see what life is like without the pressures and stress causing the problematic behaviors at home, the participant may be more inclined to view the experience positively. However, if the participant is informed that they are going on the program the day before and feel like their opinions and best interests were not considered, they may be inclined to only want to perceive the experience negatively. Despite this bias, Outward Bound courses have shown they can exceed beyond the limited expectations of these individuals. By virtue of its components and thoughtful programming, Outward Bound still has the power to radically influence those who did not voluntarily sign up for the course. In the participant and instructor reflections uncovered during my research, this theme is articulated clearly and consistently.

Along the same vein, the general mentality of the participant is an important factor for their participation on the program. Previous studies focusing on at-risk youth noted trends in backgrounds and mentalities of the participants. A study conducted by Kelly (1974) focused specifically on the recidivism rates of delinquent boys stated that many of them came from homes with an absent father figure (p. 1). Kelly notes that participants who grow up without positive influences modeling behavior tended to turn to their peer group for role models. Unfortunately, often times the peer group suffers from similar needs and the whole groups feeds on each other and manifests a masculine façade from which toughness, danger, excitement, and delinquency arise (p. 2). For participants like these who enjoy pursuits of adventure in the name of toughness or rebellion, Outward Bound can be a perfect and profound experience for them to shift their behaviors towards prosocial values and look to their instructors for positive role modeling.

Instructors

Researchers have given ample academic attention to the role and contribution of instructors for WEPs and WTPs because their influence is greatly significant. Since their influence on the group is so critical, some of the academic conversation has focused on the necessary qualities and specific qualifications for instructors, especially for Intercept programs and WTPs.

One of the ways in which instructors can be so effective is how they relate to participants during the experience. The instructors confront the same obstacles, eat the same foods, endure the same physical burdens and make their way through the same storms (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 32). The way that the instructors go through and

positively model how to handle all the obstacles not only builds trust and rapport with the

group, but also sets them up as an exemplar. This is crucial because while students may

look up to their instructor's behavior, they can also use the shared experiences to

minimize the sense of hierarchy that is commonly present in a therapist-patient

relationship (p. 32). When participants view their instructors as friends, it can greatly help

them to open up more authentically and create a culture of sharing (Russell, 2000, p.

173). Even though instructors have to play the role of authority figure from time to time,

they can seem less imposing than other adult figures. This may in part be due to how

young and physically active they are, but also because the level of freedom and autonomy

given to participants by instructors is so high that it helps make them seem less

authoritative than other adult figures in the participants' lives.

By removing the hierarchy and treating participants with respect, instructors build

the necessary rapport with participants to engage them on a deeper and more authentic

level than often possible through other therapeutic means. With this in mind, a study

conducted by Fischer and Attah (2001) found that the issue of middle-class white

instructors working with populations of inner-city youths of color can create distance in

the group dynamic and lead to an unbalanced group culture (p. 117). While this is merely

the case from one single study, it raises questions about demographic diversity within the

Outward Bound organization and its potential negative impact on more diverse

populations of participants. While this is not the focus of the current study, it is certainly

an area where further academic research is significantly needed.

A central focus of this study is on the role instructors play in creating a culture

and a sense of meaning within the group for participants. While instructors have to

interpret participants' behaviors and desires to set appropriate challenges and manage risks, they also have to have to consider how to manage many aspects of the group. One of the influential aspects over which instructors have control, at least at the beginning of course, is the division of subgroups for things like cooking groups, cleaning groups, and tent groups. The way instructors can either randomly or strategically organize participants can play a major role in the creation of the group culture. Similarly, instructors must take into consideration how to assign leadership roles, lessons, travel plans all while trying to balance the needs, wants, and goals of the group and its many individual members (Sibthorp & Jostad, 2014, p. 61). Essentially, instructors play a leadership role, one where they have significant influence in curating the group structure which can have a profound impact on the way and type of group culture which forms in response. One of the goals of this study is to ascertain insight into how instructors make choices to intentionally create a culture within a program group, and how that culture is designed to persist beyond the duration of the program and have a lasting impact on participants.

Most significantly, one of the chief responsibilities of the instructor is to curate and adapt the experience to maximize opportunities for growth and create appropriate challenges for participants. Although there is a preplanned set of activities, the way they are approached and framed can be instrumental in how they are accomplished. Framing is particularly important, and a major responsibility of the instructor is to set up activities in such a way that participants can easily transfer their experience to their daily lives. Therefore, it is the instructor's duty to help increase the potential for transference by aiding participants to see the real, meaningful implications of their wilderness experience and behavior in the group (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 31).

The Group

On the first day of a program, participants often glance around at their fellow groupmates with disbelief that they could possibly grow to be close enough to accomplish such formidable tasks together like circumnavigate islands by sailboat or summit towering peaks by foot. And yet, time after time, groups leave on the last day teary eyed and in disbelief that they may well never see some of these dear friends again. One of the contributing factors which leads these groups to work so well together and grow so close is by following the "ten-group" framework which suggests groups fall between the size of 7-15 members and share a common objective (Walsh & Golins, 1976, p. 5). At this optimal size, groups are large enough for variation in behavior and personality types, yet small enough to avoid cliques. Groups of this size are both large enough to have conflict, and small enough to manageably resolve it. They are large enough and the objective is significant enough that a shared mindset and bond exists in response (p. 5).

Along the same lines, the optimal group size and culture that forms in response to it nearly always manifests a system of mutual dependence and reciprocity. By doing so, individuals who may have never felt needed by others discover that the group depends on them (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 22). Even participants who may not excel at the physical challenges and feel like their participation burdens or slows the group, they can contribute meaningfully through actions like cooking, navigating and providing emotional support. In this way, the strengths and weaknesses of participants can be traded in a system of reciprocity (Walsh & Golins, 1976). Not only does a system of exchange

and order manifest from the reciprocity, a true sense of community evolves from it as well (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 22).

The sense of community that comes from a tight knit group of individuals who have struggled and triumphed together can cultivate feelings of belonging and importance that may have never been felt by the individuals previously. Adolescents, especially those from broken or struggling homes, have a strong desire to experience family, community, and in-depth relationships. The sense of family created on Outward Bound has the potential to fulfill a critical developmental need (Kimball & Bacon 1993, p. 22-23).

Challenge Activities

Outward Bound courses are known for the physical challenge they request from participants. Outward Bound does this through a variety of activities which most commonly include backpacking, rock climbing, canoeing or sailing. Other challenge activities at Outward Bound can include cross country skiing, ropes courses, dog sledding, canyoneering, kayaking, rafting, and service projects. While there are many challenging aspects of an Outward Bound course, from group living to intense physical exertion, the specific and planned challenge activities are physically demanding of participants in such a way that they have the potential to contribute to increased psychological well-being (Lubans, 2012).

One of the essential features of the challenge activities on Outward Bound courses is how holistic they are. The activities demand each participant contribute the fullest effort of their physical, mental, and emotional resources (Walsh & Golins, 1976). In this way, the activities take on much more meaning than just reaching a mountain peak or sailing to a destination. The activities become an effective medium for participants to

realize and work around their own limitations, to feel empowered by recognizing the extent of their strengths, and to be pushed forth by a motivation to overcome the difficulties of the wilderness (Hattie et al., 1997).

Similarly, while the challenge activities themselves may seem highly dangerous or impossible to achieve, this is an important perception for participants to have. For instance, participants may perceive a high risk in participating in something like rock climbing for fear that they may fall and, therefore, feel even more accomplished and courageous when they succeed at the activity. Meanwhile, instructors are acutely aware of the actual risk involved and are in control of how to manage it. The key here is that almost all of the challenge activities are high in perceived risk, but low in actual risk.

One way that Outward Bound motivates participants to get involved in these activities is by using an incremental progression of challenge. To do so, problems and challenge activities are gradually introduced in terms of their complexity and consequence (Walsh & Golins, 1976). This progression often parallels the phase progression through the course where instructors are highly involved, then somewhat involved, and then hardly involved at all. As instructors pass responsibility on to the participants, gradually participants become more confident and capable of handling the increasingly challenging activities.

Reflection Time

Each night after dinner, Outward Bound groups gather around for an evening meeting to debrief on the day, learn what tomorrow has in store, and answer a go-round question. This can be a space for participants to reflect privately or openly on their

experiences, for conflict or concerns to be openly addressed, and for the group to come together vulnerably and with respect to build a safe community space.

Often times the instructor will ask a "go-round" question for the group where each student is given time to talk openly about their emotions and experiences without the interruption of others (Bacon, 1983, p. 19). Go-round questions can be a helpful instrument for instructors to either deepen or lighten the mood depending on their sense of the collective well-being for that day. For instance, instructors can ask participants to reflect on and share about vulnerable topics like their fears or dreams, or they can ask participants a silly question if the mood needs to be uplifted after a demanding day.

There are several key benefits to the use of go-round questions. They help to build community and improve communication among participants and instructors. With a sense of community in place, evening meetings and go-round questions can cultivate an encouraging space where participants can receive support, solve problems, and talk openly about their feelings. This can be a highly useful tool for instructors to formally assess the inner state and wellbeing of participants (Bacon, 1983, p. 32). Go-round questions can also be beneficial because of the impact positive testimonials can have on others. For instance, when one participant speaks fondly of a shared experience, sometimes this can lead others to re-remember the same experience in this new perspective and essentially upgrade their recollection of the experience (p. 32). By doing so, students who may not have enjoyed a particular activity as much as others have the potential to look back more fondly on it and extract more meaning from it. Unfortunately, this also works vice versa and occasionally students may downgrade their recollection or impression of an experience to match a shared group sentiment.

There are several additional concerns with regard to the use of go-round questions at evening meetings. The initial apprehension is for go-round time to turn into a nightly group therapy session (Bacon, 1983, p. 32). Sometimes there is nothing but a fine line in between participants openly sharing vulnerable emotions and seeking therapeutic support from the group on a regular basis. While some participants may genuinely need and want group therapy support, Outward Bound is not designed for this and generally wants to veer away from talk-therapy methodologies. Likewise, the focus of Outward Bound is on action and experience. When talk-therapy comes to the foreground, it fails to focus on the central values of Outward Bound. Go-round questions are an important tool for instructors and the group and, therefore, should be used regularly, but with an auxiliary intention (p. 32).

While evening meeting and go-round questions are important tools and ways to unpack the events of the day, general debriefing is a way to reflect regularly on activities after they happen. Though debriefing is similar in nature and benefit to the go-round questions, it can help give participants an opportunity to understand and thoughtfully articulate the meaning and relevance of their experiences. In doing so, they can improve their ability to transfer the lessons learned in the wilderness to their daily lives and behaviors back home. The difference with debriefing is that it does not often systematically require each participant to speak in turn as go-round questions do. Unfortunately, the consequence of this is that quieter students tend to hang back and not contribute fully. Debriefing can also be a space where an instructor who is eager to teach a lesson can skip ahead impulsively without fully gauging where everyone is at in their personal experience (Bacon, 1983, p. 20). Generally speaking, debriefing, evening

meetings and strategic go-round questions offer participants opportunities to reflect

openly, learn from one another, and build community.

Solo

Group reflection has its many benefits, but solitary reflection time has the

potential to be truly transformative for participants who rarely spend time completely

alone in their own company. Every Outward Bound course incorporates a solo

component because it is integral to the process. This experience can last anywhere from a

couple hours to three days alone. Outward Bound strategically places students in small

designated areas where the participants are entirely alone with the space and freedom to

explore the depths of their own mind, catch up on some rest, or do whatever else they

may like to do in their rare moment of pure wilderness solitude. Like nearly all aspects of

an Outward Bound course, the solo is a component where a participant is able to get out

of the experience what they put into it. If a participant wants to journal, face their

personal issues, set goals, or generally reflect on their life, this is the space held for them

to do so. However, sometimes participants experience boredom, hunger, or discomfort

being alone with themselves—yet even these types of experiences can be profoundly

effective for personal growth.

Duration

Outward Bound courses vary dramatically in duration, lasting from a handful of

days to three months or more. Some of the academic conversation on duration has shed

doubt onto the potential effectiveness of shorter duration courses. Russell (2000) notes

that the possible change effected on a severely emotionally disturbed participant during a

short-term WTP is questionable (p. 175). Cason and Gillis (1994) conducted a meta-analysis from which they deduced that longer programs are more effective (p. 44). That said, they neglected to determine the optimal length of a program. The findings from meta-analyses done by Hattie et al. (1997) and Cason and Gillis (1994) concur that programs with longer durations produce higher effects on participants' conception of themselves, behavioral assessments by others, locus of control, grades, and school attendance. Generally speaking however, little has been done to study the correlation between the duration of the course and the extent to which participants are impacted by their experience long-term. Lacking the time and resources to pursue this question currently, I must leave it to remain an insufficiently explored area of the academic conversation on WEPs and WTPs for the time being, but strongly encourage further research on this topic.

