Qualitative Examination of the Group Development Process

Within an Adventure Programming Context

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Within an Adventure Programming Context

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental process of a group within an adventure programming context, specifically assessing the efficacy of Tuckman’s (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) model of small group development which is a hallmark model in the field of adventure programming. Several professionals within the field of adventure programming question the appropriateness of the use of this model (Cassidy, 2007; Degraff & Ashby, 1996; McAvoy et al., 1996). In order to assess the appropriateness of the model, this study utilized qualitative methods consisting of a case study approach (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000; McKenzie, 2000; Merriam, 1988; Sibthorp, 2003). Themes that emerged held commonalities with components commonly described within group development literature (Johnson & Johnson 2003; Wheelan, 2005). A deductive analysis of the data found that Tuckman’s (1965) model does not adequately explain the developmental process experienced by the group examined in this study. The discussion considers alternative models of group development that better described the development of the group in this study. Implications for future research are discussed.

Approved: ________________________________

Bruce Martin
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Review of the Literature</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Development Theory</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Models</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsequential Models</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Model</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques of Tuckman’s Model</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Development in Adventure Programming</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Methodology</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Description ........................................................................................................... 36
Recruitment of Study Participants ................................................................................ 40
Course Participants ....................................................................................................... 40
Data Collection ............................................................................................................. 46
Data Analysis ................................................................................................................ 48
Trustworthiness of Data ............................................................................................... 49
Researcher Reflexivity ................................................................................................. 50
Summary ....................................................................................................................... 51
Chapter 4: Results ............................................................................................................. 53
Introduction ................................................................................................................... 53
Sea Kayaking ................................................................................................................ 53
Summary of Results ...................................................................................................... 81
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, Limitations, and Recommendations ...................... 83
Summary ....................................................................................................................... 83
Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 84
Analysis ........................................................................................................................ 84
Deductive Analysis .................................................................................................... 88
Limitations .................................................................................................................... 97
Recommendations for Future Research ....................................................................... 98
References .................................................................................................................... 100
Appendix A: Participant Journal Prompts ...................................................................... 109
Appendix B: Institutional Research Board (IRB) Approval Forms ................................. 111
LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 1: Designated Roles of Course Participants .......................................................... 40

Table 2: Options for Major Decision .............................................................................. 63
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Outward Bound Process Model (Walsh & Golins, 1976) is commonly used to describe the key elements of an adventure programming experience. The model consists of seven key elements: the learner, the prescribed physical environment, the prescribed social environment, problem-solving tasks, a state of adaptive dissonance, and the instructor, a mastery of learning and the reorganization of the participant’s experience. Walsh and Gollins described that a process is a desired effect produced by interactions of a generalized series of conditions, events, and objects. Keeping this description of a process in mind, the authors described the Outward Bound process: “the Outward Bound process functions as characteristic problem-solving tasks set in a prescribed physical and social environment which impel the participant to mastery of these tasks and which in turn serves to reorganize the meaning and direction of his/her life experience” (p. 2).

When considering the first element of the process, the learner, Walsh and Golins identify motivation of the learner as the main focus of this element of the process. The participant must be motivated to take part in the learning process in order to benefit from the experience. If motivation is lacking, the participant will be unable to master the prescribed task.

The prescribed physical environment is considered any environment in which the participant is unfamiliar. Walsh and Golins (1976) proposed that outdoor contexts provide more educational possibilities than others, because it provides a highly stimulating environment. The authors also attributed educational possibilities to the
outdoors because it provides a neutral setting in which “arbitrary and consequential rules are in existence which are not man-made” (p. 4). Experiencing an unfamiliar environment should allow the participant the ability to reorganize the meaning and direction of the experience.

The prescribed social environment is described as the unique social environment produced by the development of an interdependent peer group. Walsh and Golins (1976) explained how these unique social groups are large enough to provide a diversified group of participants, yet small enough preventing the development of cliques based on diversity. It is also explained that conflict should occur, but, due to the smaller size of the group, conflict should be resolved, and the group should have similar goals so that task completion can occur. These characteristics of the social environment should allow for the promotion of individual decision-making and a realization of the group’s strengths, weaknesses, and the various skills of the group (Walsh & Golins, 1976).

Problem-solving tasks are typically viewed as a challenge within an adventure context. These challenges often lead to a state of adaptive dissonance (i.e., the difference between a learner’s perceived current state of being and his or her desired state of being), which typically results in a sense of anxiety in the learner (Priest & Gass, 2005). Learning occurs when a participant is able to successfully address this dissonance and achieve harmony. Priest and Gass (2005) argued that adventure programs create challenging experiences through the manipulation of perceived risk and perceived competence. The reorganization of meaning to which Walsh and Golins (1976) referred
to occurs when the participant transfers what they learned through the completion of

tasks in an adventure setting to an everyday context (Priest & Gass, 2005).

Sibthorp (2003) pointed to a number of studies providing affirmative results
regarding the efficacy of the OB process model (Walsh and Golins, 1976). However,
Sibthorp (2003) also stated: “While the preponderance of positive research findings
indicates the development (e.g. increases in self-esteem, self-efficacy, trust, group
cohesion) through adventure based programs is possible, how and why this development
occurs remains less clear” (p. 80). Sibthorp called for more research focusing on the
process of adventure programming. One critical element of the OB process model that
Sibthorp (2003) considered to be lacking empirical evidence is the role of the social
environment in the process. McKenzie (2000) also argued that “there appear to be many
gaps in our knowledge of how the characteristics of a participant’s group affect the
impact that an adventure education program has on them” (p. 23).

Significance of the Study

One of the most well known and commonly utilized models of group
development in the field of adventure programming is Tuckman’s (1965) theory of small
group development (Ashby & DeGraff, 1998; Attarian & Priest, 2002; DeGraff, &
Ashby, 1996; Drury, Bonney, Berman, & Wagstaff, 2005; Jensen, 1979; Martin et al.,
2006; Priest & Gass, 2005; Rhonke, Rogers, Wall, & Tait, 2007). Kalisch (1979)
described the group development process in an Outward Bound experience using a five-
stage linear model of group development. Kalisch’s (1979) model is essentially the same
as Tuckman’s (1965) model, only using different names for the phases to teach
instructors about group development. Luckner and Nadler (1997) presented a ten-stage model to practitioners, but then suggested using Tuckman’s model to explain the process to clients due to it being easier to remember and understand. Tuckman’s model continues to be a foundational model used to describe the group development process within the field of adventure programming.

Several researchers in the field of adventure programming have called for further research into the group development process within an adventure programming context (Ewert, 1991; Ewert & Haywood, 1991; Ewert & McAvoy, 2000; McAvoy, Mitten, Stringer, Steckart, & Sproles, 1996; McKenzie, 2000; Sibthorp, 2003; Sibthorp, Paisley, & Gookin, 2007). This call is due to the limited amount of research on the process and the need for a validated model for the field of adventure programming. McAvoy et al. (1996) argued that outdoor groups defy traditional schemes and that researchers should evaluate the group development process as it actually occurs in the outdoors. McAvoy et al. (1996) also called for the development of a situated model of group development in the field of adventure programming.

DeGraff and Ashby (1996) described how the “complexities of the group development process can increase as a group becomes involved in outdoor, experiential activities where additional factors such as active involvement, high levels of engagement, cooperative opportunities, shared experience, accelerated intimacy, environmental factors and others come into play” (p. 90). Ashby and DeGraff (1998) asked similar questions to those of McKenzie (2000) and Sibthorp (2003): “What happens within each of the stages? How does the group proceed within each stage? How can leaders help groups and
individuals to grow?” (p. 162). The authors claimed that a greater understanding of groups and how they develop could be produced by integrating sequential and nonsequential models of group development.

An article written by DeGraff and Ashby (1996) called for an investigation into Tuckman’s model due to the “complex and dynamic nature of group development that calls for a richer understanding of the development/process phenomenon and understanding of group development theories beyond traditional sequential models of development” (p. 92). Sibthorp (2003) stated that “a cadre of philosophers and theoreticians have offered models of adventure process, some of which are largely accepted as doctrine within the industry” (p. 81). Tuckman’s model of small group development (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) fits within this category. Cassidy (2007) attempted to answer Degraff’s and Ashby’s (1996) call by providing a meta-analysis of the group development theories used in adventure programming settings. However, her proposed ideas have not been tested in the field. Thus, the research that has been conducted within the field of adventure programming has yet to answer the call for a model and description of the group development process in the field of adventure programming.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental process of a group within an adventure programming context, specifically assessing the efficacy of Tuckman’s (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) model of small group development. In an attempt to answer the call for additional research regarding the process of group
development in adventure programming (DeGraff & Ashby, 1996; Ewert, 1991; Ewert & Haywood, 1991; Ewert & McAvoy, 2000; McAvoy, Mitten, Stringer, Steckart, & Sproles, 1996; McKenzie, 2000; Sibthorp, 2003; Sibthorp, Paisley, & Gookin, 2007), the researcher employed a qualitative methodology. This methodological approach was used to enable the researcher to explore the nature of the group development process within the context of a Wilderness Education Association (WEA) National Standards Program (NSP) course.

Summary

Chapter 1 has introduced the reader to the background and key literature on group development in an adventure context, while providing an argument for the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and highlights group development theories and pertinent research for which the study is built on. Chapter 2 provides a brief description of the history and creation of various group development models, specifically Tuckman’s (1965) model of small group research, and presents the research conducted within the field of adventure programming which evaluated aspects of group development. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in the study. The chapter provides a description of the research design, site, sample, researcher biases, data collection, and data analysis used for the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. A detailed description of the development of the group in the sea kayak phase of this course is provided. Chapter 5 discusses the results. The emergent themes from the inductive analysis are presented and discussed. A detailed description of the deductive analysis is provided and discussed. A group development model that better describes the development of the group in this study
is presented. Further, chapter 5 discusses limitations to the study and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The aim of chapter 2 is to provide a conceptual foundation for this study through a discussion of theories and concepts related to the developmental process of groups. The chapter specifically addresses the development of groups within an adventure programming context.

Group Development Theory

In order to evaluate the development of a group, one must first understand what constitutes a group. A commonly referenced definition was presented by Bales (1950): “A small group is defined as any number of persons engaged in interaction with each other in a single face-to-face meeting or series of meetings, in which each member receives some impressions or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person” (p. 33). Cragan and Wright (1991) provided a similar definition that is based on research from across disciplines, and defined a small group as “a few people engaged in communication and interaction over time, usually in face-to-face settings, who have common goals and norms and have developed a communication pattern for meeting their goals in an interdependent manner” (p. 9). Forsyth (1990) defined a group as two or more individuals who influence one another through a social interaction.
In order for a group to develop and remain effective, Johnson & Johnson (2003) argued that three core functions must occur: (a) the group must achieve its goals, (b) maintain positive working relationships among group members, and (c) be able to adapt to environmental changes.

These positive working relationships that were previously discussed could also be related to roles of individuals within the group. The development of roles is common and it is important to be aware of the different types of roles that can develop within a group. An individual’s role can be defined as a set of expectations defining a pattern of behavior expected of a group member (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Rothwell, 2004). Mudrack & Farrell (1995) examined the three types of roles that can develop in a group introduced by Benne and Sheats (1948) and provided empirical evidence suggesting that the three categories of roles that groups will develop are: task roles, group building, and maintenance roles, and individual roles. The authors explained how group members who hold task roles will generally be perceived as valuable and as contributors to the group goals. On the other hand members holding maintenance roles are important but are often overlooked. The authors also explained that there is a potential for group members that are classified as being in individual roles to exhibit dysfunctional behaviors.

It is also important to understand the distinction between group development and group dynamics due to the often interchangeable use of the two words. The two terms have very different meanings within the realm of small group research. Forsyth (1990) defined “group dynamics” as the study of the behavior of groups, whereas “group development” is the pattern of growth and change that occur in groups throughout their
lives. It is important to understand the definitions of each so that there are no misunderstandings within small group research.

Various models of group development present two interconnected perspectives of defining group development as process oriented or outcome oriented. Chidambraram and Bostrom (1996) described how the group development models that focus on group process can be characterized by the exhibition of the following behaviors: “1) Being cohesive, 2) Managing conflict effectively, 3) Balancing task and socioemotional needs, 4) Communicating effectively, and 5) Being involved actively in group activities” (p. 179). Cohesiveness is a commonly used term within group development research. Chidambraram and Bostrom (1996) explained that, “Cohesiveness refers to how close the members are to each other and the extent to which they are attracted to the group” (p. 179). Mitten (1995) explained how group cohesion is often encouraged by professionals in outdoor education through the use of the outdoor environment and the potential challenges it provides.

Group development models “focusing on an outcome-oriented view of group development suggests that well-developed groups are also high performing teams” (Chidambraram & Bostrom, 1996, p. 181). The authors warned that the relationship between group development and performance is very complex. One must think of development as the means to achieving the end, which is typically high performance of the group. They also described the role of contextual factors and how certain factors may speed up the developmental process and help develop teams faster than would normally be expected. Some concerns within small group research are presented by Wheelan and
Hochberger (1996) who argued that researchers often proceed as though all the factors of how groups operate have been discovered and, consequently, can set about determining how to improve group effectiveness and productivity.

Group development is a fairly complex phenomenon with a number of variables that can impact a group’s development. Chang et al. (1996) provided a great example of these complexities,

For group development researchers, development can mean anything from the growth of the group’s solidarity or cohesiveness, changes in the relationship toward the leader, changes in the relationship among group members, changes in the primary concerns of group members and changes in task orientation and output. (p. 329)

Gersick (1988) added the variable of the environment for which the group exists to the list of factors affecting a group. He highlighted the impact that the dynamic relationship between a group and its environment presented. When evaluating groups and environmental factors, Ancona (1993) argued that “group behavior should be viewed as a series of escalating cycles of interaction between groups and their environments” (p. 225). In adventure programming literature, Priest and Gass (2005) described “environmental dangers” as one of the situational factors of five that can have a large impact on how the group will relate and respond to the leader and tasks. The author’s listed weather as the first factor in the “environmental dangers” category of factors related to the concept of conditional favorability (favorable conditions of a group). Due to
the number of variables and the large variety of types of groups there has been a number of group development models produced.

