The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in a 3-day adventure-based professional development experience as a collegial cohort. The cohort in this study represented middle and elementary school teachers from within the same school district. Despite the current adventure-based professional development opportunities that exist for teachers, the research on adventure-based professional development shows a lack of understanding related to how colleagues experience such an opportunity. The study focuses on the expectations participants bring to these experiences, the perceptions and interpretations of the experience itself, and the perceived personal and professional impact of participating in such an experience. These understandings are pursued through a hermeneutic phenomenological process in an effort to illuminate the lived experiences of participants in these adventure settings. The findings from this study indicated a transformative effect that transcended the participants’ personal and professional lives. This capacity carries various implications for the conception for professional development experiences, as well as the way in which experience is theorized within a curriculum.
THE PATH LESS TRAVELED:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF
ADVENTURE-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A dissertation submitted to the
Kent State University College and Graduate School
of Education, Health, and Human Services
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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

It is an October morning in the Appalachian foothills of Western Pennsylvania. Fog hangs thickly in the cool, still, morning air. The ground is blanketed with a quilt of deep reds and radiant yellows freshly stitched by the newly fallen leaves from the trees that tower above. In the distance, far below, a river can be heard making its way south, gracefully, powerfully, methodically continuing its work of carving steep valleys until the winter freeze grants a reprieve for a few short months.

Within this world of ruggedness and solace, one would expect to hear the crunching of leaves and the frantic, haphazard scurrying of woodland animals—but deep in the distance something breaks this natural chorus.

“You know, I have never understood differentiation until now. I am so impressed with what you are doing with your students—I cannot wait for you to do a peer observation with me so that you can help me create the same type of learning environment! This is so exciting!”

“This sounds like a perfect topic for that learning community we talked about yesterday. What do you think? Anyone know of any books that might be good?”

And so it begins. Deep in the Pennsylvania wilderness, clad in mud covered hiking boots, raincoats, and winter hats, trudging through rain-soaked trails, teachers, but
not just any teachers, colleagues were blazing a trail to a new frontier in professional
development: participating in an adventure-based, experientially driven professional
development expedition. By trading in the PowerPoint® presentations and silver bullet
models of professional development they had come to know, these colleagues were
looking for an opportunity to reconceptualize professional development, an opportunity
to develop deep professional relationships, an opportunity to understand their connection
to the profession they had chosen years before. This was truly a challenge of mind, body,
and for some, soul—all this while carrying backpacks in excess of 25 pounds! The
transformative potential of this experience is staggering, and yet, according to a review of
the literature, little has been done to understand the impact of adventure and
experientially oriented professional development with teaching colleagues.

Fundamental to experiential learning is the underlying intention that individuals
will be changed and undergo personal and social development as a result of direct
emphasized that experiential learning is “predicated on the belief that change occurs
when people are placed outside of positions of comfort . . . and into states of dissonance”
(p. 4). Gass provided a frame for understanding the types of situations that are considered
to be experiential. The primary rationale for considering learning to be experiential is that
the learning experience must be participatory, not a spectator sport. There must be an
active involvement on the part of the learner. This involvement and the experience itself
must be predicated on personal motivation and responsibility—passive participation does
not count. Participants must feel a connection to the experience and be willing to invest in
it. This connection is driven by the development of experiences that are considered real
or meaningful by providing natural consequences for the experience. Participants need to
feel as though they are working within situations that have consequences, creating a
balance where success and failure are both achievable. Many times the difference
between understanding the successes and failures of an experience is dependant upon the
participants’ ability to reflect on the learning experience. These reflections can be
facilitated in a number of ways, but to be considered experiential, each participant must
take part in a reflective process. The ultimate goal of this reflective process, and the
experiential learning process as a whole, is to provide present and future relevance, “for
the learner and the society in which he/she is a member” (p. 4). The purpose of
experiential learning is not to develop silos of understanding, but to develop a web that
connects past, present, and future learning to real and relevant situations.

Experiential education is not new to educational thought. Written in 1762, Jean
Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile* suggested outdoor experiential methodologies.

Our first teachers are our hands and feet. To substitute books for all of these is not
to teach us to reason, but to teach us to use the reason of others; it is to teach us to
believe much and never to know anything. (Rousseau, 1762/1962, p. 90)

“The essential place of experience is exalted, and the value of learning through a process
of trial and error is recognized” (Adams & Sherrod, 1981, p. 24). This type of
understanding has its modern historical roots in the work of Kurt Hahn. In 1941 Hahn
developed the Outward Bound program for young British seamen whom he believed
lacked the fortitude, self-reliance, and perseverance that was identified in the older
sailors. Hahn’s program was developed to instill a spiritual shift by training “through the body, not of the body” (J. Miles & Priest, 1990).

In 1962 Kurt Hahn brought Outward Bound to North America with a focus on inter- and intrapersonal development through adventure, highlighting a subset of experiential education. This subset, known as adventure education, is defined as, “a type of education that utilizes specific risk-taking activities to foster personal growth” (Wurdinger, 1997) and is a key distinction within the field and this study.

In 1965, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) was founded which focused on wilderness education and outdoor leadership (Attarian, 2001). NOLS was quickly followed in 1971 by Project Adventure that was established to see if the insights touted by extended wilderness programs, such as Outward Bound, could be implemented into the public school curriculum (J. Miles & Priest, 1990). The final major institution developed as a part of the U.S. exploration into experiential education was the Wilderness Education Association in 1977. The WEA was founded with the intent to “develop standards for certification of wilderness leaders, who could in turn help others to wisely use, conserve, and enjoy the outdoors in a safe manner” (J. Miles & Priest, p. 90).

Since its introduction in the U.S. in 1965, this industry has shown steady growth over the past four decades, aided by the establishment of the Association of Experiential Education (currently 670 member organizations). This professional organization has provided a forum for research centered on understanding and predicting the effectiveness of experiential strategies of teaching and learning (Attarian, 2001).
Statement of the Problem

Thanks to organizations such as the Association for Experiential Education, the use of and research into experiential education has had wide and diverse applications. The overwhelming majority of experiential education research is situated within the context of therapy, personal and social development programs, and college orientation programming for youth and young adults. From these therapeutic models used with at-risk adolescents to the creation of a billion-dollar corporate team development industry, experiential education has made inroads into many instructional realms (Attarian, 2001). Despite this rapid growth in the use of and research on experiential and adventure methodologies, one avenue of inquiry remains conspicuously less traveled.

A bit farther down the trail, our professional development explorers reach a very difficult section of trail. In one mile the trail will drop nearly 1000 feet of elevation on uneven and rock-strewn paths. On any other day, this would be tiring to say the least, but in the damp, wet leaf covered conditions of the morning, treacherous would be a more appropriate description.

Very early into the descent, it is clear that the trail conditions and pre-existing physical limitations of one member of the group were creating a dangerous and potentially harmful situation. But what could be done? There was no way around this section of trail.

“Hey Grace, how about if we take your backpack and see if that helps. Not having that on your back may give you a little more confidence.”
“No. That’s O.K. I’m not here to burden anyone. I think that I can do it.”

Two falls and a scraped knee later, “Grace, I promise, you would not be burdening me at all. That is what I am here for. We are a team, and as a team we do whatever it takes to help each other succeed.”

“It is so amazing to know that I have people like you all to count on,” Grace said as she handed her backpack to her colleagues. Safely at the bottom of the descent Grace was rejoined with her backpack and a new sense of wonder for what it meant to work as colleagues. “Imagine what it would be like if we did this for each other back at school. Wow, that would be powerful,” she said.

To date, very little research or programmatic implementation exists that pairs experiential and adventure education, both as a source of and vehicle for professional development, with practicing teachers. Many of the nation’s top schools in experiential and adventure education offer courses and training designed specifically for educators. As of March 3, 2007, NOLS offered nine courses for educators ranging from 22 to 94 days, and Outward Bound offered four educator courses ranging 7 to 50 days in length. Current offerings are not only expensive ($1500 to $9000 per person), but typically the participants in these experiences are not colleagues. They are, for the most part, strangers: people who will have little or no contact with each other after the experience. Participants will return to collegial situations that lack the group mythology and dynamics created in extended adventure settings. Participants are faced with the task of implementing and sharing newly developed leadership capacities and professional insight into systems and
with colleagues that were disconnected from or unaware of the greater experience. This unfortunate, but inherent disconnection developed in current adventure programming for teachers effectively limits the broader organizational impact of the teacher’s professional development.

But why use experiential education, and in particular, adventure education as a form of professional development? What are its benefits? How do these benefits relate to classroom teaching colleagues? Are current models of experiential training for educators useful in today’s schools? Is there an alternative?

In a seminal work by Luckner and Nadler (1997), 12 aspects of experiential education were highlighted that were used to help people understand its effectiveness (Table 1). By paralleling these characteristics with the *Ten Principals of High Quality Professional Development* (Table 1), developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and authored by Peixotto and Fager (1998), a distinct and complimentary relationship emerges. Peixotto and Fager provided a substantive structure for developing meaningful growth opportunities, whereas Luckner and Nadler (1997) provided the conditions and inter- and intrapersonal capacities needed to ensure the success of these opportunities. To assume that school districts would be able to develop and implement the type of professional development called for by NWREL without also developing the skill-base and capacity enhanced through effective experiential learning, would be misguided. The very nature of NWREL’s professional development suggestions relies on the participating practitioners to be involved, invested, reflective, and collegial participants in the school environment. These organizational behaviors
Table 1

Characteristics of Experiential Education and Professional Development

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<tr>
<th>Experiential Education Characteristics</th>
<th>High Quality Professional Development</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Equality in group status and a leveling of hierarchies</td>
<td>• Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The ability for participants to develop relationships quickly</td>
<td>• Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An innate capacity to create disequilibrium</td>
<td>• Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use projective technique to see the participants true roles and abilities</td>
<td>• Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use of a decreased time cycles in project development and completion</td>
<td>• Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The participants’ involvement in meta learning and self-reflective behavior</td>
<td>• Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing chaos and crisis in a safe environment</td>
<td>• Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of a kinesthetic imprint of learning</td>
<td>• Requires substantial time and other resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of a common language and organizational mythology</td>
<td>• Is driven by a coherent long-term plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraging participants to take risks in a safe environment</td>
<td>• Is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highlighting the diversity of strengths possessed by the participants</td>
<td>(Peixotto &amp; Fager, 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use of a lighthearted and fun atmosphere to address complicated and emotional issues (Luckner &amp; Nadler, 1997)</td>
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are not tacit and can take a great deal of time to develop—time many education professionals may not have.

By utilizing experientially-based methodologies, professional developers can foster involved, invested, reflective, and collegial behaviors by capitalizing on developmental characteristics of experiential education (Table 1), such as decreased time cycle, development of common language and organizational mythology, and a leveling of hierarchies (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). It is through these processes that experientially-based professional development can be seen as a viable way to help create a foundation for life-long professional and institutional growth.

For the purposes of this study, experiential education, more specifically, adventure education, is discussed as being both a source of, and vehicle for professional development for practicing teachers. Many experientially and adventure-based programs have created inroads into the curriculum and instructional practices of contemporary education, and the power of experiential education has not been lost on the academic world who have recognized the role experiential education could play in education reform. Paul Ylvisaker (1988), former Dean of Harvard University Graduate School of Education, called on experiential educators to make public and tangible the benefits of infusing experiential strategies into schooling:

You are not audible . . . in the debate over reform. Legislatures have been full of it in this country and elsewhere. Is there somebody from your organization [Outward Bound] or your spirit that is talking about these missing dimensions in
contemporary education? That extra dimension badly needs talking about, writing about, in ways which are not possessive, which are sharing and giving. (p. 31)

Despite this current connection to our classrooms, there is a lack of research that seeks to understand how teacher colleagues use adventure-based professional development for their own growth and how these experiences are translated into teachers’ personal and professional lives. On the frontline, classroom educators are the critical link between the idealized reform method, and the individuals the reform is intended to help. The task of positioning and preparing teachers to carry out such roles can be greatly informed by educators’ changes in behavior and belief as a result of adventure-oriented professional development. Experiential and adventure-based professional development experiences have been shown to prepare teachers for life on the frontlines of educational change:

Those teachers who have completed an Outward Bound course tend to transfer the experiential curriculum into their classrooms and relate more sensitively and humanely to their students and colleagues. These teachers gain a greater level of confidence in themselves and are more willing to reveal their own strengths and weaknesses, while at the same time, grow stricter in their expectations for students achievement. They show a tendency to move from a dispenser of information to a facilitator of learning. (Sills, 1993, pp. 127-128).

Given this connection between creating positive professional growth and experiential learning methodologies, a natural reaction would be to advocate for the use of accepted experientially-based training; the type of training represented by Luckner and
Nadler’s (1997) characteristics. Organizations such as NWREL also propose an experiential option when considering professional development:

Staff retreats, a frequent practice among business professionals, offer educators many benefits. A regular, uninterrupted single or multiple-day session provides staff with unique opportunities to develop goals and action plans targeting their specific needs and context. Schools using this strategy report that one of the most significant benefits from regular staff retreats is the progress made in building a spirit of professional community among all staff (Little, 1989). If at all possible, the retreat should be held at a site other than the school building. (Peixotto & Fager, 1998)

When juxtaposed with the professional development expedition at the beginning of this chapter, NWREL’s suggestion of a retreat as an experiential methodology is qualitatively different when viewed from a perspective of inherent risk. This variance in perspective is at the heart of this study. How do people perceive and interpret adventure as a part of professional growth? Can professional growth occur in a world that is predicated by risk and uncertainty, as opposed to what would be traditionally considered experiential, such as a staff retreat?

Research Questions

The lack of research regarding collegial participation in adventure-based professional development underscores this study’s purpose to deeply understand the use of and teachers’ engagement with adventure programming as a form of professional development. A hermeneutic understanding focusing on the phenomenon of adventure-
based professional development is essential to facilitating this process of deep understanding. For these ends, a hermeneutic phenomenological study on a cohort of teacher colleagues from the same school district will provide the extended time needed to collect appropriate descriptive data needed to understand the experience of participating in experiential adventure-based professional development as a collegial unit.

Specifically, this study explores over time how the experiences of a collegial cohort who participated in a three-day, two-night backpacking experience were perceived and interpreted. In addition, there is a need to understand the nature of the participant’s expectations prior to attending such an experience and their perceived impact from participating. The research questions that directed this exploration are:

1. How do teacher colleagues perceive and interpret a three-day, two-night adventure-based professional development expedition?
2. What expectations do these teachers bring to adventure-based professional development?
3. Are there perceived personal and professional impacts from adventure-based professional development?

These three questions together represent significant steps forward in understanding and redefining the fields of adventure-based learning, professional development, and curriculum theorization, but it is the intersection and synthesis of these three questions that provides this study with its greatest significance.
The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers perceive and interpret experiences from a three-day, two-night, adventure-based professional development experience; to understand the expectations of collegial teams participating in such an experience; and to unearth any perceived personal and professional impacts associated with collegial participation in such an experience. Drawing guidance from the current literature in the fields of experiential education, professional development, and curriculum decision-making, this line of inquiry is sitting at the intersection of the experiential, professional development, and curriculum worlds—an intersection that has yet to be mapped. It is this study’s hope to illustrate how adventure-based methodologies, when used as a form of high quality professional development for the purpose of developing transformative capacity, can be seen through the lived experiences of its participants.

Participants in this study took part in a three-day professional development backpacking expedition in the Western Pennsylvania wilderness. During the expedition, participants kept an audio journal of their experiences that they used to develop an initial protocol (van Manen, 1990) of their experience. These protocols and the audio journal transcripts served as the catalysts for a series of ongoing interviews with the participants throughout a five-month period. These data sets provided insight into the nature and essence of the adventure-based professional development phenomenon for collegial groups, developing the significance of this study on three planes.
First, this study is significant in the domain of experiential education because of its emphasis on teaching colleague teams, as opposed to researching teams of professionals who have little to no contact after the experience. Second, this study is significant to the professional development world because of its emphasis on using adventure-based methodologies as a form of high-quality professional development. This shift reflects the synthesized nature of adventure-based experiences and underscores the viability of such experiences. Finally, this study is significant to the world of curriculum theorization because of the transformative decision-making capacity of such an experience. Teachers participating in such an experience are exposed to multiple perspectives and provided opportunities to make decisions based on current need, as opposed to overarching doctrine.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The sun has been down for a few hours and the coolness of the night has begun to set in. The rich amber glow of the waning fire flickers in a feeble attempt to illuminate the rough-hewn pine walls of the rustic, three-sided shelter. Inside the shelter, bathed in the orange hue, the members of the professional development expedition sit in a circle with their feet pointed to the center like spokes of a wagon wheel. Each member is cocooned in a down-filled mummy style sleeping bag seeking shelter from the evening’s cooling air.

“We look like worms, big worms,” Gordon commented. The others chuckled.

“You know, I began to realize something today,” Gordon continued. “I mean, I have always been someone who has prided myself on trying to find really innovative and engaging ways to meet the needs of my students. But today, as we hiked, I was struck listening to each of you talk about your classrooms and the opportunities you are providing for your students, the accountability pressures you are all feeling, and the types of support and professional development you all have participated in. I began to feel stuck, lost. I can actually remember hearing myself say in a department meeting, ‘Look, just tell me what to teach and when so we can all be on the same page. It will just be easier that way.’ Same page? Easier? Who cares about the same page? Who cares if it
is easier? What happened to doing what was right for our students as opposed to what was going to be easier for me?”

“You know Gordon, I have felt that way too,” Grace said softly. “As teachers, we are in the middle of it all—on the frontlines. Caught between an unrealistic educational ideal, prescriptive, de-skilled training to support that ideal, all while balancing the desire to have the flexibility and freedom to make fluid, meaningful decisions. I thought about that today too. It’s funny, I know that these thoughts have been swirling around in my head for a while, but at school and at home I never seem to have the time to stop and think about it, deal with it. Today, out here, in the dirt, sweaty and tired, with all of you, those thoughts were just natural. I had time to let them happen. I had time to envision what could be.”

“Huh, pretty darn deep for a worm,” Gordon said as he added another log to the fire.

The excerpt above depicts a conversation from a pilot study I developed as a foundation for the study that is the focus of this dissertation (Broda, 2005, p.4). The primary purpose of the pilot study was to understand why teachers chose to participate in a two-day, one-night outdoor experiential education program, as well as how teachers planned to transfer the experiences into their personal and professional lives. Participants in the professional development expedition came to the experience from very personal places—seeking to improve individually with no intention or expectation of developing the common good. As a result of the expedition experience, participants articulated a
variety of personal gains, but also expressed many benefits to the professional, collegial aspects of their lives. Emerging from these personal and professional gains, participants predicted ways to transfer their experiences into the development of a positive, supportive, and professional collegial community. This migration from personal interest to professional gains was in contrast to the original personal and individualized expectations with which the participants began. These complex understandings highlighted the importance of continued research on this type of professional development, as well as the obligation to fully understand the lived experience of the participants. How did these self-to-group migrations happen throughout the expedition? Moreover, what was even more exciting than the evolution of a line of inquiry was how the participants’ experiences help shape the theoretical framework that were used in this study to structure the use of experiential and adventure-based professional development.

Throughout the pilot experience, participants’ dialogic explorations and internal conversations revolved within three interconnected spheres: (a) the need for a general understanding of experiential and adventure education—why does this learning work, (b) looking for avenues of professional development that allowed for and saw this new experiential and adventure-based professional development as valid and viable, and (c) negotiating the current climate of curriculum decision making and reconciling experiential and adventure education within that reality. Though not expressed in the same language above, the participants believed they were a part of something unique, and were interested in its future implications. It was through these three lenses that the participants sought to define their experiences, thus, it is through these topics and their
intersections that I hope to establish the foundation for understanding the use of
adventure-based professional development with teacher colleagues.

Experiential and Adventure Education

Conceptualizing the worlds of experiential and adventure education is governed
by one’s ability to navigate the vast jungle of semantic, philosophical, and process-
orientated intersections that shape the disciplines. The integrated nature of these fields
can make any demarcation difficult. So, to better visualize the conceptual frameworks
and connections between experiential and adventure education, we turn to Figure 1, *The
Outdoor Education Umbrella* (Bisson, 1996).

![The Outdoor Education Umbrella](image)

*Figure 1.* The Outdoor Education Umbrella gives a visual dimension of how the
overarching field of experiential education is organized and its subsets are connected.

Designed in 1996, this metaphorical model sheds light on the vastness and
interrelatedness of experiential education. This model was originally created to depict the
location of outdoor education (i.e., the use of the natural world as an instructional tool) in the experiential education world. The umbrella consists of the shaft, defined as outdoor education, connected to eight ribs branching out. Each rib represents various related disciplines such as environmental education and adventure education. To underscore the broadness of its scope, experiential education is conceived as the canopy that covers and connects all of the ribs. Whereas Bisson (1996) showed how outdoor education is a core understanding that provides background, insight, and guidance into a wide variety of related disciplines, the use of experiential education as the umbrella’s canopy is of most importance to this study and is a viable representation of how experiential elements are used throughout all outdoor educative experiences.

It is also through this metaphorical model that one can visualize three broad centers of practice that are at the heart of this movement (Neill, 2004d): (a) experience-based models that use a Deweyian inspired approach emphasizing the need to provide well-designed, structured and facilitated experiences that meet a predetermined end; (b) nature-based models that emphasize the need to have humans engage with the natural world in an effort to realize one’s place in the natural world, as well as the development of ecological knowledge; and (c) practice-based/multi-dimensional models that seek to provide practical application of effects by focusing on the combination of critical elements: role of the individual, role of the activities and sequence, role of environment, and role of the group.

As a point of contention, however, is Bisson’s (1996) use of outdoor education as a unifying link from which all experiential sub-fields sprout. This perspective does not
recognize the variety of experiential opportunities that exist in non-outdoor settings. Experiential education is not merely limited to the outdoors; it is a theoretical position on teaching and learning that can exist in complex and varied settings.

Coming out from under the umbrella gives greater insight into the wide array of current methodologies being used that are rooted in experiential education. Branches such as recreation, adventure therapy, environmental education, somatic education, camping education, awareness education, humanistic education, play education, and recreation education seem to carry similar semantic meaning, but to practitioners, they are worlds apart (Neill, 2005). It is also this diversity that begs the question whether the application of experiential and adventure-based professional development with teachers is deserving of its own categorization? Of the methodologies presented above, none are specifically devoted to the development of practicing teachers, or even at the least, professional development.

For this study, it is critical to note adventure education’s location within the experiential world. Bisson’s (1996) model depicts adventure education’s ability to utilize experiential methodologies in an outdoor setting, but does not articulate what separates adventure education from the other experiential facets. First and foremost is adventure education’s focus on both the change and development of interpersonal (group dynamics) and intrapersonal (personal dynamics) relationships. This is accomplished through a “direct and purposeful exposure to: challenge, high adventure, and new growth experiences” (Priest, 1990, p. 114). Also embedded in this purpose is an enhancement of the participant’s self-concept and the capacity to improve social interactions (Priest).
Beyond this purpose, for an experiential methodology to be considered adventure it must first be predicated on terms of leisure as defined by the following two criteria: (a) it must be entered into voluntarily and of free choice, and (b) it must be intrinsically motivating in and of its own merit (Priest). For this experience to qualify as one of adventure, a third criterion must be met: the outcome of the experience must be uncertain (Priest). For this study, these adventure criterions are being utilized under the larger canopy of experiential learning.

When conceived and implemented properly, all of the experiential methodologies discussed above embrace core purposes, objectives, and subsequent issues that characterize high quality experientially-based learning (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). The 12 characteristics presented in Table 1 and described below have striking connections to the world of high quality professional development, which is discussed later in this chapter.

1. Disequilibrium—Aligned with Piagetian (1950) learning theory, experiential education enables participants to be introduced into a setting that they may find unfamiliar, thus creating a state of disequilibrium. If facilitated appropriately, this state of dissonance can promote significant learning opportunities for the participant, as well as develop the willingness and capacity to encounter instances of change more readily. For some, this disequilibrium can be unsettling and negative, so well conceived experiences and intentions are necessary (Dewey, 1938).

2. Decreased time cycle—If developed accordingly, experiential situations can be created whereby participants can go through the entire creative process, from vision to implementation, in rapid succession. In a real-world setting, this creative process could
take a significant amount of time, possibly not allowing all participants not be involved in each step of the process. In an effective experiential setting, this process time is reduced, thereby allowing all to participate and providing a debriefing time for participants to discuss the process itself. This decreased time cycle does have the potential for creating unrealistic stress on participants if not developed and debriefed properly. Though situated within a learning context, the pressure of having to perform tasks quickly with the potential for failure can be stressful. These issues can be overcome through the use of clear and explicit expectations and time management (Propst & Koesler, 1998).

3. Develop relationships quickly—Through experiential learning opportunities, participants are provided with environments to work with other people with whom they may not come in contact on a daily basis. In the magnified world of experiential education, relationships can develop to a point that could have taken years to create under normal daily circumstances. Though the majority of these relationships develop positively, if not monitored, there does exist the potential for establishing negative relationships as well.

4. Diversity of strengths—Participants learning experientially will find themselves in a variety of situations that will require numerous skills and strengths. In alignment with Vygotsky’s (1978) social learning theory, properly designed experiences will ensure that one person cannot reach his or her full potential alone, but will need the abilities and wisdom of the collective group to succeed (Surowiecki, 2004).

5. Encourage risk taking—Critical to both personal and institutional development is the ability of those involved to take positive risks. The inquiry-orientated environment
that is foundational to experientially-based learning provides participants the opportunities to reach beyond what is known, or work with colleagues to understand why success was not possible.

6. *Equality*—When properly designed, experiential opportunities engage all participants without perpetuating hierarchical levels. For most experiences, preexisting experience is not seen as collateral because all participants should be provided with the same level of knowledge and “rank.” This leveling of hierarchies can be readily facilitated if the experience is removed from the daily lives and roles of the participants, and approached in a more metaphoric manner (Gass, 1991; Hovelynck, 1998; Porter, 1999). At times, participation with one’s “superiors” can cause participants to automatically defer setting up a power-over relationship, but proper facilitation and expectations reduce this potential.

7. *Common language and mythology*—Climatic change is reliant on personnel connections and relationships within an institution. The experiential learning process will provide groups of people with a core of common language and an overarching institutional mythology (Owen, 2000). Leaders within the institution will be able to utilize both of these aspects for facilitating change. Depending on how relationships are developed throughout the experience, this type of mythology can take a negative turn if not facilitated and debriefed accordingly (Owen).

8. *Chaos and crisis in a safe environment*—Within an experiential-learning setting, participants will eventually encounter an obstacle, cognitive or physical, that causes them to fail. How participants choose to handle this failure can greatly inform
their subsequent decision making outside of the experiential arena. How failures are supported, or not supported, will greatly impact the participants’ future willingness to venture into uncharted territory in order to seek possible solutions to new obstacles.

9. **Projective technique**—Experiential processes allow people to function in roles that might not normally be assigned to them as a part of their daily routines. Participants will have the opportunity to discover previously unrealized potential through participation in diverse experiences and varied roles. This transformative break can allow colleagues to begin to see each other in a new light brought about by the discovery and demonstration of new skills (Basuray & Scherling, 1979).

10. **Meta-learning**—Key to any experiential-learning program is the focus on reflection, debriefing, and meta-cognitive processes. By providing participants with the time and guidance to reflect on their actions and decision-making process, a more informed understanding of organizational relationships, processes, and motivation can be established (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). At times this meta-learning process can lead to very introspective and personal places, which will require the sensitivity and total support of the facilitators and colleagues.

11. **Kinesthetic imprint**—At the core of many experiential-learning experiences are settings and situations whereby participants are asked, or required, to use their bodies to accomplish specific goals. These bodily processes make real the cognitive processes and developmental understandings the participants are living through at the time. These bodily imprints will create lasting and readily accessible memories that can serve as reminders of lessons learned in the future (Friese, Pittman, & Hendee, 1995).
12. *Fun*—For the best perspective on the characteristic of fun in an experiential setting, we turn toward Bisson and Luckner’s (1996) work that sought to understand the pedagogical role of fun in experiential settings:

The characteristics of fun are that it is relative, situational, voluntary, and natural. Fun can have a positive effect on the learning process by inviting intrinsic motivation, suspending one’s social inhibitions, reducing stress, and creating a state of relaxed alertness. (p. 108)

These 12 characteristics are at the heart of a quality experiential-learning experience and supported by a solid foundation of learning processes. They paint the picture of a powerful element that can be utilized on a variety of levels, for a variety of reasons, resulting in diverse gains. The ability to make an experience fun and enjoyable involves a careful consideration of participants, expectations, and outcomes. Luckner and Nadler’s (1997) characteristics point to a methodology that promotes both individual and institutional change. Participants are highly active in the learning process and experience real and natural opportunities for success, as well as failure. Participants are exposed to situations that have transformative potential on both personal and professional levels. This ability to synthesize both personal and group growth is central to this study. As noted earlier, a majority of the current adventure-based professional development opportunities for teachers are not devoted to working with collegial groups, but rather just a collection of teachers form various capacities. Though this method will still allow for personal growth, there is a vast world of professional/institutional growth that remains
untapped. This study’s focus on the experiences of colleagues in adventure-based settings will help to bridge that gap.

**Development of Experiential Learning Methodologies**

As illustrated above, the idea of adventure-based experiential education is vast and complicated with implications throughout a range of endeavors with distinct objective and purposes. Critical to understanding these characteristics is the history and development of experiential learning/education. The theoretical foundations for all of the methods under the umbrella are rooted in experiential learning, whether these methodologies take place in an adventure context or not.

Experiential education has had a long connection throughout history, starting with the Socratic and Platonian ideas that learning was a process fueled by a dialectic process—not simply an end state (Crosby, 1995). Building on those early notions, experiential thought has grown through several evolutionary periods including: Aristotle’s organizing principle of change moving from potentiality to reality, Hume’s belief that our mental operations were developed through our sensing or experiencing the world, and Kant’s revelation that we indeed “order our world in the very process of perceiving it” (Crosby, p. 10). These early epistemological examinations were foundational to the development of modern experiential education. Stemming from these early perspectives are five main theoretical categories that compose the whole that is experiential education and provide structure for our analysis: (a) learning and educational theories, (b) wilderness and nature theories, (c) psycho-experiential theories, (d) psycho-social theories, and (e) facilitation
theories (Neill, 2004e). All five theoretical categories discussed within this section also provide insight into the professional development and curriculum theorization domains.