Despite the inconclusive understanding on the optimal length for a WEP or WTP, what is certain is that it must be long enough such that a participant can be fully immersed in the wilderness. Likewise, if the pertinent research on this subject connects longer duration programs with higher levels of positive outcomes, perhaps wilderness programs should be long enough to make this lasting positive impact. This current study focuses on one of Outward Bound's longest duration courses, 72 days, and perhaps the findings detailed in Chapter 6 can begin to clarify the potential long-term effectiveness of these longer duration programs.

Conclusion of the Course

Finally, as alluded to previously, the conclusion of a course can often be an emotional experience in which participants have to part ways with their new friends and

comrades. The final days of the course often illuminate the strength of the group bond, the sense of personal empowerment felt by individuals, and the high levels of trust for others. By the conclusion of a course, participants generally leave with increased self-knowledge and a heightened self-concept (Kimball & Bacon, 1993). As Kimball and Bacon document, participants can leave with an altered set of values, a new world view, and even a resolve to change certain aspects of their lifestyles and habits when they return home.

Chapter 3: Theory Behind and Evolution of the Outward Bound Model

Introduction

Given Outward Bound's deep history in the field of wilderness education and programming, its successes have fundamentally been rooted in the underlying theories which shape these programs. While some theories have been universally accepted and time honored for Outward Bound, others have been debated or adapted over the years. Outward Bound's history, approach, and specific elements were detailed in Chapters 1 and 2. Here, we now delve into several relevant theoretical perspectives applicable to wilderness programming including: rite of passage, the "Hahnian" vision, action and experience over talk therapy, potentialities rather than pathologies, and metaphor.

Rite of Passage

Many academics have studied and theorized about the benefits and reality of the rite of passage model in reference to WEPs and WTPs. As noted in the previous chapter, psychologist and former instructor Dr. Stephen Bacon is one of the prominent voices in the academic conversation on the rite of passage theory for Outward Bound (1983). The Outward Bound process flows through three phases which mimic the developmental process. The first phase is one where the participant is in a childlike state through basic expedition where they rely on instructors and still have many skills and competencies to learn. The second phase parallels adolescence where instructors take a step back and participants assume greater responsibility for their program. Lastly, the final phase of the expedition is where participants are entirely accountable and take on the role of adulthood. Bacon views this maturation progression through the course as a ritualized rite

of passage (p. 54). While our society tends to lack a clear demarcation from adolescence into adulthood (Kelly, 1977, p. 4), the way Outward Bound reproduces this progression with clearly defined transitions helps to mark the significance of the transformation into a role of responsibility in the group and in society.

In partnership with Dr. Richard Kimball, Bacon expands on the theoretical implications of the rite of passage progression (1993). They discuss the psychological power of the transition through the levels of the program and how it can be a powerfully transformative experience. Despite it not being a directly quantifiable or even linear process, once one experiences the rite of passage, they are definitively transformed (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 28). They note that this occurrence is not possible with every student and is not necessarily even a conscious or intentional aspect of an Outward Bound program. Kimball and Bacon also call attention to the power of the wilderness setting and how it offers spiritual and archetypal surroundings which can play a strong role in promoting and fostering these transformations (p. 28).

While Kimball and Bacon discuss the theoretical possibility of a rite of passage occurrence optimistically, Brent Bell, an author specializing on rites of passage, is more doubtful (2003). First Bell sets up the three necessary phases for a rite of passage to occur: separation, transition, and reincorporation. Outward Bound indisputably accomplishes the first two phases by separating participants from their ordinary lives and placing them in a wilderness environment, and by introducing challenges and scenarios which act as transitions in the lives and self-concepts of the participants. However, Bell views the rite of passage model as ineffective for WEPs because of the difficulty in implementing the third phase of the necessary process (Bell, 2003).

There are three primary reasons for Bell's view of the rite of passage model as futile in an outdoor education setting. First, the phase of reincorporation depends heavily on the role of community to support the transformation; however, when participants return home, there is no structure in place to reinforce their transformation (Bell, 2003, p. 46). While Bacon and Kimball may disagree that the only community necessary to support the transformation is the Outward Bound group, Bell seems to understand it as an inauthentic rite of passage, the effects of which may potentially not persist into the home lives of the participants without a supportive community in place there as well. Next, Bell understands a rite of passage as *one* single transformational experience but views the process through a WEP or WTP as a slow process of change (p. 45). In this way, a transformation may still be taking place, but not in the conventional method of the rite of passage model. Lastly, Bell notes that while a rite of passage is an effective model for establishing a specific role that one steps into, on Outward Bound courses there is broad encouragement for participants to "discover themselves" and in doing so, without specifically demarking what they should become through the transformation this aspect of the model is does not fit perfectly (p. 47).

Despite Bell's reservations about how applicable the rite of passage model is for Outward Bound programs, he does support the model's use as a loose framework. Applied loosely, the rite of passage model can add meaning by helping to frame and amplify the perceived significance of experiences (p. 47). While the model can deepen the value of what can be learned from challenging and transformational experiences, one of its most beneficial uses is the way in which it creates a structure that unites the group through shared expressions (p. 47). Bell agrees with Kimball and Bacon in that it can

contribute to deepening the meaning derived from experiences and helping participants make sense of the transformations they go through on the program.

"Hahnian" Vision

As previously mentioned, Kurt Hahn's "Hahnian" vision put values at the forefront of experiential education. When working with populations of troubled youths, this approach necessitated that participants receive re-initiation into cultural norms and education in prosocial values. However, part of Hahn's vision was to keep Outward Bound from becoming the kind of organization or school which indoctrinates students and robs them of intellectual freedom and discovery. Given the desire to teach specific prosocial values and skills but an aversion to force students into these beliefs, the experiential model and curriculum from his vision created an academic environment where students were placed into experiences which were specifically designed to be conducive for the natural and spontaneous emergence of prosocial values (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 12). In this way, the Hahnian vision placed experience and values at the center of the academic approach. The Hahnian vision in particular is fundamental to the success of Outward Bound programs in that it is an intentionally open-ended, agency-driven approach. Outward Bound provides clear tools and opportunities, but it is up to each participant to take what they can of their own accord.

Action and Experience

Likewise, the programming approach of Outward Bound diverges from conventional talk therapy methodologies and places the focus on action and experience (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 23). Many adolescents may have an aversion or difficulty

verbally communicating themselves for therapeutic or even social benefit. This can occur

for a number of reasons, including lack of language skills, discomfort in traditional

therapeutic settings, or an absence of quality education where learning how to talk

through problems is emphasized. For these reasons and others, many adolescents prefer

action over expression and can utilize the stimulating activities of an Outward Bound

program to work through relevant issues. In wilderness settings where action is

emphasized, adolescents are exposed to the natural consequences of their decisions in a

way that is relatively unmediated by adult authority figures (p. 23-24), yet still well

supported by skilled instructors and a group of peers.

Potentialities not Pathologies

Moreover, the theoretical approach to wilderness therapy which focuses on

potentialities rather than pathologies is rich with opportunity and optimism (Kimball &

Bacon, 1993, p. 34). While some therapeutic approaches are problems and pathology

focused, wilderness therapy emphasizes the strengths, capabilities and positive potential

of the participant. Employing this method for wilderness therapy, students have the

support for self-discovery, independence, self-efficacy and empowerment (p. 34). One of

the most powerful ways in which a potentiality based WTP works is that it enables

participants to redefine themselves. In most cases, the participants do not know anyone in

their group before the trip and have the ability to conceptualize themselves a new

narrative. Rather than being known as "substance abusers," "run-aways," "drop-outs,"

and so on, they have the opportunity to use the experiences at hand and re-conceptualize

themselves as successful, competent, capable and perhaps even heroic (p. 34-35). One of

the key aspects to this theoretical approach is that utilizes the anonymity of participants at

the beginning of the program as a conceptual clean slate for the participants' self-concept. While on the Outward Bound programs the participants will be pushed into leadership roles, accomplish feats they thought impossible and maybe even contribute to the group in courageous or heroic ways. All of these experiences have the potential to be extremely beneficial for the self-concept of participants, especially for at-risk youth or struggling young adults who may be in serious need of redefining themselves.

While the theory behind potentialities not pathologies was developed in specific reference to WTPs, it can certainly be generalized to participants of WEPs as well. Many youths stand to benefit from the opportunity to re-conceptualize themselves and step into new identities and behaviors.

Metaphor in Historical-Organizational Context

In "The Evolution of the Outward Bound Process" Bacon (1987) illuminates the various models influencing Outward Bound programs and how these models have advanced over the years. He separates the curriculum models for the Outward Bound process into three distinct categories. First, the "Mountains Speak for Themselves" model which dominated during the 1960s and into the early 1970s. Next, the Outward Bound Plus model which was used from the late 1970s until quite recently. Lastly, the Metaphoric Model which Bacon championed in this work, as well as his book *The Conscious Use of Metaphor in Outward Bound* (1983).

The first-generation curriculum model was the "Mountains Speak for Themselves" model (MTS), which relied on the specific elements and experiential nature of Outward Bound courses to do the teaching. In this model, discussion and feedback were deemphasized. While students were provided with time and space to reflect, it was

not an intentionally curated aspect of Outward Bound programming (Bacon, 1987, p. 2). While this model generated positive outcomes of participants reporting increases in their self-confidence and heightened awareness of the interdependence of humanity, the model nonetheless received criticism (p. 4). Critics focused mainly on the lack of transferability of this model. Essentially the MTS model did not assure that participants would necessarily go home having learned anything concrete. It only provides the experiences necessary to learn from without any effort to transfer that knowledge back to daily life. While the experience itself is valuable for learning, it is often the thinking about the experience, debrief and reflection which can be abundantly educative for participants.

Therefore, the Outward Bound Plus model (OBP) elevated the importance of the instructor to a discussion leader and group facilitator. This second-generation process model continues to highlight the importance of experience but couples it with intentional reflection and group discussion (Bacon, 1987, p. 5). While this model saw even more success than the previous one, it also received criticism. The OBP model compromised Outward Bound's identity as an organization which fosters experiential education. In this model, some argued that the post-activity discussions were as or even more fruitful for learning than the experiences themselves (p. 7).

With the question of experiential education at stake and an enduring value for transference, Bacon proposed the third-generation Metaphoric Model (MM). The key difference between this model and its predecessor is that instructors will suggest the metaphoric implications of an activity before it even occurs so the participants perceive its metaphoric and educational value as they pass through it, rather than just at the end once the experience has finished. Instructors preface activities with some form of reading,

poem, myth, story, or perhaps even a mini-lecture if there's a chance the metaphoric implication would be lost without explicitly stating it. Generally speaking, this model employs powerful introductions and intentional activity debriefs to allow participants to understand the importance and relevance of the experiences to their lives outside of the course while the experience is underway—as exemplified in the introductory story of this paper. This approach takes into account the holistic nature of Outward Bound experiences, which challenge participants on many different levels. The activities on an Outward Bound course are often intricately more complex than they appear because of the specific social context, the biochemical effects of releasing high adrenaline and other hormones and neurotransmitters, as well as the setting deep in the wilderness (Bacon, 1987, p. 12). When these complex aspects of the experience are fused intentionally with the Metaphoric Model, students can push their physical and existential limits (p. 13).

Metaphor in Practice

When students are immersed in an unfamiliar wilderness environment and pushed to participate in activities completely dissimilar from their routine lives at home, metaphor acts as a powerful bridge to assist participants in making meaning of seemingly unrelated experiences. Instructors play a significant role by curating how metaphor is delivered. As mentioned above, instructors can present it formally or informally, they can subtly infuse it in narratives and anecdotal stories, they can address it after an experience through debriefing or reflection, or they can choose to not explicitly address it and it probably can still have an effect subconsciously on the participant (Bacon, 1983).

One of the crucial elements for ensuring metaphoric transmission is enhancing how isomorphic the Outward Bound situation is to a real-life situation for the participant

(Bacon, 1983, p. 4). If the key components of a situation on Outward Bound parallels one that the participant may have in their ordinary life, then it could be ripe with learning opportunities for the participants. The crucial element to changing the participants behavior in these situations relies on the outcome of the Outward Bound experience differing from what normally is the outcome of the parallel experience at home. For instance, if the resolution of an isomorphic situation at Outward Bound produces a positive outcome, then it is likely that the parallel experience in that participant's home life may optimistically benefit as well.