Research on the development of groups began in the 1950’s. Two researchers, Bion (1948) and Bales (1950), realized that there were certain issues that affected the development of small groups and contemplated the temporal sequence in which these issues were resolved. Parsons and Shils (1951) developed a general theory of action based on two phases. Bennis and Shepard (1956) presented the first detailed theory of group development related to training groups focusing on quality communication.

Throughout the years, a vast number of both group process and outcome models have been developed (see Chang et al., 2006; Chidambaram & Bostrom, 1996). These models fall under one of the following three categories: sequential (or linear), nonsequential, and pendular (or cyclical). Chidambaram and Bostrom (1996) used the two categories of sequential and nonsequential, to categorize all of the models. Recently Wheelan (2005) created a model that combines aspects of both sequential and nonsequential models into what she calls an integrated model which still falls under the sequential framework. Each theorist has their own interpretation of the various types of models.

*Sequential Models*

Sequential models describe the development of a group through unitary sequences or stages. Sequential models posit that groups have a beginning and an ending and that a group develops as it moves through the stages throughout the life of the group (Chidambaram, & Bostrom, 1996). Chidambaram and Bostrom (1996) described that the
main focus of sequential models is to depict the sequence of behaviors expressed by a group over time.

The most commonly used and developed group development models are linear based. However, both linear and cyclical models conceptualize group development as a predictable pattern of changes over time. Chang et al. (1996) explained how linear models define the development of a group as a gradual and incremental progress through a logical sequence (e.g., Lacoursiere, 1980; Tuckman, 1965). Cyclical model theorists argued that any resolution of major issues within a group is only temporary and that these issues will continue to recur within the group’s life cycle (e.g., Bion, 1961; Worchel, 1994). Of the many reviews of literature that have been compiled on group development, there is little challenge to the linear development patterns of small groups (Chang, Duck, & Bordia, 1996).

Tuckman’s Model of Small Group Development (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) is one of the most commonly known and used sequential models. Tuckman developed this model based on an evaluation of 50 articles that researched group development, all of which were set in a laboratory setting. The original model had four stages labeled forming, storming, norming, and performing. In 1977, Tuckman and Jensen reviewed the literature from 1965 to 1977 and found that only one empirical study had been completed using his model. Of the other new theories that they examined, most had a termination phase and the stage of adjourning was added to the model (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Following is a description of the each of the stages in this model.
The *forming* stage consists of the group member’s first coming together with concerns, questions and notions of figuring out their place within the group. The *storming* stage occurs when group members begin to test the boundaries and conflict will arise. Conflict is essential to the growth of the group and allows issues to be brought out into the open (Martin et al., 2006; Wheelan, 2005). During the *norming* stage rules and standards are established resulting in group conformity. These norms, which are “rules of acceptable group behavior” (Wheelan, 2005, p. 36), are established through observing commonalities in behaviors and expressed attitudes and by observing what results in negative consequences constituting deviance within the group. The main purpose for the development of norms is to achieve the goals of the group (Wheelan, 2005). Once the ground rules are laid out the group can work towards becoming a *performing* group. In the *performing* stage leadership and responsibility is shared which enables the group to accomplish tasks resulting in positive outcomes. The final stage that was added later was the *adjourning* phase. In the *adjourning* stage a group begins to reminisce about their accomplishments as their task comes to an end. During this stage it is important for members to find new resources for meeting their own personal needs.

Slater (1966) patterned his model after Tuckman’s model. The major difference between Slater’s (1966) and Tuckman’s (1965) theories lies in the sequence of stages. Slater (1966) argued that a group goes through fight-flight first where the leader is challenged and roles are developed rather than a dependency stage first as in Tuckman’s model. Moreland and Levine (1988) utilized Tuckman’s model to demonstrate the relationship between group development, “which concerns temporal changes in the group
as a whole, and group socialization which concerns temporal changes in the relationship between the group and each of its members” (p. 175). A number of more recent studies utilized Tuckman’s model, verifying that the model described the development in the group that they were studying, however proposed adaptations to the model; McGrew, Bilotta, and Deeney (1999) studied software development teams and added three declining stages; Hingst (2006) studied the effectiveness of Tuckman’s theory in a call center which supported the model and proposed the addition of a stage. Fall and Wejnert (2005) theorized describing how Tuckman’s Model can be applied to the development processes of co-leaders by relating the co-leader development models to Tuckman’s model.

An interest in group development continued into the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in a number of new theories and methodologies (see Chang, Duck, & Bordia, 2006). Jones (1973) created a linear model where both the facilitator and group members could determine the stages of group development which focuses on the two areas of personal relations and task functions. Lacoursiere (1980) reviewed the literature and developed a model based on both task and social emotional behaviors. This model is a linear model that is very similar to Tuckman’s model but added a sixth stage called “Negative Orientation.” Lacoursiere argued that this sixth stage can be the beginning stage for groups that do not form voluntarily.

A cyclical model often referenced is Worochel’s model of group development (1994). Cyclical models are similar to linear models, because they have a beginning and end and involve movement through phases. Worochel’s theory is based on the idea that
group development occurs through repeatable cycles rather, or in addition to, the linear models offered by previous investigators. He stated that even groups that have a defined beginning and end progress through cycles that can be repeated several times throughout the life of the group. The cycle can be interrupted, and the group can return to an earlier stage of development at any point.

Worchel’s model (1994) is comprised of six stages, and is unique in that it described members in the first stage as feeling alienated or being withdrawn. These feelings and actions occur due to groups generally being dominated by a few individuals. The fifth stage of Worchel’s model is not typically included in linear models of group development. This stage is concerned with the individuals needs once group goals and resources have been achieved. During this period, group members begin to demand recognition for their contributions to the group. The sixth stage is similar to the other models in that it is concerned with termination, but also has some major differences. The last stage is comprised of personal needs being most important resulting in open conflict and competition within the group (Worchel, 1994). This change in goals results in a rapid turnover in leadership allowing for subgroups to form and compete for power. This aspect of the final stage is quite different from the linear models discussed earlier.

The interaction between leaders and groups is also mentioned as a factor or indicator in most sequential and some nonsequential group development models. Barge and Hirokawa (1989) critiqued common leadership approaches and developed their own conceptualization of leader and group performance and how this relation could effect a group’s development. In Wheelan and Kaeser’s (1997) investigation of the patterns of
development of groups engaged in different tasks, the researchers found that informal leaders would emerge in the absence of formal leaders and that task differences did not have an effect on the group development process.

*Nonsequential Models*

Nonsequential group development models are quite different than the linear models previously discussed. Chidambraram and Bostrom (1996) explained one of the major differences: “Nonsequential models propose no predetermined sequence of events; instead they focus on explaining the underlying factors that cause shifts in group development” (p. 172). These authors also suggested that nonsequential models will not predict when a group will demonstrate their highest level of functioning, rather they will examine why cohesiveness might be high or low at any given time. This examination of cohesion enables a researcher to observe what is occurring within the stage.

In the 1980s, theorists began to conceptualize group development in nonsequential terms. Katz (1982) investigated the impact of group longevity in terms of communication behaviors and performance of research and development project groups. Insko, Gilmore, Drenan, Lipsitz, Moehle and Thibaut (1983) investigated power relationships using college students and found that even though in a group of four, when a member was removed and another added every 20 minutes, the groups were still able to produce origami products that could be exchanged for money.

Towards the end of the 1980’s, theorists began to study the role temporal change played in the development of the group. Gersick (1988) studied the complete life spans of eight naturally occurring teams comprised of several project groups and developed a
model based on “punctuated equilibrium.” The model consists of two phases: (a) the first half of a group’s calendar time is an initial period of inertial movement; and, (b) the second phase occurs at the midpoint of the allotted calendar time in which the groups undergo a transition. This transition creates a second period of inertial movement allowing a revision to the group’s direction.

McGrath (1991) developed a nonsequential model called the Social Entrainment Model. This is a time-based model that has the intent to explain how groups develop, manage conflict, and deal with ambiguity over time using synchronization behaviors. Social entrainment refers to the synchronization of a variety of processes among group members over time. Arrow, Poole, Henry, Wheelan and Moreland (2004) described how time is viewed as a context, a resource, and as a moderator or mediator of other processes, while describing how time affects the different types of group development models. In McGrath’s model, social entrainment is the primary mechanism underlying group development. The synchronization process is dependent on the group, and the coordination of behaviors can occur at different levels: within individual members, among team members, and even within the social context in which they operate (Chidambaram & Bostrom, 1996). These behaviors can be the result of either external or internal stimuli.

During the same time period of the development of models to evaluate temporal developments, the decision-making paths of small groups were being questioned and several studies had evidence to suggest that the traditional unitary sequence models for decision making did not explain all groups (Poole, 1983a; Poole, 1983b). Poole critiqued
sequential models and processes and developed a nonsequential model based on the
decision-making process of small groups. This model proposes the idea that a group
develops as a set of “parallel strands or tracks of activity” (p. 326). Each track is
representative of a different activity evolving simultaneously interconnecting in diverse
patterns over time.

Poole (1983b) explained that the group’s development may appear to be
sequential in instances where the tracks intersect and form patterns. The core of this
multiple-sequence model is its activity tracks, or task process activities, relational
activities and a topical focus. Both task process activities and relational activities are
focused on in a number of group development models; these are the two relationships that
Tuckman’s small group development model is based. Poole added the category of topical
focus which he describes as “the substantive issues and arguments of concern to the
group at a given point in the discussion” (p. 326). This model also allows a researcher to
observe breakpoints or indicators of change in group activity as well as providing a
framework for task accomplishment.

Poole and Roth (1989) developed a typology that provides support for the
multiple sequence models for decision making. Poole and Baldwin (1996) described how
the long-term development of the group along with development of the decision are two
key factors that have the potential to influence decision making.

Group polarization is another important aspect of the decision-making process.
Cheng and Chiou (2008) described the polarization process as a more extreme decision
than the original preference of the group, either riskier or more conservative after a
discussion has taken place. In these authors study of group decision making based on investments, it was discovered that group polarization was occurring. Results from this same study also indicated that the framing of the decision determined a riskier or a more cautious decision.

Throughout the 1990’s and into the turn of the century, groups continued to be studied. Bettenhausen (1991) reviewed the literature in a five-year period and identified over 250 studies focused on the dynamics of small social groups. Erez, Lepine, and Elms (2002) found evidence suggesting that team design (i.e., rotated leadership, member evaluation) impacted the effectiveness and functioning of the team. Akrivou, Boyatzis, and McLeod (2006) reviewed the recent literature on group development as a complex system and created a theory to explain intentional change within a group. The Intentional Change Theory is a nonlinear model thought of as a spiral iterative process. Fambrough and Comerford (2006) challenged the organist idea of past group development models and propose the development of a model based on a contextualist ideology.

*Integrative Model*

The integrative group development model developed by Wheelan (2005) is a combination of both sequential and nonsequential models. Wheelan (2005) explained how experiential learning and therapy group development models typically do not include a work stage: “work occurs but is rarely identified in most studies of therapy or learning groups” (p. 14). The work stage generally falls under stage three *norming* in most other linear models. Wheelan stated that the goals of the work stage are to: “1) get the job done well, 2) remain cohesive while engaging in task-related conflicts, and 3)
maintain high performance over the long haul” (p. 18). In order to accomplish these goals a group must be able to communicate freely and be able to use available resources.

Wheelan also challenged the idea that both sequential and life cycle models appear to assume that groups steadily progress through the stages (Wheelan, 1996). She argued that groups tend to advance and then retreat, while other groups may remain in a stage for an extended period of time (Wheelan, 2005). These are unique ideas that are not shared in Tuckman’s model or other linear-based models. Tuckman suggested that a group could continually revert back to the conflict stage but that once the conflict was resolved the group would return to its previous stage. The primary goal of groups that develop in relation to this model is to create an overall unit that can work effectively to achieve specific ends (Wheelan, 1999). The model also assumed that each stage had its own goals and once those goals were achieved the group would move to the next phase.

The models discussed above share some commonalities but all represent group development in a variety of ways. The linear models commonly have five or more stages and show a group progressing through the stages. If conflict occurs, the group could possible revert back to another stage. The cyclical models utilize stages as well, but the group can cycle back through the stages, and issues can continue to recur within the group a number of times. Worchel’s (1994) model brought about a new stage concerned with the individual’s concerns and development rather than the groups’ concerns and development. The nonsequential model described group development in patterns rather than stages and that the development pattern will vary depending on the group and its purpose. The integrative model is considered a life-cycle model that shares
commonalities with the other three types of models and added a work stage, i.e., a stage that does not exist in most models that describes the development of groups in an experiential learning setting. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon of group development and the variety of models to choose from, it is very difficult to determine which model works best in describing the group development of the specific group one is observing.

*Critiques of Tuckman’s Model*

There have been a number of critiques written about group development models, specifically Tuckman’s model (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Cissna (1984) critiqued a number of articles and theories in his article. One of which was Tuckman’s model. Cissna stated;

Tuckman’s (1965) excellent and well known review of available research to that point is now dated, and is directed solely at how well the literature fits his hypothesized four phase model. His subsequent effort (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) assesses how well the model has faired and adds a fifth phase, but neither article provides a critique or evaluation of the research in the area. (p. 4)

Cissna also proposed that Tuckman’s (1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) model can “provide an appropriate point of departure for future researchers” (p. 25).

McCollom (1990) expressed this sentiment as well, and critiqued Tuckman’s (1965) model due to the model being based solely on research conducted with therapy groups and generalized to all other groups. He noted that Tuckman suggested that the path of development might vary for the different types of groups in his survey.
McCollom proposed a shift to a dynamic-contingency model getting away from the linear models. Based on the review of literature, Tuckman’s (1965) model of small group development is not the only model that could describe the group development process in an adventure programming context.