Learning and Educational Theories

Central to the formative research on experiential learning are the writings of John Dewey. Dewey’s work stems from his desire to confront and deconstruct dualisms—the ultimate of which is the separation of the human from the natural (Dewey, 1925/2000). To combat this dualism, Dewey developed empirical naturalism (pp. ee, ix–x; 1a), or a philosophical inquiry based on experience, as opposed to having to choose between rationalism or empiricism through which one could inquire. “The empirical naturalist is trying to make a bridge between the human and the natural, the rational and the empirical, the material and the idealistic” (Hunt, 1995, p. 27)—in an attempt to render all dualisms outmoded.

Empirical naturalism examines both stages of experience, the primary, “the immediate tangible, and moving world which presents itself to the senses,” and the secondary, the act of refining and making the primary precise (Hunt, 1995, p. 27). Dewey’s empirical naturalism and examination of primary and secondary experience allows for the interplay between continuity, the storage and carryover of experience, and interaction, how past experience interacts with present situations to create the present experience. This process of mining primary experiences from participants and then working through a hermeneutic, reflective experience to refine, order, and arrange data rises above the polarization between rational and empirical tendencies, presenting a pluralistic, cyclical understanding of human learning. The ultimate goal of this empirical
naturalism results in a three step learning cycle that includes: (a) the observation of surrounding conditions, (b) the collection of knowledge obtained by recollection, and (c) the use of judgment, which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey’s three-step cyclical approach (Table 2) to framing and understanding epistemological processes has had a great impact on the field of experiential learning. From this simple cycle, a host of cycles have been developed in an effort to crystallize the ambiguous, fluid learning process that occurs through experiential learning. The key models of today range in scope from a one-stage model focusing on simply providing the right experiences to facilitate learning, to a six-stage model that ventures into the induction, deduction, and evaluation of experience (Table 2; Bacon, 1987; Joplin, 1995; Kolb, 1984; Neill, 2002; Pfeiffer & Jones, 1975; Priest & Gass, 1997). Of the experiential learning cycles featured in Table 2, the model proposed by Kolb (1984) is the most widely referenced and utilized (Neill, 2004a). The Kolbian model for experiential learning (Figure 2) utilizes a four-stage process through which learning occurs. Participants will: (a) have a concrete experience, (b) followed by reflective observation, (c) then develop abstract conceptualizations before, (d) participating in active experimentation to investigate their newly developed ideas. This model extends Dewey’s three-steps by allowing for active experimentation with ideas, as opposed to merely reaching a judgmental plateau. Regardless of the model, the experiential learning process is predicated upon the active engagement with an experience. The number of associated
Table 2

Matrix of Experiential Learning Models

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<tr>
<th>One Stage Model</th>
<th>Two Stage Model</th>
<th>Three Stage Model</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Observation-Recollection-Judgment (Dewey, 1938)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Four Stage Model</th>
<th>Five Stage Model</th>
<th>Six Stage Model</th>
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steps applied after the experience is the choice of the facilitator and can present issues in moving the learning process forward.

With such diversity possible for framing the experiential process of learning, it is no surprise that there are a number of critiques for the experiential learning cycle. How on earth can the fuzzy, varied process of learning be condensed into four ordered stages? How many stages of learning are there really? There could be anywhere from 0 to 100, there is no real way of telling. The teaching of experiential learning cycles as a strict methodology can narrow an individual’s
Figure 2. The Experiential Learning Cycle (Exeter, 2001; Kolb, 1984)

These critiques present a conundrum for those individuals wishing to utilize experiential learning in their respective settings. Beyond selecting the number of stages that one will utilize in the learning process, there is then the task of monitoring and guiding participants/learners through the appropriate process. These decisions and adherence to a strict methodology can create new issues.

The most direct application of the models is to use it to ensure that teaching activities give full value to each stage of the process. This may mean that a major task is to “chase” the learner round the cycle, asking questions which encourage reflection, conceptualization, and ways of testing the ideas. (Atherton, 2005, ¶3)

This “chasing” approach also eliminates the ability for the participant to make distinct choices and facilitate his/herself through the learning process. Could this process happen
without outside facilitation? Is the learner capable of attending to this learning process as a solo endeavor?

The process of experiential learning is critical for this study. In an adventure-based setting, there can be a tendency to rely on the environmental, inherent risk, and physical challenges of the experience to serve as the core learning components. But, as discussed in chapter 1, for an experience to truly be experiential there need to be reflective, as well as, relevant learning opportunities for present and future growth. The learning models above are significant to this study because of their devotion to reflective and relevant application of learning, and allow for the research process to view a lived experiential process of learning.

Beyond the facilitation critiques of experiential learning, the models above do not isolate or examine the impact of environment or setting. Does the same experience provided in differing environments produce the same outcomes? How does a natural environment shape the learning process differently than in a traditional classroom?

Wilderness and Nature Theories

So, why does using the outdoors as an instructional/learning medium work? How does it work? Several theories have informed these questions and have provided grounding for the use of experiential and adventure-based professional development: (a) biophilia (Kellert & Wilson, 1993) and psycho-evolutionary approaches (Neill et al., 2004), and (b) novel environment (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Foundational to both biophilia and psycho-evolutionary theory is the belief that the evolutionary history of humans is deeply rooted in the natural world, and that 21st century life does not provide
humans the needed contact with nature. But when people, students included, are given the opportunity to exist and interact with the natural world, deep-seeded, evolutionary benefits result including (a) direct experience and daily intimacy with nature, (b) development of inbuilt sensitivities and capacities for acquiring knowledge about nature, and (c) a reconnection with elements of nature and experiences which were significant to one’s ancestors (Neill et al., 2004).

These benefits give rise to the idea of *intra indigenous consciousness* (IIC), which asserts that, “the cumulative psychological knowledge of human evolution is genetically stored. It is the indigenous psyche within each person and it can be activated through direct experiences with nature, natural elements and natural systems” (Neill, 2004b, ¶1). IIC is most readily triggered through reengagement with activities that could be considered representative of an indigenous lifestyle. Reengagement is an incremental and developmental process. Neill (¶2) suggested the following experiences to facilitate this progression:

- Spend time in nature. Experience symbiosis with nature. Gradually, regularly, explore your relationship with nature through various phases and cycles. Become friends with nature. Walking, jogging, running and other journeying in natural environments, especially camping and living in nature. Study human connections to nature holistically and integrally, including cosmology, geology, botany, zoology, farming and environmental issues. Directly trigger IIC through indigenous-type ceremonies and consciousness-altering activities such as solo in nature, sweat lodges and vision quests. Undertake environmental service and
nature restoration work (e.g., green corps). Live sustainability with nature (e.g.,
follow permaculture concepts) as much as possible. Even small steps in this
directing, such as growing vegetables and foraging for nuts can catalyze growth
of IIC. Engage in observation, experience, understanding and celebration of the
natural seasons. Act in ways that spawn sustainable living and realization of IIC
consciousness more widely.

Though Luckner and Nadler’s (1997) work is not based on human evolution, it
emphasized the impact of using a novel setting or environment to free people from their
daily routine and stimulate exploration in an unfamiliar setting. Through meta-analysis,
these novel settings have been found to have a profound impact on those who experience
them (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997; Luckner & Nadler, 1997):

The novel environment, the novel activities, and the novel social settings, free a
person up from normal constraints, so that more exploration can take place and
there is more excitement and motivation due to the stimulation of the novel
situations. (Neill, 2004c)

A summary of meta-analyses completed in 1997 tried to tackle the question of
whether the use of experiential methodologies really worked by bringing together the
findings of the major meta-analyses of experiential education programs (Hattie et al.,
1997). These analyses included an analysis of 30 studies pertaining to outcomes of
experiential education when used with adolescence, an analysis of the effects of
experiential education on locus of control, as well as an examination of the effects of
adventure programs on a diverse array of outcomes such as self-concept, locus of control, and leadership.

In total, these three meta-analyses included over 12,000 participants across 96 individual studies. Drawing on a previous meta-analysis conducted by Neill (1998), the overarching analysis identified 40 major outcomes based on the body of this experiential literature. These outcomes were clustered into six larger categories and represent the spectrum through which participants experienced significant change and personal benefit: (a) leadership, (b) self-concept, (c) academic, (d) personality, (e) interpersonal, and (f) adventuresomeness (Hattie et al., 1997). In addition, this study was able to demonstrate that self-concept was directly related to effort (mental effort and physical effort) when utilized as a means for coping and problem solving, and that 65% of participants in outdoor experiential education programs are “better off” (p. 3; domains of locus of control, self-efficacy, life-effectiveness, etc.) than those who did not participate. This work highlights a sleeper effect whereby attitudes, ideas, and changes in self-concept are “seeded” (p. 7) during a program, and continue to grow after the experience. Neill (1998) stated, “A particularly impressive strength would seem to be that these programs can trigger in participants an ongoing cycle of personal growth” (p. 7).

Of greatest significance to this dissertation was Hattie et al’s (1997) call for the need to understand whether it was the experience as a whole that made the most impact, or the aspects of the experience that caused particular gains. This direction for future research urges the field to develop a greater understanding of how individuals perceive and interpret these experiences—placing immense value on the participants’ lived
experience. Furthermore, these wilderness and nature theories also raise the question of what should be considered a professional environment. Does professional development of teachers have to be conducted in certain settings? Will different, nature and adventure-based settings have similar effectiveness as a classroom or traditional workshop setting? Ultimately, is professionalism contextual or can it be ubiquitous?

*Psycho-Experiential, Psycho-Social, and Facilitation Theories*

These three theoretical domains encompass the psychological, social, and facilitation components that are present in experiential and adventure-based models of learning. From a psycho-experiential perspective, Rhoades’ (1972) *Unfreeze—Change—Refreeze* model provides a means of fostering growth through experience. Prior to the experience, participants are asked to *unfreeze*, or let go of any attitudes and constraints that may inhibit their participation. The experience itself serves as the *change* process whereby conceptions are altered during the experience. After the experience, participants are then asked to *refreeze* or solidify the new positive conceptions experienced into a permanent form. When paired with the experiential learning models above, this process can be a valuable guide for transferring a participant’s experiences into his or her everyday life.

From a psycho-social orientation, there is a connection between Maddern’s (1990) work of utilizing experiential learning as a rite of passage, and the design and implementation of experiential opportunities. Maddern’s theory consists of a five-step passage that is intended to promote self-transformation: (a) a symbolic journey, (b) the challenge, (c) opening the door to the dreaming, (d) shouldering responsibility, and (e)
community participation. This passage is not speaking specifically to the use of an outdoor or adventure experience, but it provides a framework for creating a transformative experience for participants. For this study, understanding the connection between a self-transformational experience and an adventure setting is critical for understanding the lived experience of such an event. Though not a recipe for success, these curricular guides shed light on the holistic and naturalistic dimensions that are available when attempting to develop experiential, self-transformational programming. These dimensions also provide insight into the potential for the Teacher Leadership Expedition to provide a transformational experience—these dimensions can be seen as a benchmarks for aligning an adventure-based experience with transformational aims.

Central to the quality of any experiential learning opportunity is the facilitator’s role within the experience. Facilitation theorists Schoel, Prouty, and Radcliffe (1988) developed the *Adventure Wave*, a three-step model that shapes the facilitator’s role throughout the experience (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. The Adventure Wave model for experiential facilitation](image)
Step one of the model emphasizes the need to begin all experiences with a briefing, or frontloading, to set-up and establish the context for the experience. During the experience, the facilitator’s role is to provide guidance and support for each of the participants. The final role of the facilitator at the end of the experience is to debrief the participants’ engagement and promote self-reflexivity and exploration both on individual and group levels. The core guidance that these theorists provide for this study is the need to maintain a facilitative presence throughout the expedition. Frontloading the experience, providing the experience, and debriefing the experience are critical components that must be present, and will have a significant impact on the lived experience of each participant.

Professional Development

The need to stay abreast of changing theoretical concepts and best-practice methodologies is central to the professional growth, and subsequent effectiveness, of those in the field of classroom education. This section on professional development provides the following: (a) an understanding of the current best-practice characteristics for the professional development of practicing teachers (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987), (b) a synthesis of five current models of professional development (Killion, 2003; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990), and (c) the establishment of a paradigmatic continuum for the evolution of professional development (Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sparks, 1994). By analyzing these three veins, there will emerge a natural relationship between the theoretical foundations and philosophical underpinnings of experiential and adventure education, as well as the
direction, structure, and paradigmatic orientation of current professional development. This relationship will strengthen the need to fully understand the essence of an adventure-based professional development experience.

**Recommendations and Models**

So, how does this experientially-based learning process align with current thoughts on professional development for practicing teachers? Is this really high-quality professional development? As established in Table 1, there exists a core understanding of what constitutes high quality professional development. Based on these recommendations, five models of staff development have been proposed by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990). These five models include: (a) individually guided, (b) observation and assessment, (c) involvement in a development/improvement process, (d) training, and (e) inquiry. Each of these models is founded on specific theoretical underpinnings of adult learning and shows a profound connection with the current objectives and purposes for experientially-based learning presented in Table 1. Furthermore, when looking at an adventure-based experience, each of these five models lends specific components that help to create a synthesized methodology in adventure-based professional development.

**Individually-Guided Professional Development**

This model of professional development embraces the many professional activities in which teachers engage on a daily basis, and allows for those activities to be seen as beneficial to the professional growth of the educator. Activities such as memberships in professional organizations, the reading of professional journals, and
collegial conversations all promote professional growth (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). This type of development is at its core designed by the professional and assumes that individuals can and do judge their own learning needs. These assumptions are based on the research indicating that adults will learn more effectively when they initiate and plan their learning activities, and will seek growth given the appropriate conditions (Rogers, 1969). Furthermore, for adults, readiness to learn becomes situated in real life tasks and problems (Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1980). And as stage theorists assert, these real life tasks and problems can look very different for a second year teacher, as opposed to a 20-year veteran (Levine, 1989).

To properly facilitate this type of model, a system needs to be developed to ensure participant growth and benefit. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) suggested the following phase order for this type of structure: (a) the identification of a need or interest, (b) the development of a plan to meet the need or interest, (c) the learning activities, and (d) an evaluation of whether the outcome of the learning experience matched the expressed need or interest (p. 8). This process provides opportunity for the development of meta-learning and projective techniques, as well as the encouragement of taking positive professional risks in pursuit of professional growth. This individually-guided approach lends a key component to adventure-based programming. In both settings, participants need to approach their professional growth opportunities from a perspective of personal motivation and responsibility—characteristics typically associated with personal choice.
Observation and Assessment

Central to the success of this model for professional development is overcoming a prevailing stigma that observation and assessment are only used as a mode of evaluation, making it not readily embraced or accepted by teachers (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1985). To overcome this hurdle, making explicit three basic assumptions is beneficial (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990, p. 9):

Reflection and analysis are central means of professional growth and observation/assessment can provide the needed data on which reflection can happen. Reflection by an individual on his or her own practice can be enhanced by another’s observations. When teachers see positive results from their efforts to change, they are more apt to continue to engage in improvement.

This process of stimulating reflection and analysis and its enhancement by someone else’s input and observation is beneficial to both parties, the observer and the observed (Glatthorn, 1984; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1987; McGreal, 1982). To increase reliability of the observation, it is suggested that one narrow the scope of what is to be observed by utilizing a predetermined set of objectives or behaviors (McGreal).

This observation/assessment process lends itself to many benefits of experiential methodologies. By interacting with varying professionals, teachers will have the opportunity to develop new professional relationships while being exposed to a variety of teaching styles and perspectives. These interactions can enable the acceptance and embracing of diversity in professional strengths among a staff. The dialogic component
that accompanies an observer-observee relationship will help establish a common language set, as well as the creation of a supportive and equitable collegial culture.

These aspects are critical to this study because of its intensive nature and extensive collegial contact. Not only will participants have the opportunity to observe one another throughout the expedition, but also the extended collegial contact will allow for the development of new, and/or deeper, relationships that can sustain an observer-observee protocol back in a classroom setting.

*Involvement in a Development/Improvement Process*

The focus of this model is the inclusion of educators into a variety of aspects of institutional development. These processes may include the development of curriculum, the creation and implementation of school reform initiatives, the design and implementation of new programming among others. Though common in educational settings, the professional development impact of one’s involvement in these aspects has been the focus of few research inquiries (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). What is known about these pursuits is that it aligns with the idea that adults learn more effectively when they have a need to know (Knowles, 1980). The disequilibrium created when working as a part of growth processes such as these will cause teachers to utilize professional problem-solving techniques and seek out new knowledge through readings, discussions, and other varying perspectives (Glickman, 1986; Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985).

In addition to the use of disequilibrium as an experiential methodology in this model, participants are also exposed to the idea of creating a learning setting where chaos
and crisis can coexist in a safe environment. Ultimately, the manner in which these experiences are provided, guided, and assessed will determine the extent to which a safe environment is created, but the potential benefit from this cognitive dissonance is tremendous.

*Training*

The central tenant for this model of professional development is the existence of behaviors and techniques that are worthy of replication (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Classically understood or recognized as “workshop-type sessions,” teacher trainings have the capacity to promote positive professional growth if aligned with clear objectives and focused on increasing both the awareness and knowledge of its participants (Showers et al., 1987). Typical training opportunities might include skill development, exploration of theory, demonstration or a modeling skills, or even the use of context skill development through simulations (Joyce & Showers, 1988).

On the surface, this form of professional development seems to be removed from the scope of this study. However, this model serves as a reminder to understand the content and purpose of the training utilized throughout the Teacher Leadership Expedition so participants can have the opportunity to engage in the development of a common language set. These foundational communication components could have long-term professional benefits. The power of this training model has the potential to be greatly enhanced through the use of experiential methodologies to deliver the content. By utilizing an experiential cycle as the epistemological premise, participants will be involved in training sessions that are engaging, reflective, and productive.
**Inquiry or Action Research**

Stemming from the qualitative paradigm of human science research, inquiry, or action research focuses on investigating practice for the sake of initiating change (Hatch, 2002; Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2004; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2001). Underlying this professional development model are three key premises: (a) teachers are intelligent, inquiring individuals with legitimate expertise; (b) teachers are inclined to search for data to answer pressing questions and reflect on the data to formulate solutions; and (c) teachers will develop new understandings as they formulate their own questions and gather data to answer them (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1987). This model is closely tied to Dewey’s (1910/1997) notions of reflective action, which emphasized, “Behavior which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads” (in Grant & Zeichner, 1984, p. 4). Ideally, the inquiry process should be conducted collaboratively, which tends to shift the focus from only classroom specific aims, to school-wide growth (Lieberman, 1984). This collaborative process can be facilitated through the use of teams, collaborative groups, or professional learning communities (Calhoun, 1994; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Garmston & Wellman, 1999).

Two experiential characteristics are central to the success of this model: disequilibrium and the development of relationships. Participants in this form of professional development are continually faced with issues of practical and cognitive dissonance that serve as the seeds for systematic inquiry. The use of collaborative environments allows participants to engage beyond themselves and seek a more diverse
understanding. The Teacher Leadership Expedition is just such an environment. The adventure-based setting will provide metaphoric opportunities for participants to view their professional worlds from various vantage points. These diverse perspectives can help to drive the inquiry and action research impulses necessary for sustained growth.

*Paradigmatic Continuum of Professional Development*

Though simply arrayed, these five models of professional development fall along a paradigmatic continuum that contours the landscape of professional development. This continuum can be thought of as two intersecting lines that create a matrix, or the plane on which professional development exists (Figure 4). Starting on the left, we can see that professional development theorization encompasses models rooted in a deficit perspective, embracing the notion that all teachers are lacking specific skills. This perspective creates a power-over relationship, essentially disempowering the teachers by telling them what will be developed and how.

On the opposite side of the plane are growth models that are based on the notion that teachers will inherently seek out new understandings and perspectives to their profession. This paradigm is empowering to those involved and is respectful of the intellect and professionalism embodied in its participants. Quite simply, depending on one’s orientation, across this continuum, teachers either have it, or are in need of it (Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Within the same plane, another continuum runs from top to bottom illustrating the paradigmatic scope of focusing on developing the individual, that is, Fullan’s (2003) moral imperative to teach, and on the bottom, focusing on institutional
Figure 4. The professional development plane

development such as Hargreaves and Fullan’s (1998) notion that individual development
will naturally develop the institution as a whole.

This paradigmatic plane illustrates the potential scope of current professional
development practices, and provides an opportunity see how adventure-based
professional development can transcend this continuum. The transformative capacity of
experiential learning, and the synthesized nature of adventure experiences allows these
types of professional development opportunities to develop both individual and
institutional domains, while allowing all participants, regardless of background, to
achieve personal and professional growth.

Experiential or adventure-based professional development has the potential to
utilize a holistic approach to the development of its participants by drawing upon a mix
of components from the core models of professional development. Participants are not
reduced to a set of basic skills and dispositions, but seen as engaged, intelligent professionals. The content of these experiences can be completely fluid, allowing for the necessary complicated conversation that lies at the heart of curriculum reform. This emphasis on the holistic also models an inclusive approach that may carry over into the classroom and other professional arenas, where teachers will be more apt to utilize similar approaches with their students and colleagues.

Collegial use of adventure-based professional development shows the potential to effect climatic change across the continuum. A school or district’s ability to deal with and facilitate a change process is critical regardless of the prevailing curriculum paradigm. By utilizing the projective technique aspects, as well as the formation of a common language, colleagues could theoretically create the critical mass needed for enacting institutional change (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). This networking can facilitate the flow of best-practice ideas, as well as the disaggregation of data used to make instructional decisions.

Contemporary Curriculum Decision-Making

A defining feature within contemporary curriculum theorization and decision-making is one of paradigmatic tension and struggle. Currently, multiple perspectives and paradigmatic orientations collide on the battlefield that is curriculum theorization. These confrontations are not new, and not unhealthy to the development of curriculum thought. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman’s (1995) perspective that, “Curriculum becomes the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world” (p. 847) underscores the power and intimate connection society has with the curriculum
theorization process. By understanding the current paradigmatic landscape it is possible to understand the circumstances that influence the professional development decisions teachers make, as well as the understanding the struggle of envisioning specific forms of professional development, such as adventure-based forms, within different paradigmatic views.

Three main paradigms are at the center of these curricular tensions: (a) the modernist, or standardized management paradigm; (b) the constructivist best-practice paradigm; and (c) the post-modern curriculum wisdom paradigm (Henderson & Kesson, 2004). To fully understand each paradigm and the tensions that exist between them, one must look at their antithetical positions through four lenses: (a) the paradigm’s guiding question, (b) the current problem solving technique used within the paradigm, (c) how curriculum work is done, and (d) the shadow sides (Craig & Wolf, 2004) or negative aspects of each paradigm that lurk behind its corners. By illuminating these factors, the prevailing struggle between each school thought becomes apparent.

**Standardized Management (SM)**

Currently seen as the dominant paradigm in curriculum decision making (Cuban, 2003; Henderson & Gornik, 2007), “because of its simplicity of purpose and its straightforward approach to accountability” (Henderson & Gornik, p. 8), standardized management relies on a guiding question for theorization that revolves around how to teach for higher test scores in adherence with federal, state, and local mandates. This linear focus reduces the students’ social and emotional domains to unrelated by-products
of the education process, while cognitive abilities are marginalized as rote processes and demonstrations of itemized, standardized objectives.

This type of guiding focus produces predictable, technical approaches and problem-solving techniques. These technical approaches typically are implemented in the form of teachers providing direct instruction to students in strict accordance with data-driven continuous-improvement policies and plans (Cuban, 2003; Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Henderson & Kesson, 2004). Curriculum workers become increasingly worried about what students do not know, as opposed to what students are actually learning.

The process of curriculum development in this paradigmatic setting is similarly rigid and linear. A standardized management process begins with a simple act or experience. This action or experience is then processed through a rudimentary reflection process, followed by a systematic usage of the Tyler Rationale, emphasizing technical modes of address (Henderson & Gornik, 2007). The last phase in the curriculum development process within the standardized management paradigm is to make final decisions based on standardized performance and behavioral outcomes that align with current mandates. Inherent in this process are a number of shadow sides (Craig & Wolf, 2004), or pitfalls, which include issues of power and control, repressive leadership, power-over relationships, and a normalization of the education/curriculum development process (Craig & Wolf). These shadow sides allude to the elimination of any connection between democracy and education—not a curriculum by the people and for the people, but simply provided to the people. To be properly understood, democracy stated above,
and for this study, is not being used as it relates to a system of government, but rather a way of life:

Or as Dewey puts it “a moral standard for personal conduct”—it is to extend a democratic outlook to one’s daily living. Democracy now becomes a moral referent for good living. This is important, because all curriculum decisions are at their heart, moral decisions. They touch the core of what it means to be human, to live in a community with others, to find meaning and purpose, and to create a more just and peaceful world. (Henderson & Kesson, 2004, p. 9)

This paradigmatic stance has a long history beginning with Bobbitt’s (2004) introduction of predetermined objectives and outcomes into the educational setting. In describing curriculum, Bobbitt stated,

As applied to education, it is that series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life; and to be in all respects what adults should be. (p. 11)

Though slightly tempered, Tyler (1969) continued to evolve this paradigm through the Tyler Rationale. Tyler did allow for situatedness and context to be factors in determining outcomes, but the narrow scope and scientific means of creation and evaluation still remained. Consistency and regimentation of human behavior were still considered fundamental.

An educational program is not effective if so much is attempted that little is accomplished. It is essential therefore to select a number of objectives that can be attained in significant degree in the time available, and that these be really
important ones. Furthermore, this group of objectives should be highly consistent so that the student is not torn by contradictory patterns of human behavior. (p. 33)

These two perspectives are most noticeable in current curriculum development through the efforts of No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)—a truly scientific and standardized approach to curriculum thought.

*Constructivist Best-Practice (CBP)*

The constructivist best-practice paradigm is primarily guided by the question of how to teach for deep subject matter understandings that are in reference to appropriate national standards. Implicit in this question is CBP’s desire to understand and foster a student’s desire to know deeply, to construct knowledge, as opposed to assessing and structuring curriculum around what students do not know (Dewey, 1938; Gardner, 2000; Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978). This paradigm also aligns itself with reference to “standards,” but this is a qualitatively different perspective then Standardized Management (SM). Within the CBP paradigm, the standards that are used as reference are those provided by national organizations and associations that help determine the scope and sequence of content areas in broad systemic means. Organizations such as the National Council for Teachers of English and the National Science Teacher Association provide national guidelines for shaping curricular thought in those particular content areas. These standards are far different from the governmental, standardized mandates that drive SM decision-making.

Problem-solving within the paradigm revolves around both solo and collaborative deliberation constituting active, deep meaning making, and a search for wiggle room
when making curriculum decisions about the practices that will lead to such a process (Walker, 2003). This deliberative ideal is reflected in the way in which curriculum work is done in CBP. Both Walker (2003) and Cuban (2003) have provided process models that strive for deep meaning making, while still referencing mandated standardization.

As with SM, the decision-making process starts with action and experience, followed by a simple reflective phase. Beyond this, a deliberative ideal is enacted seeking multiple perspectives to inform the upcoming decision-making (Walker, 2003). Decisions are finally made based on the appropriate national standardization, but promote constant pursuit of active, deep meaning making.

Though this process projects a balance between standardization and free thought, there are a number of shadow sides (Craig & Wolf, 2004) that skew its applicability. The most common issues within this paradigm is flirting with narcissistic or elitist preoccupations (Craig & Wolf). One of the key players in this paradigm, Howard Gardner, is a primary example of this narcissistic and elitist perspective. His call for a disciplined mind urges curriculum workers to embrace the liberal arts heritage that is, in his perspective, the basis of western civilization (Gardner, 2000). In many instances, this liberal arts heritage is morphed and marginalized to promote only the ideals of western civilization, as opposed to embracing a disciplined approach to deep understanding.

**Curriculum Wisdom (CW)**

Conceived by Henderson and Kesson (2004), curriculum wisdom is guided by the question of how to teach for democratic goodness, while still facilitating deep subject
matter understanding. Gone are any references to standards and objectives, and included is the pursuit of the democratic good life (p. x). The problem solving process within CW still begins with an action or experience, but new to this process is a “holographic” (p. 41) reflection and inquiry. This reflective inquiry process is facilitated through the “arts of inquiry” (p. 43). There are seven different modes of inquiry, each intended to change the lens through which a problem is assessed (p. 48):

- Poesis—artful inquiry
- Praxis—rooted in justice, “are we being fair?”
- Polis—political in nature, “what will people think?”
- Phronesis—reliance on practical wisdom, judgment
- Techne—technical, process-oriented inquiry, “how does this look in a classroom?”
- Theoria—reliance on theory, the power of intellect
- Dialogos—seeking dialog with multiple perspectives

Once this inquiry has been initiated, the next step is to use deliberative artistry, as informed by Eisner’s (2002) educational imagination and notions of connoisseurship, the private art of appreciation, as opposed to critique, and the public art of disclosure. From this multi-modal inquiry and deliberation, an informed decision has the potential to be made, but only in reference to reconceptualized standards. Just because standards are provided does not mean that they are right. Reconceptualization will allow for the original standards to serve as a starting point for future, artistic, and deliberative thought.
As with the other types of theorization, or any ideologically-orientated theorization, there are shadow sides (Craig & Wolf, 2004) that will hamper its acceptance and capacity. For CW those shadow sides present themselves through self-righteousness, moralistic tendencies, and critical impatience (Craig & Wolf). It is apparent that in reconceptualizing the standards, one will be making judgments about the original quality and purpose of the standards. This judgmental process can escalate to a carte-blanche rejection—thus creating moralistic lines in the sand.

In addition to Henderson and Kesson’s (Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Henderson & Kesson, 2004) multi-modal holographic inquiry approach, many of the key players in this paradigm have tried to introduce processes and ideas intended to curb the shadow sides of CW. Pinar’s (2004) complicated conversation and currerrian reflection draws on the work of Ellsworth (1997), underscoring the need for multiple modes of address by noting, “Finding out where, when, and how teaching happens is undecidable. It is also in some sense, impossible, in that all modes of address misfire one way or another” (Pinar, 2004, p. 200). Dewey’s (1910/1997) work on reflective processing provides a transparent framework though which reflection is practiced, calling for “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (p. 9).

At the heart of this paradigm, Henderson and Gornik (2007) proposed a balanced 3S approach (see Figure 5). By keeping a balance between the needs of the subject matter, society, and one’s self, one can significantly reduce the possibility of making judgments purely on ideology alone. This type of framework fosters the ability to make
decisions on a case-by-case progression—avoiding sweeping generalization and imposition of moralistic tendencies. Henderson and Gornik recognized that for all curricular questions there will need to be many answers—some may be based on standardization, others may require curriculum wisdom. But in all cases, having the same answer to every question will never promote a more fluid and impactful education process.