To put this more concretely, imagine a participant who often shies away from responsibility in her home life and when she must take on responsibility, her insecurity and lack of desire for it leads to her failure. When on the Outward Bound course her group needs her to step up and fill a crucial role to support a fellow participant climbing up a rock face. Sensing a demand for her to take on responsibility, she experiences a familiar hesitancy to step into the role where she is now accountable. Yet, as there is no one else who could fill the role and the situation appears to be of high risk for her teammate, she steps in. Her contribution and ownership of responsibility enabled that climber to safely accomplish their goals. In this scenario, the participant who often shies away from responsibility had a successful experience with it on Outward Bound in a way which clearly parallels experiences she is familiar with in her home life. Gaining the confidence and assurance that her contribution was helpful and lead to success, the participant will be more inclined to adjust her behavior back in her home life and adopt more responsibility than she may have previously.

While scenarios like this occur frequently and spontaneously on Outward Bound courses, instructors are responsible for maximizing the quantity and type of isomorphic experiences in order to enhance the potential impact of the course (Bacon, 1983, p. 4). It is also the instructors' job to decide how and when to infuse explicit or implicit metaphoric lessons accompanying these types of experiences, as will be further explored in my findings in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4: Prior Studies on Outcomes and Effectiveness

Introduction

This chapter delves into the findings, successes, and shortcomings of the pertinent studies on Outward Bound programs. While some studies focused specifically on WTPs and others on WEPs, some studies were meta-analyses which synthesized a wide breadth of findings into a few key outcomes. First, I will look at the main conclusions and methodology used in the relevant studies, and finally I will review and assess these studies as well as the other pertinent literature used to support my own study.

Outcomes of an Outward Bound Course

Much has been done in the way of researching the types of outcomes that Outward Bound programs produce. There seems to be a general sense of agreement across the board on what these outcomes are; however, the disagreement and lack of understanding is on the significance of the impact and the permanence or duration of the outcomes. While there is more to be researched in this regard, the relevant studies conclude that some of the most important outcomes include: positive affects to self-concept, academic improvements, enhancements on personality dimensions, superior interpersonal skills, and increases in adventuresome dimensions and physicality.

The meta-analysis conducted by Hattie et al. (1997) refined the general use of the term self-concept employed by dozens of studies to synthesize a more advanced and multidimensional understanding of self-concept (p. 70). Hattie et al. differentiates high-order self-concept dimensions, which includes aspects like independence, confidence,

self-efficacy and self-understanding (p. 67), from low-order self-concept dimensions such as achievement, physical appearance, and peer and family self-concepts (p. 71).

The findings from this meta-analysis conclude that WEPs had profound effects on areas of self-control including independence, confidence, self-efficacy, self-understanding, assertiveness, internal locus of control, and decision making (Hattie et al., 1997, p. 70). Less substantially but still significantly, WEPs had effects on leadership, personality, and adventuresome dimensions (p. 70). A 2005 study conducted by Goldenberg, McAvoy and Klenosky echoed many of Hattie et al.'s findings. In particular Goldenberg et al. notes that self-awareness/improvement/fulfillment was the second most frequently mentioned value from their study (p. 138). These findings indicate that Outward Bound WEPs can have positive effects on participants' sense of self as well as their awareness of self and others.

While there generally is an inconclusive understanding of the lasting power of these outcomes, Hattie et al. found that in regard to self-concept outcomes, follow up periods established that independence, confidence, self-efficacy, and self-understandings were further enhanced over time (Hattie et al., 1997, p. 67). Conversely, the greatest immediate effects of WEPs were specifically with regard to leadership, academics, independence, assertiveness, emotional stability, social comparison, time management, and flexibility (p. 63).

Relatedly, Kimball and Bacon (1993) found that WTPs also had a significant ability to enhance the self-concept of troubled youths (p. 36). Their findings indicate that much like the WEPs focused on in Hattie et al.'s study, WTPs also facilitated a sense of internal locus of control, improved self-reliance and the strength of the ego, and increased

assertiveness (p. 36). Kimball and Bacon also notes significant improvements in the motivation levels of participants of WTPs as well as a decrease in general levels of anxiety (p. 36).

Improvements in all of these dimensions clearly have the potential to contribute to a generally better sense of well-being for the participants after the conclusion of the program. Several academics looked specifically at improvements in academic performance and functioning as they relate to the Outward Bound course outcomes. Findings in this domain indicate that abilities for identifying and solving problems, recognizing and reviewing solutions, picking and implementing a solution, and evaluating the solution are not only particularly relevant skills on Outward Bound programs, but they transfer well to academic settings (Hattie et al., 1997). In this way, WEPs can improve participants' general problem-solving abilities and contribute to improved academic performance. Kimball and Bacon (1993) noted that as WEPs and WTPs can enhance adolescent motivation, it can likewise contribute to improvements in academic functioning.

The findings from these studies indicate improvements on several personality dimensions such as heightening assertiveness, reducing aggression, contributing to emotional stability, enhancing achievement motivation, creating a clearer sense of internal locus of control, improving maturity, and reducing neurosis (Hattie et al., 1997). While these positive outcomes were recognized by the pertinent studies, they found similar improvements on interpersonal dimensions as well. Hattie et al. found increases in social competence, cooperation and interpersonal communication. Once again concurring with Hattie et al.'s findings, Goldenberg et al. noted that one of the common findings

from their study was the high value participants placed on developing relationships and working as a team (Goldenberg et al., 2005, p. 138). Likewise, in Kimball and Bacon's research on WTPs, they found that the interpersonal competence and self-control of troubled youths was increased, all while dimensions of defensiveness and aggression decreased (p. 37). Kimball and Bacon also noticed a sizably large increase in social acceptance from their study (p. 37).

The last category of outcomes given attention by academics is the dimension of adventure and physicality. Hattie et al. found high effects on challenge and flexibility, but generally speaking, improvements in the adventure category declined over time while most other category's improvements were found to continue increasing (p. 71). Kimball and Bacon similarly noted an immediate increase in physical fitness following a WTP, but no acknowledgement of how that may decrease or change overtime. Lastly, Russell (2001) connected improvements in adventure abilities and physicality back to self-esteem and self-concept dimensions. Russell claims that feelings of accomplishment combined with physical health and well-being might contribute to clients feeling better about themselves, and lead to enhanced self-esteem and personal growth (Russell, 2001, p. 75).

Another study by Russell (2000) diverges from the others because he focuses specifically on what the participants wanted to get out of the WTPs. Across four client case studies, he found that three outcomes were common for proposed changes. These include participants wanting better relationships with their families, to abstain from drugs and alcohol, and a desire to try harder and complete school (p. 173). There seems to be a fair degree of cohesion between the findings from pertinent studies, namely Hattie et al. and Kimball and Bacon, and the desires of participants recorded by Russell. Since Hattie

et al.'s study was perhaps the most comprehensive and yet focused specifically on WEPs

and not WTPs, less is known about the direct outcomes on drug and alcohol use after an

Outward Bound WEP or WTP. Broadly speaking, the immense positive findings

certainly have the potential to affect dimensions of participants' lives regarding

decreasing their involvement in alcohol and drug use. Yet there is certainly more to be

uncovered about this matter.

Measuring and Assessing Overall Effectiveness

Though there are dozens and dozens of studies and articles focusing on Outward

Bound, there are several specific academics whose work is particularly prominent for the

purpose of this paper. Many of these academics have already been mentioned or cited

above. In this section I will briefly analyze their contribution to the field, the areas where

disagreement exists, and the spaces where further understandings should be apprehended.

The most prominent contributions to this field include works by Kelly (1968, 1974),

Bacon (1983, 1987) and in partnership with Kimball (1993), Cason and Gillis (1994),

Hattie et al. (1997) and Russell (2000, 2001). Noticeably, all of these works are over

seventeen years old and some were even published nearly fifty years ago. Given that the

academic study of Outward Bound spans fifty or so years, there are hundreds of other

contributions to the field which I cannot sufficiently incorporate or account for.

Nevertheless, the works mentioned here appear to be amongst the most influential works

created to further understandings on WEPs, WTPs, and Outward Bound specifically.

Kelly's 1968 and 1974 works both focus on the use of Outward Bound programs

as an alternative to institutionalization for adolescent delinquent boys. The 1968 work is

essentially a book of a couple hundred pages in length detailing the methodology,

procedure, results, and implications of using WEPs and WTPs rather than conventional juvenile detention methods. Kelly's 1974 publication reviews the ten-year relationship between the Massachusetts Department of Youth Service and Outward Bound. Kelly's work contributed important findings about how the Outward Bound process concretely improved the lives of many of the young boys and had a significant impact on reducing recidivism rates. Despite the groundbreaking nature of Kelly's contribution back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these contributions are now quite dated. While much of their impact is still relevant in the field today, a more current or similar edition of these studies conducted with the same level of intention and thoroughness is greatly needed. Additionally, Outward Bound's website currently denotes that their Intercept programs are not designed for serious juvenile offenders. So, whether there is a great difference between the behaviors of the delinquent Massachusetts male youth of the 1960s and current at-risk youth populations today is somewhat undetermined and reinforces the need for more up to date studies.

Furthermore, in his 1983 work on the use of metaphor in Outward Bound as well as his chapter contribution to Gass's 1993 book with Kimball, Dr. Stephen Bacon has been an important contributor in the field of WEPs and WTPs as well. His work on the use of metaphor in Outward Bound has been greatly helpful in drawing awareness to the specific methodology employed by instructors to produce the greatest positive outcomes on participants. His book delves into how, why, and when metaphor is an appropriate and significant tool to be used by instructors. Similarly, his work with Kimball breaks down the process of the WTP challenge model and analyzes the many components of an Outward Bound program which can lead to its success. As a former Outward Bound

instructor himself, Bacon's contributions leave an extra impression of expertise on the matter and his works were noticeably influential in several of my previous contextual chapters.

Moreover, there were two important meta-analyses conducted within the span of a few years by Cason and Gillis and Hattie et al. Cason and Gillis's 1994 research attempted to synthesize all pertinent studies to reach an understanding on the overall effectiveness of adventure programming. Their research incorporated 43 previous studies and ultimately concluded that adolescents who attend adventure programming are 62% better off than those who do not. Similarly, Hattie et al. conducted a study published in 1997 which synthesized 96 studies to conclude that many immediate and short-term gains from adventure programming were followed by additional gains between the end of the program and follow-up assessments. Hattie et al. also concluded that longer duration programs and programs with older participants have higher effect sizes and outcomes. Generally speaking though, both of these meta-analyses focused on the outcomes and not as much on why WEPs and WTPs work so well. Overall, the works of Cason and Gillis and Hattie et al. have been instrumental in making sense of a large volume of seemingly incongruent findings from previous studies to come to some majorly important discoveries.

Lastly, the work of Russel in the early 2000s has been important for clarifying what exactly wilderness therapy entails and how the specific process of WTPs relates to the outcomes of the programs. What his contributions published to the Journal of Experiential Education lack in length, they make up for in content. Russell does a superb job of integrating several concepts of wilderness therapy into a unified and specific

definition which can lend itself helpfully to some of the broader implications such as receiving more recognition by state agencies and mental health professionals.

As previously noted, these academics and their contributions are substantial, but not all-encompassing. Much has been researched on smaller scales and yet considerable aspects of this field still remain to be conclusively understood. One of the paramount issues with the pertinent literature is the wide variety in methodology, terminological definitions, control group, and duration of study. Many studies, either not mentioned directly in this paper or incorporated in the meta-analyses, suffer from poor design, lack of control groups and limited or absent follow-up. Given the high degree of variance across this field of study, it is possible that even the results of the meta-analyses are somewhat obscured (Cason and Gillis, 1994, p. 46). What this indicates is that future research is in urgent need of being conducted in more consistent and reliable ways. Kimball and Bacon address that while these methodological shortcomings increase the questionable validity of the empirical studies, they nevertheless still clearly indicate that WEPs and WTPs can and do result in positive changes in self-concept, behaviors, and interpersonal skills for the participants.

While the pertinent literature does a considerable job of delving into the process of Outward Bound programs and the implications and outcomes of WEPs and WTPs, they neglect the significant role organizational culture plays in the formation and successes of Outward Bound groups. Because culture is alluded to but not systematically examined, prior studies miss an opportunity to uncover the specific organizational mechanisms that foster individual-level transformation. It is to this task that we now turn in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Outward Bound from an Organizational Culture Perspective

Introduction

As exemplified, Outward Bound groups are a unique organizational form. While most organizations are created to endure, Outward Bound groups themselves are created with the intention to dissolve after a matter of weeks or months. And while the physical group itself may disperse back to their individual lives, the culture within an Outward Bound group is built to withstand this physical separation. Prior research and related published works on Outward Bound acknowledge, implicitly, the central role that organizational culture plays in producing outcomes, as well as attest to the personal transformation (a kind of cultural shift embodied by each individual participant) that determine whether or not an Outward Bound experience is effective. Yet, as pointed out in Chapter 4, to date no study has applied an analytical framework that is explicitly and intentionally cultural in its focus. The present study fills this gap by examining one Outward Bound group using an organizational culture lens. In this chapter, I first define key concepts in organizational culture. Then I reiterate my research questions and describe in depth the methodology behind my study.

