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**THE EXPERIENCE OF USING REFLECTIVE JOURNALS  
ON AN OUTWARD BOUND COURSE**

A Dissertation in

Adult Education

by

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## Abstract

The writing literature specifies that cognitive mechanisms are used both in learning to write and also in writing to learn. Numerous studies have documented the positive effects on learning that occur through writing and perpetuating these learnings in the reflective journal. Journals assist in various modes of communication and when used to critically reflect have been instrumental in a variety of learning settings. Reflective journaling research, in the fields of outdoor and adult education is scarce, but when combined with other data mechanisms assist in consciousness-raising and expression. What is notably lacking in the research is how learners actually experience reflective journaling while engaged in their learning.

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological and heuristic study during a North Carolina Outward Bound course was to: 1) explore the lived experience of participants' personal development through their reflective journals, and 2) explore the lived experience of participants' social development through their reflective journals. Seven participants, including the researcher, answered daily questions in their reflective journals. In addition, the researcher used interviews, observations and daily evening debriefings as strategies to explore the phenomena of the lived experiences of using reflective journals on their Outward Bound course. The data was further triangulated through a follow-up final position statement and through member-checking. Findings of this study indicated that the participants' experience of reflective journaling was essential in their learning and Outward Bound experience.

In particular, four themes emerged from the reflective journal analysis: 1) introspection, 2) crew cohesiveness, 3) reactions to journaling, and 4) phenomenon of reflective journaling. The reflective journaling experience led participants to express their feelings and become cognizant of personal and social consciousness related to increased levels of humbleness,

awarenesses of satisfaction and appreciation, inhibitive self-imposed limits, determination, self-belief and confidence. All participants developed an acceptance and appreciation of the reflective journal and affirmed that their Outward Bound experience was more meaningful because of the journaling experience. Based on these findings, a discussion focusing on implications for theory and practice is presented.

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This doctoral journey exploring the experience of the reflective journal really began with my involvement with North Carolina Outward Bound and one dynamic and transformative experience with the school. It was July 1991 and I was on a thirty day instructor development course. We were rock climbing a multi-pitch route on Table Rock Mountain and during this climb it became clearer of what Outward Bound meant to me. The climb did push my physical limits, but more importantly the climb was a vehicle of getting to those inner qualities of self-awareness, purpose, understanding and meaning. Upon “topping out” and sitting on the summit, I noticed the impressive and engaging scenery of the Blue Ridge Mountains that lay before me and thinking “This is *why* I do Outward Bound and want to instruct others to share this experience.” I took out my reflective journal and began journaling about all my feelings while climbing because I wanted to capture and process what I was feeling, as well as remember and preserve those memories.

Jump ahead to late August, 2004 and I was attending the first “intensive weekend” for the 2004 Adult Education Doctoral Cohort at Penn State Harrisburg. Drs. Ed Taylor and Libby Tisdell were presenting the foundations of the program to us and made the insightful suggestion to find a topic in which to research and write about that, 1) you are truly passionate about and, 2) will further adult education. Without hesitation I immediately thought to myself how passionate I was about the Outward Bound experience for my participants and how the reflective journal is little known and realized yet is a significant part of Outward Bound.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

This chapter provides an overview of a research study focused on the learning experiences on a North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) course. The project investigates how participants and the author learned about their experience through reflective journaling on a NCOB course. To establish an understanding of what Outward Bound is, this chapter includes a historical account of Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound as well as North Carolina Outward Bound. In addition, the chapter contains the purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, sources, heuristic inquiry as a research methodology, definitions, assumptions and limitations of the study.

### A Different School

Outward Bound is an educational process dedicated to the principle that individuals, when engaged by adversity and drawn into shared experiences of adventure and service, enhance their self-respect and concern for others (North Carolina Outward Bound Instructor's Handbook, 2004). The largest and oldest adventure-based educational institution in the world, Outward Bound is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. It is best known for its ability to build participants' self-confidence, self-reliance, compassion for others, responsibility to the community, sensitivity to the environment and development of leadership skills (Isaac & Goth, 1991).