**Group Development in Adventure Programming**

In light of the variety and number of group-development theories and concepts discussed above, it is apparent that empirical and theoretical research related to group development in the field of adventure programming is quite limited. However, before evaluating the research based on the group-development process occurring in an adventure programming context one must first understand expedition behavior.

Expedition behavior is discussed in several organizations field manuals (Drury, Bonnie, Berman, & Wagstaff, 2005; Gookin, Doran, & Green, 2001; Petzoldt, 1984), and is described as the culture of a group in a wilderness setting. Expedition behavior establishes expectations for the group set by the leaders, group members and outside agencies. Expedition behavior is described by Drury et al. (2005) as the expectations of the group, awareness of relationships, being concerned for others wellbeing, completion of ones share of the tasks, and trying to resolve conflict when it occurs. The key aspects of expedition behavior are interrelationships, communication skills, and providing and receiving feedback.

Several studies have investigated group dynamics as well as the group development process occurring within an adventure programming context. Ewert and Haywood (1991) examined the impacts of an Outward Bound (OB) course on group
development using the Jones and Bearly’s Group Development Assessment Questionnaire (1986) that is based on Jones’ (1973) model of small group development. Ewert and Heywood (1991) stated that the OB process emulates the stages of group development in Parson’s Theory of Social Action (Parsons & Shils, 1951). The study focused on four variables: gender, length of experience, type of course, and identification with the group, which were all deemed to be important to group development in a wilderness setting. The study found that the variables of sex, type of course, and group identification had varying levels of impact on group development. However, Ewert and Heywood’s study did not provide insight into what the group’s development processes were, and the purpose of the study was not to test Parson’s model or any other group development model.

Group Cohesion, a component of group dynamics has received some attention. A study conducted by Oaks, Haslam, Morrison, and Grace (1995), investigated the homogeneity of groups on 26-day trips which utilized the OB model. Their research found that, over time, groups were found to be more homogenous, or cohesive, and the members of each were more likely to be described by other group members in terms of stereotypic in-group norms. A more recent study which also focused on cohesion conducted by Eys, Ritchie, Little, Slade, and Oddson (2008) evaluated the relationship between status congruency and group cohesion in outdoor expedition groups in an educational setting. The study found that the perceptions of group cohesion were greater when leaders were individuals with a higher group status ranking, and that groups that
had some consensus about their group’s rankings perceived their groups as being more cohesive.

McKenzie (2003) also studied the OB model by using mixed methods to explore the means for which outcomes were achieved. Findings of this study indicated that an increase in interpersonal skills was achieved by working with other group members, and working as a group. This study also suggested that the component of self-awareness was achieved by relying on other group members, interacting with other group members, and working. It is interesting that the same components that created positive outcomes were also found to have a negative impact on the course outcomes: working as a group, interacting with other group members, and the attitudes of other group members.

Sibthorp, Paisley, and Gookin (2007) examined National Outdoor Leadership Schools (NOLS) programs in order to develop an etiological model of participant development. One of the targeted outcomes was small group behavior defined as “being a positive and productive group member” (p. 7). In this study, the small group behavior outcome was one of the characteristics found to predict personal development. The study also found that a group’s perception of its level of cohesion or functioning also seemed to impact perceptions of development.

Leon, Kanfer, Hoffman, and Dupre (1994) examined the group processes and task effectiveness on a 61-day polar expedition across Siberia. Results produced evidence that group cohesion tended to break down over time, during planned stops at villages, and in perceived unfairness of tasks, both in terms of group feelings and functioning. Martin and Davids (1995) studied the effect of outdoor pursuits as a team-building technique for 22
British professional soccer players. The study found that a development training course could improve group cohesion. However, the group studied, “already had a high level of cohesion before participating in the study” (p. 534).

Another study that investigated components related to an expedition, was conducted by Beames (2003). Beams utilized a case-study approach to evaluate the key components of a ten-week community service based expedition to Ghana. Five themes emerged from the study, three of which directly apply to the social environment or group’s development. The first emergent theme was group isolation. Group isolation was described as spending the majority of their time with their project group. Changing groups was another theme that related to the importance of changing groups throughout a multiweek expedition. **Diverse groups** was a theme that is atypical to most expeditions, but the process in which the groups were created for this expedition ensured diversity. The theme of **physically demanding** emerged in this study. The work in which this group was enlisted to perform was very physical. The last theme was **self-sufficient**, or the groups independence in cooking, sleeping and cleaning. These five themes were critical to the expedition of this organization. These themes appear to relate to experiences that may occur during typical adventure programming experiences.

A relatively recent development in the realm of adventure programming is that of corporate trainings and challenge course activities to aid in the group development process. A study on the development of teamwork within work groups engaged in corporate adventure training was conducted by Priest and Lesperance (1994). The focus of the study was on the longitudinal impacts of corporate adventure trainings, more
specifically, team building using the common stages of group development based on Tuckman’s (1965) model as a framework. Hatch and McCarthy (2005) examined the long-term effects of a challenge course on college students. Findings from the study reported short-term but not long-term gains were made in group functioning, cohesion, group effectiveness, and individual effectiveness. Kopf (1996) studied the impact that the sequencing of challenge course activities had on the group’s development. Results indicated that the sequencing did not have an impact on group development. The limited amount of empirical data suggested that short-term gains are made with corporate and group trainings produced by challenge course activities and the sequencing was not a factor in the group development process.

A recent meta-analysis conducted by Cassidy (2007) of the group development literature with an experiential educational focus in mind, provided some interesting insights on the various group development models, specifically Tuckman’s model. A unique idea presented by this analysis is the defining of group development stages in terms of concerns to be addressed based on the perspective of the practitioner, rather than behavioral outcomes. Cassidy also explained that her study provided more information to the experiential practitioner and that Tuckman’s model (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) might not be as applicable to groups outside of a therapeutic context.

The majority of the studies that evaluated group dynamics and group development in the field of adventure programming have focused on components of group dynamics rather than the group development process. Ewert and Haywood (1991) and Leon, Kanfer, Hoffman, and Dupre (1994) were the only two studies that focused specifically
on the group development process. Cassidy (2007) provided evidence suggesting that Tuckman’s model might not be the most appropriate model for the field. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to prove her claim.

There are a number of fundamental group development questions that are currently unanswered in the field of adventure programming. Based on the field’s current body of knowledge, adventure programming currently assumes that the current models (Jones, 1973; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) best describe the developmental processes groups in adventure programming contexts even though most are based on therapy groups within a laboratory setting that is quite different from an adventure context.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental process of a group within an adventure programming context, specifically assessing the efficacy of Tuckman’s (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) model of small group development that is a hallmark model in the field of adventure programming. The research questions were: (a) what is the group development process of a group on a 24 day WEA National Standards Program course in an adventure programming context; and (b) does Tuckman’s model of small group development describe the development process of this group?
Summary

Chapter 2 presented essential prior literature pertaining to this study. A discussion of the areas of group development theory, and group development within an adventure programming context was addressed to provide context for this study. The chapter also provided a statement of the problem. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter three includes the following subsections: research design, case description, recruitment of participants, participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of data, and researcher reflexivity.

Research Design

This research project utilized a qualitative research design to investigate the phenomenon of group development. The researcher relied on a case study approach (Merriam, 2001), which is often used interchangeably with ethnography but is separate, because it approaches the phenomenon of a program, institution, person, or process rather than the culture (Merriam, 2001). This approach was chosen due to the limited research in the field of adventure programming on the group development process (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000) and the exploratory nature of qualitative inquiry (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995). Qualitative methods enabled the researcher to observe the natural setting and provide greater ecological validity (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).
Case Description

A Wilderness Education Association (WEA) National Standards Program (NSP) course was the case being analyzed for this study. The Wilderness Education Association was established in 1977 to promote the development of the profession of outdoor leadership (WEA, History of WEA, n.d., ¶2). The mission of the WEA is to “promote the professionalism of outdoor leadership through the establishment of national standards, curriculum design, implementation, advocacy, and research driven initiatives” (WEA, WEA Mission, n.d., ¶1). The WEA fulfills this mission by hosting an annual conference and a series of workshops and courses designed to professionalize and educate outdoor leaders as well as advocate for more sustainable and environmentally sound practices.

This study focused on a WEA National Standards Program (NSP) course. The following course descriptions came from the WEA webpage (WEA, Outdoor Leadership Courses, n.d.). NSP’s cover the 18-point curriculum using a 21-35 day expeditionary course. Graduates from this course type are eligible for certification. The NSP is the longest and most involved WEA course type. A shorter version of the NSP is the Wilderness Stewardship Program (WSP). The WSP is typically a ten-day course which covers the basics of outdoor living skills, and judgment and decision making while touching on various points of the curriculum. Graduates of WSP’s are normally not eligible for certification. There is also a Professional Short Course (PSC) which is a shortened version of the NSP. The 14-day course covers the 18-point curriculum and is designed for professionals with considerable previous experiences that are already
working in the field. These courses are implemented through a network of WEA affiliate organizations, which consist primarily of colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Students enrolled in NSP courses are taught using an 18-point curriculum. These 18 points cover everything from decision making and problem solving to expedition behavior and group dynamics. The 18-point curriculum is presented to the participants throughout the course of the expedition (WEA, Outdoor Leadership Courses, n.d., ¶4). Instructional methods include requiring participants to teach component(s) of the curriculum, perform a variety of assigned roles, such as leader of the day or navigator, participate in daily debriefs, reflect and journal on a daily basis and work within the constraints of the group (WEA, Curriculum, n.d.).

This course required every participant to teach two or more of the points (topics) pertaining to the 18-point curriculum. These teaching presentations were 20-25 minute interactive lessons for the entire group. After the completion of the lesson the group provided feedback to the presenter based on the content of the topic and their teaching ability.

Another component of the curriculum of this course was the various roles that a participant could be assigned on any given day (see Table 2). Students on this course were required to be the leader of the day (LOD) and navigator at least once during the trip. The other roles were designated by the LOD for their leadership day.
Table 1

*Designated Roles of Course Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Intended Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Day (LOD)</td>
<td>Managed group, created daily itinerary Lead the designated day</td>
<td>Develop outdoor leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigator</td>
<td>Assistant Leader, focused on navigation Assisted leader with navigational decisions, LOD the following day</td>
<td>Develop navigation skills, and gain leadership experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother</td>
<td>Responsible for interpersonal aspects of the group, provided extra assistance to group members, responsible for not allowing group to spread out</td>
<td>Gain experience dealing with group issues and managing a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweep</td>
<td>The person who is at the back of the group; responsible for aiding rescues, and not allowing group members to fall behind the rest of the group</td>
<td>Gain experience leading a group from the rear and gain experience assisting individuals who may be struggling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback is an important component of the WEA process and occurred in the group at both a group and a personal level. At the end of every LOD’s day, the group would circle up and debrief the day in terms of the leader of the day and the functioning of the group. The leader reflected on the challenges and opportunities available to them that day, and his or her evaluation of the level of success he or she had capitalizing on those circumstances. In their turn, the other group members expressed three positive aspects of the day that the leader was directly responsible for, as well as three gifts (areas of improvement) for the leader. Every participant was also expected to journal on a daily
basis and reflects on their experience, the leadership of the day and functioning of the group.

The manner in which the group was expected to conduct themselves can be described as expedition behavior. A component of expedition behavior is the group dynamics and group development in regards to various interrelationships that can occur throughout an expedition (Drury, Bonney, Berman, & Wagstaff, 2005). The four main interrelationships that should develop in response to expedition behavior are: individual to individual, individual to group, group to individual, and group to group (Drury et al., 2005). These are two integral components of the 18-point curriculum. The concept of expedition behavior was taught on the third day of the course and was explained through the comedic descriptions of expedition behavior (Tomb, 1994). Group Development was taught on day 9, after the group had been going through the developmental process as a large group, in cook groups, and as tent partners. Tuckman’s (1965) model of small group development was used to describe the process to the group.

The WEA affiliate program that offered the NSP course used in this study was the Ohio University Recreation Studies program. The course took place in three different wilderness settings which utilized three different modes of travel. The first section of the trip took place in the Cape Lookout National Seashore in North Carolina (see Appendix A). Participant’s sea kayaked for five days during this section of the course. The second segment of the course took place in the Great Smokey Mountains of North Carolina and involved five days of backpacking. The third phase of the course took place on the Green Brier River in West Virginia and involved five days of canoeing. Participants utilized
wilderness living skills throughout the three sections of the course. Participants were required to transport all of their necessary equipment, food and clothing with them into the wilderness. Participants formed a community in which they cooked in groups of three and shared a tent for the entirety of the course.

Recruitment of Study Participants

Advising and informational sessions were utilized to inform students of the opportunity to take part in this course. There were two informational sessions enabling students to gain a better understanding of the course and program. During the first morning of the course, I verbally explained the purpose, methods, and potential risks of the study to potential participants. The potential participants were informed that this study was completely voluntary and not a requirement of the course. Participants received a written description of the study and an informed consent form in which they all signed, agreeing to participate in the study.

Course Participants

The course participants in this study included ten undergraduate students, six males and four females ranging in age from 20-30 years of age. There were two male graduate students, between the ages of 23 and 29, myself included. Participants were recruited based on their involvement in the WEA course offered through the Recreation Studies department. Upon successful completion of the course, Undergraduate students earned twelve credits toward graduation and graduate students earned six credits for their participation in the course.
The following is an introduction to each of the course participants and course instructors. The instructor team consisted of the lead instructor and two apprentice instructors, all of whom were males. The lead instructor (Steve) is a professor in the Recreation Studies program. Steve has taught in the Recreation Studies department for two years with previous experience at two other universities. He has been a member of the WEA since 1994 when he took his inaugural NSP and a WEA instructor for 1 year. He has numerous outdoor interests ranging from raft guiding and white water kayaking, to wilderness experience in Alaska. I was in a course taught by Steve and took a kayak certification course with him.