Organizational Culture

In order to understand how the organizational culture within an Outward Bound group is built to last, we must begin by clarifying what exactly the terminology organizational culture means and what its effect on an organization is. While there is some debate as to whether organizations have cultures or are themselves cultures, generally culture is thought of as both a process and a product (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 269). As the term was gaining footing in academia in the late 1970s and early 1980s,

anthropological scholars frequently asserted that organizations were cultures in themselves (Rosseau, 1990). Further research and input from the fields of business, social psychology, and sociology led to a consensus that culture is an entity which an organization possesses (Bellot, 2011, p. 31). Understanding that it is essentially a possession of an organization, a process, and a product enables leaders and members of an organization to control, influence or change their organizational culture as they see fit.

Dr. Jennifer Bellot (2011) synthesizes the scholarly agreement on several fundamental principles regarding organizational culture. First, it exists. Second, cultures are fundamentally vague and incorporate contradictions, ambiguities and confusion. Third, organizational culture is socially constructed, the product of groups not individuals, and based on shared experiences. Fourth, each organization's culture is relatively unique, malleable, and subject to continual change (p. 30). These widely agreed upon principles highlight that organizational culture can be molded or influenced so as to effect organizational output. To do so, organizational leaders and even members must become familiar with the ways in which they can shape and have an effect on their culture. On Outward Bound courses this notion is crucial because instructors as the organizational leaders can have such tremendous impact and influence on crafting and adjusting the culture.

Leadership

While there are many factors at play which influence culture, organizational cultures are largely a reflection of their leaders. Warrick (2017), an esteemed academic on organizational change, development, and transformation understands the health, strength, and success of an organization to be the result of effective leadership (p. 396).

While a healthy culture can be attributed to effective and clear leaders, likewise, unhealthy cultures reflect ineffective leadership and dysfunctional management (p. 396). Importantly, unhealthy cultures can negatively impact performance, morale, motivation, teamwork, and loyalty (p. 400). For Outward Bound as for any organization, one of the most crucial ways leaders can affect their organizational health is through their own modelling. When leaders model the behaviors expected of the group members, hold the values and beliefs of the organization with esteem, and exhibit willingness to make changes for the benefit of the organization, this example trickles down to the group (p. 401).

Likewise, the strength of a culture is often a reflection of leadership. A strong culture is one which exhibits clear understanding of the values and norms and they effect the behaviors and practices of group members. Weak cultures are characterized by unclear expectations and inconsistency in values or norms (Warrick, 2017, p. 398). I conjecture that most, if not all, Outward Bound groups exhibit strong cultures because of the prominent role and prevalence of the four pillars of Outward Bound: compassion, integrity, excellence, and diversity and inclusion. Between these values which underscore all programs, the positive role modelling of instructors, and the use of daily ritual and socialization, Outward Bound groups seem deliberately set up to have strong group cultures. Generally, scholars associate stronger cultures with higher performance than weak cultures (p. 398). The more groups perform, achieve goals, and have successes, the stronger the culture is likely to be (p. 400). Warrick believes it is not only the successes themselves, but the debriefs and celebrations of them which further build a strong culture

(p. 400). Likewise, skilled leaders can use setbacks and difficulties to rally the group closer and unite the team to face these challenges.

In order for instructors to change or shift culture, it is important for them to first and foremost understand the state of the culture (Warrick, 2017, p. 403). By checking in with participants regularly and assessing the culture through observation, instructors can have a better understanding of how to shift the culture if necessary through direct or subtle intervention.

Subcultures

Paralleling the complexities of how culture with an Outward Bound group forms, Miriam Erez and Efrat Gati (2004) describe organizational culture as nested. They observe that lower levels of culture are nested within higher levels. In this way, change at any one level impacts and ripples through all other levels, upwards, downwards and sideways. The notion of organizational culture as nested illuminates several key qualities of culture. First, different individual members and different subgroups within an organization experience that culture in unique ways. For instance, while all group members on an Outward Bound program may be technically experiencing the same group culture on an outer level, the males within a subgroup may be experiencing a particular culture on a lower level. Similarly, the instructor pairs may have their own subculture which can greatly affect the other subcultures as well as the overall group culture. Second, culture is dynamic and changing. The changes that happen on one level of culture can ripple through and shift aspects of all the cultures in its sphere. Erez and Gati note that culture is characterized by structural and dynamic dimensions. Not only is the organizational culture made up of each individual level which are comprised of

behaviors, assumptions, and values, but the dynamic interplay between these nested levels also characterizes an organization's culture as a whole.

Likewise, Alvesson (2002) states that socialization, connecting people to strengthen interactions, and developing a shared identity in the organization is a crucial way in which culture is maintained (p. 57). Moreover, just as socialization maintains and contributes to the creation of culture, the culture fosters the ability and characteristics of these socializations. Just as culture is both product and process, Alvesson sees organizational culture as both cause and effect (p. 57). Through socialization and meaningful bonds between group members, a sense of common culture can emerge which strengthens cohesion, improves communication, and enables the group spirit to flourish (p. 58). In contrast, the more disparate the culture of the group is, the less cohesive, less communicative, and less spirited the group is in response. The type of culture within a group can therefore play a significant role in the potential effectiveness, achievements, and success of the group. This phenomenon is particularly valuable for Outward Bound groups as the programs place challenges and opportunities for success and failure in front of the groups on a regular basis. Assessing whether, why and how groups do or do not succeed in the face of these challenges can help to ascertain the quality of the culture at any given time. While of course these successes can be affected by a number of external factors as well, group cohesion, communication, and spirit play a large role.

Conflict between subgroups or even individuals can further affect culture in both productive and unproductive ways. Conflict is characterized as when group members perceive discrepancies, incompatible desires or discordant priorities. Chuang et al. (2004)

categorize conflict into two distinct categories: task-related conflict and relationship-related conflict. Task-related conflict refers to disagreements within the group about the importance of goals, decisions, and procedures (p. 28). Relationship-related conflict refers instead to interpersonal incompatibilities between group members such as tension, animosity and annoyance (p. 28). Relationship-related conflict can be damaging to a group for a number of reasons including: redirecting important cognitive functioning to each other rather than to goals and group objectives, increasing stress and anxiety for individuals which also negatively impacts group members' cognitive functioning, and creating antagonistic and hostile interactions between group members which further hinders group outcomes (p. 28). While academics agree that relationship-related conflicts negatively impact group outcomes and culture, there is considerable disagreement on the nature of task-related conflicts. Though task-related conflicts may divide the group and negatively impact the culture, it is possible that they could instead challenge the group and encourage superior solutions and ultimately positive outcomes for the group as a whole.

Symbols

Bolman and Deal (2013) delve thoroughly into the ways that organizational culture is communicated and revealed through symbols. To understand how culture forms and what impact it has on members, Bolman and Deal emphasize the ways that symbols form the basic building blocks of culture and are essential to how we make sense of the world. While symbols can take on many forms, Bolman and Deal focus on the organizational use of myth, vision, values, heroes and heroines, stories, rituals and ceremonies, metaphor, humor, and play. For the purpose of this study, I will only briefly

explore the most pertinent of these symbols in direct reference to their implications for an Outward Bound group's organizational culture**.**

First, the use of stories is fundamentally connected to the Metaphoric Model. Stories become far more profound than their surface value of entertainment or moral instruction. At their core they offer hope, direction, and reassurance (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 259). Much like metaphor, stories can articulately externalize inner conflicts and provide comfort in how to address them. The use of stories can be extremely effective in perpetuating the values of an organization and spreading them in a vivid way. The organizational culture of an Outward Bound group can be greatly shaped by the use of stories. When instructors choose to tell stories to the group they can use symbolic leadership to intentionally craft the type of impact, information, and values that will be received. For example, all Outward Bound groups take with them a specific book of selected stories, poems and quotes to inspire and motivate them along their journey. While instructors may refer to this quote book from time to time in addition to their own collections of literature, the quote book becomes a daily focus each evening before dinner as a student will select and read aloud any story or quote of their choice. Participants use these stories to relate broader themes and values to their own experiences on course and from their lives. While instructors and participants use stories spontaneously throughout the course, instructors can also employ them strategically often before a new experience, after a challenging day, and always before embarking on solo.

Likewise, Alvesson (2002) addresses how symbols often contribute to creating a more functional culture. They do so by influencing goal attainment, increasing the ability to meet the emotional and expressive needs of group members, and by creating more

harmonious communication (p. 44). Alvesson notes that symbols can play an important role in establishing consensus and clarity within a group as well as increasing the meaningfulness of activities and outcomes.

Ritual and Ceremony

Harrison Trice and Janice Beyer (1984), prominent scholars on rituals and ceremonies, describe these as discrete enactments with a beginning and an end and give expression to a culture's values and beliefs. In this way, rituals and ceremonies are themselves symbolic of the deeper ideals and principals which guide an organization. Many organizations, including Outward Bound, use rituals frequently or even daily to builds a sense of community, establish norms, and emphasize meaning. Likewise, ceremonies are used less frequently and more formally signify accomplishment, success and advancement. The use of ritual and ceremony helps organizations to produce and reproduce successful, strong, and unified cultures. The use of ritual and ceremony establishes clearly what is deemed important and, in doing so, they play a crucial role in the formation of culture for Outward Bound groups.

Daily rituals provide structure and meaning to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of days on an Outward Bound program. For instance, a time-honored Outward Bound ritual for sailing programs is to begin each day at 6:00 am by jumping into the ocean and sometimes even making a lap around the boat. Hiking courses may begin the day with a pump and stretch circle to bring care and attention to the body and its muscular needs.

Regardless of which type of activity is at hand, all Outward Bound courses rely on ritual throughout the day. In particular, dinner time at Outward Bound becomes the

most sacred ritualistic occurrence. All groups stand arms linked in a circle where the

group asks in unison, "Hey cooks, what's for dinner?" to which the cooks will reply what

they made for that night and the group in unison will chant: "Mmm, delicious. Mmm

mmm delicious-licious." Then one of the cooks will read a story or passage from the

quote book and offer a moment of silence. The reader of the quote will then "pass the

pulse" by squeezing the arm of the person next to them until the pulse makes it around

the circle back to them. At that point, that leader will say "peace love and chow" and the

group will reply in unison "chow love and peace!" and the group can begin serving food,

waiting until everyone has been served, and finally eating.

Rituals like this provide a stable dynamic to otherwise challenging and

unpredictable days. These routines connect the group to one another and anchor them

with a common language and practice. Rituals are considered an integral part of culture

because the loss of ritual can often illuminate a sense of emptiness (Bolman & Deal,

2013, p. 262). When participants of an Outward Bound program return home at the end

of course and have meals with their families or friends, it can surface a sense of nostalgia

and longing for a common ritual when meals no longer begin with such a specific ritual.

Outward Bound uses traditions and rituals daily to solidify the importance of the

community and group interdependence. They also anchor the experiences of a course to

broader themes in life and deeper implications. Outward Bound has a few specific

ceremonies which recognize dramatic changes or momentous accomplishments. For

instance, as aforementioned, all Outward Bound programs progress through three phases

where the participants take on more and more control and responsibility of their course.

Often, when progressing from one phase to the next, instructors will hold a small

ceremony or activity to solidify the transition between phases. However, the most significant ceremony of any Outward Bound program is at the final evening meeting, where the pin ceremony takes place.

There are numerous ways instructors can facilitate this final ceremony, but all programs incorporate a few of the same essential components. During the pin ceremony, each participant is individually acknowledged for their admirable qualities, strengths, and contributions to the group over the course of the program. At the end of the ceremony, all participants are given the opportunity to take a special pin if they feel that they are deserving of it for their contributions throughout the program. Pinning ceremonies can often be highly emotional for their direct acknowledgement of the important and special qualities of each member, and for the tangible evidence of a proud accomplishment and hard work well done.

Humor and Play

The use of humor and playfulness helps members of organizations to communicate, share experiences, form bonds, and benefit socially and personally. A psychological study conducted by Wayne Decker and Denise Rotondo (1999) on the use of humor in the workplace found that subordinates who rated their supervisors as having a good sense of humor reported higher job satisfaction. Likewise, subordinates rated other dimensions of their supervisors higher if they had a good sense of humor. In particular, the use of positive humor was found to be even more beneficial to female supervisors than to male supervisors. Ultimately, Decker and Rotondo's study concludes that supervisors use of humor may affect subordinates use of humor and their work attitudes more generally (p. 967). While Outward Bound programs are not structured like

workplaces and the roles of instructors and participants are different than in a traditional office setting, the findings of this study are nonetheless pertinent to the current study. The use of humor by those in leadership roles creates a greater sense of satisfaction within the members of the group and encourages subsequent humor.