Named after the nautical term "outward bound," which is used to describe the journey of a ship departing its home port and heading out to the adventures and challenges of the open sea,

the school courses focus around such activities as land and sea expeditions, rescue training, and service to the community. School and course areas extend as far away as Borneo, an island in Southeast Asia and involve 47 schools in 42 countries.

### *Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound*

Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, was born in Berlin, Germany in 1886 and was the son of a wealthy Jewish industrialist. Hahn read and studied the works of philosophers and educationalists (e.g. Plato, Baden Powell, Cecil Reddie) while he attended schools in Oxford, Heidelberg, Berlin, Freiberg and Göttingen. In 1920, Hahn in concert with Prince Max Von Baden opened the Schloss Salem School where Hahn incorporated into his own educational philosophy what he considered to be the best of Plato's philosophies, humanistic educational traditions and works of German and English educationalists Lietz and Reddie (Hogan, 1968; NCOBS Instructor's Handbook, 2006). It was Hahn's belief that every child is born with innate spiritual powers and has the ability to make proper judgements about morally and ethically-driven issues. Furthermore, it is during adolescence that the child loses those spiritual powers and abilities because of what Hahn called the diseased society and the impulses of adolescence. Hahn (Zelinski, 2002) termed these as social distresses and described them as:

- The decline of fitness due to the modern methods of locomotion.
- The decline of initiative and enterprise due to the widespread disease of spectatoritis.
- The decline of memory and imagination due to the confused restlessness of modern life.
- The decline of skill and care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship.
- The decline of self-discipline due to the ever-present use of stimulants and tranquilizers.
- The decline of compassion due to the unseemly haste with which modern life takes place.

In addition to the teachings, awarenesses and prevention of these qualities most compromised by society, Hahn placed emphasis on non-competitive physical activities and democratic forms of social cooperation and community service. He believed that education should include opportunities for both failure and success. Hahn regarded failure as an important part of learning how to overcome setbacks, which he believed boosted one's self-confidence. He also maintained that effective learning situations involved both directed activities and time for reflection. To assist students balance their mental and physical growth, Hahn introduced a training plan which was specifically directed towards increasing levels of physical challenge and personal hygiene and focused on promoting healthy living as opposed to competitive performance (NCOBS Instructor's Handbook, 2006; Zelinski, 2002).

It was nearly a score of years after Hahn's Schloss Salem School opened that in 1938 that Dewey published his masterpiece entitled *Experience and Education* that has strikingly similar educational attributes to those that Hahn had instituted into his pedagogy at Schloss Salem School and eventually beyond. Dewey (1938) writes that traditional education does not address the wider world. That the usual school system and environment of blackboards, desks and a small school yard had to be greatly expanded upon to include "the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc. in order to utilize them as educational resources" and "A system of education with experience must take these things constantly into account" (p.36).

Additionally, Dewey (1938), on reflection, writes as a critical component of experience and education, that "keeping track of ideas, activities, and observed consequences...to reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization

and of the disciplined mind” (p.110). Hahn involved his Schloss Salem School students in the community and used experiential challenges beyond the traditional realm of educational practices. Dewey (1938) calls for the same. Is this happenstance or something else? Did Dewey (1938) have any knowledge of Hahn’s methodology and was he at all influenced by Hahn’s practices as Hahn was influenced by the teachings of Plato and Reddie?

It was at the Schloss Salem School in the 1930’s that Hahn spoke out against Hitler and Nazism and asked his students, both active and alumni to choose between the practices at Salem or Nazism. The specific event that provoked Hahn happened in 1932 when five storm troopers trampled to death a young Communist – in public, and in front of his mother. Hitler hailed the young storm troopers as comrades, which in turn prompted Hahn releasing a letter to all Salem alumni denouncing the act:

“Hitler’s telegram has brought on a crisis that goes beyond politics. Germany is at stake, her Christian civilization, her good name, her soldiers’ honor. Salem cannot remain neutral. I ask the Salem Union who are active in a S.A. or S.S. to break with Salem or with Hitler” (Miner & Boldt, 1981, p.30).

Hahn’s passionate and continued outspoken opposition to the current political climate resulted in his imprisonment in 1933; however, due to having gained support of friends and allies through his earlier educational influences in the European region, Hitler released Hahn after five days of imprisonment and forced Hahn to leave Germany (NCOB Instructor’s Handbook, 2006; Zelinski, 2002).