Curricular Synthesis

Standing alone, each of these three paradigms represent clear significance to the fields of experiential education and professional development. The type of paradigmatic orientation being used in an educational setting will drastically affect the choice of learning methodologies utilized, as well as have an affect on the types of professional development used to implement those particular methodologies. For this study, having a
clear understanding of the tensions that exist for teachers provides even greater insight into each participant’s lived experience. These paradigms provide a landscape through which participants can journey and wander both personally and professionally, and their lived experiences are a way through which to track this journey. Adventure-based professional development has the ability to develop the leadership capacity within the teaching population to not only carry out current reform models, but to have the courage to reconceptualize what is possible in education. Though standardization may be the prevailing paradigm today, teachers need to have the leadership capacity to help determine what future paradigms will influence tomorrow.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers perceive and interpret experiences from a three-day, two-night, adventure-based professional development experience; to understand the expectations of collegial teams participating in such an experience; and to unearth any perceived personal and professional impacts associated with collegial participation in such an experience. Drawing guidance from the current literature in the fields of experiential education, professional development, and curriculum decision-making, this line of inquiry is sitting at the intersection of the experiential, professional development, and curriculum worlds—an intersection that has yet to be mapped. It is hoped that this study can illustrate how adventure-based methodologies, when used as a form of high quality professional development for the purpose of developing transformative capacity, can be seen through the lived experiences of its participants.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the cool fog of the morning, a faint smell of warming pancakes mixes with the fresh, distinctive scent of recently applied insect repellant. Quietly huddled with waiting plates, gathered around small stoves and hot skillets, the participants are at work preparing the breakfast that will fuel their coming day’s hike. As each cook-group monitors their respective stations, Michael breaks the morning silence.

“You know, last night, while stretching out in my sleeping bag, letting my sore muscles relax, I began to think about what I had just accomplished. The hills were hard, but amazing. There were times I felt as though I could not go on. That physical drain and struggle made me flashback to when I was sick about fifteen-sixteen years ago. I wasn’t supposed to live—and I did. When I got out of the ICU at the Cleveland Clinic, I was told to expect that I would end up living out my days in a nursing home—but I didn’t. Here I am. Though I have accomplished so much, I never felt like I was able to regain the strength that I once had. I was hoping that this experience could help me break out and see what I can do, see what I am capable of, and yesterday, I think I caught a glimpse of it.”

“I remember that time, Michael,” Pam said. “We taught together then. You were a real source of inspiration for us all. You truly were.”
“You know what’s funny,” Michael continued, “in the middle of thinking about all of this stuff, all of my personal struggles, I thought back to my previous administrator and especially my special education supervisor. You all remember her.” The group provided a collective groan in unison. “We didn’t see eye-to-eye at all. It was a challenge for me just to go into school each day. One day at a time—that’s what it took to get through it. Just like yesterday, there were times when it was one step at a time to be successful. It was hard, but boy was it worth it! Yesterday I asked a whole lot more of myself than I thought I could handle, but I did, and I could, and you all made it possible. Now that’s a pretty cool thing to realize.”

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

In order to truly understand the lived experiences of colleagues participating in adventure-based professional development, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used in an effort to utilize a methodology that sought interpretive ends to experiential inquiry (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Stemming from the early philosophical traditions of Huserl, Heidegger, and Blanchot, phenomenology has evolved into a viable human science research methodology for capturing the sensitivity of human experience (van Manen, 1990).

As a human science inquiry, van Manen (2002f) provided a number of perspectives through which phenomenology can be studied. Phenomenological methodologies allow the research to draw upon various traditions and orientations, including transcendental, existential, hermeneutic, historical, ethical, and language,
providing both depth and breadth to their respective inquiries. With so many traditions and orientations, phenomenological inquiry can survey different sources of meaning such as experiential, language, historical, and cultural sources to provide the truest representation of one’s experiences. These sources of meaning can be viewed in relation to the philosophical or methodological attitudes associated with a person’s ability to “reachieve direct contact with the world by suspending prejudgments,” as well as the ability to “let things ‘speak’ or be ‘heard’ by bringing them into nearness through the vocative power of language” (van Manen, 2002f, ¶3). While the procedural dimensions of phenomenological inquiry may be explored through empirical and reflective methodologies, phenomenological inquiry cannot be separated from the practice of writing. It is a textual process.

For this study, hermeneutic phenomenology has been used by combining “both the interpretive/hermeneutic methods and descriptive/phenomenological methods for the purpose of examining the lived experiences or lifeworlds of the people being studied” (Hatch, 2002, p. 29). This hermeneutical approach is desired because of its orientation to “examine human understating in general” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 7). This examination moves beyond the merely descriptive phenomenology (such as transcendental and existential modes), and invokes an interpretive and overtly textual orientation to the creation of meaning (van Manen, 1990). This interpretive/descriptive relationship in hermeneutic phenomenology is grounded in three epistemological notions: (a) knowledge as text whereby meaning is embedded in the text, (b) knowledge as understanding is characterized by active and reflective participation in meaning, and (c) knowledge as
being resulting in achievement of a personal, formative knowledge (van Manen, 2002a, ¶1). These three notions are critical for this study to develop a textual, reflective, and knowledge-based understanding of the adventure-based professional development phenomenon.

The Teacher Leadership Expedition

Conducted in August 2006, the Teacher Leadership Expedition (TLE) was an adventure-based professional development experience that was attended by seven teaching faculty members of a small city school district in Northeastern Ohio. The TLE was conceived, designed, and implemented externally of this study. The scope and sequence of the expedition was developed based on a series of shorter adventure-based expeditions that had been offered to this district. The participants on the TLE had never attended a previous expedition that was offered to the district. For all but one participant, the TLE was the first time they had lived and traveled in an outdoor, adventure setting.

The August 2006 TLE was designed to develop the concept of teacher leadership among colleagues in the participating district. As a concept, teacher leadership was specifically defined as developing the capacity for classroom teachers to design, implement, and lead a change process that supports and is in alignment with the district’s common mission and vision for its students. Participants in this expedition were to gain exposure to the best-practice methodologies of initiating and leading a change process at the collegial level. These methodologies were presented in two ways: first, metaphorically, through the debriefing of daily activities and routines such as camp
preparation, cooking, and route selection; and second, literally, through focused
discussion of classroom and context specific leadership skills.

This focus was supported through the curriculum design, as well as the materials
used by the participants in their participant journals. Prior to attending the expedition,
participants were asked to read two articles. The first, *Uncovering Teacher Leadership*,
emphasized the need for teacher leadership (Ackerman, 2006), and the second, *Teacher
Leader*, was a more practical piece that articulated the various activities in which teachers
could participate to help promote a leadership agenda (Barth, 2001). In addition,
participants also read an excerpt from a casebook that detailed the events of a group of
teachers trying to implement a teacher-driven leadership initiative (Miller, Moon, & Elko,
2002). These materials were meant to serve as a means for developing a common
language among all of the participants, as well as giving shape to the concept of teacher
leadership.

In addition to the preliminary readings, while on the expedition the participants
were exposed to a curriculum designed to draw on the reading material as a catalyst for
discussion, as well as a springboard for understanding the role of a teacher leader in a
school setting. Participants took part in activities such as group-based activities during
the hikes, group development opportunities such as meal preparation and route finding,
and the development of a building-wide leadership initiatives as a way of experiencing a
wide array of leadership experiences in a short amount of time. The expedition’s
summative assessment was the dynamic, collegial creation of a building-wide leadership
initiative. In a three-day period the collegial teams envisioned, developed, and made
initial implementation plans for a leadership initiative that would impact the buildings each collegial team served, as that would require the TLE participants to assume a teacher leadership role to ensure the initiative’s success. These initiatives were developed through a collaborative process, and critiqued through critical colleagues’ reflections and discussion sessions.

This process allowed participants to live through a leadership experience, and during that process, translate their new perspectives and understandings into the creation and planning of a new leadership initiative that could be implemented in their respective professional settings. The participants were modeling for themselves the best-practice methodologies of teacher leaders as a way to develop a more robust and authentic understanding of what it meant to lead.

The curricular and logistical frameworks for the TLE were developed by a regional non-profit experiential education center specializing in teambuilding and professional development for organizations. This was done with assistance from the team of four facilitators, including me, who led the TLE experience. These facilitators were responsible for the content, delivery, and logistics of the expedition. Each facilitator had a specific role within the context of the expedition:

1. *Jim*, male, 31, supported both the equipment and team development aspects of the TLE. As a former emotional disabilities teacher, and current Associate Executive Director of the regional experiential education center, Jim also served as a content specialist for organizational development, leadership development, and exceptional children issues.
2. *Madge*, female, 33, was dedicated to curricular support and guidance related aspects of the expedition. As a former special education teacher and current guidance counselor, Madge was used as an authority on the development and coordination of school services, the social and emotional needs of students, as well as general school guidance and scheduling issues.

3. *Karen*, female, 33, was solely dedicated to the equipment and dietary needs of the group. While having an extensive background in land-based expeditions, as well as the developer/facilitator of previous adventure-based professional development offerings within the district, Karen made sure that the participants had the necessary equipment, food, and technical skills needed for backcountry travel. In addition, Karen is also a high school English teacher from the same district as the seven participants.

4. My primary role throughout the expedition was to serve as the curriculum generalist. I delivered the content associated with the teacher leadership curriculum and facilitated the discussions orientated to that topic. In addition, I took the lead in facilitating the development of each grade-level’s leadership initiative. Throughout the expedition, the primary instructional methodology was of a constructivist and inquiry focused nature. Participants were given free reign to pursue teacher leadership as they saw applicable, and were guided in their quest by the use of active questioning and reflective practice.

The TLE expedition was held on a 15-mile section of the Girard Hiking Trail, in Oil Creek State Park, in Oil City, Pennsylvania. This is a section of trail with which the program developers were very familiar and have traveled several times prior. This
background knowledge about this particular locale, as well as the facilitators’ other experiences in participating in and leading adventure education experiences was made known to the participants.

Over three days, participants averaged four to five miles per day on well-marked and groomed hiking trails. There were optional day hikes once the participants reached camp. The terrain was varied with some challenging steep uphill as well as downhill sections in between sections with little to no elevation gain. Accommodations while on the expedition were considered rustic. The participants slept in Adirondack-style shelters (see Figure 6) and had access to primitive restroom facilities (pit toilets and running water dependent on season) at each evening’s campsite, as well as the parking lot used at the start and end of the expedition. Since the TLE was held on a backcountry trail system, participants had to carry all of the necessary equipment, food, and clothing for the three-day expedition. This resulted in packs weighing 20-30 lbs. depending on the participant. The weight was consistent with what is deemed appropriate for this type and duration of backcountry travel.

The district participating in the TLE was one for which I had conducted professional development sessions in the past, and also were I was employed as an instructional specialist from 2002-2004. This preexisting relationship served as a seed for developing ongoing trust and reciprocity with the participants. In other words, to the participants, I was a known commodity and had worked with a number of the participants in collaborative capacities in the past. We had common shared experiences and
understandings. My familiarity with the district allowed me to have a deeper understanding of existing power structures and policies that participants referenced during the expedition, as well as during the data collection phases. All of these facets provided the stable footing on which to build the open and reciprocal relationship needed for phenomenological inquiry.

**Participants**

The invitation for the TLE experience was extended to the faculty and staff of the district’s middle school and elementary schools in Northeastern Ohio. The reason for not including high school teachers in the TLE was the fact that teachers from the high school had already participated in adventure-based offerings earlier in the year, whereas the elementary and middle school teachers had not had the opportunity to do so. Subsequently, five middle school teachers and two elementary teachers attended the TLE. Space on the expedition was limited to 15 as a function of gear and site carrying capacity,
but only seven participants chose to attend. All participants were accepted for the TLE on a first-come-first-served basis.

The primary purpose of the study was to explore how the colleagues perceived and interpreted an adventure-based professional development experience. Given this focus, the demographic composition of the group was not critical. This is consonant with notions of purposeful sampling, or the need for participants to have certain characteristics in common (Bogdan & Bilkin, 1982; Gay, 1996). Of primary concern was whether or not the teachers were colleagues—teachers who taught in the same building, utilized the same resources, or interacted with the same pool of students over a given period of years. In the end, five middle school teachers and two elementary teachers chose to participate in the TLE, as well as this study. Though from different buildings, there was an expressed collegial connection between the two groups of teachers. With one exception, all of the teachers had taught together in the same buildings within the district in the past, and it was only through district rearrangements that they were not still working together in the same building. Of the seven participants, there were six females ages 56, 53, 47, 47, 42, 36, and one male age 50. In addition to the seven participants in the TLE, four facilitators (myself and three additional) were also present.

Researcher Role and Ethics

As the fourth member of the facilitation team, I was actively involved in the general facilitation of the curriculum, group discussion, and activity debriefing. This active participation allowed me to gain access to the participants, develop a climate of trust, and situate myself within the context of the experience. This position within the
experience enabled me to collect data as an insider. Any additional personal information was not withheld, and participants were made aware of my presence as an educational researcher prior to their decision to attend the TLE.

I established written agreements with all of the participants to take part in this study. Participants in the expedition had the choice of participating in the study, but had no obligation to do so, and were able to end their participation at any time. Due to my experience with extensive adventure-based learning, I was liberated to follow an observer’s path and focus on the participants and their experiences as opposed to my own processing as a participant. My experience in backcountry travel also served as a resource for the participants, many of whom had never participated in adventure-based programming before. After the experience, the reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant reached its apex via assisting participants in developing their understanding of the experience, preserving the integrity of their voices throughout the structuring of the phenomenon, and the participants’ role to serve as a co-constructor throughout the entire research process.

Data Collection Strategies

Data collection for this study included a number of the methods including participant protocol writing (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990), semi-structured interviewing (Hatch, 2002), experience observation (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990), and the examination of participant journals (Hatch, 2002; van Manen, 1990; Table 3). The ways in which participants perceived and interpreted adventure-based professional development was explored over an extended period of time and not only
sought to understand these experiences, but also to understand how, and/or if, this experience was integrated into their personal and professional lives.

At the completion of the Teacher Leadership Expedition (TLE) the participants’ audio journals were collected and transcripts were created from them. Participants were then provided an audio copy of their journals, a paper transcript, and a book of photographs that were taken during the TLE. Participants used these materials to develop a lived experience description for the TLE, which I also collected. The transcripts and the lived experience descriptions were the primary data sets used throughout the analysis process.
Self-Facilitated Interviews and Journals

Prior to leaving on the expedition, participants conducted a self-facilitated audio interview orientated around their expectations for the experience (Appendix B). During the expedition, participants kept a daily audio journal of their experiences. These journal entries were also self-facilitated using assigned prompts to begin the process, as well as time for free-form reflection on their experiences (Appendix C). Immediately after the expedition, participants conducted a self-facilitated post experience audio interview (Appendix D).

My rationale for using the self-facilitated interview prior to leaving was threefold. First, this exercise gave the participants exposure to using the technological equipment needed to collect audio data while in the wilderness, which is where the experience was located. Troubleshooting at this early stage was much easier then it would have been in the outdoors. Second, participants had an initial opportunity to discuss their expectations for the experience in a setting that was familiar, easing them into the self-reflective practices they would engage in during the experience. And finally, after the participants conducted their interviews, the group as a whole debriefed the self-facilitated process, voicing some best practices for completing the process that they used to guide their subsequent journal entries throughout the experience.

The decision to use audio journals as opposed to written journals is a result of my previous research experience during the pilot study. In settings where participants kept written journals, less detailed information about their experiences was provided.
However, participants with audio journals evoked almost a stream of consciousness while using the recorders resulting in more richly constructed data.

In addition, the use of self-facilitated audio journaling was also used in an effort to preserve the individualized and intimate nature of written journal writing. Participants were free to explore their ideas as they were presented to them. Though guiding questions were used to help the participants’ frame or structure their thoughts, the direction, depth, and openness was a result of their own decisions and interaction with the experience.

In addition to the participant audio journals, throughout the entire expedition, I also kept an audio field note journal with anecdotes and descriptions of the experience as they unfolded. This journal served to recap many of the days’ activities and my observations of the participants’ involvement, attitudes, and interactions with the events of the day. The journal was also a way for me to debrief the events of the day and provide context for situations and dialog that occurred throughout the expedition.

**Lived Experience Descriptions**

Shortly after the expedition, participants were given a lived experience description kit, which contained transcripts of their audio journals, compact disc versions of their original audio journal, a book of photographs from the experience, a blank composition book for pre-writing, a protocol-writing guide, and a lived experience description task sheet. Using van Manen’s (1990, p. 64) procedural suggestions, participants were given the following guidance about creating a lived experience description: First, describe the experience as you lived through it; avoid as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations. As you develop
these descriptions, be sure to focus on describing the experience from the inside, almost like a state of mind, highlighting the feelings, the mood, and emotions. You may also choose to focus on a particular example or incident that occurred during the experience. Describe specific events such as an adventure, a happening, or a particular experience, but try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, attending to how the body felt, how things smelled, and how they sounded. Finally, try to avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology.

Based on the above guidelines, participants were asked to write a direct account of their personal experience of participating in the Teacher Leadership Expedition as they lived through it. Honoring the use of new media literacies (Kist, 2005), participants were given the choice to complete this through various modalities including handwritten, audio recording, or typewritten mediums. Regardless of their choice, participants were asked to use their composition books as the location where they kept their prewriting entries. Participants were also reminded to feel free to use the various documents that were created during their experience such as audio journal, transcripts, photo journal, their Teacher Leadership Journal, or any other document they found beneficial to this task.

These lived experience descriptions, the audio journal transcripts, and my audio field journal transcripts served as the core data sets that were used as the central focus for a series of ongoing interviews with the participants (Appendix C).

Ongoing Participant Interviews

Over the course of four months, each of the seven participants participated in three semi-structured individual interviews of up to one hour in length. These interviews
utilized the participant audio journals and lived experience descriptions as the catalyst for conversational dialog in search of meaning. Since each participant’s experiences were situated within his or her own reality, the interview questions differed for each participant in order to seek meaning for each participant. Interview questions focused on understanding and collating participant responses around existential lifeworlds or fundamental existential themes such as lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality; van Manen, 1990). This organizing focus for the interviews helped to “avoid causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations” (p. 64).

The interviews themselves were an evolving source of phenomenological data. The primary purpose of the follow-up interviews was to seek clarification, co-construct meaning, and extract/structure the essence of the experience for each participant based on the data sources. Furthermore, it was critical that the participants’ voices were preserved and the interviews were a way to ensure that the integrity of their voices remained—preserving the true essence of their experience (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The journals, protocols, and field notes provided stepping-off points where the essence could begin its construction via recursive, hermeneutic dialog.

Data Analysis Strategies

Though the very nature of phenomenological research evokes a fluid and ambiguous methodological process (Gadamer, 1975; Rorty, 1979; van Manen, 1990), because of the new territory and uncharted domains of this study, it was decided that a more rigorous and regimented approach to analysis be applied. Central to the analysis in
this study is the modified *Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen* method outlined by Moustakas (1994) (Figure 7). This analytical approach was developed by combining and modifying the analytic processes proposed by Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975). Moustakas’ (1994) modification, and the subsequent analytic protocol for this study, provides an analysis procedure that uses a systematic treatment for each data set while still preserving the multiple realities represented by each participant (p. 122).

To obtain full description of the experience, I utilized the participants’ self-facilitated pre- and post-interview transcripts, audio journals, transcripts of the journals, researcher field audio journal transcripts, and follow-up interview transcripts. These sources align with van Manen’s (1990) suggestions for mining phenomenological and experiential descriptions. Not condensing or summarizing the participants’ voices attempted to preserve the integrity of all data sets. In addition, recursive readings of the texts, including journals, interview transcripts, and lived experience descriptions, were used in an attempt to utilize caution over the presuppositions that may creep into an analysis process. The ultimate goal of this process is to capture the *lebenswelt*, or the essence of each account (M. Miles & Huberman, 1994; Zahavi, 2003).

Throughout the *horizontalization* (Moustakas, 1994) phase of the analysis, recursive readings were used to search for practical understanding of meanings and actions (M. Miles & Huberman, 1994). These data streams were fused and analyzed for recurring and emerging structures and themes indicated by statements of meaning that: (a) runs through all or most of the pertinent data; or (b) one in the minority that carries
Figure 7. Data analysis flowchart

A combination of approaches for isolating themes within meaning units was used including holistic/sententious, selective/highlighting, and detailed/line-by-line approaches (van Manen, 1990). It is important to note that this type of thematic understanding “is not a rule-bound process, but a free act of seeing meaning” (p. 79). It is through these
structures (Hatch, 2002) that one will be able to begin constructing the essence of the adventure-based professional development experience.

This process was carried out for each of the seven participants. The final stage of the analysis was to create a composite description “of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textual-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122).

For this study, thematic structures were constructed around the four proposed lifeworld existentials “which probably pervade the lifeworlds of all human beings, regardless of their historical, cultural or social situatedness” (van Manen, 1990, p. 101). Within each of these lifeworlds, sub-thematic development was established in order to provide a more detailed structure within van Manen’s existential lifeworld shell. In an attempt to synthesize the phenomenological perspectives of van Manen (1990) and Moustakas (1994) the meaning units were clustered into themes according to the existential lifeworld each theme represented. These four lifeworlds and their descriptive meanings are as follows:

**Lived time or temporality:**

Lived time is the time that appears to speed up when we enjoy ourselves, or slow down when we feel bored during an uninteresting lecture or when sitting anxiously in the dentist’s chair. Lived time is also our temporal way of being in the world--as a young person oriented to an open and beckoning future, or as an elderly person recollecting the past, etc. The temporal dimensions of past, present,
and future constitute the horizons of a person’s temporal landscape. (van Manen, 2002e)

Lived space or spaciality:

But lived space is more difficult to put into words since the experience of lived space (like that of lived time or body) is largely pre-verbal; we do not ordinarily reflect on it. And yet we know that the space in which we find ourselves affects the way we feel. In general, we may say that we become the space we are in. (van Manen, 2002d)

Lived body or corporeality:

When we meet another person in his or her landscape or world we meet that person first of all through his or her body. In our physical or bodily presence we both reveal something about ourselves and we always conceal something at the same time--not necessarily consciously or deliberately, but rather in spite of ourselves. When the body is the object of someone else’s gaze, it may lose its naturalness or instead it may happen that it grows enhanced in its modality of being. (van Manen, 2002b)

Lived human relation or relationality:

As we meet others, we approach them in a corporeal way: through a handshake or by gaining an impression of the other person in the way that he or she is physically present to us. Even if we learn about another person only indirectly (by letter, telephone, or book) we often already have formed a physical impression of the person which later may get confirmed or negated when we find out, to our
surprise, that the person looks very alike or different from the way we expected.

As we meet the other we are able to develop a conversational relation which allows us to transcend our selves. (van Manen, 2002c)

Strategies for Achieving Trustworthiness/Validity

The pursuit of trustworthiness in this study was grounded by four reflective questions that Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended to be asked by all interpretive researchers. Each of the four questions were used a guide for discussing trustworthiness/validity procedures.

1. Truth Value—”How can one establish confidence in the truth of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

   Central to the ability to establish truth value within this study is the appropriate application of phenomenological methodology. Though an established phenomenological design does not exist, adherence to the intentions and philosophical underpinnings that define phenomenological inquiry and analysis create a bounded and defensible inquiry. In addition, hermeneutic phenomenology embraces and celebrates the multiple realities that define an experience, resulting in low threat of internal validity. The pursuit of truth value looks towards natural validity and the conviction to keep the process as natural and uncontrived as possible (Warner, 1991).

   2. Applicability—”How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).
In a naturalistic inquiry such as phenomenology, the quest for generalizability is nonexistent. As stated above, phenomenology accepts multiple realities. This acceptance makes any generalization impossible, for one’s reality cannot be generalized to be the reality of anyone else. This, however, does not deal with the issue of transferability.

Within a naturalistic context, “if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 298). To aid this process for future inquirers, this study intends to provide as much contextual detail as possible so that future applicators can have the clearest understanding possible with which to make decisions on transference.

3. Consistency—”How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects in the same context?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

To request the replicability called for in conventional research from a phenomenological methodology is antithetical. Each person experiences phenomena differently. It is this variance that this study is trying to capture through phenomenological inquiry. It is dependability, taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design-induced change, that one must seek in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 299). This focus on dependability was executed through open and critical discussions with participants and fellow researchers throughout the study. These discussions were entered into in an effort to bracket and
examine the unstable and/or design associated factors that could influence the validity of the study.

4. Neutrality—“How can one establish the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry are determined by the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivation, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

So begins the balance of subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative inquiry. Within this study, the quest for neutrality was operationalized using a variety of methodological tools (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): (a) replication of responses—the collation of similar responses for the same participant over a variety of questions or data sources; (b) prolonged engagement—a four-month interview process that was informed by recursive readings of the ongoing texts; (c) member checking—working with participants to co-construct the “truest” representation of their experience, not focusing on the factuality, but presenting the most realistic and genuine essence of the experience; and (d) triangulation—using both multiple data sources to conform emerging structures of the experience, as well as using multiple readers to help determine and verify the structures themselves.

As Maxwell (2005) stated in his book *Qualitative Research Design*, “Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques” (p. 105). This warning has been a constant reminder throughout the design, collection, and analysis phases. Though the procedures and intentions associated with this study may be pure, it is only through systematic, ethical attempts as a researcher, and the desire to make this research process
as transparent as possible, that this study will be able to provide a clear and true understanding of what adventure-based professional development means to teacher colleagues.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS
Introduction

Phenomenological research opens the doors for a fluid and ambiguous methodological process (Gadamer, 1975; Rorty, 1979; van Manen, 1990). This fluid process embraces the varied and complex lived experiences we seek to understand through this study. How do participants experience a three-day adventure-based professional development experience with their colleagues? How can we know? It is the intangible of each person’s experience, as well as the universality of all participants’ experiences that this study hopes to capture.

The findings presented in this chapter represent the analysis and synthesis of the experiences of the seven participants\(^1\) on the three-day Teacher Leadership Expedition, an adventure-based professional development backpacking experience. Each participant’s lived experience is presented individually and structured across three broad structures that are in alignment with the overarching research questions structuring this study: (a) each participant’s expectations for the adventure-based professional development experience; (b) each participant’s perceptions and interpretations of the adventure-based professional development experience as seen through four thematic domains: lived time, lived space, lived time, and lived space.

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\(^1\) In order to preserve the participants’ anonymity, all persons and places discussed throughout the study have been provided pseudonyms.
lived space, lived body, and lived human relations; and (c) each participant’s perceived personal and professional impact of the adventure-based professional development experience. These individual lived experiences enabled the creation of the final component of this chapter: a composite lived experience that is illustrative of a common description of the TLE experience, representing the group as a whole.

Jan

Expectations

For Jan, her initial expectations for participating in the Teacher Leadership Expedition (TLE) were centered on collegial themes. She was exposed to the idea of the professional development experience through an elementary school colleague with whom she was working. For Jan, the TLE appeared on the surface to resemble what she had known as a “staff retreat,” which in the past had not proven to be the most positive of experiences. Jan said, “I felt apprehension toward participating in a retreat with my colleagues. I have been on retreats with colleagues before in a team-building capacity where the experience turned into a nightmare. So my guard was up.”

Jan provided further insight into her past experiences with collegial development. For her, the ongoing issues and apprehension that were central to her negative perceptions were in relation to the development of institutional mythology:

I hope that everything that goes on here stays here [the TLE]. I know that we tend to go back and talk to our friends about things that happened on these little adventures, and sometimes those things are carried on forever and ever and ever and ever and that annoys me, because I think that when you’re having an
experience like this, it’s neat to just have it, benefit from it, not benefit from it and then move on to something else. So we’ll see.

These institutional mythology issues were amplified by Jan’s self-assigned transient status within the group:

I agreed to participate in the Leadership Expedition as an elementary staff member. Before the expedition took place, I became a middle school staff member. I felt awkward as to where I would fit in. I felt like I had abandoned my elementary colleagues and stepped into the unknown world of the middle school.

Though seeded within issues of trust, Jan had great professional expectations for participating in such a different experience with her colleagues. She felt secure with the familiarity she had with a number of the participants and was excited to have the opportunity to venture into the unknown with less familiar colleagues she would be working with in her new setting the following school year. These expectations showed a clear connection to the relationship development characteristics of experiential education:

Most of the people I’m on this expedition with I’ve worked with before or I’m going to be working with this year and that’s exciting to me. I’m going to get to know them probably in a way that I would never know them professionally. I love to go places with people that I don’t really know because I get to learn about other personalities and how people think and what they do.

As a way to facilitate the development of collegial relationships with her colleagues, Jan took an initial stock of who her colleagues were, what she knew about them, and how she expected these characteristics to unfold throughout the TLE:
These people that I am with, most of them, I trust them and they seem like really nice people, and they all have pretty good reputations professionally as well personally, and so I’m excited about that. I think we have a really nice mixture of personalities. We have some quiet people, some not outdoorsy people, some people that don’t care whether they get down and dirty, and people in between. It makes a good mix. I’m sure the ladies will roll because they’re strong-willed and they’re not afraid to voice opinions, so guys, good luck. We’ll see how you [the guys] survive this three-day excursion.

Jan carefully expressed her capacity to extend trust to “most” of the members of the group, and through her itemization of the group’s qualities, she illustrated a connection to the other members of the group as well. Being a self-described “strong woman,” she was also sure to extend her sympathies to the men in the group.

For Jan, the participants in the TLE represented a collegial transition—from elementary to middle school. How she navigated that transition was up to her. However, her initial expectations for the experience were pointing her in a particular direction: “I decided to stick with the elementary group as much as possible.”

Expectations for the TLE experience were not limited to issues of group dynamics. Being a lifelong athlete, Jan embraced the physical and mental challenge of the TLE and was quick to point out that she typically chooses to participate in athletic activities that are conducted outside. “The fact that the experience was an outdoor expedition was the selling point. I live for the opportunity to be outdoors whenever
possible.” The TLE provided both a profound connection to the outdoors and the opportunity to fulfill a longtime desire to participate in a backpacking experience:

I love the outdoors. I’m happier outdoors than I am anywhere. I’m tired. I want to have some laughs and some struggles and allow me to clear my head and allow me to be the best that I can be at the job that I do.

I’ve always wanted to go on a backpacking trip, and I’d like to go on a longer one, but I thought this would be a good introduction, and hopefully I can convince my husband to do a longer one someday.