Used either in a workplace organization or on wilderness programs, humor and play can be useful tools to alleviating some of the seriousness and tension which builds naturally in high-stress environments. Faced with constant challenges, physically and emotionally, participants of Outward Bound courses turn to humor, silliness and games to communicate, share meaning, and build friendships. When employed by instructors, the use of humor as a tool to affect culture may increase its potential.

While the use of humor and play to form a culture may vary from group to group depending on any number of factors, generally it is an important aspect in the formation of group culture. At least at the beginning of course, nearly all Outward Bound groups begin with ice-breaker activities and games to help one everyone get to know each other. As the course progresses and the group overcomes challenges, takes meaningful risks, and spends time in self-reflection, these serious aspects are often balanced with humor and play as it releases tensions, bonds the group closer, and lifts the group spirit (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 281).

The role of culture on an Outward Bound program can be highly significant in its contribution to the groups successes. Because there is relatively little formal power structure within a group, especially as instructors progress into the background of daily operations, it is often not the structure which gives groups their drive. Rather, a shared cohesive culture can be the force which motivates groups to success (p. 281). Team

building is integral to creating this type of symbiotic culture. It is the creation of a community of individuals united by shared values, a common objective, and faith in one another. Bolman and Deal acknowledge that when teams discover their soul, peak performance emerges (p. 291).

Current Study and Relevant Background

The current study is intended to delve into the formation, impact, and lasting effect of the organizational culture within one specific Outward Bound program as a focused case study. Apprehending a thorough and developed understanding of the culture on a specific Outward Bound group will lead to an outcome of generalizable and widely applicable findings to increase the understanding of culture's impact on Outward Bound groups, wilderness programs, and even other forms of impermanent organizational structures.

The group in focus is the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School (HIOBS) Service and Leadership Semester program from the fall of 2015. Because I was a participant in this specific group, I am able to leverage my intimate understanding of the course itself, the group members, and the results of interviews with participants and instructors to weave together a developed understanding of the state of the group culture and its lasting effects.

Background on this specific course and the programming it involved will be beneficial for a comprehensive understanding of the results in the following sections. For 72 days, a group of eight participants (which later became seven) united to accomplish and complete a wide variety of activities. The group consisted of five females and three males (which later became two). All group members were 18-22 at the time of the

program. The course began with three weeks of sailing in a 30-foot boat with two instructors around coastal Maine. The objectives were to circumnavigate Mount Desert Island, do a beach clean-up on Isle Au Haut and take a three-day solo on Burnt Island.

After completing this portion of the trip, the group moved inland to the HIOBS base in Newry, Maine where they began a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course for a week. During this phase, one male participant returned home and left the course. Additionally, upon arriving in Newry, the male instructor left and was replaced by another female instructor. Following the WFR training, the course rock climbed for several days, did local trail work, and prepped for the upcoming backpacking trips.

Prior to leaving for the first backpacking trip, the original female instructor was replaced by another new female instructor. The group then embarked on two separate backpacking trips, each over a week long. Finally, the group spent the remaining few weeks doing a variety of service projects in Maine including labor-intensive trail work, serving in soup kitchens in Portland, and creating activities and trails for the Waban Project which is a community of developmentally and physically disabled adults. Over the course of ten weeks and a wide assortment of challenges and activities the group developed a unique culture, the impact of which persists in each member still today.

Methodology

The current study is comprised of ten semi-structured interviews with all instructors and all participants except one from the HIOBS Service and Leadership 2015 semester program. Human Subjects approval from the Institutional Research Board was obtained in advance. Prior to each interview I gave a consent form to each interviewee and after receiving verbal and written consent from my participants, I conducted phone

interviews lasting from thirty minutes to one hour. I created audio recordings as well as took detailed notes during the interviews.

In order to ensure the confidentiality of my participants, all notes and recordings are stored on a personal, non-networked, and password protected computer. The interview notes and recordings are considered confidential and have be de-identified. Additionally, all data will be destroyed after one year to further ensure the privacy of the participants. To protect the privacy of all participants, everyone mentioned in this study will be referred to as "a participant" or "an instructor."

At the beginning of the interview I briefed each participant on the focus of my study and reminded them that they have the right to not answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable, to rescind any responses, and to take all the time they need to answer. At the end of each interview I debriefed each participant, thanked them, reminded them that they can rescind their responses at any time, and asked them to please not talk to the other interviewees about this study in order to not influence other answers.

For the instructors of this program, the semi-structured interviews were based around the set of questions in Table 1 below.

Table 1

1. In what ways did you intentionally shape our group culture, if at all? Were there any particular stories, activities or lessons that you may have used?
2. Did Outward Bound formally train or instruct you to on how to craft a culture? Can you tell me anything about this process?
3. What do you remember about the culture of our group? Positive and negative aspects.
4. What do you think your role and impact was on the group culture?
5. What were you trying to achieve or trying to help the participants achieve?
6. What is your relationship to the use of metaphor in the context of group culture on Outward Bound programs?
7. Was it a successful group culture or group experience in your opinion? How do you measure that?

Using these questions as a framework for the phone interviews, I hypothesized

that the four instructors would illuminate intentional ways that they created, shaped, and

managed the culture of the group. While I anticipated that some of the instructors may

have a difficult time remembering specifics about our group because of how many other

programs they lead, I also assumed that their experience on so many courses would be an

asset for comparing our course culture to other groups with which they have worked.

For the participants, the semi-structured interviews were instead based around the

distinct set of questions in Table 2 below.

Table 2

1. Generally speaking, what was your experience on the program?
2. In what ways did you feel the program was successful and unsuccessful for you?
3. In what ways were the instructors successful or unsuccessful?
4. How do you remember and look back on the culture of our group?
5. What was your role and impact on the group culture?
6. What was the role and impact of the instructors on the group culture?
7. In what ways was the program impactful for you?
8. Do you feel that the program changed you? How so?
9. Did your relationships with family or friends change?
10. Did your grades or motivation change?
11. Do you still benefit from or experience the ways that you were changed?
12. How did you feel upon returning home from the program?
13. What are some of your favorite memories from the program? Why?

These questions were crafted with the intent to gather the perspectives from the

wide variety of participants in the group each coming from diverse backgrounds and life

experiences. While the program was nearly two and half years ago at the time of the

interviews, I expected that many of the participants would remember in detail the

experiences, and more importantly, the impact of these experiences on them emotionally

and psychologically. Responses analyzed and presented in the next chapter reveal the

great depth to which participants were impacted by their experience on Outward Bound,

their fondness towards the program despite some volatility in the activities and culture,

and their keen awareness of the role of the instructors in shaping the culture.

Chapter 6: Results and Discussion

Introduction

Over the course of six weeks, I was able to get in touch with and conduct

interviews with all instructors and all but one participant from the HIOBS 2015 Service

and Leadership semester program. While this HIOBS course technically had eight

participants to begin with, myself included, I chose not to explicitly include my own

experience and perspective for the purpose of this paper. Therefore, these results are

based on the four instructors and six participants I interviewed. While I have chosen to

exclude my own perspective from the course, I am employing my intimate knowledge of

the program and group in order to synthesize these findings. Reasonably, this proceeding

section is divided into two main categories, the perspectives of the instructors and the

perspectives of the participants. These following sections are a synthesis of the results

ascertained from the phone interviews.

Instructor Perspectives on Instructor Roles

During the first part of course, the instructors played a crucial role in setting the

norms and expectations, teaching the technical skills, and helping the interpersonal

dynamics form and flow cohesively. To do so, the instructors built rapport with each

student and then were able to pair them together based on these similarities when needed.

Building rapport with each participant also helped to establish a sense of safety and

comfort which can help students transition to life on course, especially at the beginning.

A common practice by the instructors was to act and lead by example. Not only

are they participating in all of the same activities and challenges as the participants, but

just as Kimball and Bacon (1993) noted, the way that the instructors go through and

positively model how to handle the challenges not only builds trust and rapport with the group, but it elevates them up as a positive exemplar (p. 32). This example they set when doing so can be an important role they play to establish standards and norms for the group. Especially at the beginning of the course, the attitudes and behaviors displayed by instructors can have a tremendous impact on the group as it is actively forming.

By the second part of course when the group switched instructors, the new instructors came in and assessed where the group was and what the group needed before deciding what leadership style to employ. The second set of instructors very intentionally came in to balance the effect that the previous instructors had on the group. When the first new instructor came in and was traded out for the male instructor, the group was not getting along particularly well and it lacked a sense unity. The instructors identified that the group needed assistance to strengthen interpersonal connections and focused intentional help on developing authentic cohesiveness.

To do so, the first new instructor came in wanting to "shake things up" and see what could change. They wanted to "ask hard questions and impel change from within." By the time the final new instructor came, the group was already working together more successfully. It is important to note that during this time as the group transitioned from ineffective and disorganized to more cohesive and successful, one member of the group went home. Therefore, as much of an effect as the instructors had on smoothing over the dynamic of the group, the loss of a member played an important role as well.

Moreover, the final two instructors' preexisting friendship created a more playful and relaxed tone for the group which contrasted the tenseness of the dynamic during the first part of course. The final two instructors intentionally leaned more towards the role of

friends to the group rather than authority figures. While this is partly because of the course progression into phases where instructors intentionally take a step back and the students' leadership comes to the forefront, they also recognized that the group needed more friends, more listening, more encouragement and more support. They still acted as authority figures when appropriate by challenging the group, asking difficult questions, setting high expectations, teaching, and caring for everyone's safety. Decker and Rotondo's (1999) understanding of the role that leaders and supervisors can play by using humor in the workplace is particularly pertinent for these last two instructors. As mentioned by the participants in a later section, their playfulness and humor were well received, the group generally performed well, felt at ease in their company and were encouraged to foster a more playful and supportive culture amongst themselves.

When asked to elaborate on the role of an instructor as it pertains to the line between "friend" and "authority figure," the instructors say it is a tough one to walk at times. On the one hand, the authority part is naturally built in. Instructors are the experts, they are teaching skills and receive respect from the group. But when they cross into the friend zone it can be delicate space to be in. Instructors must balance relatability and openness with protecting themselves and caution as to how much they share about themselves. When instructors display vulnerability and authenticity to their students, it can really help students to be vulnerable and connect. As Russell (2000) mentioned, when participants view their instructors as friends, it can greatly help them to open up more authentically and create a culture of sharing. At the same time, there is a very thin line which can turn vulnerability on the part of the instructors into a loss of respect or even a loss of their perceived authority. On this particular course, however, the

instructors, particularly the final two, balanced themselves appropriately on this line and were well received by the participants for doing so. Conversely, the first two instructors who were present during the initial phase of the course were taking on a much larger authority role and less of a friend role. While this impacted the participants in ways which will be elaborated further, it was indisputably an intentional and appropriate choice given the state of group development at that time.

Goals of Instructors

The goals of the instructors are fundamentally to assist and support participants to achieve, learn, and grow. I have categorized their common goals into five specific categories: challenge and accomplishment, transference, autonomous final, interpersonal growth, and service.

First, the instructors touched on the role of challenge and accomplishment on the Outward Bound course. Specifically, one instructor referred to the broad goal they had for participants as "discovery through challenge." Similarly, others referred to this objective as fostering a space and activities where participants can accomplish things that they did not know they could do. To succeed in these accomplishments, participants must work hard and work together. Therefore, the challenges are more than their physical appearances, they are also reliant on the interpersonal challenges of demanding teamwork. This parallels an observation made by Walsh and Golins (1976) that the activities on Outward Bound demand each participant contribute the fullest effort of their physical, mental, and emotional resources.

Second, several of the instructors specifically talked about transference as a concrete objective they have for their participants. One instructor views the intensity of

these wilderness trips as valuable experiences in and of themselves but helping

participants to take what is learned on Outward Bound and know how to apply it to

situations all throughout life is a real intentional task that all instructors take on. To do so,

they begin by making transference present within the course. If a participant can transfer

what they learned from one activity, like sailing for example, and apply those skills to

another activity, like backpacking, the likelihood that the skill will remain with them after

the program is significantly increased. This observation is highly significant for its

potential effects on transference and because it was neglected from the pertinent

literature. Perhaps one reason longer duration courses are thought to be more effective or

could have longer-lasting outcomes is due to the myriad of activities which can be

covered in a course providing participants with ample opportunities to transfer skills over

and over.