Hahn emigrated from Germany to England and where with the assistance of his friends Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton and the Cumming family founded a school at Gordonstoun. Gordonstoun was established with the same curricula and foundational processes to that of the

Schloss Salem School and it was here that Hahn hired a retired educator, Jim Hogan, to assist with the educational processes at Gordonstoun. It was here at Gordonstoun that the four key elements were established for a student to receive the County Badge – which became an integral part of Outward Bound (now, a pin, instead of a badge, is presented to an Outward Bound graduating participant) – and are referred to as the “Four Pillars”. These pillars are: 1) *physical fitness*; an expedition that provides challenge and adventure, 2) a project that involves and develops *self-reliance* and self-discipline, 3) *craftsmanship*, or quality both in skills and behavior, and 4) above all, a sense of *compassion* through service (Zelinski, 2002). However, with the eruption of World War II and the British Army commandeering the school at Gordonstoun, Hahn and Hogan moved their school to Wales, which was a significantly safer place at the time. Hahn rented buildings to house the school’s academic programs and a house on an estuary for its sailing program to continue incorporating adventure into the school’s curriculum. Hahn never advocated adventure as an end in itself, but rather as a vehicle through which the participant would learn more about themselves, about one’s possibilities and capabilities (Miner & Boldt, 1981; NCOBS Instructor’s Handbook, 1982). This is similar to what Boud & Walker (1991) classify as the milieu that constitutes a particular learning experience. A learner informs the milieu, enhancing it with their contribution and creating an interaction which “becomes the individual as well as the shared learning experience” (p.18). The experience of an adventure activity (e.g. Hahn’s sailing component) – the milieu – not only influences the participant, but also others that are engaged in the activity as well. The inclusion of authentic adventure experiences along with time for reflection afforded Hahn’s students the full learning potential of the activity and provided “greater opportunities for a more fruitful learning experience” (p.19).



With the continued escalation of World War II, enrollment and funding for Hahn's school dwindled. A serendipitous connection both saved Hahn's school and provided the framework of Outward Bound. One of Hahn's students was the son of Lawrence Holt – a partner in the Blue Funnel Line and an advocate of Hahn's work. Holt's Blue Funnel Line, a shipping company, transported goods across the North Atlantic and his ships became a prime target for German U-boats patrolling the area. A daunting concern to Holt was how his sailors, especially the younger ones were faring while awaiting rescue. The younger sailors were accustomed only to work in big ships, where the ship's motion was comparatively slight, the quarters reasonably comfortable, and the work often not actively concerned with real seafaring. The sailors were good crewmen but were not always seamen, "and they hadn't an idea how to look after themselves or anybody else when they were cast adrift in a small boat on the North Atlantic, or anywhere else" (Villiers, 1953, p.13).

While thrust into their life boats due to German U-boat torpedoing, the Blue Funnel Line's younger sailors were succumbing to the elements and rigors of the North Atlantic, whereas the older, more experienced 'salts' survived long enough until rescue arrived. In essence, Holt realized that youth, skill and technical training was no match for lived, authentic experience (Hahn, 1957). This questioning and reflecting that Holt was experiencing is what Brookfield (2005) references as a tradition in shaping how criticality is thought of and spoken about analytically and logically. Brookfield explains that when criticality is used analytically and logically, one becomes more skillful in arguing their dilemma. Holt recognized the criticality and disparity between his young, technically trained and more physically fit sailors failing to measure up to the lived experiences of the 'old salts' when thrust into their life boats, awaiting rescue and exposed to the harshness of the North Atlantic. Hence, Holt realized his

own logical fallacies, distinguished between bias and fact as well as opinion and evidence and became critical to the training practices and pedagogy at the Blue Funnel Line.