The two apprentice instructors were both recent graduates from the Ohio University Recreation Studies masters program. Both apprentices had completed an NSP in the Sierras the previous summer. One of the apprentices (Nate) was the Outdoor Pursuits graduate assistant for two years. His main outdoor focus was backpacking but he had developed an interest in kayaking and climbing while in graduate school. After the course he started working as the Assistant Director of Outdoor Recreation at a university in North Carolina. The other apprentice (Tony) was a graduate teaching assistant for two years prior to the course. He taught a variety of classes ranging from wilderness survival to mountain biking. After completing the course he accepted a position as the Program Coordinator of Outdoor Recreation at a university in Arizona. I knew both of the apprentices really well through class settings and other social settings.

Melanie has previous trip leading and guiding experience. She is an experienced white water and sea kayaker. She is in her senior year of the program. She had previously
taken a WEA course but did not receive certification due to the program not being an affiliate of the WEA. Her goals for the course were to gain more experience and knowledge as well as acquiring certification. Her experience and concern for the group demonstrated in the following quote, “You are always really helpful; you are one of the most helpful persons I have ever met. You are constantly trying to help people with things.” She also hoped to “gain some clarity or some direction, I have been feeling a lot of pressure and am glad to be away for a while.” I was an acquaintance of Melanie and spent time outside of class with her.

Erin finished up her junior year and had wilderness experience but did not have any trip leading experience. She was on the course for the expedition experience and felt like the certification was an after thought. She took advantage of every learning opportunity, which the following quote helps to describe her motivations: “I am nervous about being LOD, but Tony said something tonight and it gave me the ‘hell yeah’, I’m gonna lead the group and do anything and everything possible.” After a tough day she describes her motivations for her vote: “This is what I came here for, we are on an expedition you know it is not supposed to be easy.” I was an instructor of a class that Erin was in and had been a co-leader of two trips that she participated in.

Sarah had finished up her sophomore year and was on the course to gain leadership experience and knowledge which is exhibited by the following statement “I know that I want to be a very helpful and supportive team member, I hope to do more than just carry my own weight.” She had some outdoor experience, but limited kayaking
and canoeing experience and had never led a group before. I had co-led two trips that
Sarah was a participant of.

Angie is double majoring in Recreation and Communications. She was on the trip
to gain experience leading a group and to develop her skills in a variety of modes of
wilderness travel. A statement from another student gives a great portrayal of her goals,
“She is in it to truly please herself and the group, not to humor her grade or passing of the
course.” Another example of her wanting to push and better herself is expressed by this
statement that she made early in the trip, “I was tired we were all tired, I mean as far as
physical strength goes, I might have the least upper body strength of everybody in the
group, I thought I could do it and I had confidence.” I had no prior relations with Angie
before the course.

Sam was on the trip to gain leadership experience and to obtain the certification.
He was going into his senior year and had wilderness living experience and some guiding
experience. He was generally very optimistic and was generally concerned with having
fun and making sure that the group was having fun. He was torn at times during the
experience with his personal goals, “This is my first understanding of conflict within
myself, on one side I want to become a competent leader and develop qualities that make
me useful in helping people enjoy the outdoors, on the other hand, I am 21 on the Outer
Banks, I want to have fun by utilizing my time and space to my personal desires.” I had
co-led a trip that Sam was a participant on.

Ryan was starting his senior year and did not have an outdoor focus. He was on
the trip for the experience and wanted to improve his outdoor skills. He did not realize
that there was a potential for certification until after the first phase was over. His desire to be in the wilderness was expressed by the following quote, “I wanted to stay out in the wild and keep going and see some scenery and not see Fred’s backyard, because that is where I figured we were going to go.” His change from personal goals to group goals is demonstrated by the following quote from his journal, “I have not been thinking about the group, only myself.” Ryan had participated on a course that I had co-lead prior to this course.

Jason was starting his senior year and was very confident in his wilderness living skills and had a lot of prior experience leading groups in the outdoors. He was on the course to obtain the certification and was hoping to get a bid to become an instructor. He had high expectations for the group but was also had strong group awareness. The following passage provides a great example of this: “I actually voted for number one because of the group, I wanted to paddle all day and I wanted to go all the way across, but it wasn’t going to be possible for the group. It sucked on the way back riding, I hated it, I do not want to leave the water at all.” I had worked several shifts with Jason and had also co-lead a trip that he was a participant on.

Dan is a senior with previous experience leading participants in the out of doors. He was on the course to get college credit and wanted to gain certification as well as a bid to be an instructor. Initially he was ready to give up on kayaking and wanted to be in a canoe, once he became comfortable in the kayak his goals changed to the following: “I wanted to get out there and it just seemed like a lot of people weren’t and it made it hard, I mean that paddle across was definitely one of the highlights of the trip so far, I really
enjoyed paddling with the sun set and the challenge of going out into those waves.” My prior relations with Dan were as co-workers in which I had worked several shifts.

Dave was beginning his senior year and plans to work in the ski industry and guide once he graduates. He was on the course to acquire leadership experience and to get certified. His goals varied throughout the course. He accomplished tasks well if he was assigned a role, but during the sea kayaking portion of the course he was never assigned a role and felt like he was just along for the ride which resulted in some poor followership issues at times. I had met Dave on a weekend class trip that I was a co-leader on.

Mark was experienced in the outdoors but had never led a group before and typically spent time in the wilderness with his brother. He was on the course to gain experience leading individuals and to help develop his skill set. In his journal he stated that he wanted to grow from his experience, and to gain leadership experience and aspects of insightfulness to help the group. His desire to push himself and grow is expressed in a statement that he made, after a decision to change the itinerary was made. Mark made the following comment: “all I know is that it was going to keep us on the water.” I did not meet Mark until the first day of the course.

Pete was a graduate student focusing more on campus and community recreation. He had wilderness experiences but was hoping to gain credit while learning new skills and possibly obtaining a certification. Initially he had conflicting goals, “My stomach is bothering me, which leads me to questioning my presence on this trip again…. The instructor said that Petzoldt stated: “if you’re not comfortable in the wilderness you’re
doing something wrong.” I should probably put this quote somewhere because I believe it maybe what helps me turn this trip around for myself. Wow, I think I can do this.” Later in the trip his goals totally changed, towards the end of the trip we realized that we would be done with the expedition a day earlier than everyone thought. Pete stated that “I am going to spend the night that we get back at Stroud’s Run so that I can say that I stayed out for 25 days.” Pete and I had been in several classes together but did not really interact outside of class.

Data Collection

Five primary modes of data collection were used in the collection of data for this study: participant observation, group discussions, interviews, participant journals, and course artifacts.

First, I acted as a participant observer, documenting observations and memos in bound notebooks for the entirety of the trip. This was accomplished by taking filed notes of observations throughout the day and then writing up a thick description of the day, every evening. I was constantly observing the behaviors and interactions of the group during all waking hours. This method of data collection was utilized in order to gain full access to and a better understanding of the research setting, the participants, and the factors that effected the development of the group (Glesne, 2006). By utilizing qualitative methods I was able to participate and gain first hand knowledge of the culture, while producing written accounts of the culture and group development process, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the culture or issue of research (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).
Some limitations to this type of data collection method are that the data is not generalizable and that the data could be misinterpreted by the researcher (Glesne, 2006). To account for the limitation of misinterpretation I utilized triangulation techniques by collecting data in a variety of ways (i.e. audio tapes, participant observations, participant journals). This method contributed to the study by enabling first hand observation of the group development process in the adventure programming context. One constraint to the method in this study was that the researcher was a full participant observer, meaning that he was responsible for all the same tasks as the group. Ewert and McAvoy (2000) describe that a challenge of qualitative research in the wilderness setting, is the researcher becoming so integrated that they influence the development of the group.

Second, I audio taped and participated in all daily group Debriefs, in which the group reflected on key learning experiences from the day. These debriefs were facilitated by the course instructor. The recordings were made using a digital recorder. The lead instructor also recorded the Debriefs which would act as a back up in the event that data was destroyed or unusable. The recordings were transcribed by the primary researcher once he had left the field.

Third, participants completed journal entries on a daily basis. A portion of the journal was dedicated to reflections on group development throughout the course. A prompt with several questions was provided to the participants (see Appendix C). Course expectations required the participants to reflect in their journal on a daily basis. The participants had a private portion of their journal that the instructor team and research
team were denied access. I collected participant’s journals at the end of the course and made photo copies of the data.

Fourth, course artifacts were collected. These artifacts consisted of course manuals, maps and itineraries, and information provided by the program areas. These artifacts provided the cultural expectation for participants, as well as course expectations and goals.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches. The data were selectively transcribed (i.e., group process and group development data) from the daily Debriefs and participants journals. During the group debriefs most of the discussion focused on topics that were not directly relevant to issues of group development and group process, such as the performance of the leader for that day. When group members made comments that were relevant to their understanding of the group’s development or group’s interactions, then I transcribed those comments verbatim. There were 59 pages of double spaced data retrieved from selective transcriptions and my daily observations for the sea kayaking portion of the course.

The inductive approach of data analysis consisted of both open coding and focused coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006) to elicit themes from the transcriptions and journals. The purpose was to explicate the patterns, themes and categories associated with group dynamics and the group development process. This approach was utilized to attempt to answer the first research question trying to identify factors affecting group development in an adventure
programming context. The open coding produced 101 codes which were combined to form more specific categories. I then combined codes that had overlap or that were conceptually connected, which also enabled me to evaluate which codes were most prevalent in the data. For instance, the codes of unattainable goals, individual goals, and group goals were all combined into the category of goals. These categories were used to perform line by line focused coding. The line-by-line coding enabled me to create themes that would support most of the data. The data was then separated into files based on the themes and ordered by the day in which it correlated. Several sub-themes also emerged from the coded data.

Once the inductive analysis was completed, a deductive analysis ensued, utilizing the same data. The transcriptions of the Debriefs and personal journals, and my field notes were organized by the day of the course. Tuckman’s model of small group development (1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) was used as the framework. This deductive approach utilized a group development theories stages to be classified as the themes to code the data in order to answer the second research question evaluating the effectiveness of Tuckman’s model in adventure programming. I completed focused coding using the stages of group development proposed by Tuckman: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning based on his description of the processes taking place within each stage. This data was color coded based on stage and organized by day.

Trustworthiness of Data

The researcher established trustworthy data in a variety of ways. One way was through the prolonged engagement and use of persistent participant observations (Glesne,
Triangulation added to the trustworthiness of the study through the use of multiple data collection techniques. These techniques consisted of; participant observation, audio tapes of group debriefs, and journal entries produced daily by the participants. Trustworthiness was also ensured by the use of formal member checks to assist and ensure the internal validity of the study (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 1990). The formal member checks resulted in the interviewing of five participants of the study, whom discussed their critiques with the researcher.

Researcher Reflexivity

The adventure programming context and the phenomena of group process were chosen for this study for a number of reasons. This context is my focus area within my area of academic study and is an area of personal interest. I was really excited to spend 25 days in an adventure programming context while collecting data on group process. I had easy entry into this context and would be considered an “insider” due to my previous experience with both the field and the participants (Glesne, 2006). The phenomenon of group development was of interest due to previous adventure experiences and a basic understanding of group process gained through previous coursework and prior exposure to the Project Adventure curriculum. Going into the field I had a solid understanding of a variety of group development models and potential dynamics that I might observe.

I was often times conflicted with my positionality within the group. Being that I was a full participant observer meant that I was a fully functioning member of the group as well as a researcher. It was very difficult to maintain both duties at times. There were many occasions when other group members were hanging out playing cards at night and I
was sitting off on my own compiling my notes from the day eager to climb into my sleeping bag. It was also difficult for me to refrain from applying what I knew about group process to daily tasks and Debriefs. For the most part I was always observing the group, taking mental notes or scribbling down notes while other group members were reflecting on the day or relaxing.

Another positionality issue that I had was that of being a graduate student and somewhat of a mentor to many of the participants stemming from prior relationships that had developed in either an instructional or work setting. On several occasions I had to strongly consider whether or not to include information that individuals had expressed to me. I had to decide whether or not it was important enough to the study to be included even though it was provided in a more intimate setting than most of the other collected data. Despite my struggles, my position on the course provided the unique ability to see things in the group through the lens of both a reflective participant and also a researcher leading to a richer, more theoretically nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

Summary
Chapter 3 described the methods and procedures utilized to explore the development process of a group whom participated in a WEA National Standards Program course. First, the research design was discussed providing reasons for the use of qualitative methods. Second, the case description was discussed. A general overview of the trips itinerary, including course goals and objectives was presented to illustrate the culture and context. A brief description of the participants was provided to supply
background information of the group. Finally, chapter 3 outlined the methods utilized for data collection, data analysis, and ended with a description of the trustworthiness of data, and researcher reflexivity.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the results of this study. This section provides a description of the developmental process of the group that was studied. It specifically focuses on the development of the group throughout the sea kayaking portion of the course.

This expedition had three phases, which involved three distinctly different environments and modes of travel. The modes of travel included sea kayaking, canoeing, and backpacking. These phases took place in North Carolina and West Virginia. This results section is only focusing on the sea kayaking portion of the course due to the scope of this study. The backpacking and canoeing phases were omitted from the analysis of this study, resulting in an in-depth focus on the development of this group during the sea kayaking section of this course. The backpacking and canoeing portions of this course may be revisited in future works due to the potential of the findings from those phases.