     To ensure the skills persist after course, instructors will touch upon these skills

during their exit interviews with each participant. Likewise, another instructor talked

about wanting to help participants achieve life skills, build courage, and feel like they

have the ability to accomplish and follow through with anything after the course. Another

instructor wanted participants to leave with memories like: "When I was at Outward

Bound I was part of a team that worked effectively to accomplish a physical task." From

there, this instructor hopes that the participants will then be able to identify what was

effective, what worked well, and know how to apply it to future teams. While instructors

clearly articulated the importance of transference, to my surprise, none of them explicitly

mentioned their intention to facilitate long-term impacts for the participants.

The final two instructors focused on the goal of helping participants prepare to have a successful and autonomous final expedition as a highly important objective. To do so, they saw it their role to prepare students with the technical skills and emotional readiness for success.

While the instructors talked about goals like challenge and accomplishment as broad and important, they also referred to interpersonal growth and development as a more specific and equally important goal. Meaning, instructors wanted to ensure that participants had the space and tools to create meaningful bonds with one another. One instructor articulated this goal as "getting students to take care of each other" because in doing so this teaches compassion, self-reliance, and service.

Finally, service was an intentional goal of the instructors for the course as it would be on any Outward Bound program. However, because this particular program was a "Service and Leadership" program, they gave it additional attention. The final two instructors were the ones facilitating a majority of the service projects therefore it makes sense that they focused on this goal more than the initial instructors. They wanted participants to act with kindness and act in service to our group members and others. They also wanted the group to concretely succeed in completing a culminating final service project, which the group did, in fact, accomplish.

How Instructors Intentionally Shaped Group Culture

When asked about the specific ways that instructors shaped the culture of the group, I was surprised to find out the initial factor shaping the group is actually out of their control. In fact, one instructor elaborated that the application and selection process to even be able to attend an Outward Bound semester program is where the culture

creation really begins. When the directors receive applications for programs, they have some degree of control to create a dynamic in their selection. For instance, from the applications Outward Bound can infer whether a student is a potential leader, follower, supporter or even possible troublemaker. While much of the group selection happens naturally, there is still technically some degree of control over the group culture before participants even arrive.

Similarly, the pairings of co-instructors are largely out of their control, but it can have an impact on the culture and dynamic of the group. For example, the first two instructors balanced one another out in that one was much more focused on the interpersonal relationships and emotions of the participants while the other put more energy into teaching the technical skills of sailing and navigation. Whereas the last two instructors had a closer friendship of their own which impacted the group by creating a general feeling of ease and fun.

One specific strategy mentioned by some instructors, particularly those from the initial phase of course where instructors play a more hands-on role, is the intentional subgrouping of participants for tasks like cooking or cleaning. By selecting two to three specific students they want to work on a task together, instructors can control some interpersonal dynamics. For example, one instructor explained that this strategy can be used to put someone who is struggling with someone who is a good listener. It can be used to put a quiet person with another quiet person, because often time the louder participants will take up space from the quiet people rather than balancing the dynamic. It can be used to separate people who are engaging in cliquey or exclusive relationships. The nesting and subgroup understanding laid out by Erez and Gati (2004) is especially

relevant here. Erez and Gati note that the smallest level which nests within all the larger levels is the level of the individual. Just as subgroups of people have different values, behaviors and beliefs and can either work cohesively or create tension, so can individuals in the same way. Therefore, by intentionally pairing or subgrouping individuals together, instructors can facilitate more harmonious relationships on these smaller interpersonal levels and hope that the positive culture shifts ripple and rise throughout the culture to the entire group.

Another way instructors can assist the interpersonal dynamics of the group is to create more solo time and to more consistently have one on one check ins with each participant. Since the structure of the course is 24/7 time with the group, any time of solo reflection is important and allows participants to have the space to assess their current situation. Instructors use these tools to go around to each participant and check in on how they are doing, help them set goals about what they want to change about the culture of the group, and help them to identify ways that they can step into different roles for the group. Warrick (2017) asserted that in order for leaders to manage culture, they must first understand it. By using one on one check ins and observing the culture overall, the instructors were able to not only get an understanding of the overall group culture, but also the subcultures as well. In order to ascertain inside information on the subgroups and their cultures, the rapport built between instructors and participants is key during these one on one check ins. Ultimately, the more thoroughly instructors understand the nuances of the group culture, the more strategically they can manage and shift it as needed.

As touched on previously, how the instructors lead by example can be a way that they intentionally affect the group culture. Some instructors mentioned treating everyone

with respect and not using profanity. Likewise, their leadership by example and rapport building through one on one relationships with participants helped them to create a positive welcoming space. One instructor talked about a way that they created a positive space and energy in the group by creating opportunities for lots of success early on to gain excitement and establish a norm of accomplishments. Additionally, by creating opportunities for the group to succeed instructors are also able to gradually make activities more and more challenging, just as Walsh and Golins (1976) touched upon. By using an incremental progression of challenge instructors can help the group to not only become increasingly competent at teamwork and concrete skills, but it also helps to build a momentum of accomplishment which can boost spirit and foster enthusiasm.

Lastly, the instructors talked about the use of lessons and games as tools for them to have a direct and specific impact on the culture of the group. For instance, at the beginning of course the instructors facilitated the "cocktail party game" in which everyone has a card on their back with a different identity. Based on how they are treated by others they begin to guess what their identity is. This activity was intentionally debriefed and transitioned into a lesson on inclusion and diversity. Similarly, when the group was transitioning to new instructors, had lost a participant, and generally was not getting along very well, the instructors took that opportunity to teach a lesson on the phases of group development. They used Bruce Tuckman's 1965 forming-storming-norming-performing model to teach the group how the development process works. This enabled the group to identify that they were in the "storming" phase and to come up with strategies to help them progress to the latter phases.

Instructor Reflection on the Culture of the Group

        Upon reflecting on the culture of the group, the instructors brought up a wide range of aspects of the culture, some of which were productive and others of which were not as helpful for a positive culture. One of the obvious dynamics pointed out by several instructors was the role of exclusivity in such a small group. From the very start there were two participants in particular who formed such a close friendship that it impacted the social dynamics of the group around it, thus supporting the nesting concept used by Erez and Gati (2004). While at times it was better and more inclusive, and other times it was worse, other cliquey relationship dynamics emerged and dissipated casually over the course of the program as well. Additionally, one instructor pointed out a practice of outright exclusivity towards one participant in particular at times. Whether intentional or a product of carelessness by the group, the impact was the group became unbalanced and overall less cohesive at times of heightened exclusivity.

        These observations by instructors directly contrast what Walsh and Golins (1976) noted about the optimal group size falling between 7-15 people so as to avoid cliques and yet have enough diversity of personality. Despite the fact that both participants and instructors noted a wide diversity of personalities, they also both acknowledged the presence of cliquey behavior. This suggests either that Walsh and Golins' "ten-group" framework is insufficient or that the emergence of cliques is somewhat unavoidable, especially with youth and young adults. My research and experience support the latter conclusion. Regardless of the optimal group size, if the circumstances arise, certain people will be inclined to form cliques or exclusive friendships which can serve as systems of support and affirmation for them.

One of the other damaging patterns in the group culture, especially towards the middle of the program, was that several students actively did not want to be there. This was much like what Walsh and Golins (1976) noted about how a participant's expectations are highly influential over their thoughts, feelings, behaviors and outcomes. More than the impact that a single participant not wanting to be there had on their own behavior and motivation, what was found was that it actually spread to others who were questioning their motivations as well. During the period when the participant who did eventually leave the course was making those arrangements, two or three others also wanted to go home. The impact of these students on the others is that the remaining participants who did want to be there and who decided to come to the program voluntarily in the first place felt unvalued, unstable in the future of the program, and as a whole the motivation and cohesion plummeted.

Similarly, one of the instructors referred to the concept of "personal best versus group best" as an important influence on the culture of the group. This instructor elaborated that certain individuals had lower standards than others which skewed the entire group experience. While some participants came on the program with high expectations, motivation, and ability, those who had different expectations or were sent on this program against their own volition lowered the bar for everyone. Outward Bound's foundational pillar of excellence was compromised as some participants were unable to achieve at their highest potential. Erez and Gati (2004) touched upon this type of dynamic within an organization by suggesting that subgroups will have different and sometimes contrasting values. With both subgroups nested in the same overarching group culture, the friction between the groups changed the culture as a whole. The interplay

between these subgroups likely fostered tension, resentment, and ultimately the values of only one of these subgroups set the tone for the group and the bar for its achievements. While one subgroup of participants held a high standard for excellence and motivation, another subgroup of participants with lower standards who valued excellence to a smaller degree became the prevalent culture.

Likewise, another instructor referred to a similar issue especially in reference to the disrespect of time goals and commitments on the part of some participants. The work of Chuang et al. (2004) on task-related conflict is highly relevant here. The group exhibited incompatible priorities, discrepancies in motivation and disagreements over time goals. These incongruities between subgroups created task-related conflict for the group which created division and hurt the culture, rather than unifying the group over better solutions. While Chuang et al. addressed disagreement in the academic conversation on task-related conflict, my findings support the notion that task-related conflict has an overall negative impact on the group culture and its outcomes.

The final two instructors noticed that particularly towards the end of course there was an uneven balance of group members expressing concerns. While some participants expressed concerns in a productive way during the nightly "fireside chats," others could not or would not speak about their concerns productively. To address this, instructors directed lessons on communication and encouragement, and despite these efforts a tension in the group persisted because not everyone was vocalizing and addressing their concerns productively.

Despite these aspects of the group which were not conducive to a healthy supportive culture, there were several other things which contributed to the group culture

in much more positive ways. For instance, as the course progressed and the participants became increasingly familiar with each other's strengths, they were able to play off them. These behaviors exemplify the system of reciprocity and interdependence as mentioned by Kimball and Bacon (1993) and Walsh and Golins (1976). One example recalled by an instructor was when the group had to cross rivers during the backpacking trips, some students would scout and cross first and then come back over to help the other participants make it safely across the river. Generally, the instructors felt like the group had a culture of looking out for one another and helping whenever possible.

Similar to the notion of reciprocity, there was an encouraging dynamic in the group where some participants were positive leaders and helped empower and support others to step up with more confidence as well. Some participants who came in with genuine passion similarly helped to model for the rest of the group high spirits and enjoyment. Despite this, one instructor noted that at times with the group being so small it sometimes lacked a leader.

Many of the instructors looked back on the culture of the group as one in which personal evolution was supported and very present. Everyone came in to the program from such different backgrounds and experiences, but many if not all of the participants were there because of some instability or change in their lives back home. When coming on the program, most participants approached it with a willingness to improve, an eagerness to learn, and open-mindedness to grow. While none of the instructors were able to see the group from start to finish in its entirety, it was evident to the instructors that people were changing and evolving throughout the course.

The last aspect of the culture explicitly mentioned by the instructors was the role of the intense physical challenges in bringing the group together. For example, when the winds were erratic or too complicated for the group to sail through, they would pick up oars and begin to row in unison four or six people at a time. During these long hours of rowing, the group would sing or grunt in harmony and support one another through the challenging task.

Instructors Assessing and Measuring Success of Group Culture

When answering questions about the success of the group culture, all of the instructors equated successful achievements in the group's physical tasks with a successful group culture. While the first two instructors did not get to see the course end, one felt that the group and the culture was successful because the team circumnavigated Mount Desert Island successfully. The other instructor cannot remember specifically, but because they do recall days of easy sailing, being silly, and trusting the group, they also decided it was a success. The final two instructors unambiguously assess the course as success and link the final expedition, the run at the end, the final service project, and an overall sense of accomplishment to a successful group culture. In this way, all instructors equated the clear achievement of a goal with success. Some instructors noted that even if the group did not achieve its goal at times, which happened to the group one day when it thought a false summit was the top of the mountain, what matters more is how they got there and what happened along the way. One instructor stated that the general feeling of

group accomplishment, not just mandated by the instructors, is one way to assess the success of the accomplishment.

One instructor mentioned that growth is an appropriate metric to measure the success of a culture. Given the individual and interpersonal growth as noticed by instructors and mentioned by participants as well, which will be elaborated on further, the group grew and matured together in a number of ways. Some of these ways as stated by the instructors include cohesiveness, trust, leadership, communication, compassion and empathy.

The final phase of course is a time when instructors can step back into a less active role and see how the group performs on their own. All of the instructors mentioned the final phase or final expedition as a way to assess the success of the group. One way they do so is by measuring how much the instructors need to interject. While the final expeditions for sailing and backpacking were rocky at times, the instructors remained mostly on the sidelines. Speaking generally about measuring success, one of the instructors stated:

> It's not a success if people are disagreeing, refusing to do stuff, it leads to late nights, decisions are not being made – this might be categorized as a failure, but it's still better for the students to be creating their own culture and deal with the consequences of whatever they have created. Whether that's positive or a cautionary tale. It can be such a learning experience.