The use of the outdoors as an instructional medium was a key factor in Jan’s expectations. Seen as a mediating force in her life, Jan looked to the TLE, and the extended time in the outdoors it would provide, as a means of centering and refocusing both personally and professionally for the upcoming school year:

I hope that it’s going to relax me a little bit. I hope that it’s going to give me time to think about some things that I need to prepare for in the next week to get ready for school, and it’s just refreshing. I’m hoping that this will give me the things that I need to get started this school year, and I can take something back and some refreshing things and ideas and thoughts and have a great school year.

Jan’s interviews, journals, and lived experience description all depict a true interrelatedness between her personal and professional intentions and expectations. In her lived experience description, Jan drew her own connections between the personal and professional lenses through which she conceived her expectations:
I know that this expedition was supposed to make me a better leader. I did not attend for that purpose. My life has been turned upside down in the last year by personal events that I choose not to discuss in detail here. I wasn’t sure that physically, emotionally, and professionally that I wanted to continue teaching. I thought that the expedition would give me some time away from my personal life to think and reflect on where I’m going personally and interact with those that will affect my life professionally. It is an obsessive drive for me to be successful professionally. I am the only member of my family that has graduated from college and still works in a skilled profession. I love my job and hope that I will always want to continue to refine and learn new techniques to better myself.

*Experience Perceptions and Interpretations*

*Lived Time*

For each participant, the engagement with one’s concept of time differed greatly. For Jan, the concept of time began with the TLE timing within her calendar year. Conducted in mid-August Jan noted, “There were some scheduling conflicts for me personally, so I thought I should discuss the prospect with my family.” These scheduling conflicts included such personal moments as her wedding anniversary and her participation in a national soccer tournament. Despite the TLE’s overlap with her personal events, Jan’s discussion of the TLE’s timing with her family resulted in a supportive endorsement of her participation, “Of course my husband is always supportive of my adventures; both personally and educationally.”
Throughout the expedition, Jan conveyed few references to time. The references that occurred were done so to develop the idea that in this type of professional development setting there was a perception of having more time, in particular, more time to be outdoors. “During the school year, I don’t have much opportunity to spend time outside.” Interestingly, Jan perceived this new environment as a key component to synchronizing the myriad of schedules that prevent many teacher colleagues from collaborating and having professional interactions:

We’ve now broken the ice and so I think that we’re going to have a great beginning to the new-year and that’s a part of this experience; this experience has done something for us that we normally couldn’t do because there’s no time for everybody to get together. Nobody’s schedule ever coincides with anybody else.

Time in this setting was modified from what Jan had previously known. There were the conventional uses of watches to establish key points during the day such as departure times, but many of the other day’s activities were run according to biological (if I am hungry, then I will eat), and natural (when the sun goes down, I go to bed) stimulus. As a whole, Jan saw the extent of time devoted to the experience as appropriate, but modifiable if necessary:

Could I go more days? Probably, but I think this was enough of an experience and enough of a bonding to get us jumpstarted and I think everybody needs to do something like this at some point in time in their life, if they don’t want to do something extensive, even a day thing would be good.
For Jan, time also became an issue when attempting to reflect on her experiences during the TLE. “When an activity is over, somehow I pack it up and store it in my brain and leave it there. It becomes difficult for me to reference the details of the experience.” For her, the ability to make time stand still through the use of photographs and journals was critical for her to reference her past.

_Lived Space_

As a central feature in an adventure-based experience, the setting, or space in which the experience develops walks the line between providing an environment that is challenging, yet manageable for the participants. Jan’s unfamiliarity with outdoor travel and the prospect of participating in an adventure-based experience in the outdoors was not a point of contention but a facet to a balanced philosophy of learning:

Well, for me, any outdoor education environment is better for me. I don’t like being caged up. I like fresh air. Would I want to do it [TLE] for every class that I took? No, there’s a place for everything, but I truly believe that we don’t even give our students enough opportunity to experience nature and life and what it all involves and how it all evolves and so for me, this was the ticket to the start of a new year.

With this new space came the prospect of traveling to various locations throughout the day in an attempt to arrive at a campsite each evening. Each day’s hikes were varied in their length and terrain, and all provided deeper understanding of Jan’s lived space. On her first day Jan commented:
My most difficult part was the zigging and the zagging and changing directions on an incline that's very difficult for me to do. The changing elevation is one of the things that make it difficult for me to do these kinds of things.

The second hiking day provided a change in the nature of the hike. “My day today was a good day, but hiking was a different kind of terrain, flat, damp.” Both of these sections of trail provided unique opportunities for Jan to interact with the colleagues who had joined her in this place, as well as interact with the beauty she saw around her. “It was a comforting feeling to talk with people about personal and professional issues in a beautiful place such as Oil Creek and come away from it feeling good about life.” These new surroundings also provided Jan with a new appreciation for the quiet times to reflect personally and professionally stating, “I love the peace and quiet.”

Each day’s travel brought Jan and the rest of the participants to a destination where camp was made. Participants spent one night in each of the two locations used on the TLE. Though drastically different from what she had experienced in the past, Jan found comfort in the primitive features that defined these new living spaces:

When we got to our destination today, I think it was great. The little huts [Adirondack shelters] are wonderful. The fact that we have some kind of latrine or bathroom or pit, or whatever you want to call it, is good. It makes it a little more comfortable for us ladies who don’t like to pee and poo in the woods. The primitive nature of the facilities provided a vestige of the familiar, while still enabling her to function within her comfort zone.
When asked to reflect on the space as a whole that was utilized throughout the TLE, Jan wrote, “The [TLE] will be a constant reminder to me that learning can take place anytime, anywhere, in any capacity.” The space itself provided a number of “venues” for personal and professional interactions. On the trail, around the campfire, in the “kitchen,” all of these spaces provided Jan with new perspectives and challenges that helped to define her experience.

Lived Body

Thematically central to Jan’s experience are her perceptions and interpretations of her bodily experience. Jan had participated in athletic activities prior to attending the TLE, so she admits to having a general understanding of her physical and mental tendencies:

No one has really analyzed my learning styles or strengths or weaknesses, but I am probably a strong undiagnosed attention-deficit person. I retain information through several modalities at the same time (visual, auditory, and tactile). I participate in an activity with 100% commitment.

Backpacking was a new physical venture for her and provided some additional insights regarding her lived body, and a commitment to supporting others in the group who were, in her mind, not as experienced in extended physical activity. “Meredith was very nervous about the whole trip, so I decided to stick with the elementary group as much as possible.”

For three days, the solitary mode of transportation for the participants was hiking. For individuals who had not had much, if any, prior experience hiking with a backpack,
this was a daunting task. By relying on her previous physical endeavors, Jan had positive perceptions of the daily hikes. Comments such as, “The hiking was challenging but refreshing,” and, “The days and nights were gorgeous and I really felt refreshed,” characterized her impressions of the experience. Jan’s positive interpretation of the physicality related to the experience continued throughout the TLE commenting, “I didn’t go home feeling exhausted at all.” Interlaced within these physical perceptions were her cognitive processes that provided insight into her development within the experience, that is, “Keeping my boots tied tightly was knowledge gained that I won’t forget,” as well as some motivating forces that underscored her experience: “Any time I can participate in something innovative excites me.”

Jan’s perception of the experience was one that encompassed many physically taxing moments. It was these moments that helped her to define what she was capable of doing: “I always feel better when I push myself beyond the comfort zone.” And it was this border-crossing, this realization of what was truly possible that enabled Jan to take a step back and reflect not only on her own physical prowess, but her cognitive orientation towards the profession stating, “I think this project has made me stronger as a person and educator.”

*Lived Human Relations*

A central feature for this study was the opportunity to have colleagues participate in adventure-based professional development, as opposed to a mere collection of educators with no professional association other than job title. These collegial relations provide a different context and frame of reference through which interactions occur.
As noted earlier, Jan had expressed an initial apprehension about participating in what she considered a “retreat” with her colleagues. In the past, these experiences had not proven to be beneficial for Jan, and she was weary about the possibility of having the same type of experience with the TLE. She readily admitted that, “My guard was up.” Jan’s position in the group was different from any of the other participants. Prior to attending the TLE Jan was an elementary special education teacher. She had chosen to switch to a middle school special education position for the upcoming school year. The participants on the TLE represented her former elementary colleagues, as well as her new middle school colleagues. Her assimilation into the new collegial group was facilitated by her perspective on professional growth. “Often it’s easier for me to venture out of my element with strangers than with people I know.” Though positive and excited to work with new people, Jan still “felt awkward” about possibly having to negotiate two collegial groups. Jan quickly sought commonalities that she could use as ways to relate to her new colleagues on personal and professional levels:

I had worked with Angela at the elementary level. I know her style, dedication, work ethic, and determination. I had heard about some of the other Edgewood people—mostly positive, but wasn’t sure how things would work out. It was comforting to know that Michael and Phyllis were both special educators.

On the trail, Jan sensed possibly the greatest commonality of all—apprehension. Admittedly embarking on what was for most a very new experience, she noted, “I sensed some anxiety the first day of the expedition. It was comforting to realize other people feel and experience similar things.” As a participant, Jan embraced this common bond, and
used it to fuel her initial interactions on the trail. This extended trail time provided Jan the opportunity to develop relationships and understandings with her fellow colleagues. After the first day she commented:

I liked the conversations and the fact that people changed positions in the line, so everybody could talk to each other. We learned a lot about each other today and that was good. I love talking to different people along the way. I learned a lot of things about a lot of people personally that I did not know before. Their likes, their differences, their families, their relationships. That was exciting to me. I love to see how people operate. I love to see what makes people work.

As discussed earlier, the TLE utilized a variety of spaces through which collegial interactions developed. For Jan, one of the key venues for these interactions was the “kitchen” where participants prepared two meals a day as a team:

I loved the cooking experience. It was neat to watch the different things that people were comfortable with. Some people were comfortable with cooking, some people were comfortable with cleaning, some people were comfortable with organizing every group’s materials and food and things, and so it’s really neat to see how different people’s styles make them unique.

For Jan, this kitchen-work was much more than a means of sustenance. She perceived these interactions as a way to shape her interpretation and orientation towards the profession. “The challenges in my personal life today are similar in the respect that I’m going into a new position, meeting new people, having to adjust and work with new people, which is exactly what I did today.” Jan saw this new understanding as a way to
embrace the diversity her colleagues represented. She stated, “And again, I think that’s [different people’s styles] what we have to look at in our classrooms, the styles and what makes our colleagues unique, and what makes the students that we work with unique.”

Though Jan’s perceptions were predominantly positive, there were instances when she sensed a potential for issues, or times when she and her colleagues did not function at their full potential. One of these times occurred when the participants were divided based on grade levels to begin planning a leadership initiative to implement the following school year. In the middle school group there were five individuals: four eighth-grade teachers and one seventh-grade teacher. The eighth-grade teachers initially began planning for an eighth-grade-specific initiative, which left the one seventh-grade teacher to plan alone. Jan immediately noticed this:

We needed to make our project a community project including everybody in our building, then she [the lone seventh-grade teacher] just flew with it and she took it where she needed it to go and shared her ideas and we combined her ideas with the eighth grade team. She’s ready to jump right in and I’m excited and she’s all happy.

Jan perceived these events as an immensely positive professional exchange. Jan saw her colleagues transition from their initial perceptions of each other into a more holistic and supportive collegial unit. “Some people had anxiety working in groups with other people—but that turned into a very positive thing. We all got together and worked. Everybody stuck in there and did the things they needed to do.”
When asked to reflect on her overall perception of the lived human relations throughout the experience, Jan stated:

I’m feeling more comfortable [with my colleagues] and I know what I’m going to have to work with, and learning more of their styles and how they work and their opinions and how they voice those opinions. I learned that [my colleagues] are a great bunch of people that are goal oriented and they’re all serious about what they do but they’re not afraid to laugh and not afraid to let down their guard and tell people how they feel and their convictions. I’m pretty proud of that.

Perceived Personal and Professional Impact

Distinct for each participant, the personal and professional orientations towards TLE helped to create widely diverse lived experiences. These experiences have a direct impact on each participant’s perceived personal and professional impact of the TLE. For Jan, the line between personal and professional impact becomes very fuzzy. Jan is passionate about being an educator and sees her role as a diverse and interrelated component of who she is as a person. The TLE actually provided her personal refuge by pursuing an intense and challenging professional avenue:

Personally, it was a godsend. I needed to take a break and I needed to get away from the personal stress in my life and that was my goal and that was the reason I signed up to prep me for the new-year. Both personally and professionally, I think I’m going to be better prepared for the new school year.

Jan felt a sense of being refreshed by the experience, and hoped that this feeling would continue as she and her colleagues moved back in to the classroom environment. “This
was very, very, very refreshing for me as well, mentally and physically and so I hope that I can take this back, the strategies that we talked about, the attitudes that we all had.”

For Jan, her greatest accomplishment was couched in her ability to reconceptualize the profession she so passionately pursues. She stated that:

I think that the greatest accomplishment from this expedition is the renewed enthusiasm I have for learning and teaching. Learning and teaching needs to be a fun, rewarding, ongoing experience.

Speaking from a broader professional context, Jan perceives the opportunity to be infectious with her newly developed professional perspectives, and model the behaviors and attitudes she found to be successful with her colleagues:

I think there are wonderful attitudes out here, and I can only hope that these attitudes carry over into the classroom and to the children and the rest of the members of the team that didn’t go on this expedition. They will carry over.

We shared everything from bug spray to gum to whatever we needed to share and if somebody needed a little more of something then somebody gave up something of theirs, and that’s what it’s all about and that’s what team building is all about—working together, and that can only rub off in the work environment.

I’m especially excited to share my experiences with other teachers and other professionals in a teacher leadership capacity. I think that word of mouth is one of the best ways and somebody that’s experienced something and they share it with somebody that they know or even colleagues that they don’t know and say, well, wow, maybe I should try this.
Jan’s lived experience highlighted her struggle to seek acceptance from a new collegial community, as well as her personal determination to reconceptualize the profession she has chosen to pursue for nearly 30 years. Jan desired the opportunity to look beyond the standardized aspects of her professional life and seek out what could be. It would appear that Jan saw this new understanding of herself, her profession, and her colleagues as a transformed view of her personal and professional trajectories. She saw herself in a different place than when she started.

Michael

Expectations

Michael came to this experience with a balanced agenda that spanned both personal and professional realms. He was in search of a progressive, engaging approach to professional development that aligned with his own personal and professional interests. Michael stated, “Professionally I was looking for something exciting to do, something different, something that would test me a little bit physically and emotionally. And I love the outdoors . . . it really sounded like a neat thing to do.”

Michael’s expectations for the TLE stemmed from his personal experience with illness. Sixteen-years ago Michael was diagnosed with what many felt would be at best a debilitating disease that would potentially require constant nursing care for the rest of his life. Michael, his family, and his friends struggled through a long, but successful, recovery—Michael had overcome the odds and was well again. The memory of this illness, and the memories of what he once was able to do prior to being sick were motivating forces for Michael’s expectations of the TLE. Through an adventure-based
model, Michael also saw the opportunity to challenge himself and grow both physically and mentally:

I chose this on a more personal note. This is sort of for me a good test of my physical ability. Ah, going on fifteen years ago I was quite ill and I recovered, but I don’t feel like I’ve just physically been able to recover the whole way. And this is sort of a time for me to break out of my shell and hopefully do that. I’m a novice backpacker and the back of my mind is a devil’s advocate saying, “Ah, I don’t think you’re going to make it.” And it’s something I’m going to work on—getting that little devil off my back and being able to break free of that. Now all the people think when you’re sick and you get better, that’s it. Well, for me it has been a big change, you know. It sticks with you.

This personal growth/learning-centered orientation is evidenced by his initial description of the experience as a “leadership class.” For Michael, this mental designation as a class is seen as positive, a place where learning can and will occur for him.

Parallel to these personal expectations is Michael’s devotion to his family. Prior to leaving he expected to have to balance the excitement of the experience with the sadness of leaving his family for three days. Michael commented on this stating:

My daughter Marta said she’d make a card for me for when I get home Sunday. It’s funny, I’m such a homebody with the kids and my wife that when I’m out and about for a little bit, it’s a little bit of an adjustment. I’ve got excitement in doing this and I get a little sad just not being home with them.
Michael’s initial collegial themes depict an orientation towards his colleagues that is holistic in nature. He is genuinely concerned with reconnecting with the people he has worked with, or will be working with, reestablishing the lines of communications that may have been strained throughout the years. His connections with his colleagues on the trip are fairly extensive having worked with all of the members except one prior to the TLE:

Um, the people I’m with, I worked with Kelly on our team. I just see Angela in the hallway and talk to her, hello and that. I’ve worked extensively with Phyllis. I know Pam, know Meredith—they are some really neat people. The new person is going to be teaching LD with us. I’m sorry to say I forgot her name. You know, she’s going to be [at the middle school]. You know, I feel real close to a lot of the people I work with.

Michael’s attention to his colleagues is centered on being able to get to know them as people who have a new perspective to offer him—potentially friends—as opposed to simply other professionals:

I think professionally, you know, I get to see some people I knew and just, you know, get to know them really well. And some of the people I work with at the middle school and with all the changes we’ve had over, oh gosh, the last five, six, seven years. It’s sort of refreshing to bond a little bit with them. You know we’ve gone through a lot together, administrative changes, people losing jobs, and people’s lives changing. You know people having kids, people getting divorced,
and it’s nice knowing that people you work with are really pretty neat. I thought I’d get to know them a little outside of the work area.

And I’m really lucky, you know at Edgewood, we’ve got some darn good people. Not just good teachers but good people. And so I’m excited about that, to see, you know, what knowledge I can gain from them and to develop closer friendships.

Experience Perceptions and Interpretations

Lived Time

The conceptual development of one’s lived time is difficult to construct. For Michael, the common experiences such as time speeding up, time slowing down, or even the feeling of time standing still was not something that he readily experienced. He did, however, convey temporal notions that align with van Manen’s (2002e) description of temporal reflection. “The temporal dimensions of past, present, and future constitute the horizons of a person’s temporal landscape” (¶1). Michael’s experiences with lived time took him to a place in his memory where he relived some of his developmental moments, and embraced the teachings of his past:

My mind got to wondering as I hiked. You know when I was cooling off my feet in the creek, I flashed back to being a kid with a creek behind the house, a creek down at the park, and skipping stones with a good friend of mine who passed away when he was twenty-four. We spent a lot of time down there as little kids. And it’s really, you know, some neat memories. You know the thinking while we
were walking, emotionally, some of it was, “Lord, help me out. I’m in your hands. Let me do right.” And He’s been there as always to hold me up.

Michael saw these “wonderings” as an important part of his experience. It gave him an opportunity to travel back in time to places he had not visited for quite some time. In this new environment, visiting old memories, Michael felt that he was able to view those memories from a new vantage point, providing new perspective on who he had become.

These reflections on the past also served as a guide for Michael:

The first hill was a killer! I kept thinking to myself, “What are you doing here, are you nuts?” I kept flashing back to the time I rode a horse back in the Rockies along with my wife. On the first day we were in the saddle for nine hours, and boy it killed me. Old Norm, the cowboy in charge, said that the only thing to do was get back on tomorrow. I took his advice and miraculously I felt a whole lot better each day. I was praying for the same thing would happen here on the backpacking.

These memories of the past continued for Michael throughout the TLE experience, many of them rooted in his past physical struggles: “I thought all the way up to my flashbacks of my recovery from my illness when I would lie down to rest.” These memories came back to Michael during these quiet times because they reminded him of the months he spent in bed while ill, how the days were optimistic but the nights were lonely. During these reflective times on the TLE, Michael would often find his thoughts drifting towards home; “I thought of my wife and family.” He felt great pride and knew his family would be equally proud of what he was accomplishing. He felt lucky,
“blessed,” to have a family who supported him. He remembered all of the places they had traveled together, and envisioned what it would be like to bring them back to this place, in the woods.

*Lived Space*

As an existential theme, identifying lived space within one’s experience can be very difficult. For many, these spatial facets are not what are typically verbalized. As noted, thematically, lived space does not necessarily represent the true physical structure of one’s surroundings, but rather the emotive or visceral response that one has to those particular surroundings. In Michael’s case, very little time was devoted to the discussion of his interaction with the space. In one passage, Michael notes the relaxing capacity of one of the evening’s campsites:

> When we reached our destination today I was dead tired. I got my bag out and my sack out and I laid down I thought I’ll never nap and—BAM—I did. I woke up and felt a whole lot better, courtesy of some Advil, and really exhilarated.

What is interesting about Michael’s lived space interactions is their inseparability with his perceptions of lived time. As discussed above, various locations and spaces such as the creek, the first hill, and the places he laid down to rest all provided avenues for him to pursue memories from his past. All of these spaces provided spatial dimensions that evoked feelings of comfort, fatigue, excitement, and sadness. Without the qualitative aspects of these spaces, these memories, as Michael experienced them, would not have come to him.
Bodily perceptions and interpretations within a phenomenological framework are precipitated by the perspective of the participant. There are situational aspects that can drive a bodily view such as being inspired, fatigued, or repulsed. Michael’s perceptions and interpretations were no different.

From the outset of the TLE experience Michael was attuned to his body and how it was faring in relation to his colleagues. The expedition itself started with a half-mile section on a dirt road that was primarily uphill. For many in the group, including Michael, this was the first half-mile anyone had ever hiked with a backpack on. Michael remembered being near the front of the group during this initial hike: “Hearing everyone talking while I was sucking air was pretty depressing. I felt like I was in the worst shape out of the whole bunch.”

This early pattern of self-doubt was repeated as the day continued. Michael found himself unable to talk with his colleagues because he was struggling to catch his breath. This immediate physical struggle started an emotional ebb and flow throughout the day, bouncing back and forth between feelings of wanting to find a way out of the TLE, and elation that he was accomplishing something so difficult. Once at camp, Michael was able to interpret his day:

We made it to the first camp and had a great supper, and I’ll be honest, I didn’t think I’d make it. Ah, the day got better as we went. One of my goals is physically to be able to do this so I know I can. And it’s been really good. It’s been good for me. I just hope that everything holds out and I do well.
Michael’s bodily perception began to improve as the days continued. Though tired, he was seeing that his body was capable of great things. “I woke up stiff but I’ll tell you what though, it was a real good day of hiking. I had a great time with the hike.” Michael even began drawing parallels between overcoming his physical struggles, and the struggles he was facing as a professional:

I’ve had a couple of my previous administrators, and especially my special education supervisor, where we didn’t see eye to eye at all. It was a challenge for me just to go into school each day. There were times when it was one day, one step at a time. And maybe [the TLE] is going to help me with my perseverance, maybe this will help.

By the end of the TLE experience, Michael was able to articulate his new familiarity with his body:

The constant minor adjustments to my backpack, I remember doing that a lot, just to help make it comfortable. I can recall the smell of the bug spray all the time and getting comfortable with a ripening body, hearing my breath, feeling my heart pound, and ache in my upper legs. These are things that I can recall very easily.

This ease of recollection was driven by Michael’s new perspective on his body. He came to the TLE on a mission to redefine his bodily potential, to show himself what he was capable of doing. Michael’s new lived body experience allowed him to shed his past perceptions of a body slowed from illness, and reconceptualize the strength, depth, and fortitude he truly contained. “All in all, this was really a whole lot more than I expected, and I have asked for a whole lot more than I thought was in me, and that’s a cool thing.”
For Michael, all but one of the participants in the TLE was familiar to him. He had worked with them in a variety of capacities, and in a variety of settings. Michael perceived this initial familiarity as providing a smooth transition from classroom colleagues to expedition colleagues:

As we got in on the trip more and started working together the enthusiasm of everyone else was contagious. In fact, it kept me going. I felt very comfortable sharing jobs. The give and take we had went real smooth.

Throughout the experience Michael found opportunities to try out new roles and relationships that he had not previously attempted. One of these instances was when Michael assumed a leadership role during a team-building exercise, the Helium Stick, which was conducted during a hiking rest break:

Getting done with the hike was nice and so was working along with my colleagues and friends. I sort of surprised myself when we did the helium stick and I came up with an idea and I just sort of ran with it and took charge and everybody went with it and it worked. That was pretty cool.

Michael’s extended trail time with each colleague enabled him to move beyond initial physical and conversational relationality and dispel previously conceived notions. Many of the people on the TLE Michael thought he knew, but he began to realize that he had only scratched the surface of who they were. The depth and character he began to see in his colleagues was inspiring:
I learned about some other people today, that their covers, in other words the outer presence they have, is a whole lot different than who they are. And you don’t just simply judge a book by its cover. Some of these discoveries were people that I’ve worked with, and I’m still working with, that I have grown a whole new level of respect for and admiration for.

This has helped reenergize me with school because I’m seeing veteran teachers who are excited about school and want to do extra to make school good for them, for the kids, for everyone. And that is so cool. It’s dynamic and to see teachers with as much or more experience as me getting excited about things, making change and taking risks.

At the end of the TLE experience, Michael reflected on his colleagues stating, “I’m really fortunate to work with these folks and to call them my colleagues and friends.”

**Perceived Personal and Professional Impact**

For Michael, his participation in the TLE experience was greatly motivated by personal ambition to overcome self-imposed barriers that were a result of a tragic illness 16 years ago. This motivation and determination are thematically evident in his reflections on the experience. By pushing himself, Michael was able to grow as an individual, and recalibrate what he had once thought was possible:

Personally I can’t believe I feel as well as I do. I know I’ll be stiff but I can’t believe I feel as well as I do. I gained the knowledge that I can push myself farther physically and mentally than I thought I could. It’s helped prepare me personally, knowing I can stretch my limits farther physically, emotionally.
These feelings of success ran deep for Michael. By processing and reflecting on these accomplishments, Michael began a process of redefining himself; a process that he acknowledged would take some time to fully understand:

This experience has meant a lot more to me emotionally than anyone could know. I feel I got somewhat of a monkey off my back, and I’m tearing up as I’m talking. It’s a very different feeling and it’s going to take me a little while to get used to it. I know I’ll probably be emotional over it for a while. I came here figuring I would not be able to make it, that I would not have the endurance, but I feel better today than a half-hour into [the TLE].

Even though Michael’s primary orientation to the TLE experience was from a personal plane, the end of the experience provided him the opportunity to align his new personal growth into the various roles he fulfills on a daily basis; colleague, teacher, father, and husband:

I really think others will benefit from my participation. I’m going to be one of the five go-to people for the seventh-eighth-grade day. And I’ll be honest; I wouldn’t be that person otherwise. I would have been working with my group of special education kids and that would be about it. And it’ll be neat for me to take a lead with my group and talk to them about [the seventh-eighth-grade teambuilding day] and get things moving. I think my kids at school will benefit. I guess I just feel surer of myself. At home, when my wife and kids are saying, “Come on,” when I’m tired and hey, you know, I won’t just flop on the couch. I can push farther and it’s not going to have any repercussions.
Lastly, while on the TLE, Michael took the time to look to others around him for guidance and inspiration. Whether it was hiking advice, proper cooking techniques, classroom best practices, he chose to open himself up to others to see what they could offer. For him, much of this new insight was collected through his observations and the modeling provided by his peers. Within these people he saw and drew strength from a unifying characteristic that connected them all. Michael said, “It showed me that the people, the veteran teachers I work with, have a huge enthusiasm for the kids and that’s neat to know that. You know, I always thought it, but it’s nice to know it for sure.”

Michael’s lived experience is one of overcoming—overcoming the past by breaking free of the chains from a previous illness that had prevented him from pursuing adventure and physical goals; overcoming the perceptions he carried for his colleagues and finding inspiration in people he had not seen as a source; and finally, overcoming the struggles of the classroom world by seeing potential for new leadership opportunities and avenues for professional growth.

Angela

*Expectations*

For Angela, participation in the TLE represented an opportunity to fulfill a life-long mission to be successful in a backpacking experience. From her first introduction to the possibility of participating in adventure-based professional development, she was intrigued about spending an extended amount of time in the wild:

This experience started many months ago, back to April, when my principal offered a unique educational leadership experience to his staff. The promise of
hiking three days in the northern Pennsylvania woods, sounded appealing, so I decided to check things out further.

It was the novelty of the program that initially attracted her. Angela readily admitted that she had never connected hiking as a professional endeavor before, and in this situation, she was willing to try. This fascination with backcountry travel was not as a result of past experience, but rather, a long-time desire to participate in such a physically demanding experience. Angela saw this as an opportunity to move beyond her self-imposed traditional conceptions of who she was and see what she was capable of doing:

I have never done anything like this physically as an adult, or even as a child. I don’t even think during my Girl Scout years. I was excited about that. I’ve never, I don’t know, I guess I don’t really consider myself an outdoorswoman. I do like skiing and I hike in Maine a lot, every summer. I don’t know, I guess I don’t experience this. My kids love being outside quite a bit. As a family we do a lot of stuff outside, but I guess just being away and having three days was real exciting to me.

Though she had never participated in this type of experience, Angela had a local knowledge of the area that was positive, giving her even more motivation to participate. Angela described her connection and impulse to attend by saying, “I was familiar with [the Oil City] area of Pennsylvania since my husband’s family has owned a family camp in Tionesta for years. I immediately decided that I wanted to participate.” Angela’s local knowledge gave her some key topographical insights into the region where the TLE was being held. This background knowledge of the rolling terrain gave credence to her
expectation that the TLE would be physically demanding—an expectation for which she hoped she had properly prepared:

I’m just a little apprehensive about the trip because I don’t know if I have trained appropriately. I got my boots first of June and I know they’re broken in. I’m a little apprehensive, I just hope that number one, I can sleep in a three-sided shelter, and that I have walked enough this summer to get ready for this trip. And that’s it.

Angela’s concern and high physical expectation for the TLE continued up through the evening before she left. Her concern and doubt caused her to reevaluate the “necessities” she had planned on bringing:

The last night before the trip, I was mainly concerned about the level of training I had done to get ready for the trip. I was worried that my legs wouldn’t be up for the task. The night before, I shed TONS of my necessities out of my pack realizing instead, how little I could get away with.

Initially, Angela was ambivalent about her professional expectations for the TLE. “Professionally, I don’t know if I have any expectations for this.” Angela had just finished her first year at the middle school. She had previously taught elementary in the same district. Since the trip was offered to both middle and elementary teachers, Angela saw this as a great way to connect with her current colleagues, as well as colleagues from around the district:

I was excited about the prospect of working with colleagues from my present school. I just was finishing my first year at Edgewood and was looking forward to
making connections on a different level with members of the staff from there. Not only working with teachers in the building, I was really hoping that we would have a nice group from all three levels.