Sea Kayaking

The first phase of the course was conducted in Cape Lookout National Seashore, located along the southern portion of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. This area provides an excellent environment for a sea kayaking expedition and setting for the delivery of the 18-point curriculum. Cape Lookout National Seashore provides 56 miles of uninhabited coastline to explore and travel through. The travel itinerary for this section of the course was to start out in Lola, NC and spend five days paddling across the Core Sound, working our way south, down the 35 miles of the Core Banks to Cape Lookout. Cape Lookout is the site of one of the historic lighthouses that line the eastern sea board.
On the ninth day of the course the group would paddle five miles west across the Core Sound to Shell Point where the sea kayaking phase would come to a conclusion.

After we arrived in the Outer Banks, the instructors divided the larger group into sub-groups for cooking and tenting. The instructor team chose the sub-groups. Cook-groups consisted of three participants each. Tent groups consisted of same sex pairs with the exception of one tent being co-ed and two individuals sleeping in solo tents. The instructors tried to place a more experienced participant in every cook group.

After tent and cook-groups were established and all the pre-expedition tasks had been completed the group was given the itinerary. The course itinerary laid out the course plan and goals. The group would start at Lola on the fifth day of the course and paddle approximately seven miles. The group was expected to cross the Core Sound by the end of the day. Crossing the sound entailed a three mile open water paddle. Once the group crossed the sound they would set up camp at the Old Drum Inlet on the Core Banks. This would allow the group to be in a more isolated and undeveloped area of the Outer Banks. An ideal environment for the delivery of the 18-point curriculum. The group would spend the following five days paddling south along the Core Banks. Designated roles would change on a daily basis and teaching presentations would be spread throughout the days. This phase would conclude when the group reached Shell Point, 42 miles south of Lola.

Day five of the course was the first day of the sea kayaking expedition. It was a beautiful, warm, and sunny day, with a breeze. While a van was being shuttled to the take-out participants loaded their boats with their personal and shared group gear required for five days of sea kayaking in an expeditionary setting. This type of expedition was new
to most, and some participants became frustrated when their gear did not fit easily into the storage areas of the kayaks. Several group members assisted others once their own boats were loaded. After all of the kayaks were packed and trimmed (balanced), I, the days LOD presented the day’s itinerary, which consisted of a seven mile paddle. Three of the miles consisted of an open water paddle across the Core Sound. The group was eager to hit the water and start the adventure. Participants had picked a paddling partner (one of their friends) for whom they needed to paddle within close proximity and assist if warranted.

Everyone paddled close to their paddling partner and stayed as a group as the group left the cove at the starting point. As the group approached the Sound the wind became much stronger and white capped waves were coming toward the group. I explained the technique required to successfully exit the cove, while Steve, the lead instructor explained that safety was a concern, and he was comfortable with the safety of the group in this situation.

The group paddled out into the waves and the strong wind; staying with their paddle partners and the group for the most part. Angie fell behind from the get go, and was having difficulty paddling into the larger swells. She was being pushed in the opposite direction of the group. At this point the group had essentially divided into two groups of varying abilities; a group of more skilled kayakers, and a group of paddlers whom were experiencing some challenges. Steve assisted Angie by tethering her boat to his, so that she could acquire momentum and not have to spend as much energy keeping her boat straight. Steve describes his dissatisfaction with the group, after spending some
time assisting Angie in the following way: “The group was gone and I was a little pissed off…. I felt like we had been abandoned.”

The majority of the group had continued to paddle while Steve was working with Angie, and had made it into the open water. The main group became fatigued while working to stay rafted up (grouped up in kayaks), and trying not to lose ground. The purpose of rafting up at this point was to allow the group members that were having difficulties to catch up. During this time Ryan was on the shore emptying water out of his boat, Steve and Angie were not in sight and several other kayakers who were having a difficult time were pretty far behind. The rafted up group had become anxious as they were being blown back into a rocky shore.

I reluctantly made the decision to completely split the group by allowing the stronger group to paddle as a group to the point that was about a mile away. The splitting of the group resulted in paddle partners getting left behind and a lack of concern for the individuals who were being abandoned by the group.

After paddling most of the way across the open water, I placed Jason in charge of the stronger group that was making its charge towards the point. I turned around and paddled back to assist Steve with the group that was experiencing major challenges. I had asked two of the stronger kayakers if they would assist me by paddling back and helping Steve get the rest of the group across the cove, to the point. They declined, stating that they did not think that they would be able to make it back across.

When I approached the then abandoned group, Dan and Ryan were both out of their boats and swimming, not by choice. This was after making it about 1/3 of the way
across the cove. The small group decided to turn back and regroup on a small beach. Once Dan and Ryan were back in their boats the small group took a route that was more protected from the wind, across the cove and reached the rest of the group that was waiting on the point. Dan and Ryan were not happy with the day’s experience. Ryan said: “Adventures are awesome even when they suck!” He flipped and swam several times and was very upset about it. Dan, who was also very upset with the situation stated, “I hate kayaking and will be happy to never see one again!”

After encountering 10-15 knot winds and waves, the navigator and I made the decision to set up camp on the point. The point was approximately three miles from Lola the put-in, on the mainland side of the sound. Most participants appeared to be happy with the decision and enjoyed the campsite. This was a beautiful sandy beach in which no human developments could be seen. Unfortunately, this campsite was also 4 miles short of the intended campsite. Cook-groups set up their kitchens and cooked meals independently of other groups. One group had difficulty with their stove, and Nate expressed the expectation that the group would cook and eat in the same area for the remainder of the course.

The goals for the day had not been accomplished and the group was not functioning as a group. Most participants seemed to be concerned solely about themselves and not others when the situation became challenging. A few of the participants were concerned with the well being of the group and did everything in their power to help the group function, and assist individuals who were in distress.
The weather on day six was very similar to the previous day’s, with sunny, warm, and windy conditions. Group roles had changed. Pete became the LOD, and I was recruited to be the smoother. Pete had an ambitious goal of crossing the sound and making up the miles that we had lost the day before. He re-assigned some paddle partners trying to match up skill levels. He explained to the group that a small goal of making it across a mile wide cove had been established. The group would re-evaluate the itinerary based on how they performed once the cove was crossed.

Dan had been told to switch into a larger kayak and Ryan remained in the same kayak. Ryan had a personal goal of not flipping over at all on the first crossing. The group stayed together for the most part while making the crossing. Ryan flipped twice and expressed his frustration, “I don’t know if it is my boat or if I just suck?” We took a break once we made it across the cove. During this short break, Steve had Ryan switch into a kayak with more volume in hopes that it would not take in as much water and submerge as easy as the kayak he had been in. This boat swap worked and the group paddled well and stayed together through similar head winds and swells as the day before.

During a lunch break it was decided that the group was performing well enough to attempt crossing the sound. The crossing required the group to paddle away from the security of the shore for three miles. Soon after the decision was made the wind had grown stronger; it along with large swells were beginning to wear on people and the group was getting spread out again. Pete told us that he wanted us to group up behind some sandbags that formed a harbor, and created a wind break. Instead of stopping, half
of the group followed Steve around the other side of the sandbags. This act frustrated Pete, “several members of the group continued around the corner and this was the point that I lost control, the group split and I didn’t know what to do, I let people see that I was frustrated and frozen.” All group members except for Steve and Melanie stopped on the rocky shore of the harbor. Steve and Melanie had paddled over to a shady beach without communicating to the group their plan.

At this point everyone was getting tired and were frustrated with the conditions. The head winds where just as strong as the day before. The group was docked on a sandbag trash pile right next to a harbor that was filled with fishing boats. On top of the unaesthetic landing, there were beach houses blanketing the shore. The group realized that they were much further away from the planned crossing point than they had thought during the lunch break, leading to a break down in the group.

Steve and Melanie returned from their beach, and explained that the reason that they continued on was because it was a much nicer and more protected beach. Steve also apologized for the navigational error in which he thought the island that we were now looking at was the point that we were going to paddle to on the other side of the sound.

There were 20-25 knot winds predicted for the next two days, and the group needed to make a decision on how they were going to proceed with this section of the course. Pete asked the group for suggestions, and Jason felt the group was functioning well enough to make the crossing. He suggested that the group paddle to the island half way across the Sound and then decide from there. Dan suggested that the group, “shuttle back to base camp, paddle out to the Outer Banks and complete a smaller loop.” Crossing
the sound from base camp (the kayak shop), would be a shorter distance, and there were a number of islands in between the mainland and the bank that could provide shelter. Ryan expressed his frustration with the current situation, “I wanted to get into wilderness and now we are back in civilization,” but he did not offer any options.

The instructor team included Pete in their discussion of potential options, and decided to let the group vote on which option they preferred. While this discussion was taking place the group split up into smaller groups. Dave and Sam took a swim, and Ryan joined them singing, “This sucks, this sucks, this sucks!” The rest of the group circled up and discussed the situation. The four options presented to the group by Pete are listed in Table (3).
Table 2

*Options of Major Decision*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Itinerary Options</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1</td>
<td>The group would return to shell point, the site of the instructional day, paddle to the lighthouse, and paddle a loop back to shell point. This would result in spending one to two nights in the outfitters camping area, one in which the group had previously spent two nights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2</td>
<td>The group would continue to paddle south towards the town of Atlantic, staying near the mainland. The group would paddle near the shore towards the take-out, remaining in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 3</td>
<td>The group would paddle to the town of Atlantic, and then to the town of Sea Level. The group would then cross the sound to the Outer Banks and finish by paddling back to Lola, the put-in for the phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 4</td>
<td>The group would paddle back to Stall Point, which was where the group camped the previous night, spend several days exploring the area and take-out at the put-in, Lola.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The group made the decision democratically by having a secret vote. Option one, to head back to base camp and paddle to the lighthouse won by a small margin. There was only one round of voting, even though option one only beat the second choice by two votes and several people had a hard time making a decision. Several were disappointed with the outcome of the vote, Ryan stated “Let’s not camp out in Fred’s yard again.” Overall the group’s morale was relatively good based on the decision that was made.

The two course apprentices Nate and Tony, headed toward the buildings on the shore where they found the road and a ride back to the vans. The rest of the group made a mad dash back to the lunch spot which acted as a boat landing. Participants left their paddle partners behind and did not try to stay as a group after being instructed to do so, becoming separated yet again. While waiting for the vehicles, journaling took place and some people talked and joked with each other while others kept to themselves. When the vans arrived the kayaks were unpacked and loaded onto the trailers. Half of the group, worked diligently at loading the gear into the van and tying down the boats, while the other half of the group took a more passive approach to the process and did not help much with the tasks. This upset a number of the participants, which was brought up later in a Debrief.

The van that I was a passenger in was extremely quiet for most of the drive. The group stopped and looked at a potential put-in point, and the instructor team discussed this idea without communicating anything to the group. We continued to drive and drove past the base camp that we had decided to retreat back to. The van drove on to Shell Point, the area that we practiced our kayaking the fourth day.
Pete and the instructor team had a discussion, during which time everyone in my van began to wonder why the group did not stop at the campsite. They were tired and getting very hungry. I went to see how the other van was doing. They explained the plan that had developed during the drive. After the instructor’s meeting, everyone was circled up outside of the vans. Steve explained that the new plan was to load up the kayaks and paddle with the wind at our backs, two miles to an island for the night, rather than spending the night in Fred’s backyard.

This decision created a big rift within the group. Half of the group was excited about the idea of getting to an island, and staying in a pristine setting, while the other half had their mind set on having a secure campsite, starting dinner in 20 minutes, and grabbing a shower. They were not enthusiastic with the idea of loading up their kayaks for the second time that day and paddling two miles into the sunset. Another issue was the concern for safety. The group had to paddle from behind a protective jetty into strong wind and waves and around a headland to get back onto the water. Erin refused to get her headlamp out: “There is no way that I am going to were my headlamp, I am most likely going to flip and I do not want ruin it.” If anyone flipped, they would likely be pushed toward an embankment of rocks and rip-rap.

However, everyone made it onto the water without incident and paddled with the wind and waves at their back toward Brown’s Island. The sun was setting to the west, and we were making good time. Group members commented on how beautiful the evening was and how much nicer it would be out in nature rather than in Fred’s backyard. Jason stated: “I love to paddle during the sun set!” Camp and dinner were prepared via light
from headlamps. Cook-groups prepared their dinner wherever they could find a wind break. During the lunch break cook-groups ate together and this was a common theme throughout the course. This was in part due to the sharing of food, and the way that the food had been divided up between the members of each cook-group.

The sixth day of the course had very similar results as the fifth day. The goal of the itineraries was not accomplished, and now the entire itinerary for the sea kayaking expedition had changed. Members of the group were frustrated with the current situation and still not functioning as a group. Most participants appeared to be more concerned with their personal goals and motives rather than the goals of the group and course.

Day seven started off a little differently than the others. The group was informed the night before that they could sleep in, and that there was the potential of having a base camp day (camp at the same campsite). This was due to weather forecasts predicting 20-25 knot winds over the next two days. As the days LOD, Jason had developed an itinerary in hopes that the wind would not be as strong as predicted and that a base camp day would not be necessary.

Jason and his navigator Melanie, approached me before most of the group was up and out of their tents. They asked: “what do you think we should do? I really want to paddle but look at the conditions.” It was another beautiful day but the wind was already blowing pretty strongly and there were waves with white caps forming in the sound. I told them: “I would plan on having a rest day and hope for better conditions the next day based on how tired the group was and the current weather conditions.” The group was
low on water, so Tony, Melanie and I eagerly paddled into the wind back to the harbor and jetty that the group had launched from the night before to fill water bags.

When the small water collecting party returned everyone was up and had finished breakfast. The plan for the day was to Debrief the previous day and catch up on teaching topics since the two previous days did not allow for them to take place. The day was not physically strenuous and allowed the group to spend a lot of time together.

During the Debrief it was clear that the group was frustrated and not pleased with the current situation. Steve, the instructor expressed his dissatisfaction with the current situation: “You made a crux decision to get off the water and to move the group and reconfigure our trip.” He felt that the group decision resulted in the group failing this section of the course, “I feel like we failed because we were willing to go back to Fred’s yard, we stepped right out of the ‘Wilderness University’ and right back into the kayak shop.”