Contemplating this dilemma, Lawrence Holt queried Kurt Hahn for a solution. Kurt Hahn suggested that Holts' younger sailors needed to gain life skills, which included cooperation, adversity training and a sense of compassion and went on to develop a training program modeled after the Gordonstoun 28-day badge course for the Blue Funnel Line. Holt agreed with Hahn's approach and as a condition for purchasing the school's property at Aberdovey (and saving Hahn's school from financial collapse) as a base for the training program and providing the ships needed insisted that there should be reserved on each course places for the Merchant Service apprentices. Holt had often deplored the lack of sea sense so noticeable in seamen only trained in steam or motor powered ships and "would rather entrust a lifeboat which had to be lowered in Mid-Atlantic to a sail-trained octogenarian than to a young Sea Technician who, while competently trained in the modern way, had never been sprayed by salt water" (Hahn, 1957, p.10). Practical training in sea conditions was to become an important part of Hahn's program.

Hahn (1957), on writing about Lawrence Holt's notion that "in a democracy you can only compel by example" (p.10) resulted in Hahn developing curricula involving students sailing in small boats and on the Gordonstoun schooner *Prince Louis*. Additionally, and in a nautical sense, Holt coined the term 'outward bound' for Hahn's school. Holt chose the name from the letter "P" or "Blue Peter" nautical flag. This blue flag with a white square center is the flag that seaman fly on the start of a journey across the Atlantic or other waters which communicates the ship is outward bound. In turn, Hahn and others at the school modified a line from Alfred Tennyson's epic poem *Ulysses* to serve as the school's motto. The motto 'To serve, to strive and

not to yield' was devised in 1941 and remains the motto of Outward Bound today (Zelinski, 2002).

Outward Bound's early students came from the Blue Funnel Line, as well as other shipping companies, however industry apprentices, boys on leave or finishing school as well as entering the military began applying to Hahn's Outward Bound School in Aberdovey, Wales. After WWII, the need was no longer required to train sailors and boys for the military, thus Hahn's Outward Bound approach responded by running open enrollment courses based on personal development objectives (NCOB Instructor's Handbook, 2006).

At first, course enrollment was thin, however, the success of the early courses bred new interest, and is what Cranton (2006) suggests is a popular application related to adult learning – “practical and experiential in nature” (p.4). Cranton writes that adults choose to become involved personally in their learning - whether it is formal or informal in nature, because they “want to develop personally, or as a response to a professional or practical need” (p.3). Hahn's approach with evolving Outward Bound to include *all* interested people, and not just military and marine-bound participants, was grounded in his ideology of personal development needs, that his principles and the “Four Pillars” apply to all people, and as Villiers (1953) writes, people “were all welcome” (p.13) to attend his school. Similarly to this ideology, Laurence Holt was passionate that “the training at Aberdovey must be less a training *for* the sea, than a training *through* the sea and benefit all walks of life” (Hahn, 1957, p.10).

Numerous interested friends, colleagues and alumni extended Hahn's work beyond Aberdovey and Outward Bound began to flourish worldwide. The 1950's proved to be the decade of Outward Bound expansion. Two mountain schools were established in England and two other United Kingdom centers were established in Scotland and Devon. Josh Miner, who

was to become the father of Outward Bound in the United States and witnessed Hahn's work firsthand, was responsible for opening Outward Bound schools on four continents and the 1960's involved Outward Bound schools opening in The Netherlands, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Colorado, Minnesota, Maine and North Carolina. The pace and growth of Outward Bound countries continued through the 1970's, 80's and 90's to the point that thirteen new countries received licenses to operate schools (Zelinski, 2002).

The Outward Bound philosophy and phenomenological characteristics that continues to challenge, change and educate despite the course areas and locations have survived for over sixty years. Ian Fothergill, Director of the Outward Bound Trust in the United Kingdom comments (as cited in Zelinski, 1991):

“The growth of Outward Bound throughout the world has been phenomenal. Equally phenomenal is its amazing commonality of language. Despite course differences necessitated by social, geographical, and climatic variables, the organization's tradition remains concerned with communal support, a bombardment of challenge, making people know that there is more in them than they previously believed, that group effort can be harnessed for the ultimate good of the individual, that everyone can learn and grow. The influence of Outward Bound, too, has been very significant and has extended far beyond the movement itself. Thus, a far greater mission than perhaps even Kurt Hahn could have envisioned has been fulfilled” (p.13).