Angela’s interest in developing relationships with her middle school colleagues stemmed from her desire to establish cross-grade, whole-school connections within the building. Though she agreed with the teaming concept currently used to organize grade levels in the middle school, she saw this practice as isolating, and wanted to see a broader perspective to the school’s culture.

As it turned out, colleagues from Angela’s former school, Wayne Elementary, were the only other teachers from the district who chose to participate in the TLE. For Angela, this brought to the surface some issues she had regarding her current placement in the middle school.

I am just about spending time with friends. We’re here with Wayne teachers and of course I taught at Wayne for several years. I almost feel more of a connection with the Wayne staff here than I do my own Edgewood staff. So, I am anxious to build some bonds [with the Edgewood staff].

Angela had the opportunity to articulate some of the anxiety she was having as she looked towards developing bonds with her middle school colleagues. Though she had taught in the building for an entire year, Angela was searching for connections she had made with her fellow participants, some of which were not positive by her own standards:
The group that I am here with Edgewood is a group that I honestly don’t really know at all. We’ve got two special education teachers that are working with the eighth graders. I have had experience with Phyllis last year, my first year at Edgewood, and I can honestly say I didn’t think they were very positive. I started the year passing out math supplies to my math department and ran out and her special ed kids didn’t get any. She started quoting educational law to me and lawsuits and accessibility to all. I was just floored by that. I guess I just ran out of stuff and I didn’t look into it past that. I kind of felt like she had a little chip on her shoulder for special education. I think it got cleared up when I didn’t even get the materials either, and you know it was a matter of a week or so and everything was worked out. So, you know I was really hoping more people, maybe somebody from the seventh grade would join us, or someone from the regular education staff. So, I really don’t know how much interaction I will have with those three when I get back because they all do work with the eighth graders. I don’t know.

For Angela, the term colleague was not yet coming into focus. She was glad that she had two or three colleagues on the trip, but was still unsure about the amount of interaction they would have upon returning to school.

*Experience Perceptions and Interpretations*

*Lived Time*

For Angela, her lived experience with time encompassed both literal temporal conceptions, as well as temporal dimensions of the past, present, and future. Though she
wore a watch throughout the TLE experience, for Angela, time of day, and even the day itself seemed to be fleeting. Even after the first day of hiking, the day’s events had traveled out of context with any particular day: “All right, it’s nine o’clock. It is, what night is it, heck. I guess it is Friday night. Yeah, we left on a Friday.” Angela felt that the concept of time was so different throughout the experience. Depending on who you were talking to, or how difficult the hiking was, time seemed to flow with those emotions:

I thought it was really easy in terms of our hiking today. I don’t know if we just were talking more on the trip or just enjoyed whom I was walking with but, suddenly we looked up and we were at the cabins. So it was really surprising.

Angela experienced this same feeling on the last day of the TLE: “Well, here I am. I’m done. Its only 10:20 on Sunday morning and I can’t believe how fast we went today.”

Within Angela’s reflections on the TLE, temporal dimensions also occurred. One day, Angela reflected back on the circumstances that surrounded her joining the middle school teaching staff one year prior. These past events were viewed in relation to the present physical challenges she was encountering on the trail:

You know the metaphor of an uphill battle? I mean, I felt that a lot this year with my team. I felt like my voice wasn’t, I don’t know, wasn’t really heard on my team. You know I was kind of the new kid, the elementary certified person, and I was a friend of the administrators. And because the administration seemed to be seen in the past few years at Edgewood as a negative, the people, several people on my team still have that negative view of administration. And because I came
with the administrator it was a just a whole package deal. I really felt like I was walking uphill a lot of times.

Angela’s experiences on the TLE also provided her the opportunity to look towards the future and see how her current situation could effect her perception of how future events would unfold:

I’m glad that we’re having this trip you know a week, week and a half before school starts because I think we’re all really pumped about this idea and we’ve got our action plan set up so that everybody can take a job and run with it. I’m just real excited about how it’s going to work.

_Lived Space_

Angela’s perceptions and interpretations of lived space encompassed both the literal connection to the environment, as well as an emotive connection, or feeling, that the spaces provided. From a literal perspective, Angela focused primarily on the “living quarters,” those spaces that were considered destinations. Admittedly, Angela was familiar with the concept of hiking, but for her the prospect of actually living, eating, and sleeping outside were the spatial dimensions that caused her the most apprehension. On arriving at the first evening’s campsite, Angela had some hesitation with what she saw; “I liked when we arrived here. It was a little more spread out then I thought.” Her preconceptions of the facility were slightly different than what she was experiencing. Also factoring into her perception of this space was the reality that it was a shared space with both colleagues and critters alike:
I like the shelters. They are a little bit more spread out. I don’t know. I like to be around people more. But, it’ll be fun tonight to figure out how the heck we are going to sleep with a big time snorer. So wish me luck. I am going to bed with two snorers and a whole lot of bugs. Hopefully I will be as pleasant tomorrow as I was today.

One aspect to note is Angela’s tone and body language when engaging memories of this space. Throughout the TLE experience, as well as the interview phase of this study, Angela expressed her thoughts with a wide smile and laughter every time this concept was discussed. She truly found pleasure in her new and challenging situation. Though her new living space did not provide her with the level of comfort or rest she was normally used to, it did not seem to matter:

I didn’t get much sleep last night, hardly at all. Due to the hard surface of the Adirondack shelter and the snoring of my dear friend beside me, but it just seemed like I had a lot more energy today for some reason. And that was great.

For Angela, there was something about where she was, in the wild, that provided sources of motivation she never expected: “Beautiful scenery today, and you know I just felt like it was a lot easier.” Angela saw in her colleagues a similar level of comfort with the new surroundings that translated into feelings of relaxation and confidence:

We just seemed to giggle a lot today on the trip, as a group. I think we just kind of all got punchier as the weekend progressed. Maybe more of a comfort level on the hike. You know the pace was really nice; it wasn’t as strenuous as yesterday’s. I just think we were a little bit more relaxed, and again most of us had had a day,
you know we realized we can do this. So we were just more relaxed today on the trail.

Angela’s comfort level increased to the point where she was able to manipulate the space to meet her own needs. One example of this manipulation was Angela’s “secret trick” for catching her breath while on the trail. At any point when she felt fatigued and needed a break, Angela would stop and intently examine a “natural wonder” on the forest floor or in the trees above. Even though she was not really looking, Angela was confident that the multitude of creatures she could have been looking at would buy her enough time to catch her breath and be ready to hike again: “My flora and fauna trick worked really well.”

The surroundings throughout the TLE were a source of perspective and reflection for Angela as well. One instance on the trail provided Angela insight into the positive and negative aspects of assuming a leadership role. The trail was a source of kinesthetic learning that provided real and tangible consequences:

I acted like a leader today and it was great until I took a wrong turn. I felt kind of badly about having to walk uphill, but I guess I was the one that had to walk uphill the most after we were done so, I guess it affected me the worst. I guess as leaders we all take wrong turns and I took a wrong turn and thankfully got back on the track.

Towards the end of the TLE, Angela became aware of the mediating qualities of the space. As a part of the TLE, colleagues worked together to develop a leadership initiative to implement back in the school setting. The middle school group had initially divided
into seventh and eighth grade groups. This arrangement meant that Angela was left to plan alone as the sole seventh-grade teacher on the TLE. After an afternoon on the trail, Angela noticed a difference in her colleagues:

It just seemed like they were going to really run with their eighth-grade team-building day. Kind of as an offshoot of what they did last year, and kind of just make it a little different. I don’t know if it was as they all reflected on the trip, but when we met today suddenly, instead of just focusing on eighth-grade team building, hey let’s open this up for the entire building including seventh-grade teachers. And that made me really feel wonderful. It just, it looked a lot different tonight then it looked like this morning and it was really exciting that it just seemed like, our attitudes kind of changed a little bit and we said, “Let’s do it as a whole school,” and then everybody became really united.

*Lived Body*

Implicit in Angela’s expectations for the TLE was an emphasis on bodily preparation, physical ability, and unfamiliarity with backpacking as a physical activity. These expectations drove Angela’s perceptions and interpretations of her lived body throughout the experience. Prior to the experience, Angela and her family had devoted considerable time to her own physical development:

We went to Spangler Park for the first time—so beautiful and only a few miles from our home. We also planned a day trip to Mohican State Park with my son. It was a clear, blue June day. My parents and I hiked from the dam to the covered bridge—going through Lion’s Falls—twice. We had a glorious day out in the
beautiful Ohio outside. I continued to ‘hike’ through Wooster with friends at least three mornings a week through June and July. In early July, I headed to our annual trip to Maine where I continued to hike with a ‘mission in mind.’ I broke in my poles, continued breaking in my boots, and had fun envisioning my trip. This advanced preparation for the experience became evident during the first few miles of the TLE. Angela quickly found herself at the front of the group, leading the first day’s hike:

As for being a leader, I mean, I don’t know, I think because I have the longest legs, or some of the longest in the group, I decided, because I walk fastest just go in front and I really enjoyed being in front. You know, and I also kind of giggled and said that because I was in front I didn’t have to talk and that was because several of the times I was quite winded and I probably couldn’t carry on a conversation if I had to.

After the first day’s hike, Angela took stock of what she had accomplished and realized that her preparation for the TLE had been sufficient. She experienced what her body was capable of doing and it provided her with confidence:

And, my day was great. I mean I actually made it to the camp, and, I felt really, pretty in shape. I’m feeling a little bit sore, and it seemed like the last, gosh, half mile or like that 400 yards when we were going uphill to the camp was really tough for me. But, I, I just, there weren’t really any obstacles that I crossed today that I didn’t think that I could handle. You know the pack didn’t seem too heavy for me. At the end it seemed like it was getting a little sore on my shoulder.
After the first day, Angela very rarely mentioned her lived body experience. She noted that the hikes on days two and three were actually harder, but that she had already proven to herself that she was capable. As the trip progressed, less energy was devoted to worrying about her physical prowess. This focus shifted to her collegial interactions.

There was one bodily aspect of Angela’s experience that caused minor consternation—food. Angela viewed her food consumption on the trail as equal to that of the other participants, it was just the pace at which she consumed her food that was accelerated. With a little over a day left, Angela found herself with very little food remaining. For Angela, this is when tragedy struck:

I opened my food bag today, and this, a rat had deposited poop, or a mouse, and had eaten my only sandwich, so I have to rely tomorrow on my fellow colleagues to give me food since I was the only one who wanted to vote for hash browns in the morning, but everyone else is excited about eating gummy bears.

Though Angela’s nutritional dilemma was solved, the prospect of exerting the amount of energy needed to complete the TLE on such little food was a real concern. She knew her body, and knew what it would take to be successful.

*Lived Human Relations*

Prior to participating, Angela had an awareness of all of the participants. As discussed earlier, Angela felt a disconnection with her middle school colleagues prior to attending, and was looking forward to reuniting with her former elementary colleagues. On the trail Angela’s initial collegial interactions with her middle school colleagues were admittedly superficial, while her elementary interactions where more natural and at ease:
I enjoyed making light conversation with my colleagues from [the middle school]. The easiest conversations I had, though, were the ones from my friends from [the elementary]. There was ease with those teachers since I had taught with those teachers for several years. I realized that I really missed that ease with a set of teachers—I had missed that for the most part during the last year at [the middle school]. I missed giggling, sharing jokes, working for the betterment of a kid, etc.

Her “light conversations” included discussions of family, children, past jobs, their preparation for the TLE—“nothing deep, but slightly deeper than the past.” She saw this conversation as necessary because she truly did not know the middle school colleagues as well as the former elementary colleagues. She felt she needed to ease her way in, and she saw this as a good start: “Well, I learned a lot of personal things about people. It was wonderful to kind of make more of a connection with people. And I really liked that.”

Laced throughout Angela’s description of her experience are thematic notions of guilt related to her collegial interactions. In her mind, the choices she had to make regarding who and when her interactions would take place was weighty. This inner conflict was seen at its greatest when Angela was choosing which group to “bunk with:”

And it was kind of interesting; you know when we kind of on our own decided who was going to go where. So, I guess maybe three people per cabin, but we had a group of three, and a group of three, and a group of four and I don’t know. I just, it’s interesting that I chose to go with my [elementary] friends instead of [middle school]. I did feel guilty about it—that is where I felt most comfortable. I don’t know how that was taken by the [middle school] people. But, I don’t know,
I guess because I taught with the [elementary] guys much longer I still feel such a connection to them. It just felt natural.

Angela began to mediate this guilt by developing and assigning in her mind collegial roles that each group would fulfill:

I cooked, and worked on assignments with my [middle school] friends\(^2\), but stayed with my Wayne friends. And what fun we had. I haven’t giggled that much in a long time. We had such an ease about us. We laughed at how cold we were, the lack of sleep due to snoring, the hardness of the beds, etc.

At the beginning of the second day, Angela again was feeling guilty about her decision to “abandon” her middle school colleagues. She wanted to do something about it, but the comfort and familiarity of her former colleagues was too desirable: “I was determined the next night, to make a switch and go to the [middle school] tent but I just couldn’t do it. I figured our time on the trail would be the time we could bond.”

Angela felt that the roles she assigned were sufficient to be successful, but overtures of tension were thematically present. She quickly recognized that by splitting her interactions based on roles enabled certain groups to only see a specific set of skills

\(^2\) During the interview phase Angela was asked to clarify her use of the word “friends.” As used above, Angela chose to qualify that expression as it related to the middle school participants as actually meaning “colleagues.” When referring to her former elementary colleagues, she truly meant it to convey friendship.
and perspectives as they related to the task at hand. This duality took some getting used to, but she eventually saw a point where the perspectives came together:

We had some issues with baking our pancakes. You know I wanted to do one way, and I saw Phyllis give Michael a look like, “Oh God, here she goes again.” I was a little upset about that at the beginning but it seemed like I forgot about it until right now when I am talking about it. I just think as a group some of our strong willed personalities today got, I don’t know. We were able to mesh today. This “meshing” was a catalyst for Angela’s continued interactions with her middle school colleagues. Angela perceived an attitudinal shift in her perspectives and attitudes towards her middle school colleagues, and conveyed hopeful outlook for working with them in the future:

I definitely think I’ve changed some attitudes toward people, and really got to know some people on this trip. So I was really pumped about that. I’m just real excited that are five core people now are really going to do a good job of you know making this happen.

Perceived Personal and Professional Impact

For Angela, the perceived personal and professional impacts center around a theme of reconceptualization and metamorphosis. The TLE was an experience that was divergent from the perceptions that her colleagues, her family, and she held about herself. As an individual, she saw this as an opportunity to redefine how she, and others, perceived her.
I’m proud of the fact that this is way out of my element. I guess I’m known more as a, you know, city girl with, you know, the lap of luxury, and don’t really do outdoor adventures a lot. My family, my boys, my husband, my son enjoy hunting and fishing and, you know, being in the woods and doing all that fun stuff and I just have never participated in any of that stuff. So this was really personally rewarding; the fact that I was able to physically keep up and just didn’t, I just felt like one of the, you know, everybody.

The rewarding aspects of the experience fostered a sense of pride in her accomplishment. But as she reflected, the accomplishment was not so much the physical or environmental aspects of the experience, but rather the fact that she had allowed herself to pursue a personal passion, and model a goal-orientated life in which she so strongly believed:

Personally I was just really proud of the fact that I did it, I’m glad that I really did something for me. Taking the time away from my family, taking the time away from getting, you know, ready for school. You know, we only have a week left, and so taking this time to actually do this for me, I’m glad I did it ’cause a lot of times I don’t do that.

Professionally, Angela saw great potential for the leadership initiative she and her colleagues developed while on the TLE. She saw this initiative, and the core leadership group that formed on the TLE as a positive element for all of the students in the middle school. Angela stated, “I think number one the kids are going to benefit from this whole school activity. I think it will really encourage building relationships between grade levels and between teams. I’m real excited about that.”
Before starting the TLE, Angela had come to accept the fact that as the sole seventh-grade teacher on the expedition she would have a different experience returning to the other seventh-grade teachers who had not shared in the same experience. She saw great promise in being able to bring her newly-developed leadership abilities into her new team setting and help drive a new perspective of change:

I feel real comfortable in the fall coming back to my new team with some things we did and some things I learned and being able to be in a little bit more of a leadership role on that team. Where last year I felt I was definitely, I don’t want to say a follower, but I was definitely somebody who just went with the flow. Like, whatever has been done, that inertia. You know if it’s always been done, it’s just going to keep on going. I’m ready for the change.

Angela’s felt her time on the trail gave her the opportunity to develop and reflect on her collegial interactions, as well as develop more positive perspectives about the year to come. She saw her situation at the middle school in a new light, and looked forward to her year ahead with a new level of enthusiasm:

I just think I’ve been honored, blessed by being moved to the middle school. I love it and I’m really excited that people saw the need to do some moving of teachers around to make them more conducive to team styles to help the kids. I’m really excited to be working with a new group of people in the fall.
Phyllis

*Expectations*

For many, the TLE experience represented an opportunity to move beyond the traditional forms of professional development that had been previously used within the district. There was a novelty to the TLE that sparked a level of interest within the participants. Phyllis too was drawn to what she expected to be the TLE’s non-traditional approach to professional development:

I was excited to learn about this expedition. I wanted the chance to do something that was non-traditional to help me develop relationships with my peers and to grow as a teacher. I thought that was really important and I thought this would be a good experience for me.

Through this experience she hoped to escape the PowerPoint® presentations and group lectures that she felt characterized her previous professional development experiences. In her mind she was interested in something different—different was, in this situation, better.

Similar to the majority of the colleagues participating in the TLE, Phyllis had limited exposure to the outdoor world. As a self-described “city-girl” Phyllis expected there to be significant interactions with the natural world. From her viewpoint, these interactions would serve as learning opportunities that could provide her the potential for personal growth:

My personal expectations are to survive. I’ve never been camping or stayed overnight outside ever. So I’m a city girl and a chipmunk just passed my feet,
nice. So I thought that would be interesting to grow as far as doing something I’ve never done. I have personally never stayed outside, so this will be very interesting.

Phyllis’s apprehensions about the TLE experience were not eased when she began to understand the resources that would be needed to spend three days in the wild: “I was overwhelmed with the camp equipment, what to bring, not to bring on our list.” Certain elements of the experience remained a mystery for Phyllis right up to the point of departure:

After learning that we were packing our lunches and snacks, I was a bit scared. I know I need to eat every 2 to 4 hours. It was scary knowing there would be breakfast and dinner, but the 10 hours between had me worried. I usually have fruit and veggies. The trail mix and PBJ sandwiches were obviously sustainable, but was concerned how my body would react. Needless to say, the night prior to departure was nerve wracking.

Despite the nervousness of Phyllis’s personal expectations, from a professional perspective she was excited to see her colleagues in a new light. Phyllis saw the potential for developing a new closeness with her colleagues, a way to develop insights that she had not previously been able to attain:

Professionally, I thought, you know, this is a neat experience that I can take back to the school. To work with people I don’t normally work with and to see colleagues that my students see and be able to understand. See the students [my colleagues] have taught and understand what they have gone through kind of
helps me to be a better teacher. And then some of the teachers in the building, also
to develop a more core relationship with them, to work on this inclusion that
we’re working on this year, our pilot program. So I thought those two things
would be really, really good to see a good connection between these professionals
that we work with.

Thematically present in Phyllis’s professional expectations were notions of perception
verification. Phyllis readily admits that she came to the experience with definite
perceptions about a number of her colleagues on the TLE and was anxious to see if those
perceptions were viable. Conversely, Phyllis also believed that she had an opportunity to
provide her colleagues new insight and perspective into who she was as a person and as a
professional:

Professionally, there are teachers I don’t know here that I work with, so word
spreads fast where we work and I thought that’s kind of interesting to see, you
know, my perception and how it reflects on other teachers and when I say they’ve
heard of me or, hopefully those are good things and so, just a little apprehensive
about that.

Experience Perceptions and Interpretations

Lived Time

Phyllis’s experience with lived time was elucidated through three thematic
components: (a) her temporal reflections that centered on dimensions of the past, (b) the
experience of physical temporality and the pacing of the day, and (c) a reintroduction to
clock time and its accelerating properties. Each of these components underscores the temporal connection that Phyllis had with the TLE.

Similar to many of her colleagues, Phyllis experienced reflective opportunities on the trail where temporal dimensions, such as the past, present, and future, became clear and educative. As a participant in a leadership expedition, Phyllis focused her reflections through a leadership lens, looking back on some of her developmental experiences for insight into how she could be considered a leader:

I never really considered myself a leader until I looked at all the things I’ve participated in as a teacher. I have been a leadership advisor since 2003, head teacher, and special education department head. These are all leadership roles. I just felt like I was doing my part to make EMS a better place—living and being part of the community, making a difference when and where I can.

This experience of mining the past temporal dimensions of her life was critical for Phyllis to see a connection between her previous behaviors and her current notions of leadership. She was able to reconcile that she had been, and still was, a leader. Although these reflections allowed Phyllis to survey her temporal landscape, it was the pacing and temporal rhythm of the day’s activities that provided the time to explore these dimensions further.

By the second day, Phyllis began to note a difference in the pacing of the daily hikes. What had started out at, what Phyllis perceived as, a near desperate pace on the first day, her second day of hiking was notably different and allowed for more in-depth conversation and exploration of her future temporal dimensions:
The pace of our trail walk was great. We had time to talk and ask questions about each other. I spotted an old building that turned out to be an old bus. We had a lesson on the history of Oil Creek Park. I had a lot of fun this day and felt like I learned more about myself through talking with Sarah. She affirmed my inner desire to become an administrator. I hope in the future this goal becomes a reality. These notions of a relaxed pacing and simply “having time” were key elements to Phyllis’s experience with lived time, components that she noted were typically missing in more traditional forms of professional development. Though in completely different environments, Phyllis’s perception of traditional professional development were rushed, hurried affairs where participants typically watched the clock as opposed to stepping back and taking the time to have meaningful interactions. This relaxed pace changed as Phyllis returned from the experience.

It did not take long for Phyllis to begin feeling a sense of urgency and accelerated pace once she completed the TLE experience. In the parking lot, minutes after successfully completing the final day’s hike, Phyllis commented, “We arrived back and I was thrilled to make it back. I just wanted to go, but we had to organize and process our trip prior to leaving.” The slowed, attentive pace of the past three days had been quickly replaced with a pressing, importunate drive to “go.”

*Lived Space*

Phyllis’s engagement with lived space fluctuated between two thematic boundaries: space as a mechanism for personal growth and reflection, and space as medium for professional dialog and insight. These two orientations paralleled Phyllis’s
original expectations for the TLE experience. As a mechanism for personal growth and reflection, Phyllis’s lived space was challenging, humbling, and a source of self-doubt:

Our first climb was straight up the hill with full gear. As I started to climb I thought to myself, “How can Pam talk up this hill?” I was feeling really tired and gasping for air. Perhaps I wasn’t ready for this trip after all. After I was halfway up, I started to feel better physically, but concerned that three days of this type of hill could be a problem. Once I saw the trail I was relieved. It was more flat or gradual in slope.

On several occasions, this same challenging space faded into a place of refuge and reflection. “When we stopped by the creek/river, I was thrilled. It was a beautiful backdrop. I walked to the bathroom across the creek. We relaxed in the cold water and chilled out for our last climb.” Phyllis used this space as a retreat, and drew strength from it.

As the days turned into night, Phyllis’s perceptions and interpretations of this lived space changed. The new environment that she had seen as a source of personal achievement and strength during the day, took on a completely different persona come nightfall:

Darkness came and I was quite scared when it was completely dark. It was difficult to speak into our microphones when I was scared to be walked up on by critters so my comments were short. We were tired by lights out except that once the fire died an animal crawled across my sleeping bag and totally freaked me out. I hid under the covers and woke [Michael] and Kelly up asking them to turn on
the light and see what it was. They said it was nothing. I apologized for waking
them up and we went to sleep.

These perceptions, though some foreboding, display Phyllis’s full and unwavering
commitment to being successful throughout the TLE. Not only had she ventured into
unfamiliar territory, but she was willing to face her fears as well. Although personally
challenging in its own right, Phyllis’s lived space also served as a vehicle for developing
collegial dialog.

From the beginning of the TLE, Phyllis saw opportunities when the pace,
topography, and scenery were conducive to make connections with her colleagues. Her
interpretations of various sections of trail painted the picture of a physical, yet amenable
and collegial atmosphere:

I kind of worked on meeting new people and talking to them and getting to know
them by asking questions in a little bit more laid back setting than I would have
done in school—a little more personal—I was able to share more than I would
have done.

Over time the physicality of the space became ubiquitous and melted from the
undercurrent of the text. Phyllis began to believe that the space had far greater
professional potential:

We weren’t concerned about all the hiking and the gear and our focus was on
enjoying our scenery and talking with the groups that we had as we walked and it
was nice. I got to talk with people I normally wouldn’t talk with and had
conversations that were nice and pleasant.
For Phyllis, this professional potential was fully realized during an impromptu situation on the trail. The genuine nature and needs of the trail provided a place where Phyllis experienced the genuine potential of her colleagues:

We got a tree stuck in our path and Kelly and Madge are really somewhat height challenged, so it was neat that I would help Kelly over log and then Kelly would help Sarah over the log. And they all just took turns helping each other over the log that was in the way ’cause it was fairly big, and that was really, that was cool. I thought that was like the best group work without even anybody, you know, I guess initiating that. We just kind of took care of each other.

Lived Body

Phyllis’s perceptions and interpretations of her lived body were minimal. Phyllis’s initial apprehensions for the TLE were centered on her ability to live successfully in an outdoor setting, and to navigate successfully her developing collegial relationships. Phyllis acknowledged that these two topics were constantly at the surface of her reflective thoughts, and thus, did not allow her to fixate on her bodily development. At the beginning of the experience, Phyllis did go through a bodily adaptive cycle as she began to acclimate to the new equipment and procedures that would sustain her for the next three days: “We unloaded and learned how to adjust our backpacks, I had trouble adjusting the pack and feeling it right on my shoulder. After a little help, I was ready to roll.”

The challenge of this lived space, as discussed above, provided a physical demand. Phyllis used this physicality, and her ability to withstand its rigors, as a
barometer of her abilities within the group: “A very interesting day, challenging course going uphill today and trying to make sure I maintained pace and stay with the group and be with them.” This barometric reading had the potential to serve as a form of cultural capital within the group, setting apart those who were able and those who were not.

Phyllis found various opportunities to increase her cultural capital throughout the TLE: “I know how to go to the bathroom in the woods now and cook and sustain a normal routine out here and that’s really cool.” These new skills made Phyllis’s interactions and lived space experiences less adversarial—she had found a way to live within her new environment, as opposed to against it.

*Lived Human Relations*

As a function of the purposeful sampling used in this study all of the participants were colleagues from the same school district. For many, this collegial designation represented a mere familiarity with at least one of the other participants—perhaps name recognition only. For Phyllis, her collegial perceptions and interpretations ran along two thematic lines: colleague as co-worker, and colleague as team member. These two designations, co-workers and team members, were the foundation for many of Phyllis’s lived human relation experiences.

Phyllis’s perception and interpretation of her colleagues as co-workers illustrate a contextual belief that undergirded her initial interactions with her colleagues. These people were her colleagues because they shared the same job she did. There was no expanded relationship structure beyond that. Collegiality was limited to circumstantial aspects alone. “The colleagues [on the TLE] are pretty much on a non-friendship basis.
They are colleagues and we speak during the day, but outside of that, there really is no interaction.” Though Phyllis’s view of her relationship with her colleagues was mostly circumstantial, that is, we work together, she did articulate an awareness of her colleagues’ diverse backgrounds and an interest in how those diverse perspectives could benefit her understanding of the profession:

The other few teachers, here and there, I don’t really know and have no interaction with prior to this, but they work at an elementary school that feeds them to our middle school, so that might prove to be valuable.

For Phyllis, seeking out interactions with her colleagues was something she viewed as difficult from the beginning. She qualified this difficulty by describing her struggles with what she characterized as a lack of “social fluency.” Phyllis sought out those whom she was most comfortable with, but at times, these individuals were not available, creating opportunities for her to establish new relationships.

A primary example of this social fluency issue occurred when the group was loading the van to leave for the trailhead. Phyllis was prone to carsickness, so sitting near the front of the van was necessary for her. One of Phyllis’s colleagues offered to sit with her in the front of the van as well. Unfortunately, there were a few other participants who also had physical necessities for where they were located in the van. These needs made it necessary for Kelly to move away from Phyllis and to the back of the van. “That made me feel bad because I knew her and that was a comfort to both of us.” Phyllis was disheartened because she lost the opportunity to surround herself with the people she knew and with whom she felt most comfortable.
Phyllis chose to spend a considerable amount of time listening to her colleagues during the first sections of the TLE. “I listened a lot to others talking, trying to learn about what others were talking about and getting to sense their vibes and how each of the teachers in the group think and talk.” Phyllis saw this time as a way to determine how she was going to “fit in” with the group and look for people whom she saw as like-minded. This listening time also allowed Phyllis the opportunity to see how her personality and skills would fit within the six other skill-sets that were represented on the TLE, helping her to create a role within a newly conceived collegial team.

As Phyllis hiked, she began to see her colleagues as team members pursuing the same goal. Throughout the days on the trail, this team perspective was supported by Phyllis’s perceptions of the actions the group took: “I thought we did a good job of staying together and checking in on each other, making sure that we’re all still there.” Within the larger team that encompassed all of the TLE participants, Phyllis found herself navigating various smaller teams that developed throughout the expedition:

We finally arrived at our site and found our cabin. Without consulting Kelly, I yelled to Michael, “Hey, why don’t you join us?” Just because he is male, I hadn’t checked it with Kelly. She didn’t mind about the arrangement, but it probably looked a little odd to have two females and a male in the cabin. I felt he was a great addition to our cabin. He immediately set us on a search for firewood and I gave him a few matches I brought. We all rested and unpacked.

The issue of navigating multiple teams came to a head with the creation of a cook group. Phyllis had established a group of individuals, Michael and Kelly, that represented her
“cabin team,” but mealtime necessitated the inclusion of a new team member, Angela. Since Phyllis, Michael, and Kelly had already begun establishing a rapport and role within this small group, bringing a new member into the fold created issues within the team dynamics:

It was interesting to have Angela on a dinner team and her choosing to cabin with the other elementary team. As a new team member, I personally would want those people I work with to cabin with. This kind of set up an us versus them. Angela hadn’t quite gotten to the dinner area when our group was setting up so we were missing ¼ of our items which frustrated me. If you are part of a group, you need to function as a group and be together as a group in all of the activities. It was quite evident to me she had a hard time letting others be in control of the food process. So, even though she was late setting up, when she was part of the group she had to take over. It is irritating.