This comment touches upon the value of not succeeding in a conventional way because of how important the learning can be in response. Therefore, the learning in and of itself too is a success.

Finally, the instructors mentioned the final day and departure of the program as a time to measure the success of the course and culture as well. During the pin ceremony

everyone is given the opportunity to share, receive praise, and make the decision about whether or not they feel they deserve to take a pin. When everyone shares genuine praise and every participant takes a pin, as the members of our group did, this a way to concretely see and feel the success. On the last day instructors conduct exit interviews with each participant to discuss how they feel about their time on course, what they learned, how they feel about heading back home, and anything else they need to debrief. These interviews are a time when instructors can one on one check back in with each group member to assess individual and collective successes. Lastly, when everyone says their goodbyes and heads out, whether or not there is an overall feeling of cohesiveness and accomplishment speaks volumes to the culture of the group.

Instructors and the Use of Metaphor

When asked about their use of metaphor, one instructor clearly outlined two philosophies in the outdoor education world. The first, Mountains Speak for Themselves and the second, Speak for the Mountains. As noted in Chapter 3, Bacon's 1987 work "The Evolution of the Outward Bound Process" began with what he called the Mountains Speak for Themselves model which he articulated was a popular model in the 1960s and 70s especially. However, the Speak for the Mountains model as mentioned by this instructor bridges the gap between Bacon's Outward Bound Plus model and the Metaphoric Model. In the Speak for the Mountains model, the instructors can choose how to frame or debrief an experience as they see situationally appropriate. When asked to elaborate on when this instructor chooses between the two philosophies or models, they said that it is situational, but they prefer letting the mountains, or ocean, speak for

themselves and to debrief when needed. The instructor mentioned the humbling effect of nature and how it can teach many things on its own.

The instructors mention that organic debriefing happens on the side after big experiences many times, regardless of whether or not there is intentional debrief. However, when there is intentional debrief it often happens when there is a clear chance or need to speak for the experience. Instructors often do this through lessons, discussions, or both. For example, when there is a need for the group to make a hard decision, instructors can naturally progress into a lesson on decision-making during that time.

When asked about specific metaphors, the instructors provided two used for rock climbing and two used for sailing. For climbing, an instructor might ask participants about who their bilayer and back-up bilayers are at home so students think about their support systems in their lives. They can think about who it is that they are actively supporting and even how they support themselves. Another example is that when the rope is held tight you cannot fall, but you also cannot move. You need enough room to move and make mistakes. The instructor might ask students if there are people in their lives holding them so close that they cannot even climb or move or grow at all.

Moreover, for the sailing metaphors our group had a particularly intense experience which lent itself nicely to the Metaphoric Model. Sometimes you find yourself anchored in an unsafe place and you and your team have to get up in the middle of the night to sail, row, lose an oar, almost crash into a buoy, have members seasick and literally pooping their pants and somehow make it out alive. Sometimes you just have nights like that where everything is rough and stormy. But sometimes you find yourself cruising along and it is sunny and lovely. As one instructor put it after explaining this

metaphor, "Hard times and easy times come either way, and all you can do is navigate based on your compass and values and goals to go where you want to [go]."

The last concrete metaphor an instructor gave for sailing is about the act of waking up at 6:00 every morning every day and jumping into the ocean before doing anything else for the day. Doing this each morning is not something most people want to do but learning to overcome that challenge can be really helpful. Knowing that you have already accomplished one thing for the day first thing in the morning can be really helpful to promote a day of successes. This act of dipping into the ocean also has a strong connection to the history of Outward Bound as participants have been doing it since the very beginning. Ultimately, the act of dipping each morning has relevance to many other challenges in life but that fact that participants overcome it each and every day teaches perseverance and mental toughness that extends much further than just life on course.

Finally, the pin ceremony at the end of course is very symbolic and the instructors enjoy using it for its metaphoric value. The pin itself has a small compass on it and instructors will compare this compass to the compasses used throughout course to navigate on the seas and through the forests. They compare the compass to the values on course and how just as the compass can help participants physically navigate, these values can help a student navigate through life. As noted in Chapter 5, Trice and Beyer (1984) understand rituals and ceremonies like these to be expressions of a culture's values and beliefs. The way instructors explicitly encourage participants to rely on Outward Bound's foundational values for guidance in life through the use of the compass symbol is quite possibly the clearest and most literal manifestation of Trice and Beyer's definition.

Participant Reflection on the Culture of the Group

While many of the participants described the group culture as overall net positive, nearly all of them pointed out the generally unstable nature of the culture throughout the entire course, and several participants identified it as a progression of the culture from unhealthy to increasingly supportive. The first few weeks of the program were challenging in many ways for all participants. One of the greatest challenges during this time was learning to socially and emotionally navigate the group while living on a 30-foot boat with ten people. Having no alone time except to watch the anchor in the middle of the night for an hour each, and no personal space at all was hard for all participants. When the instructors began pulling back towards the end of the sailing section and the group had to combine its knowledge and strengths to sail, the group's relationships paralleled the difficulty of the course and got harder too at times. While the challenges brought the group closer, it often did so first by testing everyone to their limits.

One of the reasons the relationships were tense at the beginning was that the group had a wide range of personalities and lots of diversity in life experience and background. While this eventually contributed to the increase in open-mindedness and patience of many of the participants, it initially was the cause of many small disagreements from not seeing eye to eye or having opposing priorities.

Furthermore, some participants identified that while on the boat, the culture of the group was split by a stark gender divide and some harmful male driven behaviors and conversations. With three males and five females in the group, excluding the instructors, the males at times would try to take up just as much space as all fives females combined. Sometimes the males would swear, use sarcasm, talk about party culture, and recite rap

lyrics. While not all participants were bothered or even consciously affected by this behavior, some female participants were offended and felt uncomfortable or excluded at times in response. In addition to the male clique which formed during the beginning of the course, there were other small cliques present which further divided the group. As aforementioned, these cliquey subgroups support the notions brought forth by Erez and Gati (2004) about how subgroups nested within a larger organizational culture can have wide reaching impacts on culture on all levels. While the tension between the subgroups created a true sense of division on a larger group level, it effectively brought each subgroup closer as well. The boys enjoyed their shared collective identity and fed off the masculine energy. The girls felt less and less inclined to break through the male subculture and therefore formed closer bonds to one another. As Alvesson (2002) noted, a common culture leads to increased cohesion, communication and spirit. When the group was divided into these starkly contrasting subcultures, it was felt by all that the group lacked cohesion, productive communication and unified spirit.

While many participants acknowledged that the beginning of the course had a toxic and unsupportive culture for the most part, many noted that the group was open minded and each person was seeking to grow, thus providing room and acceptance for the culture to shift in a more positive direction.

Towards the end of the sailing section two factors influenced the group culture positively: meeting the other group of Outward Bound students on their own semester program and the solo. One participant noted that when our group met the other group, it felt like our family was meeting their family. This feeling reinforced an extra bond within the group as we had our own collective identity in contrast to the other group. Another

participant remarked that the other group was much more cohesive than we were, so they led an example for us to get our act together. Both participants who touched on this mentioned that our group culture began to get healthier after interacting with them. This provides a crucial insight that inter-organizational dynamics can have a positive effect on the culture.[1]

Equally, the solo experience gave each person much needed space and time to reflect and sit in solitude. One participant noted that by the time our group got back together we were grateful and excited to see one another and that because we knew what it was like to be apart, which for some people was lonely, we valued even more the importance of being together. Generally speaking, any time alone over the course of the program was appreciated and often had a positive effect on the culture. One participant mentioned that this is likely because being together 24/7 for over two months is so intense that the opportunity to reconnect with oneself is refreshing and from there participants can return to the group rejuvenated.

When the group transitioned from the sailing phase into the Wilderness First Responder training, every couple of days the instructors allowed the group to have "tech time" where everyone could use their phones. The absence and then reintroduced presence of technology was noted as problematic by several participants. One participant

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[1] Though inter-organizational dynamics is an interesting line of inquiry, it did not come up in my research. Gareth Morgan (1986), however, applies an organizational theory lens to look at organizations as organisms. This organism perspective emphasizes how interactions amongst organizations and with their environments can have significant impacts on organizational culture.

spoke about how during the sailing phase some participants were struggling to integrate more than others and really missed their phones or just their lives outside of course more generally. By not having their technology, one participant observed that some people became angry or annoyed which impacted the culture negatively. Similarly, when the group was reunited with their phones, another participant observed that it created distance within the group, reinforced homesickness, contributed to the desire that many had to go home and it generally distracted us from our common goals as a group.

Furthermore, throughout most of the course many participants noted a volatile and unstable nature of the culture. Some identified that it changed depending on what we were doing and how hard we were being challenged. To help stabilize the culture, when there were conflicts or minor issues arising the instructors helped to facilitate evening "fireside chats" to air out anything that needed to be said. Many participants noted that these talks were extremely helpful for the members of the group to talk openly about their feelings, to help everyone understand one another better, and to generally foster a more supportive group culture.

By the end of course, many participants described the group relationship as that of siblings or a family. Kimball and Bacon (1993) touched upon the importance of the sense of family that these programs foster because it has the potential to fulfill a critical developmental need. While none of the participant interviews gleaned direct insights into any developmental need being filled through this sense of family, the sheer fact that so many participants used familial language to refer to the group speaks volumes of the group culture. Many participants noted that there was constant bickering and ongoing banter between group members, but also lots of fun and lots of love for one another.

People came out of their shells entirely by the end and it left most participants with the perspective that the culture was overall good or "net positive." I am under the impression that the familial feeling is a large part of what enables the participants to leave with an overall positive impression of the group culture despite several clear unfavorable aspects. Generally speaking, no matter how much family members drive one another crazy, a sense of unconditional love underlines most familial relationships. Similarly, once participants use a familial lens to look at the group and frame it as family, the ability to view it as net positive increases.

Participant Reflections on the Impact of One Student Leaving

Many participants acknowledged the significant change in group culture as a response to one of the participants leaving. As one participant put it, "the boys will be boys" culture and gendered split was largely caused by *who* this participant was, not just by the sheer number of males. Therefore, when he left, the boys versus girls divide evaporated and the other males integrated smoothly into the rest of group and created a much more cohesive unit than before. Several participants noted that we all become much closer after the participant and energy they brought to the group had left. As touched on previously, the impact of having someone who decidedly does not want to be there has strong repercussions on the mood of everyone else, as was felt and articulated by many participants. Once again, the explanation offered by Erez and Gati (2004) about nested subgroups within a larger group culture is highly relevant here. The subgroup of the three male participants created its own culture with its own set of values and behaviors. One participant even noted that he remembered having trivial competitions with the other males in effort to prove their manliness or worth to one another. This competitive

masculine subculture created tension with the other subcultures and as a whole changed the dynamic of the group culture. As a result, when the toxicity of the masculine subculture disappeared, the tension between subgroups, and to an extent the gendered subgroups themselves, dissolved as well.

Moreover, the decision for the male participant to leave early into the program could have been caused by any number of things, but the role of organizational dynamics may have been influential here. As most participants identified, the culture at the beginning of the program was unhealthy and still largely unstable. Warrick (2017) noted earlier that unhealthy cultures can contribute to decreases in performance, motivation, teamwork and loyalty. Without a healthy unified culture at the beginning, this male participant may have felt less motivated to stay and contribute as a dedicated group member. Familiar with the specifics of his decision to leave as reported by him and observed by me, it is my impression that his choice to leave was in part motivated by a shift in his priorities which brought his home life to the forefront and his Outward Bound experience as a tangent. Though he reports being positively changed by his involvement in the program and articulates aspects of a cultural shift which took place within him, the inability of the culture and experience to take precedence at the time may indicate a limitation in the state of the group culture.

Participant Reflections on the Role of Instructors on Group Culture

Some participants had the feeling that the first two instructors were like parents because they helped build the group and create the culture. Likewise, some felt that the last two instructors were more like friends because of how relaxed they were and yet they still helped the group grow. However, one participant noted that they last two instructors

were actually like "mothers" because they had such a significant positive impact on the group emotionally. They would stay up late at night with us to really hear our problems and help us work towards solutions. One participant stated that the instructors "taught us a lot without babying us because they treated us with equal respect" and were straightforward with the group. As Warrick (2017) noted, the behaviors and modelling of leaders can have profound effects on the group as a whole. When the instructors treated the group with respect and not only encouraged open communication but fostered effective spaces for it, the culture began to shift and the change was felt by many participants.