The Debrief led to a discussion on why everyone voted the way that they had in an attempt to resolve the conflict from the day before. The group was circled up, sitting out in the sun in comfortable camp chairs. The Debrief began with Dave explaining his motives for his decision and also criticizing the instructor team for their lack of planning and preparation for the course: “I voted number one, [to go to the lighthouse] sort of going along with kind of like this whole section ... I felt like this whole section was an unattainable goal.” He blamed the instructor team’s lack of preparation for the current situation of the group and pointed out that most of the trees are slanted in the same direction that the current wind was blowing. One of his examples was that another
organization was traveling in the opposite direction of us: “Outward Bound was heading
the other direction they had wind at their tale when we were coming.” He also explained
that one of his main reasons for voting to change the itinerary was due to not knowing the
distance and location of where the group would be able to set up camp for that evening.

At this point Steve chimed in a bit defensively, because extensive planning had
gone into the preparation of this course. Outward Bound had been consulted, along with
Dean Berman who is a veteran WEA Instructor who frequently runs kayak trips in the
Core Sound during all seasons of the year, “Can I say something? Outward Bound has
been running two trips simultaneously. One will start in Ocracoke and the other will start
here and go north. Dean Berman has been running trips here for years starting where we
did and running south.”

Dave continues to criticize, “I am not saying that it is impossible, but you knew
that we had novice paddlers.”

Steve continues to justify the itinerary, “We had novice paddlers last year heading
south and we made it in good time.”

Sarah explained her motives next, “I personally did not vote.” She admitted the
difficulty she had in making a decision. She explained that this was due to being both
“physically and mentally” tired and that she had similar concerns to those of Dave. She
was worried about not knowing where, and how far the campsite was from the harbor,
but she also felt like by choosing number one the group would be “throwing in the
towel.”
Showing some frustration about the decision that was made, Mark exclaims: “I voted for number three and all I know is that it was going to keep us on the water!”

Jason, a participant who really wanted to push himself both physically and mentally during this course, felt that the group could have made the open water crossing with the previous days conditions. The concept of group polarization played a role in his decision making process and he ended up voting for what he felt was best for the group: “I actually voted for number one because of the group. I wanted to paddle all day, and I wanted to go all the way across, but it wasn’t going to be possible for the group”. He explained how frustrating making this decision was for him, because he did not want to stop, but the plan to paddle to Brown’s Island really excited him, and that being able to surf the waves and paddle into the sunset was the best part of the trip up to that point.

Dan, the participant who came up with option one, was disappointed with his decision. He described how frustration, fatigue and dehydration had an impact on the way he voted. “I voted for the first option…. sitting on the break for the harbor looking at the houses, I didn’t really feel like we were in a wilderness setting to start with. I was thinking that as long as we are going to be in an area that is mixed with wilderness and not, it might be cool to take another option that would at least give us a chance to see a cultural and historical monument; the light house and all that.” He described how in hindsight he would have rather voted for option number four to stay on the water and make a loop of it, and added how paddling to the island was a great alternative to staying at the boat shop: “I mean that paddle across was definitely one of the highlights of the
trip so far, I really enjoyed paddling with the sun set and the challenge of going out into those waves.”

I was really questioning my motives and concern for the group in regards to the decision I had made and how I had voted. I was also having difficulty coming to terms with the current situation: “I chose option number three, it was more of a selfish reason I guess. I was just thinking about myself. I really want to get over to Core Banks and I didn’t want to get out of the wilderness either.” I also pointed out my concern for the lack of communication from the instructor team with the participants pertaining to changing the plan and making a sunset paddle to the island. I was a bit worried about getting all of the participants out of the turbulent jetty and around the point.

Pete, the LOD the previous day, explained why he did not vote and speculated on how he would have voted: “I didn’t vote because I was counting your votes. I didn’t even think about how I was going to vote, I probably would have voted for number one.” He explains how some personal motivations would have been included but also adds to the idea of polarization by stating, “But you know my thought was group morale.” His personal agenda was present in the way that he presented the options and conducted the voting process.

Sam, speaking loudly and energetically, stated his motivations for the rest of the trip: “I want to get to the Atlantic and I think that it is pretty reasonable, … I think it should just be the goal! Let’s get to the Atlantic, let’s see the ocean!” Sam had a strong desire to make it to the lighthouse and that was one of his major personal goals for this
portion of the course. He had voted number one because that choice almost guaranteed
the opportunity to make it to the lighthouse and to see the Atlantic Ocean.

Ryan voted for number three, because he did not want to leave the field and was
disappointed that option number one had been chosen. He later stated: “But I am down
with whatever decision was made because I am going with the flow.” However, the idea
of paddling to Brown’s island had angered him the previous evening, but in the end he
was glad that we were on the island and not in a backyard.

Melanie in a serious manner explained: “This was the one phase that I was really
looking forward to, kayaking is the one sport that I can really do and give it my all.” She
had a difficult time making a decision and did not want to leave the water, but did not to
revisit the area of the Outer Banks that we had already paddled through. She believed that
the group would have a greater chance of making it to the Core Banks from Shell Point
than we would from the sandbag harbor. She also appreciated being on the island rather
than at the boat shop.

Erin spoke up next and told everyone that she voted for number one because it felt
more realistic. She was happy to be on the island and added her personal goal was related
to challenging herself: “This is what I came here for we are on an expedition, you know it
is not supposed to be easy.” During this Debrief Erin explained how successfully
paddling out of the jetty the night before enabled new found confidence in her kayaking
ability.

After all of the students explained the rationales for their different votes in the key
decision made on the previous day, Steve asked for an explanation of the purpose, or
goals of the course. He wanted to know why the students are participating in the course. Steve stated: “What I would like to do now is to spend some time talking about goals of the course. Why are we here? I mean what’s this course all about?”

Pete was the first to offer his opinion: “To learn about leadership in the wilderness.” With some questioning from Steve he went on to describe how judgment and decision making are both major issues and how the group is gaining hands on experience, in situations that require developed skill in making judgments and decisions.

Jason provides a thoughtful response to this question: “When I think about goals of the course I think about them in a couple of different ways; first off, I think about personal goals of the course … and, I also think about group goals, and I think one of the frustrating things about that, is that they don’t always go together, and I think that is one thing, that we are missing completely.” Jason goes on to explain how it is important to have personal goals, but they need to be reconsidered when they conflict with group goals. He describes how there is a disconnect in the group, due to the conflict in goals: “I don’t think that we have all come together as a group yet, I think that we are still kind of out living for ourselves right now.” He went on to describe how the major goal of the course is to learn about group dynamics and how to make everyone feel included when leading a group.

Steve agreed with Jason’s comments, but also wanted the group to consider the goals based on the academic component of the course: “You are getting 12 credits to take part in this course, why would I bring a class into this setting? Is it about going to see Cape Lookout lighthouse?” He explained to the group that one of the major goals of the
course was to get into expedition mode so that the goals could be accomplished. His next question to the group was: “What are the course goals?”

Melanie offers up the ideas of learning to be self-reliant and gaining confidence. Angie added to this notion: “Learning to rely on ourselves in the wilderness and on each other…. I have confidence in everyone in this group and my option was to keep going, I mean I was tired we were all tired.” She described to the group how she felt like she is the participant with the most physically difficulties when it came to paddling. She also brought up the concepts of motivation, confidence and perseverance and realized that they were not course goals, but believed that they should be an outcome of the course.

Steve adds to the discussion, that a major goal of Outward Bound is, “the development of character through experience and personal hardships that you encounter in an outdoor setting, which is a physical hardship in this case.” He goes on to describe how pushing someone out of their comfort zone is part of the job.

Angie adds to this notion by explaining how the first day really challenged her but she was not willing to give up. She was disappointed in the group decision and explains: “I think as a group goal, I think we totally could have gotten across there [the sound].”

Sam spoke up and told the group that he felt that this class was going to be the most difficult course that he has taken in the program. He adds to the notion of goals of the course, with the following statement: “the goal in one word, to sum it up is experience, we are out here to get experience and learn what we are supposed to do.”

Steve had the group retrieve their course manuals and the group reviewed the 18-point curriculum and the roles of the group. The discussion ended with a modified
itinerary, and most members mentioned that they were very relieved to be on Brown’s Island rather than in the backyard of the boat shop. The group had decided that the primary travel goal for the next three days was to cross the Core Sound and make it to the Outer Banks, specifically to the Cape Lookout Lighthouse.

This Debrief allowed everyone to find some resolution to the conflict. It provided insight as to where everyone in the group was coming from, and the reasons for the outcome of the vote. The discussion acted as a catalyst to re-shape the goals and norms of the group. This occurred through comments that were made by participants, the instructor team, and by reviewing the 18-point curriculum. Reviewing the course goals reinforced the expectations of the instructor team for the group. This lead to a more group centered focus. The group realized that they needed to put the group before the individual, and work as a cohesive unit in order to reach its potential and gain the most from the experience. The group’s cohesion was tested the following afternoon.

Cook-groups utilized their stoves for both meals due to having extra time to cook. After spending 30 minutes fighting with the stove, My cook group gave up and borrowed another groups stove. My cook group tended to work as a team and shared all the tasks associated with food preparation and clean-up. We would decide on a group meal, and worked together to prepare meals and complete clean-up tasks. Ryan exclaimed: “we are eating five star meals!” This was not the case with other groups. Most groups would designate a cook for the evening, while one group would cook separate dishes for every meal based on the individual desires of the group members. While I was doing dishes that evening in the sound, Sarah who was in another cook-group approached me and
complained that a member in her-cook group was really bothering her. She explained how he constantly complained about how he is not comfortable with the situation, and that he wants to quit the course. The participant was able to work out his personal issues, and desired to stay in the field at the conclusion of the course.

The eighth day of the course had similar conditions to those of the seventh. The winds were still really strong, and created white capped waves. It was sunny and warm, and Melanie was the LOD. She decided that the conditions were too poor to attempt an open water crossing. This meant that the group would spend a second consecutive day on Brown’s Island.

The group covered several more teaching topics, and Melanie called the group out for poor expedition behavior, because some participants had not kept their personal gear organized and secure “we need to do a better job of keeping camp clean and gear organized and put away so that we do not lose all of it..” Several items were blown around the camp that morning and there was cooking gear and other group gear left out over night.

Later that morning, the wind died down some, so Melanie announced that the group was going to do an afternoon paddle around the island. She assigned paddle partners based on skill level, and assigned the participants that were always way out front of the group the role of sweep, and the slower paddlers the role of lead boat. This strategy really kept the group together. Everyone paddled efficiently and appeared to have had a great time. People were talking, joking with each other, and splashing the entire time.
Pete flipped his kayak and swam after unsuccessfully trying to flip Steve after a major splash fight.

The group paddled as a unit staying close to their paddling partners until they were about 400 yards from camp. Dave was the exception to this rule, which he explained in his journal: “I kind of got away from the group and was about 50 ft. to the left of the group for a lot of the west side of the island. At the time I was just enjoying myself and not concerned too much about the group.” The entire group me included lost focus and split up and paddled for camp, leaving their paddle partners and group behind for the last 400 yards. This was described as poor followership on behalf of most of the group in the Debrief of the day.

Making it around the island was the first travel goal that the group had successfully accomplished. The group paddled five miles in approximately three hours and functioned pretty well. The group began to function in terms of the paddling component of the course, and had a better understanding of group expectations and group goals. There was a shift from focusing on individual goals to more of a group focus. Ryan reflected on this idea in his journal: “I have not been thinking about the group, only myself.”

After the days Debrief, Nate brought the circle in closer, and read a really funny poem written by Suzanne Summers. It was entitled “Touch Me”. It was hilarious and really got the group laughing and acted as a bonding agent for group members for the rest of the course. The reading of a poem from the book became a nightly ritual in which the LOD picked a poem to read to the group. Nate had commented to me in private: “the
group functioned well this afternoon and that spirits are high, that is why I broke the book out tonight.”

Confidence and camaraderie was much greater within the group after the successful completion of the paddle around the island, and a majority of the conflict had appeared to have been resolved during the Debrief of the previous day’s decision. An entry in Erin’s journal illustrated this idea: “paddle movement was more in unison, rather than everyone for themselves....It seemed like everyone was more comfortable on the water as well because people were joking around and making more conversation than usual when on the water.”

The challenge of the previous two days acted as a catalyst for the relational domain of the group’s development. Most participants were willing to spend their free time interacting with individuals in which they had not associated with earlier in the course. For instance, Mark began to spend more time with Sam, Dave, Ryan and Angie, after being more of a loner the first couple of days. Another example of higher functioning in the relational domain, was represented when after the paddle around the island, most members of the group swam together, and tried to flip Tony while he paddled through the waves in a kayak.

That evening after the Debrief, it became very evident that there was a division developing within the group. As I walked into the main camp area a small group had congregated and invited me to join their conversation. They were talking about how a number of the participants were not taking the concept of the group and its goals seriously, and how they were in it more for themselves.
The small group was also disappointed with the quality of feedback they were receiving from other participants during Debriefs. Jason and Dan had really high expectations for this trip and did not feel that they were being met due to the limited amount of previous leadership experience certain individuals possessed and their lack of concern for the goals of the group. One of the persons involved in this discussion wrote in their journal: “there are a few of us with previous leadership experiences, and some of those few have too many expectations for people without previous experiences.” These high expectations manifested themselves during the following days Debrief.

With one full day left for this section of the course the group was very eager to cross the sound and accomplish their goal of arriving at the Cape Lookout Lighthouse. The weather forecast predicted diminishing wind speeds, and it appeared as though promising weather conditions may provide an opportunity to make the crossing. The course instructor announced this to the group during the evening Debrief, and requested that the LOD and navigator anticipate this possibility in their planning for the next day.