Phyllis admitted that there was no attempt to mediate the situation as a group. Confrontation and discussion were not considered as options. By dinner on the second day, Angela had made arrangements to begin working with a different cooking team. This transition was never discussed within the group. “Dinner was interesting again because we had to decide what to put on our pizza. Angela just joined the other ladies in her group and wasn’t an issue.” Phyllis attributed this shift in group composition to what she saw as Angela’s lack of connection to the other members in their group, as well as a means of accessibility.
The development of a collegial team took some time, and was varied depending on the group’s focus. The cook teams shifted personnel to ensure success, although the grade-level teams developed an understanding for the personalities represented in the group and assigned roles accordingly. This growth process was not an easy task but proved to be rewarding:

It’s stressful working as a group. When we were trying to develop our plan for our building and making sure we were including everyone, that was a little bit stressful, but I think we got through it and our plan worked well.

By the end of the TLE, Phyllis was able to reflect on her experiences with lived human relations and come to an understanding about how diverse and complementary her colleagues were, and that regardless of task size, the whole of the group would be more successful than its individual parts:

As a group, my colleagues and I, I think we’re starting to gel. I think it took some time, but I think we understand each other’s strengths and weaknesses and kind of how we click and what motivates us and what we think is important and that has taken time to develop based on, you know, even making the food, which is kind of a menial task.

Perceived Personal and Professional Impact

Expressed early on, Phyllis’s initial interest in the TLE was the chance to be successful participating in a challenging outdoor adventure experience. By the end of the experience, she believed that this was a goal she had achieved, despite her new appreciation for its difficulty:
I know how to camp. I know how to put camp shoes on. I know how to go to the bathroom in the woods now and cook and sustain a normal routine out here and that’s really cool. But I personally know how to do that and I know how to backpack, which is an amazing thing, which I never thought would be so hard. This adventure-based experience also provided a venue for Phyllis to develop and realize the capacity she had for leadership work:

I definitely feel like I have way more confidence in my abilities as a leader and as a person who’s respected and looked up to and listened to. I feel like, I guess I didn’t realize like how much people listen to what you say. So I thought that was really cool.

Within these leadership roles, Phyllis was exposed to new situations and contexts with her colleagues. Phyllis perceived these new opportunities as beneficial because of their ability to alter previous perceptions of her colleagues:

So I think this expedition has helped me to look at other people and force me to work with other people that I normally associate myself with and see that there’s good in all that we do. And different people, they can be different and think different and act different and I still can appreciate that. So I thought that was kind of cool.

Phyllis also saw a professional benefit in being able to strengthen a collegial relationship through professional avenues, as opposed to feeling compelled to promote a personal/intimate connection to develop the relationship. When reflecting on one of her collegial relationships in the group, she stated:
I don’t know that we’re going to mesh a whole lot this year as far as personal relationship, as far as friendships, we’re totally different, but I think that professionally I can live and work with her in a positive atmosphere.

As a collegial cohort, Phyllis saw the potential to impact the rest of the school by modeling the supportive, attentive, professional behaviors the TLE participants developed throughout the experience. Students, faculty, staff, and administration alike would have the potential to benefit from the TLE experience:

I think that we definitely will see our students benefit from seeing teachers working together, seeing our cafeteria being involved with what we’re doing and implementing this, our principal, our high school involved and our counselors. We’ve created a plan that involves all seventh and eighth grade teachers and special education. And I think that all the students will benefit, even the adults. I think our school climate hopefully will become a positive one this year and it will be one that the kids want to come to everyday and non-threatening and feeling inclusive. So I think that is wonderful.

Phyllis’s lived experience was characterized by an excitement to reach personal achievement, but a disconnect from the focused development of professional and collegial relationships. Phyllis seemed to enter the experience with the same conception of what a colleague was to her. Despite the concentrated interactions and supportive environments, Phyllis retained her belief that collegiality was contextual, as opposed to being driven by an emotional or personal connection. Phyllis expressed professional transformation that is guiding her future goals. She helped develop a school-wide
curriculum initiative that challenged the standardized notions of schooling, and sought to provide a diverse and rich experience for her students.

Kelly

*Expectations*

Although a majority of the TLE participants had no experience with backcountry travel, Kelly came to the experience with a slightly increased level of comfort with traveling and living in an outdoor setting.

Growing up, the fields, woods, and swamps were my playground. When I was younger, my brother was my closest playmate but as he grew older, and he is six years older than me, he was away with his friends more and more. My animals became my playmates as we had no close neighbors and at times preferred it that way. I was never really alone. I liked to spend hours playing in the woods, creating my own worlds.

Though never participating specifically in backpacking, Kelly’s personal connection with the outdoors gave her a level of confidence that she found reassuring: “To me, it looked doable. I had been raised in the country and even though I’m not an athletic person, always considered myself in outdoor type of person.” Her personally prescribed status as an *outdoor type person* was a source of inspiration for furthering her knowledge of the outdoors and her level of comfort engaging with it. The TLE experience provided her with what she expected to be a positive opportunity to develop new outdoor skills, specifically, in backpacking:
And probably the main reason was just an interest, really with backpacking and the idea of I’ve always wanted to backpack. I’ve always enjoyed hiking, but never really got on a full-blown backpacking experience. And my family isn’t really into hiking or backpacking and so, this was an opportunity that I felt I had to take because I didn’t know when I’d ever get a chance to do this type of thing again.

Her ambition to gain new knowledge and skills was supported by her desire to pursue something personal, something that she wanted to do. Her intentions were not selfish, but rather, reparative and transformational:

It was also a time for myself, because also again, as a mother, wife, teacher, all those things, all the different roles that I play, just having a time to do something that was specifically for me was an important part of it, too.

With these expectations came apprehensions. She was venturing into a new setting, and undertaking a physical challenge like none she had experienced before. Kelly saw her physical size as being a challenge, but was confident in her preparation and compensation for what she perceived as an issue:

Being short of stature and being the smallest one here and being the, you know, I’m not the oldest one here, at least I can say that much, but this is just, you know, a challenge to me because being a smaller person and carrying a pack that weighs the same as what the bigger people are carrying is going to be a challenge, but, you know, I really feel that, you know, I’ve really worked hard to get myself in pretty good shape and I’m hoping that I’m able to do this.
Kelly’s excitement for the experience created avenues where she could dream and envision herself being successful in this new venture: “I pictured myself on this trip reaching mountaintops and looking out over beautiful vistas. I pictured camaraderie and was curious as to the leadership aspect.” For Kelly, the intrigue of leadership stemmed from her current professional situation.

There is this feeling as you get older and administrators no longer seem learned elders but instead your peers. And since they are your peers and around your age and sometimes have no greater experience or education than you, you begin to think, “Hey, wait, maybe my ideas are of value.” Especially when it comes to new administrators coming into the building. You have been there, you have seen what works, and you have seen what doesn’t work.

Kelly saw herself as being caught in a professional cycle that deemphasized the tacit, working knowledge of veteran teachers: “Sometimes you would like to have more value in what you know and get that kind of respect and value felt from your administration.” Through the TLE, Kelly expected to learn about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions she could develop to improve her leadership capacity:

It’s the whole idea of this teacher leadership situation that can help me in feeling more confident about myself and being able to express myself because again we have some new administration coming into the building, feeling confident in being able to express that and maybe bringing back to Edgewood some of the, you know, ideas and concepts that we learn, so all those things are important.
Kelly saw a renewed connection with her colleagues as a critical component to this leadership development. She felt that being a silo of ideas and initiative was not going to be as effective as a unified group with a common mission and vision. But unfortunately, daily schedules and demands made creating those connections difficult. She expected the TLE to provide the time needed to establish collegial connections:

The whole idea that it was with colleagues was intriguing, too, because the way things are anymore in education, it seems like there’s so little time to really get to know people that you work with. I found out who was planning on going and I felt it was people that I would really enjoy being with. That was a real influence on doing that.

*Experience Perceptions and Interpretations*

*Lived Time*

Throughout the TLE, interactions with lived time were critical in Kelly’s perceptions and interpretations of the experience. Thematically, Kelly did not engage in the temporal dimensions of the past, nor future, but was living very much in the moment, and using her experiences in the moment to shade her perceptions. There was one occurrence when Kelly used reflective insights from her past temporal dimensions to qualify her present situation:

This was the first totally new and different thing I had done in a while. I wanted to make as few mistakes as possible. I wanted to do things right as in the long run I knew it would make things easier and more enjoyable. Lord, how many times had
I said that to a kid working on a new skill, “pay attention and do it right the first time!” I was beginning to relax.

For Kelly, a critical facet of the TLE was the pacing of the experience. This pacing is characterized within two dimensions: travel time and experience duration. Travel time can be described as Kelly’s perception of how fast or slow the group traveled from one campsite to another over the three-day period. Each day had its own pacing personality that either frustrated or pleased Kelly. The experience duration is referring to the overall scope of the experience, the devotion of three days to the experience as opposed to more or less days.

From the beginning, Kelly sensed an undercurrent of urgency in the way the group traveled between campsites. The speed at which her colleagues chose to hike was not fulfilling the expectations she had for the TLE experience:

That’s one thing, too, that I wish we would have been, there were times when I felt like this was becoming more of a footrace than a hiking trail. I guess I’m just one of those, I really do enjoy stopping and looking at things or slowing down a little bit to look at things. It’s kind of like, you now, there aren’t as many time restrictions on us, so I just like, you know, taking time and not trying to hurry through this. I don’t want to feel hurried through this, I want to feel, you know, slowed down and really just enjoying it.

Kelly saw a marginal benefit to “making good time” while on the trail. She began to internalize this pacing difference, leading to moments of self-doubt and frustration:
Yes, we arrive at camp an hour early, but was that the purpose of the walk? Was that the purpose of this whole experience, to get there as fast as possible? Maybe this wasn’t fast for anyone else? Am I just this slow? I walk with six-foot people all the time and can usually stay up with them.

At the beginning of the second day of hiking, Kelly found herself with the opportunity to lead the group on the trail. Seeing an opportunity to take control of a situation that had been a source of frustration the day before, Kelly accepted and set a new pace of the TLE group:

We went at a pace that didn’t seem to upset anyone. In fact, later that day several people came up and thanked me for holding a good, steady, but slower pace. We stopped and look at things and played games. And the coolest thing was, as we knew we were getting close to the next campsite we were making super time. We came to the crest of the hill and stepped out of the woods on to a clearly marked road. Then we realized this was the campsite, we had made it! Not exhausted, not in pain, instead with delight and surprise! There are times when slow and steady does win the non-race.

Kelly’s interactions with pacing gave her pause when reflecting on the overall temporal scope of the TLE experience. She had found great success in adapting the group’s traveling tendencies, but was uncertain of her own capacity for a more extended experience: “I don’t know if I’d want to do this for 22 days or 72 days or whatever, but you know, for a short-term experience this has been really great.”
**Lived Space**

As a self-proclaimed outdoors-person, Kelly’s orientation towards her lived space was one of excitement and awe. Throughout her reflections are thematic structures that develop concepts such as space as companion, me versus space, and space as teacher. The initial concept, space as companion, can be illustrated through Kelly’s description of arriving at the trailhead:

First you must understand where my brain is at as we arrive in this beautiful wilderness. The sun shining and the not so warm, not so cold temperature of the air. Songs are going through my head, “The Wanderers Song,” “The Sound of Music,” etc. Here I am with my little poles to carry me along and my jungle hat to protect me from the elements. I am thinking of gathering in the beauty that surrounds me, as we will take off into the cool woods.

There is a genuine wonder and sense of respect for the space. Kelly’s past natural experiences created a perspective of excitement and the belief that she could develop a supportive, mutually beneficial relationship between her and the space. That was until she started hiking. The space had turned against her:

Then I see the first hill we must climb, the dusty, rocky road we just came down! I am thinking, “OK, baby steps, just take your time.” I placed myself to the back of the pack and started the climb.

At the top of the hill, Kelly and her colleagues stood winded, tired, and shocked. Kelly began feeling hesitation about whether she could continue. “Then I saw the sign pointing into the woods and knew I could do this.” This sign pointed Kelly and the rest of her
colleagues down a trail that assumed a more relaxed topography, one that Kelly felt she could handle. But Kelly had learned something within the first half-mile of the expedition:

But, you know, as soon as I got to the top, and had a chance to catch my breath, it was like OK. I got the first one over with and throughout the day, I mean most of the, you know, hills, the good things were that, you know, there were as many hills up and hills down and flat areas than, you know, eventually I was able to kind of, to get through certain things and get through certain obstacles. Yeah, every time you face an encounter, sometimes it’s getting through the first part of it and getting the first phase over with is the toughest part. Then you start to see that, you know, it’s not as bad as you thought it was going to be and you also see that you can do this, you can tackle this and you can make it.

She learned much about herself in the first, short, steep section of the trail. “I know I did not even look back to see where I had come from. I usually do, just to get a sense of accomplishment. To be honest, I have no idea why I didn’t.” Kelly later discussed her reasons for not looking back. She had conquered an unknown, and that first section of trail showed her what she was capable of. She did not have to look back; she just knew. Kelly’s interaction with this new space was also teaching her about how she could improve her success in spaces that were more familiar:

So it was the whole idea of one step at a time, and, you know, that’s something that I need to really take back out of this is that, it was one part of the trail, you know, one part of that, and the same can be true with things that I need to
accomplish in life, just one part of it at a time, one section of it at a time, and eventually, you know, it works out.

The wilderness was proving to be a valuable teacher for Kelly. In addition to learning about her physical capabilities, Kelly was also learning new skills that were being tested by the demands of space. In the wilderness, all of the what-ifs associated with planning became a source of anxiety:

When we got to our destination today, it was great. It was a real sense of accomplishment, a real good feeling to open up the backpack and get the sleeping bag out and kind of organize my thoughts in my mind. Because when we packed the bags the other night, you know, it was kind of like gosh, did I pack everything right? Did I do everything right? And where is everything? And so it was good to, you know, to do that and to relax a little bit. The shelters are really cool, and I really like that part of it, too.

*Lived Body*

Kelly’s initial expectations for the TLE provide insight into the perceptions and interpretations of her lived body experience. Kelly expressed anxiety about her equipment preparations, her physical preparation, as well as her physical size. These apprehensions were illuminated throughout Kelly’s reflections, establishing both a common body theme, as well as a bodily deficit theme.

As noted in both the lived time and lived space sections above, Kelly’s experiences on the first hill of the hike were significant. Though not ideal, Kelly and her colleagues spent the first half-mile ascending a fire road to get to the true trailhead. As
Kelly pushed to the top of the hill, she became self-conscious of her own abilities. She was tired. But as she looked around, she saw that everyone else around her was feeling the same way:

Soon as my legs felt like lead, my breath was becoming harder and harder and the pack on my back had surely gained about 10 lbs. for no reason. Thoughts were pouring through my head. “Is this what it’s going to be like the whole trip?” “Is anyone else feeling the way I am?” By the time we’ve reached the top, I thought, “oh gosh, everyone else is probably not even breaking a sweat.” But they were! I look at [Michael] who could barely speak for being out of breath. “I’m not alone!”

This idea of a common body was reassuring. Kelly saw this commonality as a source of unification, an entity that would draw them closer. But as the hiking continued, Kelly lost sight of a common body and began to feel distanced.

Kelly’s temporal reflections revealed a negative perception of pacing during the first day of the TLE. The speed at which the group was traveling not only prevented Kelly from fully experiencing the space around her—“Where is the beauty of the woods, where is the joy of the walk?”—but also caused stress and anxiety about her bodily abilities:

But eventually the speed and difficulty of the hike began to worry me. OK, I’m a competitive person but being five-feet tall has always made things a little more challenging. So when the intensity of the trail and speed at which we were going started to raise my anxiety of slowing everyone behind me down, or falling
headlong down a hill, I was nearly in tears not to mention the fact that for about
an hour I did nothing but look at the ground and my feet.

Though Kelly’s negative body image subsided on the second day once she began to take
over the duties of leading the daily hikes, her initial apprehensions were realized in short
order.

*Lived Human Relations*

Throughout the TLE, Kelly had a wide range of interactions with lived human
relations. Like her fellow colleagues, Kelly found it enjoyable getting to know her
colleagues during the hiking portions of the experience:

It was fun to just hang back and listen a little bit to some of the other
conversations going on and learn about some people and different things, belief
systems that they have and things like that, so that was real interesting.

In addition to the trail time, Kelly found that meal times also provided a positive
social outlet. Since meals were prepared in groups, the conversation dynamics fluctuated
between general getting-to-know-you and more team development foci.

Eating is never better than outside with a good walk and cool weather. Our
creations were not just a source of nutrition but also a source of learning and
pride. The highlights of the food were the evening meals where we made pizza
and burritos. Working together we figured out our strengths. I think too it’s never
easy for us moms who are used to running our own kitchens. But it was fun and
we tried to be creative and innovative.
Critical to Kelly’s relationality reflections were her conceptions of professional discourse and the development of a group mindset. These views were structured by two thematic perspectives, groupthink and leadership Gestalt, which facilitated Kelly’s evolution of moving beyond the small-scale vision of the group, and into a larger vision that required her leadership abilities. This evolution began with the middle school teachers’ division while planning their leadership initiative:

Then we started to work on a plan specific to our school. That was when things got tricky. Four of us were eighth grade teachers with one seventh grade teacher. The eighth grade teachers knew what we wanted to do—to work on improving our team-building day. It had been a success last year, despite awful weather, and we wanted to improve upon it. But that would leave the seventh grade teacher by herself. At first we thought (or maybe we just didn’t think) it would be OK, but I didn’t feel right.

Throughout the day on the trail, Kelly had recurring feelings of unease about the structure of the group initiative. Kelly reflected as she hiked, taking in the conversations around her. For one brief moment everything became clear, and Kelly acted:

Then the light bulb finally came on—why not involve both grade levels. I have to say I spoke up rather impulsively and without asking my fellow team members. It just seemed logical, but it was probably wrong of me to act so impulsively. I’m often the one who is a problem solver—wanting to solve them all. Wanting no one to be unhappy and maybe too willing to compromise but it did work out OK.
The only problem is we then had two very strong personalities on the team. That would soon lead to the other vivid memory of our leadership experience.

Kelly’s “impulsive” action had propelled her into a leadership position within the group. This new role was creating a demand for abilities she was not accustomed to using with her peers. As the planning sessions continued, Kelly saw more and more need for guidance and leadership within the group. This need grew to a point where Kelly again felt compelled to act again:

I am not usually a pushy person. I do however stand up for what I believe is right.

So when two of our team members were really dominating the planning of our team-building day, I felt like I was watching a tennis match! I went along with this for a while and then one of them said something totally off the wall, totally wrong. So I kept trying to interrupt and interject but couldn’t get a word in edgewise, sideways, or any other way. Finally, I ended up slamming my book down and saying, “Now wait a minute!” I think they were so stunned by my action, they stopped talking and just looked at me. Maybe it wasn’t the right way to handle this but I didn’t want to keep going over the wrong thing. After that, they slowed down a little and waited until we were ready or asked for our ideas and input.

*Perceived Personal and Professional Impact*

Though Kelly sees a positive professional impact from the TLE, “I think another positive experience for others is just the sharing that we’ve done and the thoughts about the team building and that type of thing, I think will be good,” her perceived impacts are
a melding of her personal and professional domains. Kelly’s personal accomplishments on the trail gave her the strength and confidence to pursue the development of her leadership capacities as well:

I think the whole thing of speaking up and you know, that type of thing. I’ve always been a listener, I’ve always been a person to speak up when I get to the point where I just can’t quite do it anymore type of thing. I’m not one to speak up a lot to change something or make something different unless it’s something that I feel is really vital. But I spoke up this weekend about a couple of different things and both situations were very positive when I spoke up.

Kelly’s experiences on the trail gave her insight into how she can be more successful in the professional world she shares with her colleagues. Regardless of the challenges and obstacles she and her colleagues will face in the future, Kelly felt the teachings of the trail will guide her in the right direction:

I would say some of the things that I might see different would be just the feeling of being, the whole thing was one step at a time, you know. That was the big thing for me the whole time I was doing this because, you know, I worked out this summer and I, you know, walked and exercised this summer to get in shape for this. But still, you know, it’s just still a challenge, it’s still tough to, you know, I mean there were still some very challenging things that phased me, and it is, it’s a real one step at a time type of thing. I think what will benefit me is the idea of being so very aware of when I do get to the point where something seems terribly overwhelming, to do that, just to huh, OK, what’s the first step. When I see
overwhelming coming on, and I can hopefully maybe take a little bit better attitude. That’s true whether in working at home, at school, with kids, whatever, you know, I think that I’ll see that change, too.

Kelly perceives that her family will benefit from positive impacts resulting from her experiences on the TLE. From the beginning, Kelly expressed a deep connection with her high school-age daughter and an anxiety about being out of contact with her for an extended period of time. Kelly saw a renewed strength in their relationship, and a relief in their ability to weather distance:

It was very difficult for me, you know, to not have a cell phone right in my hand all the time, ’cause there were a few times that I was really concerned about what was going on with Sarah and how’s she doing and how’s everything going at home and stuff like that. So, it was really good ’cause I think this is probably the longest I’ve ever been without talking to her, ’cause, you know, even when she’s been gone or I’ve been gone, we’ve usually talked via cell phone, so this has been a really good experience in that perspective, too.

Moreover, Kelly saw her development through the TLE as holistic, reinforcing the strengths she was confident in, but providing her a challenging environment through which she could redefine her potential and set her sights on new horizons:

It really is interesting to me that I placed my emphasis on the physical challenge. I think the idea of it being a class for developing leadership only crossed my mind when we were actually in the process of planning. Working on mental tasks and challenging myself in that way has never been difficult for me. But the idea of
carrying that pack for miles and hiking up and down those hills was both challenging and loaded with anxiety. Out of that came a sense of accomplishment and newfound confidence in the successful completion. Being successful in a task that is not the usual route of praise and reward opens up a whole new arena of attaining goals. No, I never was the champion athlete—always the honor student and the civic organizer and award winner. Now, through dedication, I feel I have one more success under my belt and the strength to accomplish many more. It was a small step, but for me it seemed a long ascent to a new high.

Kelly’s lived experience highlights the interconnection between her personal and professional lives. Kelly looked to this experience as a way to reconnect with what she had known as a child, as well as with what she had always wanted to do as an adult. Kelly saw this experience as a way to redefine herself as a teacher, colleague, wife, and mother. Throughout her experience, Kelly’s notions of her leadership capacity grew, and inspired her to take a stand and act as a mediating force. Kelly took the time to listen to multiple perspectives presented by her colleagues, and then lead the way for selecting the most appropriate method for the problem at hand—enacting a transformative approach to the curriculum decision making processes used during the expedition.

Pam

Expectations

Of all the participants in the TLE, Pam had the most extensive background in outdoor and wilderness living skills. Pam had been backpacking before, and had numerous outdoor experiences both growing up, as well as through her children’s and
husband’s endeavors such as sports and the Boy Scouts. This wilderness background shifted her expectations from a physical focus to a professional, relationship, interaction orientation. A primary expectation for Pam of the TLE was to be provided the time needed to develop the types of relationships she had hoped would be a by-product of the experience:

I thought it was a really great idea to get a bunch of colleagues out and talk about their experiences in education and rarely do I have a chance to interact a huge amount of minutes and time with my colleagues because we always have too much going on.

This need for time represented a means for Pam to not only develop deeper connections with her current fourth-grade teaching partner, Meredith, but also to extend her network of colleagues beyond the elementary and into the middle school as well:

This is a chance to meet other people at other buildings, different grade levels, and talk with them about what their experiences are. I feel like I’m kind of on an island all the time. I work in my building just by myself. Even though I have co-teachers, I don’t always find the time to talk to other people.

Personally, I’m pretty close to the main colleague I work with [Meredith], and professionally we share lots of good experiences. I don’t know a lot of the other people very well at the middle school level. Although I just kind of know them socially and that’s about it, or I had their children in school. My interactions with some of the members have been very favorable.
Pam and Meredith were the only two elementary teachers on the TLE. They were currently co-teaching fourth-grade at the same elementary school, a teaching arrangement that they had shared for one year at the time of the TLE. Pam and Meredith had been colleagues at the elementary level for more than 20 years and shared a much deeper connection that was mutually described as a genuine friendship. Pam was confident in her relationship with Meredith, but was excited about the opportunity to spend an extended period of time with her:

Personally, I think it’s going to be fabulous for me to have a chance to work with Meredith, even though we know each other very well, we don’t have very much time to talk about just general things with each other.

Pam also expected the TLE to provide a change of venue for exploring and developing collegial relationships.

I really think a good way to learn about others is not necessarily in the confines of a classroom environment, or the structure of it that the school gives us. I get a little tired of being inside of those shells when learning and I think that being in the outdoors does, although I’m getting bitten by mosquitoes at this very moment, lend itself to some different kinds of discussions and clarity of mind when you’re outside.

In her mind, this change of pace and place for collegial growth and learning would be a great model for how she and her colleagues could approach student learning differently once they returned from the TLE experience. The outdoor and adventure contexts of the experience would “provide a different outlook on the way learning takes place, and what
it looks like.” This connection and interaction with the natural world was something that Pam saw as essential for personal growth, regardless of age; “I think it’s great to be outdoors and have experience with that.”

Pam’s expectations for the TLE experience did not evoke any apprehensions for the trip. She was confident in her wilderness abilities and her capacity to establish relationships. She was excited about what lay before her, but was realistic about the demands of the wild:

No real personal apprehensions, or professional. I think that it will be fun to be outside. I haven’t been backpacking in years—I think it will be great. The only thing would be getting eaten by mosquitoes—I don’t quite like that. But that’s not really an apprehension, that’s just a bother.

*Experience Perceptions and Interpretations*

*Lived Time*

As understood through Pam’s expectations, the TLE represented an avenue through which she could find the time in her life she felt she needed to create the types of relationships she desired with her colleagues. But beyond this traditional conception of time, Pam also perceived a temporal connection to her past, and resurfacing of familiar rhythms long since forgotten.

Though it had been a while since Pam had participated in this type of experience, she quickly began to feel a renewed connection to the pace of backcountry life: “As we settled into the rhythm of the hike, the ups and downs were a comfortable experience for me.” This pace and tempo resurrected temporal dimensions of her past: “Memories of
many camping and hiking experiences from younger days flooded my memory. A sense of peace settled in.” Pam had never perceived her outdoor experiences as being professional before; she had always participated in these with her family. Now she felt the same rhythms, fell into the same cadence, with her colleagues.

As expected, Pam found time within the experience where she could continue to pursue the collegial connections she desired. As co-teachers of the same grade level, Pam and Meredith worked together to develop a leadership initiative for their elementary building. Though they have classrooms next-door to each other in their building, Pam always felt as though they never had enough time to pursue in-depth thoughts and ideas together. During the TLE, Pam did not find this to be the case. There was also the added bonus of having time with multiple colleagues from a variety of grade levels to involve in the conversation as well:

Meredith and I had time to share our ideas and feelings, something we rarely get a chance to do. Afterwards, our groups came together with our plans for action. We were greeted by caring professionals who gave us ideas and feedback.

Pam’s reflections on lived time also revealed thematic dimensions centered on the concept of timing, as opposed to merely face time or clock time. She felt that the progression of the experience, and the timing of the activities were critical to her perceptions. One example of this timing was splitting the ideation and creation phases of the group leadership initiative projects. All TLE participants began brainstorming ideas for their leadership initiative project during the first morning instructional session. Once the grade-level groups had a general concept in mind, the participants packed-up and
headed for a new campsite. This trail time was intended to be used as a reflective, discussion period that could help crystallize each group’s initiative:

Leaving the design and [building of our plan] until the next day was a wise decision. Although we felt “cut off” because we didn’t finish the entire plan, it led to a period of introspection while we hiked. Having the next day to rethink and plan individually on the trail was great!

Pam also perceived the timing of the TLE to be a benefit. Being situated two weeks prior to school starting provided Pam an impetus to begin the next school year. She saw great power, and drew strength and excitement from being prepared and focused so close to a new school year:

Having our plans set before the beginning of the school year was exciting to us.

Getting our plan designed and organized and to have a vision at the beginning of the school year was powerful. Having this prior to the year’s beginning was a terrific idea because as you know, teachers are usually pretty pumped up and revitalized and raring to go in August.

Interestingly, by the end of the TLE experience, the three-day experience which seemed daunting at the start, did not seem long enough for Pam: “And actually I’m kind of wishing that we could stay a little longer, which a couple of days ago I would never had thought.”

*Lived Space*

The wilds of Pennsylvania and the Girard Hiking Trail, where the TLE was held, were not unfamiliar to Pam. Years ago Pam had accompanied her husband to this same
location for a personal backpacking experience. Pam’s recollection of that experience was not positive. This space brought back memories of a difficult physical challenge, uncomfortable equipment, aching knees, and a sore back. But Pam had prepared differently this time.

Since her last visit to this wilderness she had perfected her wilderness travel skills, and began using equipment intended to ease some of the aches and pains associated with hiking. Like her colleagues, Pam’s first introduction to the TLE terrain was the uphill section that began the trail. “Getting back into the woods with packs on our backs, we began our [TLE]. Climbing and talking through our first steep hill was exhilarating for me.” Pam was met with an instant feeling of confidence; she was in shape; she knew she could do this. Pam began to create new memories of the space, memories of her connection with the natural elements around her, as opposed to having to focus on the aches and pains associated with her last visit:

It was a beautiful day—no humidity. Sun filtered through the lush trees. The smells of the forest, the rotting decomposing wood, the fragrant leaves, the sweating odiferous armpits struck havoc with my nose. Sunrays sparkled the ground. Above us, blue sky was layered with puffy cumulus clouds. Trekking poles clanked together as we clomped and plodded along. I love being in the woods.

As Pam hiked, the woods began to emerge as a mediating element, a source of unity within the group. She saw this place as a way for her colleagues to draw together and seek commonalities, as opposed to simply recognizing each other’s differences. For
the next three days, this space would highlight how much Pam and her colleagues needed each other:

The camaraderie that we developed! Not all of us have always gotten along so well as we did in the woods. We actually were having a blast learning about each other. There is an element about being in nature where you bring everything with you and leave nothing behind. It helps to bond and glue you together.