While the metaphoric familial relationships to the instructors was not agreed upon by the group, generally the first set of instructors were identified as the creators of the culture. They helped to establish guidelines and boundaries of what the group can and cannot do. For instance, some participants remember being explicitly discouraged from telling what were referred to as "war stories" about drinking and partying. When these group members did secretly tell these types of stories, it was clear how it divided the culture by making some people uncomfortable and excluded. Similarly, sarcasm and swearing were strongly discouraged.

As mentioned previously, the intentional use of late night talks by the final two instructors in particular was considered extremely helpful by many participants as it created a platform for communication, helped keep everyone's mental states good, and made sure no one was bottling up emotions. Similarly, the way the final two instructors helped to establish a culture of fun and goofiness that had been lacking during the more serious or tense parts of the sailing section was appreciated. One participant interpreted

this by the fact that the risks possible on the boat were greater than the possible risks

backpacking. In effect, the group could sense the uptightness and tension of the

instructors at times while sailing. Whereas, during the backpacking and service portions,

there was more freedom and room for play. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the use of humor

by the instructors trickled down to the rest of the group, much like Erez and Gati's (2004)

nesting observation. When the instructor subgroup introduced humor, silliness, and an

easy-going demeanor, the group as a whole and all the subgroups within responded to

this shift. Much like Decker and Rotondo's (1999) findings that subordinates report

higher satisfaction, more humor in their own spheres, and generally favoring their

supervisors among other dimensions higher as well, the participants of this program

reported similar results. As many participants noted, the culture of the group shifted at the

end towards more positive, supportive, and fun. It is quite likely that the final two

instructors are largely responsible for moving the entire group culture in this positive

direction through their use of humor and play.

Participants noted that instructors can likewise have adverse effects on the culture.

Some instructors were less approachable than others, consequently making some students

feel uneasy seeking help or emotional support from them. While the intentions of the

instructors were always to help and support participants socially in the group, at times

one participant in particular who was being helped felt like the instructors would push

them away in order to encourage them to mix in with the group instead. To add insult to

injury, this left the participant feeling rejected by the instructors in addition to the

exclusion they felt by the group in the first place which inspired them to seek comfort in

the instructors to begin with. Interestingly, none of the pertinent literature echoes this

type exclusionary outcome on the part of leaders attempting to encourage positive socialization between participants and the group. This type of situation may be an outlier, but it is possible that it happens more frequently than conceivable and may require further inquiry.

Moreover, several participants noted that the first pair of instructors treated the group like children at times, when they would have preferred to be treated more like young adults. Some of the male participants especially felt that the playful nature of some of the instructors was "excessively childish." For young adult participants stepping into more mature roles and identities, this energy was off-putting and made the instructors and their peers who engaged in this childishness less relatable or sometimes annoying. However, even those who were off-put by the childishness and playfulness acknowledged that it did create a positive and upbeat culture that sometimes took the edge off when things got tense.

Additionally, when instructors addressed the participants who were involved in cliquey friendships, some of the participants felt talked down to and like they were being "babied." They felt it could have been handled differently and preferred the straightforward approach of the final two instructors. Interestingly, one of the instructors from the first part of course who addressed the participants in this cliquey relationship identified their exclusionary behavior as inherently childish and noted that their exclusive behaviors encouraged those in the clique to play off on the side and not step into leadership roles.

Also, when instructors are dealing with big emotional issues or relationship cliques or drama within the group, it can be draining and distracting for the instructors.

During the time when instructors are dealing with such issues, the group is neglected and creates its own culture, which at times can lead to upsurges in the use of sarcasm or the telling of "war stories" or other negative patterns. However, it can also be an opportunity for the group to work collectively and come together in a cohesive unit.

Lastly, several participants mentioned feeling unhappy about the fact that the group had to switch instructors and even referred to the process as "harsh." Some adjusted to the transition better than others. Overall, the transition gave participants an extra clean slate opportunity to develop new relationships with the instructors and leave behind what was no longer serving them from the first part of course.

Participant Self-Reflection on Outcomes of the Course

When asked "Do you feel that the program changed you?" all of the six participant respondents said yes and that it had changed them for the better. While elaborating, the participants touched on seventeen main outcomes. While many participants may have experienced all or most of these outcomes to some degree, they are only counted in Table 3 below if they *explicitly* stated it on their own during the interview. Therefore, these results may be partially incomplete but do begin to touch on the significance and impact of some key takeaways.

Table 3

Outcome Explicitly Stated by Participants	Number of Participants
Appreciation for Nature and the Outdoors	4
Increased Open-Mindedness	4
Changed Motivation and Performance	4
Better Relationship with Family	4
Independence	3
Confidence	3
Grateful and Humbled	3
Changed Relationships with Friends	2
Mental Toughness	2

Leadership	2
Patience	2
Self-Knowledge and Awareness	2
Good for Mental State and Mental Health	2
Improved Ability to Support Others	2
Interpersonal Learning	1
Compassion	1
Value of Sitting with Discomfort	1

One of the most elaborated on outcomes was the role of Outward Bound on increasing open-mindedness and patience. Many of the participants acknowledged the diversity in life experiences and personalities of the members of the group. Spending constant time together and working towards common objectives helped many participants learn about the lives of the others who are different from them. One participant noted that Outward Bound helped to foster the ability to "gain a fondness for people who are different from me and people who held different beliefs and priorities than I do," which was particularly useful for participants heading off to college.

Additionally, a majority of participants noted that the course had an effect on changing their motivation or performance. Some participants stated that their motivation improved for with the new perspective that if they can row a sailboat in the dark on a stormy sea for two straight hours, that nothing they do at work is going to be more challenging than that. It helps some participants to increase performance and keep adversity in perspective. A similar effect empowered several students to improve their grades, some dramatically. Others maintained consistently high grades. For one participant whose grades improved, they attributed it to a fear of being sent on a program like Outward Bound against their will again. Therefore, their improvement in grades was not because of the skills obtained on course necessarily, but rather a fear of having to do a

program like Outward Bound for a second time. While the course increased motivation for some, it had an adverse effect on others. Some participants felt less motivated in the traditional academic sense when they returned home because they saw so much value in the Outward Bound experience and unconventional learning, classroom learning evoked apathetic feelings.

Many participants noted that their relationships with their families improved when they returned home from Outward Bound. For many this came in the form of increased gratitude and appreciation. For others the relationships changed because the participant returned home more independent and responsible than before. Some participants noted that their relationships with their parents changed because they needed less from them than before because they were able to do more for themselves on their own which reinforced a sense of self-reliance as well.

Upon returning home from the course, several participants noticed changes in their relationships with their friends. One participant in particular said that the relationships with instructors and participants on the course helped to challenge notions and question root causes of certain of the participant's behaviors. Upon returning home, the participant felt like they could no longer relate to some of their friends. Others mentioned that course gave them the skills to identify unhealthy relationships and to grow apart from toxic friendships. Likewise, it gave them the confidence to go out and make new friends and the optimism that if such a random pairing of people like our group could become friends, that they could learn to befriend anyone in life. Lastly, while only one participant touched on the value of sitting with discomfort, they articulated their reasoning beautifully: "the entire course was not a joy. It was painful and frustrating and

upsetting, but I learned so much and did have so much fun that it taught me about being able to appreciate the complexities and patience of an experience."

Though four of the six interviewed participants noted an increased appreciation for nature and the outdoors, only a few mentioned actively participating in similar physical activities with any regularity. Some participants noted that immediately after the program they were encouraged to hike more and be fit, but after time has passed some motivation in this regard has decreased. This coincides with the findings by Hattie et al. (1997) that over time as most other category's improvements increased, physicality and adventure declined over time. Interestingly, one participant acknowledged that when they feel a lack of motivation, insecurity or laziness, they turn to hiking or backpacking as a means to challenge themselves and feel the same type of excitement and renewal that Outward Bound gave them. Likewise, another participant mentioned that when they feel overwhelmed or in need of some time for personal reflection, they rely on the skills they learned through Outward Bound to take a solo of their own, even if it just means sitting outside on their yoga mat for an hour.

By the reflections of these six participants, it appears evident that a large degree of what occurred on the course and interpersonally within the group culture had lasting effects on the lives of the group members.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The Study's Main Findings and Contributions

This paper complements prior research on organizational studies and wilderness experience programs in two important ways. First, few studies at all have examined the role of culture on organizations which are designed to dissolve. While most organizations are created to persist, evaluating the creation and impact of culture within those organizations is of a different nature entirely. My research finds that the culture within organizations that are built to dissolve, specifically Outward Bound groups, can create meaningful cultural shifts in its members which impact them in a variety of ways—even after they leave the culture itself. My findings indicate that after months of immersion in the culture of an Outward Bound semester program, participants report increases in interpersonal dimensions such as open-mindedness, patience and improved relationships, as well as in intrapersonal dimensions such as independence, confidence and motivation.

Second, no studies to date in the field of wilderness education and experiential programming focus specifically on the role of organizational culture and its impact on program groups. My findings in this area reflect the consensus of the academic community within the field of organizational studies that instructors play a key role as group leaders in shaping and managing culture. Likewise, both participants and instructors interviewed in my study acknowledged ways in which the culture was created and changed, how it was impactful on an individual level, and how influential it was to overall outcomes and successes for the group. The role of subgroups, conflict, and exclusion were contentious and contributed to instability and division in the culture. Conversely, shared values, familial themes, and compassion unified the culture so

strongly that all participants reflect back on the culture as net positive and their experience with Outward Bound as one of growth and positive transformation.

Outstanding Questions and Recommendations

One important note on the results of my study is that I was unable to contact one female participant. Despite reaching out numerous times on various platforms over the course of several months, she remained out of my contact while still maintaining an obvious presence on social media. Her unresponsiveness to me, and inability to keep in touch with other participants as they reported to me, could indicate any number of things. While the current conditions of her life may be largely independent from her Outward Bound experience, her reluctance or avoidance to keep in contact with individuals from the group may reflect a negative impact the culture had on her or evidence that a meaningful cultural shift did not take place for her. Despite my conjecture, the underlying meaning of her avoidance and its relation to the culture of the group remains inconclusive because of the wide variety of external factors which could be playing a role.

Furthermore, while my findings indicate the great extent to which instructors are significant in creating and managing group culture, it surfaced several questions as well. How well are instructors trained on group culture? When asked if Outward Bound formally teaches instructors on how to craft a culture, several instructors referred to a "student management" skills training course. Instructors reported receiving training on soft-skills such as how to create a cohesive group, group dynamics, interpersonal skills, and so on. Other instructors agree that they are given lots of tools, but that each instructor gets to choose their own methods. One instructor referred to Kurt Hahn's ideas and the foundational four pillars as a way to teach the values and expectations of the culture.

While these skills and trainings are likely adequate for instructors to understand their scope of influence over the cultural dynamics of the group, how informed are instructors on the relevant theories and pertinent research to the field of wilderness programs? One instructor referred specifically to the Mountains Speak for Themselves theory and the Speak for The Mountains theory, but generally it was not evident from my interviews that the instructors are fully informed on the latest discoveries in the academic conversation on wilderness experience programming. Going further, I recommend concrete trainings for instructors on understanding not only the nuances of group culture but their specific and highly integral role in creating and managing it. Likewise, engaging wilderness educators and instructors in meaningful dialogues on the relevant literature is an important step to bridge the gap between the theoretical academic community and its findings, and the experiential wilderness community.

Lastly, the relevance of familial themes when describing the culture raises some questions. What exactly, from an organizational perspective, makes a group feel like a "family" versus something else? Perhaps it is the existence of authority figures and subordinates, paralleling parents and children. Perhaps it is the isolation from other people with which to interact. Maybe it is the fact that participants cannot escape social interaction from those on the program. Possibly it is because of the risky nature of adventure programming which inspires the group to bond as family for comfort and support. It could be caused by the group knowing that it will dissipate at a certain point, much like children who grow up and leave their homes to start their own lives. In this way, the impermanence of the organizational structure may be a contributing factor to increasing a sense of family within the culture. Further research on the role of

impermanent organizational structures, organizational culture, and familial themes is needed to make further sense of these findings.

Final Thoughts

When groups first set out on expedition, instructors teach them about the meaning of the Outward Bound flag, which bears the Blue Peter nautical symbol. Visually, the Blue Peter is a large blue square with a smaller white one centered in the middle. Instructors would often liken the white square to the sailboat and visualize the surrounding blue as the wide open ocean. Symbolically, the flag represents what it means to be bound outward to adventure and the unknown. On the closing night of a program instructors often return to this symbol and reflect on what it means to be "outward bound." Returning to the metaphor of a sailboat heading out to sea, instructors prepare the group members to go outward bound once more—except this time back into the unknown of their own lives. Unlike when they set out to the unknown at the beginning of course, they are now bound outward into the world prepared with a new set of skills, increased self-knowledge, confidence from their achievements and a renewed spirit as changed by the culture of the group.

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