The group was packed up and ready to hit the water by the designated start time. Sam was the LOD for day nine of the course, and he had very specific goals for the group; to make it to the lighthouse, and to have fun. There was a slight breeze on the group’s backs as they were paddling with the tide. Roles were assigned and paddle partners were the same as the day before. The group paddled hard and stayed together. They paddled the five miles in two hours, which was much faster than they had anticipated. Participants were talking and snapping pictures the entire paddle.
The group pulled their boats up onto the beach and had some free time to explore the lighthouse and play in the ocean. Various teaching topics were interspersed throughout the free time. Factions of people broke off, one group went and swam and played in the waves of the Atlantic Ocean, while others explored the lighthouse, taking advantage of the natural history resources that were available. After lunch and another teaching topic, the group had more free time in which groups again divided up. One group went and played on the beach, while another took a hike to see an abandoned resort on the island. Group members conversed, laughed, joked and played together for most of the afternoon. Groups shared and traded ingredients and desserts while they cooked dinner together in a large covered picnic area that evening.

One of the teaching topics focused on group development. Erin taught the lesson and utilized Tuckman’s model to relate this information to the group. One of the activities was to discuss with your cook-group, what stage you felt the cook-group was in. Every group felt that they were functioning pretty well, and said that they were in the norming stage. She then asked the group what stage they felt the group was in at this point. Jason led the discussion by stating: “I think we are kind of scattered, I do not think we are necessarily in one set stage. I think we are still in forming, but I think we have performed, maybe not to a high functioning level. This whole forming, storming, norming, it doesn’t feel like it has happened like that.”

Erin followed up with a similar idea: “I don’t think that you are in forming one day, storming the next and then norming, I think that you can switch back and forth
between the stages. I feel that today we are performing very well as a group and other
days we haven’t.”

Steve added that he felt like abandoning the first itinerary, and leaving the field
would be considered storming and that the Debrief the following morning acted as a form
of conflict resolution. Erin ended the discussion by talking about some of the situational
factors involved in a wilderness trip, and how they can affect the group development
process.

Although the group was functioning well in terms of the interpersonal or the
relational domain, participants were late to all scheduled meetings, and after dinner food
was left out at the cooking area. We were warned about the giant raccoons that loomed in
the area, and sure enough, as I walked up to the cook sight to collect my cook gear, one
of the raccoons was approaching the groups cooking area. I informed the LOD and other
group members of the situation and only two group members seemed concerned and
reacted.

Personal conflict among several of the members was also expressed during that
days debrief. Melanie described in her journal: “We definitely saw some conflicts coming
out with the debriefing with both Jason and Dan [towards] Sam.” This conflict really
disheartened Sarah, who described the experience in her journal: “I was disappointed at
the Debrief by some of the ‘constructive criticism’ of others. A few people really tore
Sam apart, they did it in a way that was not even conducive to improvement and a lot of it
was really unmerited…I saw it stir up some really negative attitudes and I think Sam may
have felt like he was being attacked.”
The night ended shortly after the Debrief, with the group being informed that we needed to be on the water by six a.m. the next morning to avoid the incoming tide. The group had completed the travel goal for the day and was able to accomplish the planned activities for the day.

During this Debrief, Steve expressed his concern that he had inadvertently set the group up for failure by establishing another unattainable goal: “Last night was a restless night for me, I sensed that the group wanted to get off the island and the weather forecast was not sounding good, but then it looked like the conditions would be favorable… I was worried that yet again I had set up another unattainable goal for this group.” The day started and ended with great weather that allowed the group to accomplish its itinerary and course goals. Ample time was provided for individuals to accomplish their individual goals while still focusing on the group.

In the relational domain of the group’s development, the group functioned at a high level. Participants were interacting with a variety of individuals and began to get to know each other at a deeper level. Several individuals still had issues with other participants, partially due to past experiences and due to conflicts related to goals and expectations. However, the group did not function well in the task domain once the group achieved its primary goal of reaching the lighthouse. The group goals became secondary to individual goals, which resulted in some frustrations and conflicts.

Jason was the LOD for the 10th day of the course. Several group members were up and ready before others, and helped pack up boats using light from headlamps. The group was on the water by 6:15 a.m., and paddling with an amazing sunrise coming up
over the banks. The group made good time traveling to Shell Point where the vans were awaiting the groups return. There were a number of tasks that needed to be accomplished before the group could start the drive to the Smoky Mountains. Nate delegated tasks, but once the group gear was separated into piles most of the group tended to their personal gear, thus neglecting to take care of the group tasks of cleaning gear and loading the trailers.

The neglect of group tasks resulted in some conflict between individuals who assisted the instructor team with these group tasks and those who were concerned with personal tasks. There was also conflict with expectations and goals at the take-out. An example of this was when Melanie became upset at a comment Angie made. She was expressing her excitement to be out of the wilderness and back to civilization, while Melanie was trying to enjoy the last bit of the phase and this comment set her off.

Eventually all of the gear was loaded and the group was on the road heading for the mountains. The difference between, concern for the group versus concern for the individual on the last day is another illustration of the division in the group that formed due to differences in expectations and concern for the group among individuals in the group. Although the group knew the expectations and procedures for completing all of the delegated tasks, most participants disregarded them and dealt with personal tasks that they felt were more important. Once the group arrived at the take-out it did not function well especially in regards to the group tasks.
Summary of Results

Although the major group goal of completing the itinerary of paddling down the Core Banks for 40 miles was not achieved due to the course itinerary not accounting for strong head winds, large swells, non-sea worthy boats, and novice paddlers, encountered by the group the fifth, sixth and seventh days of the course leading to a reconfiguration of the itinerary and travel objectives, many other objectives were met during this phase of the course. The five leaders and the group gained valuable leadership and adventure programming experience that they can relate to and draw from in future leadership situations. The specific teaching topics that needed to be taught during this section of the course correlating to the 18-point curriculum were covered.

The group continued to develop even though there was a significant change in itinerary and group goals. Steve expressed his concern for the group’s development in regards to the itinerary change with the following statement, “I think if we would have ended up in Fred’s backyard it would have been a tipping point, not just for this phase, but for the entire trip.” The ramifications of spending two days camped out in a camp ground with cars driving by and a convenience store 30 feet away could have been detrimental to the development of the group. Expectations for the group were established and the group agreed on the set group goals. Although a large focus on individual goals remained at the conclusion of the sea kayaking phase, the group continued to strive to meet the expectations and goals established by the group for the remainder of the course.

The sub-groups went through a developmental process, and participants learned from these experiences. Most tent mates got along well and relationships were created
through these experiences. Cook-groups progressed and most individuals were pleased with the performance of their cook-group and the outcome of their meals. Relationships developed between paddle partners, even though they changed throughout the section. Cliques were still present, and appeared to have developed stronger bonds by the end of the sea kayaking section. It should be noted that there was more intermingling, or floating from one clique to another towards the end of the section. The strong divide between the expectations and goals of the two factions that developed within the group remained throughout the course.

Although the itinerary goal was not accomplished, all of the other learning outcomes were. The designated teaching topics for the phase were covered, and the group had ample experience utilizing the skills and knowledge, that they had acquired throughout the course. By learning from other leaders each participant was able to incorporate what they had learned and incorporate it into their leader of the day experience. The group had to work together and make important decisions while continuing to develop as a group. Although the group was separated into two smaller groups based on personal goals and expectations the group overcame a number of obstacles and challenges presented by situational factors, such as high head winds and minimal kayak experience.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was twofold. The first goal of the study was to determine the factors associated with the development process of a group participating in a WEA course taking place within an adventure programming context. The second goal of the study was to explore the extent to which Tuckman’s model of small group development (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) is an accurate representation of the group development process among small groups participating in wilderness expeditions.

The results section of this manuscript provided a detailed description of the group development process of this WEA course, both from a macro-perspective (i.e., in terms of the overall experience of the group in accomplishing the course goals) and from a micro-perspective (i.e., in terms of the interactions of participants in the various sub-groups that formed throughout the course experience—cook groups, tent groups, etc…).

The discussion will offer an interpretation of the data based on an inductive approach to data analysis. The researcher will discuss multiple themes pertaining to the process of group development that were identified through a thorough examination of the data. These themes include: group goals, roles, communication, and decision-making. The data will also be considered in light of Tuckman’s model of small group development (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).
Discussion

Analysis

The utilization of qualitative analysis resulted in the emergence of themes relating to the group development of the studied group within an adventure programming setting. The four emergent themes were goals, roles, communication, and decision-making. These themes are all components of group development theory that are commonly referenced in group development literature (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Rothwell, 2004; Wheelan, 2005).

The group goals established the group’s norms for the entirety of the course. A teaching topic on expedition behavior led to a discussion of personal expectations and goals, which aided in the development of group goals. The course goals and expectations were established by the instructor team and the itinerary. Wheelan (2005) described how goals are generally superficial during the first stage due to participant’s eagerness to be an accepted member of the group. In this study, the participant’s true motives and personal goals did not surface until the group encountered the major group conflict. Wheelan also explained that a group’s commitment towards group goals is increased after working through the conflict stage.

This was the case in this study; however, the group expectations remained differentiated between two factions of the group. This was due to the development of two sub-groups, which had discernibly different goals for the trip. Conflict between participants’ personal goals and goals of the group were the primary cause of the conflict. One subgroup’s personal goals either aligned more closely with the overall group goals,
or they suppressed their personal goals for the betterment of the group. The other sub-group however, was more focused on their personal goals and continued to place them above the goals of the group. This disagreement of group goals was a major factor that hindered the development of this group.

Wheelan (2005) described how the development of sub-groups is not always a negative aspect of the group’s development. Bennis and Shepard (1956) described how early in a group’s development that two subgroups will form in relation to the leader. One group remains loyal to the leader, while the other group challenges the leader. In the studied group’s case, the split was due to differing goals of the course, and disagreement with the instructor team’s expectations, and course goals. The debrief on day seven of the course, illustrates this situation in detail in the results section.

Another theme that emerged from the data was that of roles. The formal daily roles were pre-established by the instructors and the course design. At times it was observed that participants did not possess adequate skills required to perform the role. For example, on the sixth day of the course Sarah was assigned the role of smoother and was not a strong enough paddler to be concerned with interpersonal aspects of other group members. This mismatch of skills and roles had a negative impact on the performance of the group. This finding is similar to an argument presented by Wheelan (2005) who described, how an individual’s abilities and skills must match the task of the role, and that the performance of a group will suffer when role designations are inappropriate. On the other hand, the assignment of a role to a participant that required certain behaviors resulted in an increase of functioning of the group. For instance, one group member was
always in the front of the pack, or out in front of the group while paddling. One LOD assigned this participant the role of sweep which required him to stay at the back of the group. The designation of this role kept the group in closer proximity, and prevented the participant from paddling off on his own. Another participant later explained how they did not feel like they were a part of the group and that they were only a participant, due to a lack of assignment to a formal role during this phase.

Various roles independent of the designated formal roles developed among group members. Johnson and Johnson (2003), explained that individuals can fall into certain roles based on their interests and skills. Certain individuals had interests and skills that separated them from the rest of the group. These individuals were relied on from time to time to aid the group. One example of the use of informal roles was that one participant; Dan had a great depth of knowledge with fixing stoves. Anytime a cook group was having a stove issue they would call upon Dan for his expertise. Another group member was a birder and really enjoyed identifying the birds of the region and was willing to help others identify birds and other wildlife.

The communication amongst the group, the instructors, and LOD was also an important factor in the development of the group. Wheelan (2005) explained how communication is instrumental in the development of a group’s culture. Martin et al (2006) added to this notion by describing how communication in a wilderness group is instrumental in goal attainment, the decision-making process and conflict resolution.

Communication in relation to the leader played a large role in the development of the group. The quality of communication provided by the leader had a large impact on the
development of the group. Typically, an LOD who communicated well with the group resulted in a high functioning group that day. Once the communication began to break down the group tended to regress, and in many instances became frustrated and reverted back to a less functioning stage, developing a lack of concern for the group. The theme of communication expressed more often during Debriefs of days that were typically more difficult, which resulted in frustrations among group members. On the researcher’s LOD day, he received feedback that he communicated well with individuals while on the water which enhanced their comfort level. However, during this same Debrief, he was criticized for not communicating to the group before scouting and discussing options with his navigator, upon first arrival to the point.

Decision making was a critical element in the development of this group. Decision making is closely tied to communication, and both had an effect on one another. As discussed in the results, the major group decision arose because of group conflict. The major decision that resulted in the itinerary change, and group conflict, was made with minimal group discussion and rather hastily. Poole (1983), and Poole and Baldwin (1996), described how decision development is similar to the development of the group. These authors describe how the decision-making process is based on group interactions, and how these interactions effect decisions over time. The group decision-making process among this group became more efficient and effective over the course of the trip. Wheelan (2005) described how member satisfaction is increased if they are included in the decision making process. Members were typically included in all major decisions, one instance where they were not, resulted in some frustration and conflict.
The group decision to change the itinerary had major ramifications on the group’s development. Although all members participated in the decision, several members were not happy with the outcome and felt that the group had given up on the group’s goals. The group worked through the conflict and achieved some alternative goals, however moving the group from expedition mode to another setting hindered the group development process. The group regressed to more of an orientation and goal development stage.

The four emergent themes of group goals, roles, communication and group decision-making, along with the previously mentioned situational factors, (i.e. strong winds and novice paddlers) had the greatest impact on the group’s development. The development of the cliques also had an impact on the development of the group. These themes had both positive and negative impacts, and are consistent with commonly described factors associated with group development theories.

**Deductive Analysis**

The deductive analysis for this study, which utilized theoretical perspectives to analyze the results; used Tuckman’s (1965) and Tuckman and Jensen’s (1977) model of small group development as the framework. The deductive analysis verified that the group observed in this study developed, and went through observable stages of development. Participant observations and Debriefs indicated that the group went through the stages described in Tuckman’s model: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. However, the group did not move through the stages in a linear fashion, as described by the model.
The group started out in an orientation or forming stage. This stage was abbreviated in terms of the relational or interpersonal dimension, due to pre-existing relationships between group members. One participant described in their journal on the third day of the course, that they felt like the group had moved through the forming stage, and into the norming stage. The lack of deeper relationship development early in the course may have played a large role in the development of conflicts of interests surrounding expectations for the group, and individual and group goals of course participants. There were pre-conceived notions of many of the group members before the course even began. These notions played a large role in the development of cliques and the division of the group on the seventh day of the course.