Pam recognized that navigating this space was not as easy for all of her colleagues as it was for her. She noticed how the undulating terrain and heavy packs were difficult for many. She also saw the joy, and sense of accomplishment felt by her colleagues when they successfully arrived at camp. Like her colleagues, the campsites for Pam were a special place:

The last hill of the day was tough for many folks but with several breaks everyone was successful. I was feeling pretty good as I greeted that hill. Seeing the Adirondack shelter around the top of the hill was uplifting for many. We settled in and were able to take a nap—one of my favorite pastimes after a tough day. Laying down, taking a nap that day, having my toes out of my hiking boots, and feeling the wind blow between my toes was fabulous!

As day turned to night, the campsites took on a different persona. Pam paralleled this experience to having sleepovers when growing up. She and her colleagues made connections and developed an organizational mythology that will be lasting:
We settled in, or at least tried to. Meredith snored and Angela slept with socks over her ears. Jan worried about everything. *I mean everything.* We talked late into the night and laughed and laughed and laughed.

As the TLE continued, Pam felt a transition in her perceptions of the trail and her comfort with that environment. Pam had hoped for an opportunity to make connections with her colleagues and to develop new relationships in this new space, but Pam had not necessarily factored in the aspect of continuous contact with her colleagues. The space had provided her time, but was it now too much?

As we began this morning I found my mind racing thinking about our ideas, our plan, our frustrations the previous school year. I reflected upon the professional and personal relationships I had begun this trip. Mumble jumble ideas popped in and out of my head. My brain was almost on overdose but we began to walk and talk. The scenery was amazing and much of the hike was going to be easier. We decided to hike [fewer] miles to make it easier on all—I was a bit disappointed but no matter. As we walked I began to get tired of the incessant talking. I really love walking quietly in the woods. I just want to observe what was going on, to think, to have some space and time for introspection. I, as a person, really need this quiet reflection—meditation time which I *rarely* get. I found that several times when I was trying to think about our plan, my life and our challenges that even though there was good laughter and conversation I was feeling irritated. I was wondering why I felt this way. As we went on I realized how much I need time for quiet reflection-meditation. So I just withdrew to the end of the line to get
into my own zone of consciousness. It was a bit unsettling to feel this way—as if to shut my “new colleagues” off, but I needed time to think.

Pam found a new space at the end of the hiking line that provided her with the quiet and disconnection she needed to fully process and understand what she was experiencing. She also explored her desire to create this type of space:

Once I did this, I walked quietly behind and enjoyed the woods and my own thought processes. I meditated and reflected upon my thoughts. Perhaps my need for “quiet” space and time flowed from my younger days—being a Quaker where religious services are a time of quiet reflection. I spent a good deal of time at the end of the line in my mode—no one seemed to notice.

For Pam, the fact that “no one seemed to notice” was not disappointing, but rather a testament to how this space provided every individual the opportunity to create his or her own unique system of engagement.

*Lived Body*

Pam’s reflections of lived body were not as extensive as her other existential connections. This is partly due to Pam’s familiarity with type of adventure-based activities used throughout the TLE, as well as her personal level of fitness coming into the experiences. These aspects allowed her to focus on the interpersonal aspects of the experience, as opposed to worrying about her own physical abilities. There were a few instances where Pam referred to her lived body experience. Thematically, these reflections centered on her ability to transcend her negative conception of how her body
felt during an earlier trip to this location and her ability to transfer her on-trail bodily awareness into her personal and professional life.

A central theme to Pam’s first backpacking trip on the Girard Hiking Trail was that of discomfort. In the past, her equipment and hiking style caused mental and physical issues throughout that experience. But this time was different. From the beginning when Pam positioned her backpack on her back she noticed a difference in how it felt: “My pack felt comfortable on my back.” Pam’s new perspective caused her to reflect on her earlier experiences:

I felt strong as I realized that trekking up and down hills with a correctly fitting backpack was fairly easy. Backpacking was a bad experience for me years ago and I was excited that this was a piece of cake. I’m not sore, I don’t have any blisters, and I’m feeling really good about being able to do it.

As the day continued, Pam continued to take stock of her physical condition: “My body didn’t hurt, and I wasn’t feeling too tired. Although my armpits were certainly sore.” Despite the soreness, Pam had come to realize that her new hiking methods were going to be successful, and would allow for a new perspective of this trail: “Exuberance was a feeling I noticed this first day as well as a revitalization of spirit and mind.”

Though in good shape and well versed in backcountry travel, Pam still had aspects of the hike that were challenging. She had had similar challenges on other outdoor trips. This familiarity allowed her to transpose the challenges she was living through into her current personal and professional life, and create a metaphoric understanding of these challenges:
I felt challenged that day of hiking on the down hills. I really don’t like going
down hills because I really feel off balance. Being off balance physically is
uncomfortable for me. When going down these last hills, I was totally off balance.
When this happened, I thought about how I do not like imbalance in my life—my
personal life or my professional life. I did equate going down hills and becoming
out of balance—Meredith and I discussed that this is how we felt all last year—
out of balance.

By paralleling these to aspects of her life, Pam sought to transfer the techniques she used
on the trail to increase her stability into ways she could achieve more stability in her
personal and professional endeavors. For example, on the trail, Pam was able to become
more stable on the downhill sections by using her trekking poles. These additional points
of contact released load from her knees, and allowed her to secure her footing with each
step. In her personal and professional realms, Pam saw these trekking poles as people and
processes that she could depend on for support. Depending on the situation, Pam felt that
there were specific individuals and protocols that would help take the load off of her, as
well as provide safe, secure steps to ensure her success.

*Lived Human Relations*

Pam had anticipated the opportunity to develop new relationships and strengthen
existing ones while on the TLE; in fact, she was excited to do so. Because of her level of
comfort and fitness, Pam was able to engage her colleagues in conversation throughout
the hikes. Even on the first day when the rest of the group was struggling, Pam took the
time to create inroads with her colleagues:
During this first hike, I spent much of the time gabbing with others. Talking about many things we have in common: children, school, soccer, lacrosse, exercise routines, schedules, blending family and work, vacations, time management, and general life struggles. These talks would later prove to be such an important connection point with others, allowing us to make a strong bond between us leading to stronger ties, thus building leadership.

Pam sought opportunities to develop relationships even when not on the trail. For her, meal times were great times to enter into conversation with her colleagues and to explore new technologies and techniques together:

- When we got up from our rest we had time to make supper together. Figuring out how to work those funky stoves without setting yourself on fire was fun. Joining in and cooking our meals as a team was enjoyable. The tools used to assist in the food prep were cool! And eating was grand!

Whether hiking, napping, or cooking, Pam capitalized on the exposure she had with familiar and unfamiliar colleagues. She saw every opportunity as a means of developing a closer collegial relationship.

- A key component to Pam’s interactions with lived human relations was the conception and development of the group leadership initiative. As grade-level partners, Pam and Meredith worked together to develop a leadership initiative that would benefit their school community. As a part of the creation process, group members completed a personality/group-role style assessment. Pam saw a benefit to understanding the foundational components that characterized Meredith’s leadership development style:
As for the beginning stages of our initiative, we worked on our building style. It was interesting to see which of our colleagues fell into each category, data builder, policy builder, team builder, and vision builder. The “natural” interests and strengths of my direct teaching partner, Meredith, were helpful to know. It did help to find out the styles of the other participants that I did not know as well.

Pam saw this new perspective of Meredith as a positive step that enabled them to be fully aware of each other’s orientation towards the leadership initiative project. Though they had felt it before, Pam felt this new information assured that she and Meredith were “on the same page.”

Meredith and I, although we love our jobs, were basically bummed out. The trends we saw in our school for all of the stakeholders—the students, the teachers, the parents, and the community were not positive. What were we going to do about this? Who else shared this vision?

For Pam, share vision was critical. She was willing to put in the time and energy needed to attempt to make a climatic change in her building, but she wanted to know who else supported this vision. She was willing to be courageous, but wanted to know if anyone else supported that courage.

Pam and Meredith had decided on a building culture initiative to pursue for their project. As stated above, Pam thought that it was critical to gain a deeper understanding of the issue by soliciting the perspective of her middle school colleagues. This professional exchange proved to be very beneficial:
Being able to share these frustrations with our expedition buddies was eye opening. Having spent a good deal of time together getting to know each other on the trail led to a more honest discussion. An open and truthful talk ensued. The collegial network that Pam had hoped to create was coming into focus. Through in-depth discussion with her elementary colleague, and a reflective, perspective seeking discourse with her middle school colleagues, Pam was able to have a clearer vision for her initiative, and a stronger connection to her colleagues at other grade levels: “Our groups bonded, accepted people’s ideas and shared plans—a very positive experience. This tightened the bonds unifying all our groups.” By the end of the TLE experience Pam recognized a shift in the perception of her colleagues:

We laughed, relaxed, and told stories. I got along with people that I don’t normally get along with. I saw bits and pieces of their lives and their experiences—something that I had not done before or had not even tried to do. I valued these people and saw them in a totally different light. We bonded in a way that we had never done before; time, experience, discussion, and laughter joined us together as people—pretty amazing stuff.

Perceived Personal and Professional Impact

Throughout the experience Pam sought to disaggregate her reflective comments to delimit the personal and professional components that she was experiencing. Her perceived personal and professional impacts are no different. From a personal perspective, Pam’s reflections center on two thematic components: personal reflective
time and family harmony. Professionally, Pam’s reflective texts depict themes of
collegial connection, professional organization, and school-wide climate change.

For Pam, time in the woods represents an oasis, a way to get away from the
demands of her personal and professional lives. Over the years, finding time to escape
into the woods had become difficult. Getting away to a place she perceived as relaxing
had significant personal impact:

First, I love the woods, and I love everything about it. It gave me time to reflect
upon my personal life and my professional life in a quiet place which doesn’t
happen that much. And I love everything about being in this environment.

This has been really good for me because I haven’t been out in the woods
as much, or camping and I really love it and sometimes in the hustle and bustle of
my life I’ve forgotten that that needs to be an important part of me because it
makes me feel better inside. It makes me much more relaxed and I enjoy it.

This opportunity for personal rejuvenation would have an impact beyond her. She felt
that the relationships she has with those closest to her would also be impacted by her
participation:

My own family will benefit because I think I will be in a better mood. And that’s
a big important thing. I think that when you launch something that is exciting,
and, like our new initiative that we are going to do with this teacher leadership
program in our school, where we are having monthly meetings that will bring
certain vitality to myself personally.
Professionally, Pam came into the TLE hoping to develop stronger relationships with her colleagues. As a result of her experiences on the TLE, Pam perceived a deeper connection with her colleagues, and valued the new perspectives she gained:

And the other thing is, I’ve learned to get along, I mean, last night was hysterical. The four of us were in the cabins like it was a sleep over that I had when I was 10. We were laughing and giggling about things that we would have giggled about then. And that makes you feel good. And there is nothing better than coming out of an experience after you have laughed and also have a plan and feel like you accomplished something.

I developed some relationships that I hadn’t had prior to this experience because when you spend 24-7 with people in the woods you get to know them pretty well. And I definitely value their friendship and their professionalism much more then I did before because you really get to see them all the time. I also got to spend more time with my personal colleague, which is always a delight for me. Also I got to be with people I never knew and I think personally that is important.

This professional connection helped to drive the leadership initiative project that Pam and Meredith created. The process of developing such an initiative bolstered Pam’s confidence and determination to make a difference. She saw an opportunity to change the climate of her school, and by relying on the skills and attitudes developed on the TLE she believes she can be successful:

We have a plan. We’ve both been fairly down about some of the things that have happened in our school building and quite not known what to do, and prior to this
workshop I just said to her, “Let’s just stay in our own rooms, we’re just going to do our own thing, and we are going to ignore some of the bad climate that’s going on.” And I think, I didn’t really want to do that because that’s not really my style, but I think that coming out with a plan to combat this negativity and to do some teambuilding in a positive way will help everybody and will hopefully improve the climate of our school, which has always been to this year, one of great camaraderie.

In a similar manner, Pam hopes to use the same type of experiential, not necessarily adventure-based, approaches she experienced during the TLE to develop her building’s climate:

Hopefully get our staff together on a personal level as well as a professional level. Which is kind of exactly what [the TLE] is doing. It’s getting our personal and professional lives into different perspectives. So, I am hoping to bring that part of [the TLE] to what we are doing at our school in the months ahead.

For Pam, changing the school climate and modeling for her colleagues what she experienced on the TLE could have a profound impact on how she and her colleagues perceive their growth as professionals: “I think the personal and professional lives are so intertwined that once we do more personal [experiences] with each other, professionally we’ll be [growing] as well.”

Pam’s lived experience was one filled with a quest for balance. Throughout the experience, Pam sought to balance her collegial interactions with the personal, reflective time she needed to process the concepts and ideas that were being discussed. Pam sought
physical balance as she traveled down the trail. Her previous experience in this location had not been positive, and so Pam looked to transcend that experience by taking a more balanced and stable approach to her hiking. Pam also sought to balance the climate in her school setting by trying to regain the interpersonal connections that had been lost as a result of a standardized management approach. Through her leadership initiative, Pam wanted to bring her colleagues together and reestablish the supportive, dynamic, collegial environment she felt was missing.

Meredith

*Expectations*

The TLE for Meredith represented an opportunity to reconceptualize professional development. As a professional, Meredith had always pursued professional growth opportunities. She saw this as an obligation of the field, as well as a way for her to model the concept of life-long learning for her students and her family. Many of the professional development experiences in Meredith’s past were described as “typical” or “traditional” in nature. Meredith viewed and expected the TLE to present a different perspective on professional growth:

I love my job and have always enjoyed opportunities for professional development. This expedition was presented as a different way to receive teacher training outside a classroom setting. This also intrigued me since I love the outdoors and camping.

Within this new context, Meredith expected there to be opportunities for developing collegial connections. Meredith was currently co-teaching fourth-grade with Pam,
another participant on the TLE. The extended time and contact with her co-teaching
partner that Meredith expected the TLE to provide was a significant selling point of the
experience:

I wanted to interact with my colleagues. I’m excited to have some good
interaction with my colleagues; co-workers that I just don’t get a chance to talk to
about school things and on a personal level. I knew Pam was doing this and I just
thought that it would be an awesome opportunity to do hiking which I had not
done before.

As one of two elementary teachers on the TLE, Meredith was excited to make
connections with her colleagues at different grade levels:

There are people that I don’t know that are in this group and I’m excited to have
the opportunity to meet them and interact with them. And the ones I do know, I
enjoy being with anyway—so that’s a double benefit.

Meredith’s desire to “try something new” was not limited to her professional
realm: “I want to get a little bit more physically fit and be in the outdoors.” On a personal
level, Meredith expected the TLE to provide her with the motivation not only pursue a
more physically active lifestyle, but to also spend time in the outdoors. Though not as
well versed as Pam in outdoor pursuits, Meredith was familiar with the rigors of camping
and living in the outdoors. She had never been backpacking, but she and her family had
participated in various camping and hiking excursions over the past years. Her familiarity
with the outdoors did not provide Meredith with any sense of confidence. She understood
the difference between her past experiences, and what she had signed-on for with the
TLE, difference that evoked self-doubt: “Can I do this? Can I withstand the actual hiking on the hillsides, the weight of the pack on me?”

Meredith’s apprehension about the experience was heightened when her principal commented that he did not believe she would be able to complete the experience, stating that backpacking was “hard” and that he was worried “she might get hurt.” Meredith reflected on those comments: “When the principal commented that he didn’t think that I could do this, I was determined to prove that I wouldn’t give up.” Meredith’s determination was met with feelings of self-doubt, but with a quiet resolve to be successful at all cost:

I didn’t want to let myself down, but especially didn’t want teaching staff and family thinking that I was in such bad shape that I couldn’t finish. There was no way that I would embarrass myself by giving up. Even if I [was] in horrible pain at the end of the day, nobody was going to find out. I had nightmares that I would be crying in pain or so sore that I couldn’t even walk.

Meredith used her dogged determination and expectations for the experience to fuel her pre-experience training efforts. Though there were some setbacks, Meredith saw improvement in her abilities and was pleased with her progress:

Much of my summer was spent preparing for the physical challenges of this hike. We were given a training schedule. I was a bit slow getting started, but steadily met each of the recommended steps. In fact, I pushed myself to walk each day, rather than just three or four days a week as I had originally planned. When I was out of town attending teacher workshops or lacrosse tournaments with my
daughter, I worried that I couldn’t follow the walking schedule that I had set for myself. I was pleased with my increased stamina throughout the summer.

*Experience Perceptions and Interpretations*

*Lived Time*

As a self-described person who lives in the moment, it was not surprising to see that Meredith’s reflections did not have a strong connection to her experiences with lived time. Thematically, Meredith’s temporal perspective is highlighted by two components: accelerated time and contextual uncertainty.

Throughout the TLE experience Meredith found numerous opportunities to interact with her colleagues. Whether on the trail, in the shelter, or cooking with her group, she took the time to engage people in conversation. When engaging in these conversations, Meredith found that her experience with time also changed: “The conversations not only made the time pass quickly, but were interesting. We had an uninterrupted chance to talk to each other. In our busy teaching lives, this doesn’t happen often.” Meredith found it amazing how quickly time seemed to pass when she was interacting with her colleagues. Trail miles seemed to melt away and planning time seemed to end just as she and Pam began their work. In addition to a sense of accelerated time, there were certain temporal aspects of the experience where Meredith felt uncertainty.

The TLE was a new experience for Meredith. She had hiked with family and friends before, but never backpacked. Because of its unfamiliarity, Meredith had no way of judging or gauging her expectations. In her mind, the time it would take to travel some
of the various distances between campsites was uncertain. Meredith became concerned as the days seemed to stretch beyond what she had seen as a manageable timeframe:

“How long is this day going to be?” Meredith was nervous about arriving to camp late, cooking and setting up in the dark, and not being able to have a sufficient amount of time to recuperate and plan her project: “I thought sometimes at the end of the day I’m not real motivated to really push my thinking and creativity and planning.” Meredith felt relief once she had reached the “end” of the day’s experiences: “I was happy at the end walking into the campsite.”

_Lived Space_

In this new environment, Meredith was surrounded by sights, sounds, and terrains all of which she perceived as providing opportunities for personal growth, collegial interaction, and introspection/reflection. Though Meredith had initially been concerned with her physical abilities, she was less daunted than her colleagues by the first hill of the hike. She saw the first hill and the tempered trail following the hill as a means of providing perspective, a way to slow down and take in what was around her:

I was glad that these strains were fairly short and separated with fairly flat areas. The scenery was beautiful! I loved seeing the sun shining on the ferns. There were great shades of green. The variety and colors of fungi were interesting to see. I tried to look at the variety of nature, rather than stare down at the trail.

The flatter sections of the trail enabled Meredith to take a more rapid pace, but they also provided her with opportunities to engage in conversation with her colleagues. Though
the hills gave her the reassurance that she had adequately prepared physically for the TLE, they did not provide the same reward as connecting with her peers:

I loved the flat parts of the walks where I could actually talk with the people in the group and learn more about them. Going up the hill I had to concentrate more on what I was doing so that was difficult for me, and not as rewarding.

As Meredith traveled, she not only made connections with her colleagues, but she found ways to reconnect with the beauty she saw in this space. The outdoors and the natural world have always been important to Meredith, but to be out in it, living among it was a special experience:

Beautiful. I especially liked the sections where huge trees had fallen over. We crossed a cool bridge. Looking down, we could see large fish and crayfish. I enjoy watching wildlife, so this was interesting and relaxing for me.

Meredith began to see ways in which this new space made her react to the challenges it provided. Though completely different than her work and home environments, Meredith transferred her experiences across domains. Within her personal life, she saw a connection to her role as a mother and wife:

[On the TLE] I’m tired, I might be ready to just sit down and rest, do nothing, and I have to keep going. That’s how it is in my personal life. When I get home I’m tired at the end of the day and I have to still do what I need to do with family, with my children, with the house. And I have the same outlook on it, go ahead and get it done and then it’ll be done. And I’ll feel glad that it’s over, that it’s finished.
These personal struggles, and her response to them, were transferable to her professional life as well. Meredith saw the ability to persevere as critical to professional success:

We always have challenges with the curriculum and with students, and we keep at it. We try to keep a positive outlook. That’s the biggest thing, not giving up on anybody or anything. I think it’s a huge comparison to the setting—just don’t give up, keep positive, enjoy what you’re doing.

Lived Body

As discussed earlier, Meredith came to the TLE experience with physical apprehensions and anxiety. Before the experience Meredith described visions of pain and failure, but was determined to prevail regardless. Throughout Meredith’s reflections and recollections of the experience, lived body references were less prevalent than she had thought. Thematically, Meredith’s bodily reflections conveyed notions of struggle, fatigue, and physical continuum.

For Meredith, the beginning section of the hike left a lasting impression. The length and gradient of the fire road were formidable, but Meredith found support in her application of proper equipment:

The hike began with us walking up a road. It didn’t take long before I was breathing heavily and feeling the weight on my legs. There were several times that I strained during uphill walks. The hiking poles really helped.

Meredith had shifted her thinking into an “accident avoidance” mentality. She was disappointed with this development because it meant that she spent a considerable amount of time looking at the ground, trying to avoid obstacles, and keeping her balance.
This intense focus shut out the world around her. She was living her life “one step at a time.” Throughout the coming day’s hikes, Meredith found challenge in the varied terrain, and was pleased with how successfully her body was handling the rigors of the experience. As the days passed, Meredith learned new strategies for making her body more comfortable. “The pack was still uncomfortable. It really dug into my shoulders, which were tender from the day before. Thankfully the straps got adjusted and the pack was shifted to a better position.” Meredith saw the rewards of seeking advice and perspective from her colleagues. She began to see the group as being capable of much more than each person individually.

Regardless of how comfortable her body was during the experience, at the end of each day she was tired. She was pleased with how she had become accustomed to the techniques that made her backcountry travel easier, but once at camp she felt the need to rest and recuperate for the next day. Meredith noticed that this fatigue was limiting her larger vision for the TLE, and was making it difficult to maintain engagement. “I have to admit that I was tired and wasn’t very motivated to concentrate on and begin the planning stage. I was ready to get into a warm sleeping bag in front of a fire and go to sleep.” Meredith attributed some of the lack of motivation to a mental disconnect with the TLE curriculum. For Meredith, each time she arrived at camp was seen as a victory—she had been successful. The professional aspects of the experience, particularly the ones utilized after the hikes, were more difficult to engage in when fatigued.

As the experience progressed, Meredith looked to her past day’s experiences as benchmarks for future experiences on the TLE. Meredith created a continuum of
experiences that helped her to determine if certain aspects were harder or easier than what she had successfully completed. Not knowing what lay ahead, and how that experience would measure-up, was a source of anxiety:

I was anxious to get hiking again. I tend to worry about the unknown. Would the trails be tougher today? I was pleased that I didn’t feel sore at all. I hoped that the second day would be as rewarding as the first.

*Lived Human Relations*

With physical concerns frontloading Meredith’s expectations for the TLE, she was concerned with whether she would have the time and energy to develop the kinds of relationships she had hoped for. As the experience progressed, Meredith found multiple avenues through which she could seek collegial connection. Meredith’s reflections on lived human relations encompassed several thematic components including: the search for commonality, collegial variety, situational leadership, shelter life, and friendship evolution.

Prior to the experience, Meredith had internalized fears of slowing down the group while hiking and not having enough physical stamina to be successful. These fears along with Meredith’s propensity to establish continuum relationships as discussed above, drove Meredith to seek out her place within the group—how did she measure-up?

I had to laugh when I saw Kelly trying to lift her pack onto her back. It took several tries and then someone lifted it for her. Not that I want anyone to struggle more than me, but it was encouraging to see that this wasn’t going to be easy for another teacher.
Meredith took solace in knowing that there were others on the TLE that were going to need help, and would rely on the support of others to be successful. Having a sense of commonality was critical for Meredith’s piece of mind. Knowing she was not alone gave her the freedom to open up and enjoy the company of those around her: “It was great that we walked and talked in various pairs throughout the day. Different teachers led the way and our walking ‘order’ constantly changed, so I wasn’t always talking to the same person.”

While on the trail, Meredith utilized her time by getting to know her colleagues in a more in-depth manner. Various aspects of the day’s hikes provided insights into the qualities and tendencies of the other members of the TLE. Meredith noticed how one trail activity, the Helium Stick as described in Michael’s section above, highlighted how flexible the group was at delegating leadership, and supporting the goals of the established leader:

[Michael] directed us on our second effort and we accomplished our goal. I really think it worked because we were willing to follow directions from a leader. This activity wasn’t long or intricate, but it was fun to see and hear our excitement when we succeeded.

Meredith saw her colleagues as a resource, a means of becoming a better professional:

We worked hard to write a worthwhile, reasonable plan. When we shared our plan with the other teachers, their excitement, encouragement, and suggestions added to our determination to implement it. It was a fantastic bonding experience that helped with our decision-making process.
The TLE provided an experience that was not familiar to any of the participants, communal living. Work, sleep, eat, travel, all were done together, and at the same time. This type of living arrangement required a great deal of flexibility, consideration, and as Meredith pointed out, a sense of humor:

Apparently I did a good amount of loud snoring. I felt sorry for my “bunk mates.” It was pretty humorous to see Angela wake up the following morning with her socks balled up and tucked over her ears held in place with her stocking hat. She was amazingly good-natured about it. I also laughed when she pulled out a little pouch of cosmetics. Here we all are with messy hair, smelling of sweat, campfire, and bug spray. And Angela has eye shadow and lip stick. The next night, Angela graciously sacrificed the covers and several pages from her magazine, and we started a fire and quickly fell asleep. I tried to help Angela get a quieter night of sleep. Pam and Jan provided some aspirin, sinus pills, and a Breathe Rite strip. Angela wasn’t wearing her earmuffs the following morning, so my medications must have worked.

Meredith was pleased that by modifying her sleeping habits she could have a positive impact on her “bunk mate.”

Meredith and her co-teaching colleague Pam had been more than colleagues for many years. They were indeed friends. Meredith had hoped to find time during the TLE to reconnect with Pam professionally and establish a common mission and vision for the upcoming school year. Though Pam and Meredith were successful in their planning and
development for the new school year, it was Pam’s attention to Meredith’s personal well
being that made the most lasting impression:

Pam had secretly asked Ranger John at [our] first campsite to bring me a Diet
Coke when we stopped for the second night. She didn’t even respond the second
evening when the ranger arrived and said he needed to see Angela and [me]. The
generosity, the consideration, the excitement of that little act of kindness really,
very much touched me. I’ve always enjoyed working with [Pam]. This has been a
strong friendship that I think reached a new level. And that’s been pretty awesome
for me. Not that I didn’t think she had it in her, I know she does, but I learned that
even with friends who have been friends for a long time, they can still surprise
you and do something so exceptionally considerate even though it’s pretty little
and the excitement is still there—the friendship hasn’t gotten old.

*Perceived Personal and Professional Impact*

For Meredith, each day’s successful hike was a milestone of accomplishment. She
came to the TLE experience with anxiety about her physical abilities. And with each
passing day, she grew more and more confident in her abilities. But Meredith’s
reflections on the experience revealed many more perceived benefits. Thematically,
Meredith developed an appreciation, or healthy respect for her undertaking, developed a
new appreciation for taking positive risks, and became inspired to actively model positive
attitudinal behaviors for her colleagues, students, and family.

Meredith’s initial apprehensions about the TLE made her feel alone and
unqualified. Throughout the experience, Meredith discovered that the same fears she was
experiencing were common throughout the group. This commonality allowed Meredith to redefine her fears as being “a healthy respect” for the experience. Meredith saw this respect as an important perspective to draw upon in the future:

It’s ok to be nervous about it and I think that kind of fueled my preparation for the trip, and [even with] all my preparation it still wasn’t easy. I made it bearable, and more worthwhile. I gained a lot of personal satisfaction of getting a little bit better into shape. It didn’t kill me. Some of my initial misgivings about being so sore and miserable, I just pictured that I wouldn’t be able to sleep, I’d be rolling around so much in pain, and dreading the next, and I didn’t feel that way at all.

In the same way that Meredith redefined her fears, she also changed her perspective on the concept of leadership. Prior to the experience, Meredith would never have labeled herself as a leader. Meredith’s reflections revealed that although she was still apprehensive about assuming leadership roles, she saw leadership as being more a willingness to take positive risks as opposed to the large-scale, administrative perception she had of leadership before. Meredith found this new perception of risk-taker as intriguing, and something she was willing to commit to in her future personal and professional endeavors:

At first I thought, you know I’m really not a leader. I just like to be a team person. I like to be a follower with input. And the input is important to me. I always have to get my say in, or I don’t know, not necessarily my say, but contribute to discussions. I don’t just sit and listen, but I really am uncomfortable initiating—leadership-type things.
So I’m willing to take more of a risk on being a leader. I can tell I still will, I still like the added support of a colleague being with me or on the same page or even just to discuss things. I don’t know if I’m to the point yet where I’m ready to go out on a limb totally by myself, but I find that with the colleague in my building, I don’t know that I would have to do that. But that could be just a first baby step for me. I’m ready to commit to that. I’m excited about it. I’m energized.

Meredith took great pride in her ability to respond to the demands of the TLE experience. She recognized the sheer determination, goal-orientation, and hard work it took for her to be successful. It was these attitudes that Meredith sought to model for her students in the years to come.

I’m hoping that it will be present in my classroom. Don’t give up, don’t give up, you can do it. It just reaffirms my belief that if you practice you will get better, you’ll be more confident; you have the abilities, the strength if you choose to [believe] in yourself. People, students, teachers, everybody just needs to give themselves more credit for what they can do. So that belief has really became [clearer] through this experience.

But what Meredith saw as the greatest personal and professional impact of the experience was the discovery of her inner-strength, and a rediscovery of potential. She may not have known what would come of her experience, but she was excited to find out. “Not only have I gained knowledge, but I’ve also gained something about my personal, my inner
strength, and that’s really cool. I’m very excited about the potential, and what can become of it.”

Meredith’s lived experience was one of self-actualization. Prior to this experience Meredith had not considered herself a leader. She saw the importance of quality leadership, recognized poor leadership, but never assumed a leadership role. As Meredith’s experience progressed she began to realize the potential she had for making a difference on both personal and professional levels. She recognized the dedication and determination she displayed while preparing for the experience displayed her ability to lead by example. The leadership initiative she developed moved her from a place of being one of the followers, to being someone who was willing and able to bring ideas to the table and carry them out. Meredith’s experience helped her to realize who she was as a person, and what that person was capable of doing professionally.