When focusing on the relational dimension, the group spent minimal time in the forming stage, and initially skipped the storming stage. However, the developmental stage in which the group was in was dependent on the situation. On the surface, individuals were accepting of one another and willing to spend time together. Paddling partners typically communicated with each other throughout the days paddle, and cook groups discussed a variety of topics while preparing and eating meals. Tent mates spent time together in the tent talking before bed or while waiting out stormy weather.

Underneath the surface, cliques had formed, resulting in a rift within the group. Some individuals would only associate with other group members when forced by the need to accomplish a task. At times the group was in the performing stage of the relational dimension. By the end of the phase, members where willing to speak truthfully and give quality feedback during Debriefs. During the last three days of paddling, group
members were in a performing stage, in terms of the relational dimension, to ensure the successful completion of the task or group goal. However, storming occurred in the final Debrief and while packing up the last day, due to conflicts between members individual goals and expectations.

In terms of the task dimension, the group fluctuated between forming, norming storming, and performing depending on the task. The group started out in the forming stage, and relied heavily on the instructor team and LOD with all tasks. The fifth day most participants did not know how to trim their boat and relied on the expertise of the leader. This same day while paddling, the group became divided because they were worried solely about themselves and not the common goals of the group. Cook groups had a general idea of how to function, but norms had to be established and most groups relied heavily on the most skilled cook the first couple of days. Tent mates needed to develop relationships and establish expectations for the living arrangements for the next five days. The guidelines for Debriefs had to be established by the instructor team and some members were better at providing constructive criticism than others.

The observed group tended to fluctuate between developmental stages depending on the situation and task and did not exhibit the linear movement described by linear models such as Tuckman’s model. Attarian & Priest (2002), suggested that groups in an adventure programming context could skip stages or regress to a previous stage. They also suggest that some groups might experience multiple stages simultaneously. A participant described our group’s development, during the group development lesson taught by another course participant: “the group has several stages going, and that some
parts of the group were performing and others norming, I also feel that the group has
turned around from one stage to another.”

Martin, Cashel, Wagstaff, & Breunig (2006) in presenting the group development
process to outdoor leaders, explained how the process is circular and describe it as a
“spring.” The authors describe that individual stages can be circular and that a group can
go around in a circular process within the stage, or move on to the next stage. They also
present the idea that sub-groups can go through these same cycles. These ideas partially
explain the development of the observed group. Sub-groups developed independently of
the larger group. The developmental stage the sub-groups were in was dependent on the
task and situation. Preliminary analysis of the other phases of the course indicates that the
sub-groups development may have been cyclical, due to new sub-groups being assigned
for each section.

It was not always clear as to what stage the group was in during certain
confrontations and conflicts. Conflicts did not necessarily fit within the stage of storming,
and they would occur throughout the spectrum of stages. For example, during the final
Debrief of the sea kayaking phase the leader of the day was verbally attacked by two of
the participants. This made the rest of the group uncomfortable and created some conflict.
However, the group would have been classified in a norming stage approaching forming
based on Tuckman’s model.

Cassidy (2007), in her meta-analysis of group development models proposed the
removal of conflict as a stage due to many researchers placing the stage in different
locations and due to the variety of reasons for the conflict reported. The largest conflict
during this phase of the course occurred after the group had begun to norm, in both the task and relational dimensions. *Storming* was not observed among any of the tent partners. However, conflict or *storming* did occur among several of the cook groups. This stemmed from the lack of an individual to do their fair share of the work, or due to relational issues between members of the cook group. *Storming* was evident throughout the time spent paddling. The conflict did not always include the entire group, and often times it was only one or two individuals. For instance, on the sixth day of the trip everyone was paddling well and cooperating with the group except for Ryan. Due to faulty equipment his kayak continued to submerge which would result in him flipping. He was irate, and after the second time of emptying out his kayak in the middle of the cove, he took off paddling for shore leaving everyone else in the group behind.

Another component of the group development process that was difficult to place within the framework of Tuckman’s model was group decision-making. Group decision-making is an important aspect of a group’s development, especially when the group is rotating leadership on a daily basis. During this course several of the decisions that were made resulted in conflict or *storming* within the group. Tuckman (1965) described in terms of task activity development the emergence of solutions, which are “constructive attempts at successful task completion” (p. 387), but does not specifically address the notion of decision-making within the developmental process. Thus, determining the developmental stage of a group based on their decision-making ability, when placed within the framework of Tuckman’s model, was very difficult and unsuccessful at times.
Although the group exhibited all of the stages described in Tuckman’s (1965) model, the group did not progress through the stages in a uniformed and linear fashion. Another limitation of Tuckman’s model was that it did not account for a number of factors that influenced the development of this WEA group. Tuckman’s model neglects to explain the potential development of sub-groups within the main group, and what that development process is for the sub-groups. The model does not explain how the group, or how individuals of the group can be in multiple stages at the same time. Tuckman’s model does not describe the regression of a group to a previous stage as observed in this study, or describe the impact of the group decision-making process on the development of a group. Lastly, group conflicts did not always correlate to the group being in the storming stage, and the storming stage came later in the development of this group.

Most of the previously mentioned factors and issues related to the development of groups are presented in adventure programming literature. Attarian and Priest (2002) described how groups in wilderness contexts can skip stages, or regress from stages, and that some groups may display multiple stages consecutively around a variety of group issues. Drury, Bonney, Berman and Wagstaff (2005), while explaining the final stage of Tuckman’s model, described how a group may transition to a forming stage as an adaptation to new changes, i.e. a new leader arrives, or a new phase starts. Martin et al. (2006) described how wilderness groups often times will develop sub-groups, and these sub-groups will also go through a development process. Cassidy (2007) discovered that the reason for and location of the conflict or storming stages, varied from study to study.
These are ideas established by professionals in the field of adventure programming that do not have research to validate them. Two of the many theories evaluated describe the developmental process of the group from this study more accurately than commonly referenced model developed by Tuckman.

A model that has previously been used to study group development within adventure programming contexts (Ewert & Heywood, 1991; Kerr & Gass, 1987) is Jones model of group development (Jones & Bearley, 1994). Jones model is used to describe the group development process, in a commonly referenced book in the field of adventure programming written by Drury et al. (2005). This model described the development process in terms of task and process behaviors of each stage. It described similar stages as Tuckman’s model, but it also included problem-solving and decision-making. This model could be described as a linear model, which also describes how groups can regress or skip stages. It however, does not account for the splitting of a group and the developmental process of sub-groups, or conflict existing throughout the development of the group.

A more recent group development theory developed by Wheelan (2005) used an integrative approach to describe the group development process. She described that the integrated model, is basically a life cycle model that incorporates aspects of sequential, cyclical, life cycle, equilibrium, and nonsequential models. This model answers the call of DeGraff and Ashby (1996) and McAvoy, Mitten, Stringer, Steckart, & Sproles, (1996), providing a model that moves beyond the traditional linear model and has the potential to describe groups in adventure programming contexts.
This integrative model described the group development process of the studied group. The integrative model used five stages to describe the group development process. This theory explained how groups may progress through stages, but then regress if warranted. This explains the observed fluctuation between stages in this study. The model also explained that small phases within a stage can occur and that other processes may occur “within and across stages” (Wheelan, 2005, p. 15). Wheelan also described how, “Confusion between macro-level stages of group development and phases that occur within and across stages may also account for some of the differences among models” (p. 15). Tuckman’s (1965) model does not distinguish between the macro and micro stage development, which was an observed characteristic of this study.

The integrative theory is similar to Tuckman’s in that a conflict stage is the second stage of the model. The major difference is that in the integrative model the stages do not necessarily occur sequentially, and conflict will occur throughout the life of the group. In this study the conflict stage came after the group had begun to develop norms and establish group goals, while small conflicts were present throughout the course. The integrative model describes how splits and coalitions can form during the conflict stage, and that the development of these sub-groups is not always a negative aspect. This notion explains the development of cliques within the group studied. The tent and cook group sub-groups were established by the instructor team, however the social sub-groups or cliques, developed independently of the assigned sub-groups. The integrative model also explained how sub-groups may remain throughout the life of the group, and how during the work stage the development of sub-groups may be necessary to complete the task.
This integrative model included a work stage where the group is exhibiting high performance and effective work, and that work occurs throughout the stages. Jensen (1979) in her application of small group theory to adventure programs, described how the third and final stage, is a work stage. Other theories that have been used in the adventure programming setting did not include a stage entitled work. Wheelan (2005) described how a work phase is often times absent from investigations of experiential learning groups. She explained that work occurs but, “it may be difficult for the researchers to define work of the group since it frequently deals with relational issues” (p. 14). This stage also includes group decision-making and problem-solving in the framework.

Similar to Tuckman’s (1965) model, the integrative model included a termination stage. However, the integrative model explained that the group may regress to previous stages once they have reached the end of the group’s life. This was observed at the take-out for the sea kayaking phase. Most group members reverted back to an individualistic perspective, or an orientation stage, when it came time to deal with group tasks at the take out.

The integrative model of small group development, developed by Wheelan (2005), described the development of the studied group or case. The model accounted for the themes that emerged through the inductive analysis of the data, and was able to accurately explain the observed factors, that both fostered, and hindered, the development of the studied group. Preliminary analysis of the other two phases of this course suggests that the integrated model may explain the development of the group throughout those later phases of the course.
Professionals in the field of adventure programming may want to include the integrative model of group development in their backpack of group development models. It is not as catchy, and as easy to spout off as Tuckman’s model, however, it may provide a more accurate description of the development of groups in a wilderness setting.

Limitations

Ewert (2000), in his state-of-knowledge paper presented some challenges or limitations that researchers could face while conducting research on wilderness groups. One challenge is that of being non-intrusive to the group. I was a participant observer, whom fully participated in all aspects of the course. The data collection methods are components of all WEA courses, participants are required to keep a journal and participate in daily debriefs. I was minimally intrusive during the course.

Issues surrounding being a participant observer are the next challenge reported. Ewert (2000) described that the integration of the researcher should not be so distinct, as to influence the development and dynamics of the group. I was a full participant who was designated formal roles, and aided in the accomplishment of group goals. I was distinguishable, but did not perform tasks outside of the ordinary duties of the group. One participant explained that they had forgotten that research was being conducted as the course came to a conclusion. A similar related issue is that of pleasing the instructor team and researcher. This may have occurred during the initial journal entries and Debriefs, but due to the length of the study should have phased out.

Another limitation to this study was that most participants had pre-existing relationships prior to the course. This is not usually the case with most adventure
programming courses. On a similar note most courses outside of the WEA do not utilize the leader of the day method throughout the course. The alternating of leaders on a daily basis may have been a limiting factor on the collected data.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to identify key factors in the development of a group in an adventure programming setting, and to determine the effectiveness of Tuckman’s model in describing the development of the group in this study. The four themes of goals, roles, communication and decision-making had a big impact on the development of the group.

The situational factors of weather, skill level, task groups (i.e. cook groups), and equipment also had an influence on the development of the group. It is important to understand how these factors influence the group. In regards to outdoor leaders and students learning about the group development process within an adventure programming context it may be important to address these factors.

The development of cliques and coalitions should receive more investigation within an adventure programming context. The claim that cliques should not form in the OB process context due to the small number of people in the group by Walsh and Gollins (1976) was not supported. The formation of cliques and coalitions provided evidence to suggest that there statement is not always the case. The idea that the two coalitions developed at different rates and achieved different levels of functioning should also receive further investigation.
The integrative model of group development (Wheelan, 2005) was identified in this study as a model which accurately described the development of the group in this study. This model could be useful to adventure programs in that it may provide a better description of the group process and allow for stronger leadership based on the development. It may also enable a leader to better understand how and why the group is functioning and provide ways to potentially improve the functioning of the group. However, the integrative model needs to be tested among a variety of wilderness groups in order to determine its relevance, and appropriateness in the field of adventure programming.

More qualitative research should be conducted within the field of adventure programming specifically studying the group development process. The field has gained notoriety in its ability to promote the development of a group, however the field does not have a tried and proven model to describe the development process or how and why the social environment produces positive outcomes. Factors related to the group development of the various types of groups (i.e. challenge course groups, Outward Bound groups, NOLS groups, and other outdoor leadership training groups) need to be studied using qualitative methodologies. This is necessary in order to answer the calls of professionals in the field (McKenzie, 2000; Sibthorp, 2003) for empirical evidence explaining the factors that produce outcomes in the social environment of adventure programs.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT JOURNAL PROMPTS

The Expedition Journal Continued

Questions to Consider When Writing Your Journal Entries (Cont’d)

1. Please describe in detail where you feel the group is in terms of the group development process. What behaviors have been exhibited to help determine where the group is developmentally?

2. Is the group functioning at the appropriate level at this point of the course? Please explain.

3. What implications does the group’s current level of development have on the attainment of group goals? Please explain.

4. What is your relationship to the group at this point and what was your role within the group today?

5. Describe any conflict that you have been involved in or witnessed. Was it resolved? How?
6. Describe if/how conflict has affected the group development process.

7. What will help/allow the group to continue to develop and function more effectively?
APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL FORMS

Ohio University Office of the Vice President for Research

The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

7

Project Title: Qualitative Examination of the Group Development Process within a Wilderness Expedition Context

Researcher(s): Levi Dexel

Faculty Advisor (if applicable): Bruce Martin

Department: Recreation and Sport Sciences

Jeff Vancouver, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

[Signature]

Approval Date 6/9/08
Expiration Date 6/8/09

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.