Composite

Although developed individually above, to create a universal essence of the adventure-based professional development experience a composite understanding has been attempted by synthesizing the universal elements that structured each individual’s experience. Though not intended to be used as a tool for generalization, this composite understanding can serve to represent the universality of the group, and a description of the common essence that defines all seven of the individual experiences. To present this composite the guiding questions of this study will be utilized as the structure for the universal essences:
1. How do teacher colleagues perceive and interpret a three-day, two-night adventure-based professional development expedition?

2. What expectations do these teachers bring to adventure-based professional development?

3. Are there perceived personal and professional impacts from adventure-based professional development?

Along with the universal essences found for each guiding question, a reflection on the findings accompany each section as a means of grounding the essences and their importance to each question.

_Perceptions of Time, Space, Body, and Human Relations_

The adventure-based professional development experience evoked an elaborate reflective temporal experience that provided entry points into various temporal dimensions such as the participants’ past, present, and future. Throughout the experience, the perception of time was sensed as accelerated, the rate of which depended on one’s level of engagement. This engagement was driven by the immediate surroundings. These spaces or surroundings were both the physical/natural environment created by the topographical features of the terrain, and the social/relational environment created by the proximity/perspectives of other participants. These varied spaces, both physical and relational, were significant and represented opportunities to validate expectations, achieve personal growth, and develop professional, collegial relationships.
The immediate perception of the TLE experience from the participants prior to attending was one of uncertainty as to how this particular activity and setting would provide an atmosphere through which they could grow professionally. The outdoors had never been seen as a professional location. Important meetings and decisions were always handled inside in a meeting room or board office. The reconceptualization of time and space appeared to shift the participants’ thinking as to where professional growth was possible. The professional relationships and collegial connections the participants made over the three-day experience were among some of the deepest they could remember.

For the participants, it was difficult to separate the time, space, body, and human relation elements—these elements were so deeply entwined that understanding where one stopped and the other began was hard, if not impossible. This entwinement suggests a truly holistic and authentic experience. Participants became lost in the experience, navigating their ways through an experience that provided deep existential connections.

**Expectations**

The experience of participating in a three-day adventure-based professional development backpacking experience is one that is met with feelings that range from self-doubt about physical abilities, to apprehension and excitement about working and living with colleagues who represent dear friends, to near strangers. Involvement in this type of experience is predicated by a wide range of reasons including the quest to achieve challenging individual goals, the desire to find personal time away from the demands of work and family life, and the opportunity to have extended time to interact with one’s colleagues. These reasons for choosing an adventure-based professional development
option carry specific expectations: it will provide avenues for personal victories, as well as the unstructured time needed to develop a deeper connection with colleagues.

The overwhelming emphasis for this type of experience is of a personal nature. Whether it is what participants see as an inherent challenge in the adventure, or the sheer physical demands of such an experience, participants came with the intention of proving something to themselves—to show that they could do it. Though not a sole motivation for any participant, this personal desire to achieve, or conquer the experience, was foundational to each participant.

This challenge is an important aspect of the experience that has definite professional ramifications. When trying to develop new models for professional growth, it appears that the perception, or expectation of rigor is key in attracting participants to that model. In the case of the TLE, participants were first attracted to the physical and contextual challenges and rigor that are part of the experience, but there were multifaceted expectations as well. Participants in the TLE also wanted time, professional time: Time to interact with colleagues; Time to prepare mentally for the upcoming school year; Time to plan and develop new skills with colleagues.

For many, this time represented a way to mediate the typical rapid half-day professional development sessions that had come to define their current models of professional development. Participants wanted time to grapple with new ideas and process these ideas in meaningful ways, and in meaningful company.
Perceived Personal and Professional Impact

For the participants, personal growth was achieved through both the realization of physical potential, and the time to pursue personal reflective practices. Regardless of initial bodily perception, participants saw their ability to complete the three-day experience as significant and inspiring. The experience enabled the body to be used as a unification point where aches and pains were not dismissed, but used as a form of cultural capital and a kinesthetic imprint of learning. This unified body also provided a stepping-off point for colleagues looking to make personal connections. The type and extent of the collegial connection was dependent upon context and participant, and ranged in nature from detailed personal disclosure to guarded, passive conflict.

Overall, there was a metaphoric connection between the processes, demands, and successes experienced on the trail with the processes, demands, and successes experienced in the participants’ everyday lives—one was seen as a mirror for the other. In addition, the impacts from this type of experience are perceived as ranging from a renewed excitement for one’s colleagues and the profession, to an underlying sense of accomplishment that could be used as the foundation for future personal and professional goals, as well as the experience’s ability to create a sense of calm, centeredness, and the feeling of preparedness for the upcoming school year.

Although the personal impacts of the TLE experience shine through readily, it is critical to tease out a more structured understanding of the professional benefits of such an experience. What do the experiences of these seven people mean to professional development? To best illustrate this connection we will use several of Luckner and
Nadler’s (1997) characteristics of experiential education (Table 1) to structure these professional impacts and this bearing on professional growth.

1. Developing relationships quickly and equality. As noted above, the participants in the TLE saw an ability to develop a strong core relationship as a result of the extended time they were spending together, and the context of the situations they were put in to. By living, traveling, cooking, and working together for 72 straight hours, participants were able to establish more meaningful bonds.

When compared to the exposure these colleagues would have during a typical school day, less than one hour of collegial interaction daily, it would take over 72 school days to provide the same professional exposure. This is not to say that professional developers should look to create periods of extensive exposure into their future models, but these participants suggest that having an opportunity to spend extended, meaningful, and goal-oriented time with one’s colleagues can help to produce a cohesive basis for collegiality.

This collegiality helps to erase issues of hierarchy that may be present as a result of years of experience, or other district classification systems. Prior to the experience, some participants defined themselves based on how long they had been teaching. It was not clear if this was an attempt to place themselves along a continuum or not. It is noted that by the end of the experience, there was never any reference to who had more experience, but rather, who would be best suited for a particular task. They were all teachers in pursuit of the same goal.
2. Decreased time cycle and common language. As noted by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990), having teachers involved in development and improvement processes is a viable and effective model for professional development. One issue with this type of involvement can be the time it takes to move through the creative process to implement a specific improvement. Scheduling conflicts and changes in mission or vision that can occur during a long planning process can bog down these improvement experiences. Through the TLE, participants were able to experience a full creation cycle because of a decreased time cycle. Participants were able to start with an idea, then develop that idea in a collaborative setting, then create a structure and process around that idea, and finally develop a protocol for implementing this new idea. Upon returning from the TLE, participants were fully prepared to assume the leadership role and implement the new initiatives that were created during the expedition.

This is not to say that the professional impact of such an experience will be that decisions will be made more quickly, but rather, that the participants now had firsthand knowledge of how the creation process works. This new understanding will allow participants to view the creation processes that they become a part of in the future through a clearer lens. It would appear that by having lived through the process from start to finish, participants would be more able to keep a process moving in the future.

This time cycle also brought to light a need for having a common language set. As the participants progressed through their development phases they made attempts to verify that everyone was talking about the same things. Questions were raised, and parameters were set in an effort to ensure everyone understood the vision of the team.
3. *Chaos and crisis in a safe environment.* Though “safe” is a relative term, participants found themselves in a setting where they felt safe to explore new ideas and concepts. As noted by Jan, there had been some hesitation about the relational safety of such an experience. She had not wanted her conversations and views expressed on the TLE to become common knowledge back at school. Beyond this type of social safety, the participants obviously were concerned with their own physical safety as well. Each participant was clearly out of his or her element in the Pennsylvania woods. Physical training before attending and having the right equipment eased the fears of many participants. The use of four knowledgeable outdoors people as facilitators of the experience also provided a sense of safety for the participants.

From a professional perspective, participants were able to use their colleagues as sounding boards for their new ideas. Throughout the day on the trail, as well as in structured sessions, the participants had the opportunity to make mistakes, express concern, and seek new insight into not only the TLE experience itself, but into their growth as a professional as well. Just as it was not guaranteed that the group would reach the designated campsite each night, the leadership initiatives, the food preparation, and the route selection were not guaranteed of being successful either. There were real consequences to mistakes, but these consequences were educational and served as benchmarks for future decisions.

4. *Disequilibrium, kinesthetic imprint, and meta learning.* As noted above, the participants in the TLE were out of their element. This disconnection provided the participants a new perspective, a vantage point from which they had never viewed. This
disequilibrium could be seen through the participants’ disconnection with the professionalism of the outdoors, with the introduction of new tasks and skills such as cooking and route finding, and through the development of a leadership initiative when before many had never considered themselves leaders. By providing this state of cognitive dissonance, participants were made aware of the new learning they required to be successful, and the motivation to pursue this new knowledge (Dewey, 1938; Gass, 1993).

This disequilibrium aligns with the notion of adults being more inclined to pursue the knowledge they perceive to have an immediate need for (Glickman, 1986; Knowles, 1980; Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985). The nature of the TLE exposed participants to a wide variety of new skills. Whether it was learning how to make backcountry pizzas, or deciding on the best approach to initiating school-wide climate change, new knowledge was needed, and through purposeful inquiry and collaborative efforts the new knowledge was gained.

Supplementing each participant’s knowledge growth was the use of kinesthetic learning. The bodily processes used throughout the TLE served to make real the cognitive processes and developmental understandings the participants were living through at the time. These bodily imprints have the potential to create lasting and readily accessible memories that can serve as reminders of lessons learned in the future (Friese et al., 1995).

Facilitating both processes of disequilibrium and kinesthetic learning was a mode of meta learning which included reflection, debriefing, and meta-cognitive processes. Participants were provided with the time, as well as the guidance, to reflect on their
actions, interactions, and decision-making processes. These reflective periods appeared to provide a more informed understanding of their collegial relationships and growth processes, as well as providing motivation for future action (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

5. Encourage risk taking. With the focus of the TLE being teacher leadership, the concept of risk taking was significant. Leading one’s colleagues can be wrought with difficulty (Ackerman, 2006; Barth, 2001). On top of that, the inherent nature of the professional development experience was one that was universally considered to be challenging and risky. The pairing of these two risk taking ventures created a symbiotic relationship. As the participants become more and more confident of their skills in the outdoors, their confidence in being able to develop and implement a leadership initiative in their respective school settings increased.

The contextual and curricular parallels are enough to give pause when considering professional impact. Although it may be difficult to always create a metaphorical connection between the contextual aspects of a professional development experience with its curricular goals, the mutual benefit experienced in the TLE suggest a potential consideration. When attempting to encourage participants to take risks, why not provide them with an environment where they can be courageous and feel what taking a positive risk is like. By working in parallel worlds, there is an opportunity for transferring the skills, attitudes, and behaviors that made success possible.

6. Projective technique and diversity of strengths. The risk taking opportunities discussed above allowed the participants of the TLE to act in ways and assume roles they
normally would not assume. For many participants, the TLE brought out aspects of peoples’ personalities that had never been seen before. People began to see each other in new lights, and in different roles than were originally assumed. These new perspectives have the potential for significant future professional impacts. By having a deeper understanding of the interests, skills, and abilities of their colleagues, the TLE participants were able to draw upon the complimentary skill sets of their colleagues, as well as able to funnel opportunities that were best suited for their colleagues.

It would also appear that the participants realized the depth of their colleagues, and saw that these new connections were important to seek with others not attending the TLE experience. It is possible that this new appreciation for the complexity of their colleagues could spark a conscious effort to truly understand the skills and interests of all of their colleagues, not just the TLE participants.

With no intention of developing a generalizable set of traits for an adventure-based professional development experience, the participants in the Teacher Leadership Expedition did provide insight into the perceptions, expectations, and perceived impacts of participating in a three-day two-night backpacking experience. It is hoped that these findings can be the foundation for creating a structure that captures the essence of such an experience.
CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The intention of this study was to bring into focus the distinct and intimate experiences of those teachers who have chosen collegial adventure-based professional development as a vehicle for pursuing personal and professional growth. These experiences were brought to life through the perceptions and interpretations of those who experienced adventure-based professional development in a collegial setting. The lived experiences of the participants are not meant to serve as an exhaustive list for generalizable purposes, but rather, as a lens through which one can view professional development, as well as gain varied perspectives of alternative and complimentary learning methodologies. By developing a deeper understanding of how people experience the varied elements that constitute adventure-based professional development, a more richly constructed understanding can begin.

Participants in the Teacher Leadership Expedition (TLE) expressed feelings of renewal, personal growth, and victory over their presuppositions and fears. Each participant saw a greater purpose and clearer vision for who they were as individuals as well as professionals. Their physical, social, and professional interactions instilled confidence and freed them to look beyond what they thought possible. Lastly, it would appear that participants felt empowered to take control of their situations by utilizing the
leadership capacities they had developed throughout the three days to make changes in both their personal and professional lives.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The underlying structures to these lived experiences bring into focus implications for both theoretical and practical domains, as well as implications for future research. From a theoretical and practical perspective, the field of professional development, and the combined perspectives of experiential education and curriculum theorization have distinct implications. Professional developers have the opportunity to develop accessible and integrated approaches to creating high quality professional development. Similarly, using the curriculum theorization process as a way to construct or deconstruct experiential learning opportunities can add even greater insight into the lived experiences, adding to the viability of adventure-based learning opportunities.

Professional Development

The adventure-based professional development experience highlighted in this study was a stand-alone initiative and was not part of a larger professional development or continuous improvement process. Participants cited various personal and professional impacts from their participation, but without a connection to a greater vision. This disconnection is troubling and suggests that the benefits from this type of experience can be lost without ongoing collaboration, direction, and connection to a larger initiative. As discussed in chapter 2, high quality professional development is characterized by varied and multi-phased processes that require ongoing support and reflection facilitated through a variety of thoughtfully conceived and aligned professional development opportunities.
Although the collegial interactions, shifts in perspective, personal, and professional achievement experienced through the TLE were perceived as having a profound professional benefit capable of promoting change across a wider school setting, their lack of connection to a wider shared vision could isolate and limit these benefits.

The transformative capacity of the adventure-based experience is rooted in its synthesized nature that effectively transcends the five models of professional development discussed in chapter 2. It is critical from both theoretical and practical perspectives to seek opportunities where these five models can be synthesized and integrated as a means of creating a holistic professional development experience.

Although the TLE embodied a synthesized approach, there is still a need to situate these adventure-based elements into a larger context—how can adventure-based professional development fit into a large-scale professional development plan?

Professional developers need to be aware of the different demands that various forms of adventure-based professional development involve. For example, whereas the TLE experience was offered to all staff members, it was not an experience that was accessible by all staff members. Physical requirements accompanied the experience. Participants needed to be able to carry a 20-pound backpack for three days, covering more than 15 miles. These requirements limited the number of people who could attend. And even those who had the physical ability to attend still had to have the desire, as well as the time to devote to such an endeavor. As a three-day experience, participants in this type of experience have to be comfortable with leaving their families for an extended period to pursue professional growth. It was never the intention of this study to propose
adventure-based professional development as a necessity for all teachers. It was, and still is believed that adventure-based experiences will have a varied appeal depending upon the scope sequence of the experience.

To bring adventure-methodologies to a larger audience, professional developers need to embrace the essence of what is considered to be adventure-based. We are reminded that the three criteria used for determining if an experiential opportunity is adventure-based include participation that is voluntary and of free choice, intrinsic motivation in and of its own merit, and uncertainty about the outcome of the experience (Priest, 1990). These criteria provide a diverse pallet through which to paint an adventure-based experience. This diversity is critical for developing accessible opportunities for staff members. Although the backpacking experience utilized in the TLE met all three criteria, there is a multitude of experiences that, when properly designed, implemented, and facilitated, could provide participants with similar benefits.

Experiential Education and Curriculum Theorizing

In alignment with current literature on adventure-based professional development, the TLE displayed the power to be transformative, and when situated in a collegial, teacher-oriented setting, this transformative power had perceived impacts in both personal and professional realms. Not only did participants experience personal struggle and victory, but they also were immersed in a setting that challenged and broadened their professional perspectives—giving them new vantage points from which to view the paradigmatic landscape of their professional world. Throughout the experience teachers expressed concern about the conflicting worlds they are asked to navigate—the district’s
quest for standardized achievement and the teachers’ own desires for their students to achieve deep meaning making. These conversations arose as teachers debated the importance of devoting academic class time to the implementation of a school-wide team development program. Can we afford this time? What will be our benefit for doing so? We believe that this is the right decision to make, but how can it be justified?

This paradigmatic conflict illuminated the transformative capacity of the experience and provided both personal and professional insight into how this struggle could be mediated. The potential for both personal and professional transformative capacities begs to question how this type of adventure-based professional development experience could be situated as a part of a vehicle for initiating larger scale reform processes within a school setting.

These questions and paradigmatic struggles provide a direct connection to curriculum theorization and the pursuit of understanding how experience is conceived within education. Curriculum theorization, as defined by Pinar (2004), is “that interdisciplinary field committed to the study of educational experience, especially (but not only) as that experience is encoded in the school curriculum” (p. 20). This definition provides significant latitude for defining experience within a curricular setting and can be structured by three traditions: experientialist or Dewian modeled and democratically orientated interpretation of experience, neo-experientialism representing a transitional shift when experience in education becomes experiential education, and post-experientialism representing a “deconstruction of the assumed neutrality of experience and the incorporation of issues of power” (Roberts, 2006, ¶16). The participants in this
study transitioned between these three traditions fluidly from seeing the experience as a part of their learning, to not being able to separate the experience from the learning, and finally seeing the experience as a way to rise above, and confront issues of power.

Several capacities are at play here—the ability to transcend one’s self physically and emotionally, the ability to transcend curricular traditions, and the ability to transcend various experiential traditions. Alone, these three aspects provide significant avenues for theoretical and philosophical work, but it is their intersection, the participants’ ability to reconceptualize themselves, their craft, and their epistemological perspective that is of greatest importance.

Implications for Future Research

Based on the understandings we have of adventure-based professional development, where does this lead us for the future? This vision can be seen through two implications for future research: the experiences impact on professional practice, and the inquiry into an adventure-based critical pedagogy for teachers. The lived experiences of the participants depicted a wide range of professional and personal growth impacts. The primary issue with these impacts was that many of them were perceived, or speculated by the participants within the three-day window of the TLE experience. A more extensive longitudinal engagement that follows beyond the experience and looks into whether the participants’ perceptions became a reality will provide even greater insight into the transformative capacity of adventure-based professional development. This transformative capacity of the experience is central to the second implication for future research: experiential education as critical pedagogy. Participants cited critical moments
throughout the experience and reflected on the empowering nature of their accomplishment. But were these experiences truly critical? Additional implications for developing future lines of inquiry into understanding the adventure-based phenomenon include: an exploration of environmental factors in adventure-based settings, the impact of experience duration, and the choice of activity used as a vehicle for adventure-based learning.

*Professional Practice*

The use of existential lifeworlds during the analysis process provided a solid grounding for interpreting each experience, but there is still work to be done to understand the longitudinal impact of each participant’s perceptions on his or her lived reality. This study sought to construct the essence of a collegial, adventure-based professional development experience through the perceptions and interpretations, expectations, and perceived impacts of its participants. These impacts were felt, perceived, and reflected upon during the three-day TLE experience, but did these perceptions become a reality after the experience? When did the experience truly end? The beauty of phenomenological research is the ability to embrace the multiple realities represented by each participant. But how did these realities change as a result of their participation? These questions challenge the benchmarks of when one can consider the beginning and ending points of an experience.

With the ultimate goal of professional development to be to provide teaching professionals a range of experiences that will foster the professional growth of each educator, and subsequently, improve student achievement, there is a need for continued
research into the longitudinal impact of an adventure-based professional development experience. Though the participants’ lived experiences portrayed a positive, and growth orientated perspective, there was no understanding of how or if these perceived impacts made their way into each teacher’s classroom. At the end of the experience, each participant saw the potential for numerous people to benefit from their participation in the TLE, but did that occur? Future research into this aspect will create an even deeper understanding of participants’ lived experiences.

**Experiential Education as Critical Pedagogy**

As discussed earlier, this study sat at the intersection of experiential education, professional development, and curriculum decision-making. The uniqueness of this intersection provided what participants saw as a transformative power in their lived experience. These transformations were evident throughout personal and professional realms. Participants challenged the accepted norms of their teaching situations and viewed their growth as a means of becoming independent and critical connoisseurs of their situation.

These empowered perspectives were evident in the creation of their leadership agendas, the development of personal and professional goals once thought to be outside the realm of possibility, and in their collegial interactions throughout the experience. These actions align with a post-modern view of how teachers need to negotiate their professional world. “Teachers need to be better prepared to deal with personal and political conflicts of their work—not to avoid or even endure them, but embrace them as positive forces of change” (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 20).
These forces of change, whether physical, political, social, or natural, dominated the lived experiences of the participants and mirrored the same forces and emancipatory impact seen on a daily basis in classroom settings:

Bringing differences into the open, being sensitive to one another’s interests and positions, working for clarity and compromise, being encouraged to express feelings and frustrations, moving beyond initial and often inaccurate fears about one’s threatened interests, expressing one’s own voice and giving voice to others—all these are vital components of a productive and emancipatory process of continuous learning and improvement. (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 20)

This liberating capacity opens a new lens through which to not only view the lived experiences of the participants, but also as a way to possibly deconstruct future experiences at the intersection. In this setting, for this study, the participants were students who participated in a schooling environment that was perceived as empowering:

Critical pedagogy argues that school practices need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of student becomes the defining feature of schooling. (Giroux, 1999, ¶1)

Future research is needed to understand the critical aspects of the adventure-based professional development lived experience. How do teachers who have been exposed to a critical pedagogy experience translate that learning into their own classrooms? Or do they? Does this intersection lie too far from the lived realities of classroom life? What is
the true emancipatory capacity of an adventure-based professional development experience? How can we fully assess this level of emancipation?

*Environmental Context*

From an environmental perspective, all participants on the TLE experience commented on the beauty of the surroundings, and the quality of the weather that was experienced throughout the three-day trip. With temperatures throughout the experience in the mid-80s during the day, low 60s at night, and bright sun each day the participants lived space was what many consider the best possible conditions for outdoor land travel. How would the participants’ perceptions and interpretations have differed had they been battling rain, wind, and cold? How would collegial interactions have changed? During mid-August in Central Pennsylvania the potential existed for the weather to be much less desirable. This weather potential was made clear to the participants prior to their decision to participate in the experience.

The participant’s decision to attend the TLE despite potential weather-related issues represents an underlying risk-benefit analysis implemented by each participant on either conscious or subconscious levels (Hunt, 2002), defining these rationales critical. Seeking insight into a participant’s decision-making process regarding environmental issues could further our understanding of the commitment and foundational essences that underlie the adventure-based professional development process.

*Experience Duration*

The TLE was designed as a three-day, two-night backpacking experience. In the scope of current adventure-based offerings for teachers this three-day experience was
shorter than most. National schools such as Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School have educator courses that range from 22-94 days. The teachers that chose to participate in the TLE saw the three-day time period as being challenging in its own right. Based on the schedules of the participants, three days was viewed as a considerable amount of time to devote to a professional development process. Based on this belief, the participants were pleased with the timing and extent of the program at its completion. But what if the program was longer or shorter? How would an extended or shortened exposure to an adventure environment and their colleagues change the participants’ perceptions and interpretations of the experience? This three-day experience has the ability to serve as a contextual marker for three-day adventure-based professional development. By seeking an understanding of the impact duration has on future studies, one can have a better chance of aligning the intended outcomes of an experience with the appropriate timing and context.

Activity Selection

As understood through Priest’s (1990) criterion provided above, adventure-education can be perceived and experienced through a variety of modalities. This particular study focused on the experiences of colleagues participating in a backpacking-based adventure-education experience. The underlying facet of adventure-based experiences is the inherent risk that is perceived by the participants. Could this risk be perceived equally through other adventure-based activities such as canoeing, climbing, rafting, high ropes challenge courses, and low ropes initiatives? Could the participants’ perceptions, interpretations, and interactions have been different had the TLE been
situated in a river context as opposed to land travel? These questions provide direction for future into the contextual importance of adventure-based professional development. This knowledge could provide a greater understanding of the participants’ connections to various adventure elements and environments, as well as insight into developing desirable and engaging opportunities.

Conclusion

One by one they came into the parking area; they were hot, sweaty, tired, dirty, but smiling. The mosquitoes that had been a nuisance in this very same parking lot three days earlier were of no concern today. The heavy packs, although lighter from having eaten all of the food throughout the trip, were simply another part of their bodies. Their boots, heavy and clumsy three days earlier, were now seen as a true companion, an essential element in their accomplishment. After three days, hills seemed smaller, miles seemed shorter, and their bodies felt stronger. And so were their connections with each other.

The nervous chatter that filled the trail on the first day was replaced with deep collegial and professional conversation about how to ensure the success of their leadership plans. They questioned each other, seeking ways they could ensure that they made a difference back at school. They all believed they had put too much time and energy, grit, and determination into this experience, into their bond as colleagues to let themselves or each other down. They had been successful, and they did it together. Though the trail had ended, they were only just beginning their journey together.
We have only begun to realize the personal and professional impact this type of experience can have for its participants. Whether it is a personal realization of physical and emotional strength, a renewed enthusiasm for the teaching profession, or the opportunity to create strong, meaningful, critical connections with colleagues, adventure-based professional development for these colleagues was a growth experience across a number of personal and professional planes.

But where do we go from here? First there will need to be a critical look at how these types of experiences can be implemented into a larger scale reform initiative. As an island of its own, there appears to be a potential for a diminishing return on the experience. Second, this study shows that there is a need for a deeper understanding of the transformative capacities related to combining experiential methodologies with issues of curriculum theorization. Participants experienced transformative moments but is there a better way to illuminate these paradigmatic shifts in the participants? How can experiential education facilitate that process? Third, as participants moved from their adventure-based context back into the classroom environment, did the perceived personal and professional impacts actually occur? Did perception truly become reality? Fourth, by utilizing a teacher leadership focus for the curriculum components used in an adventure setting, are there critical pedagogy capacities that participants are being exposed to? How much of the critical pedagogy is curriculum oriented and how much is experience related? And finally, in the future, there needs to be a deeper understanding of how environment, duration, and activity selection shade the lived experiences of the
participants. Although all context specific, these aspects could play a critical role in the outcomes of such an experience.

Although there are still many questions to be answered, it is my hope that this study has captured the essences of the experiences of those teachers who saw three days in the wilds of Pennsylvania with their colleagues as an opportunity for professional growth. It is only with these initial structures of this experience that we can begin to build an even larger understanding in the future. Hopefully this study can serve as a signpost for professional developers and curriculum workers looking to provide educators with significant professional growth opportunities that utilize alternative and complimentary methodologies.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

THE PATH LESS TRAVELED:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ADVENTURE-BASED
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teresa Rishel/Matthew Broda
Kent State University
Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Curriculum Studies

I want to do research on the experience of participating in adventure-based professional development as colleagues and how these colleagues translate their experiences into their personal and professional lives. I want to do this because this study will not only inform our knowledge of how teachers experience adventure-based professional development with their colleagues, but it will also give insight into the effectiveness of using alternative/experiential models of professional development. I would like you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to participate in a 15-minute interview prior to attending the professional development, keep an audio journal of your experiences while participating, and develop a story of your experiences. These protocols and the audio journal transcripts will serve as the catalyst for a series of up to five 30-minute interviews through December 2006.

All recordings, transcripts, documents will be kept confidential and secure in the office of Dr. Teresa Rishel, 404 White Hall. If any content is used for publication or presentation purposes, all names, dates, and locations will be changed in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

By participating, you may benefit from a greater awareness of your reflective practices as well as a deeper understanding how adventure-based, experientially-driven professional development impacts you personal and professional lives. Your participation in this study is independent from the professional development expedition you are participating in. You may stop your participation in the study for any reason, and at any time without any penalty.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at 330-264-7969. If you have questions regarding the rules of research project, please contact Dr. Teresa Rishel at 330-672-2580. This project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University’s rules for research, please call Dr. John L. West, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies (Tel. 330.672.2704).

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

Matthew W. Broda
Doctoral Student
CONSENT STATEMENT

I agree to take part in this project. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time.

Signature ____________________________________________ Date _______________

AUDIO/VIDEO TAPE CONSENT

I agree to audio taping my Path Less Traveled pre-experience interview, participant audio journal, and post-experience interviews. You have the right to hear the tapes before they are used.

Signature ____________________________________________ Date _______________

I have been told that I have the right to hear the audio tapes before they are used. I have decided that I:

_____want to hear the tapes  _____do not want to hear the tapes

Sign now below if you do not want to hear the tapes. If you want to hear the tapes, you will be asked to sign after hearing them.

Matthew Broda and other researchers approved by Kent State University (circle) may / may not use the tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

___this research project ___teacher education ___presentation at professional meetings

Signature ____________________________________________ Date _______________

Address _________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

PRE-EXPERIENCE SELF-FACILITATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Pre-Experience Self-Facilitated Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Teacher Leadership Expedition

2. What are your expectations for this experience?

3. Do you have any personal or professional apprehensions about this experience?

4. When you consider the colleagues you are going to share this experience with, how would you describe your current interactions with each of them (on personal or professional levels or both)?
APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED DAILY SELF-FACILITATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Semi-Structured Daily Self-Facilitated Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your day…

2. Describe what you experienced physically during our hike?

3. Describe what you experienced emotionally during our hike?

4. Describe what you experienced when we reached our destination today?

5. How would you describe the interactions you had with your colleagues today?

6. How were these interactions different from what you had experienced previously?

7. Describe what you experienced when you reached the end of the trip?

8. Is there anything you would like to talk about that may not have been covered?
APPENDIX D

POST EXPERIENCE SELF-FACILITATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Post Experience Self-Facilitated Interview Questions

1. What was the value (i.e., knowledge gain, skill development, changed perspectives/attitude, etc.) of the Teacher Leadership Expedition experience from both personal and professional perspectives?

2. Do you believe that others will benefit from your participation in the Teacher Leadership Expedition experience? If not, why not? If so, who will benefit and why?

3. Compare the Teacher Leadership Expedition experience with more traditional forms of professional development you have experienced. How are they similar? How are they different?

4. In one month, what do you hope to see in yourself (i.e., change in actions, behaviors, attitudes, teaching strategies, etc.) as a result of your Teacher Leadership Expedition experience? How will your Teacher Leadership Expedition experience have made that change possible?

5. Please take this opportunity to provide any additional comments, reflections, or reactions about the experience.
REFERENCES