#### *The North Carolina Outward Bound School*

In the spring of 1964, an article that caught the attention of North Carolinian G. Watts Hill, Jr. appeared in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. The article profiled the efforts of Kurt Hahn educated and influenced Joshua L. Miner III establishment of Outward Bound schools in the United States. Already, two schools were operating in Colorado and Minnesota and a third was nearing completion in Maine. Hill was the chairman of the North Carolina Board of Higher Education and was so illuminated by Outward Bound pedagogy and its possibilities for inclusion in North Carolina that he forwarded the article to George H. Esser, Jr. who was the executive

director of The North Carolina Fund for possible funding (established in 1963 by NC Gov. Sanford, supported by The Ford Foundation, The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation to fund new projects aimed at the alleviation of poverty). The Board of Directors of The North Carolina Fund initially opposed the project on the grounds that Outward Bound served youth from all walks of life rather than focusing on the poverty-stricken only. However, The North Carolina Fund Board of Directors “observed that Outward Bound did address a fundamental aspect of poverty – a poverty of the spirit” (NCOB Instructor’s Handbook, p.8, 2006) and for this reason the Board funded initial salaries and expenditures to assemble a core group of interested people to begin making an Outward Bound school in North Carolina a reality.

By early 1966, preparations for an Outward Bound school in North Carolina were underway and suitable locations for a site were being sought. Instrumental people at this time and their tireless efforts were Marjorie Buckley, Jack Mansfield and Richard Borden. Originally the Outer Banks region was considered to be used as a seafaring school; however the group chose the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area in the Pisgah National Forest located in southwest North Carolina. A “Special Use Permit” to house a base camp near the Table Rock area was granted through the U.S. Forest Service and in turn, North Carolina Outward Bound staff and students would provide service for lost and injured hikers, stricken climbers and forest fire situations similar to how Kurt Hahn’s Gordonstoun students provided service to stricken ships and crew off the Scottish coastline. Representatives from the new school made application as a nonprofit educational institution, and Outward Bound, Inc. granted North Carolina Outward Bound its charter (Instructor’s Field Manual, NCOB, 1983; Meyer, D & D, 1974).

The first crew of North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) students arrived on July 2, 1967 and while the first courses were designed for adolescent boys, courses for girls, inner city youth, educators, college students, adults, business managers and special populations (e.g. Vietnam Vets, Cancer Survivors) were eventually added. As its numbers of students and programs grew through the 1980's and 1990's, NCOB opened two more mountain base camps in North Carolina – Cedar Rock and Green Cove and opened bases on the Outer Banks as well as in south Florida and Chile. NCOB also coordinates courses in Atlanta, GA as well as in Mexico, Costa Rica and Peru (NCOB Instructor's Handbook, 2006).

As the times changed, so has the North Carolina Outward Bound's programmability. The School evolved into a more sophisticated organization involving supporting institutions and universities, refining curriculum, monitoring and evaluating course outcomes and developing a large, well-trained team of field, support and administrative staff. More than 50,000 students have experienced North Carolina Outward Bound since it opened in 1967 (E. Sommer, personal communication, September 17, 2007). What signifies its successes are the pedagogical influences that Kurt Hahn has instilled. At minimum, they are the "Four Pillars" of Outward Bound. NCOB participants are made aware of Kurt Hahn and the Four Pillars and are asked to sincerely apply them during their course: a desire to improve one's fitness, embarking on expeditions that promote craftsmanship and self-reliance, while always incorporating compassion and service to the environment, humanity and to one's crew.

The impetus behind providing the historical accounts of Kurt Hahn, Outward Bound and North Carolina Outward Bound to this study is to establish an understanding and reasoning for using reflective journals to enhance North Carolina Outward Bound participant experience. Outward Bound schools use adventure activities as vehicles for personal awareness and

development. Reflective journaling on Outward Bound courses can assist this process. Phipps (1988) remarks that the use of a journal on expedition-style courses (e.g. Outward Bound) can be beneficial and assist the participant in reflecting, interpreting, forming abstract concepts, and developing new personal insights which can assist when processing meaning from new experiences. This study will explore the experiences and offer insight of reflective journals that aid the North Carolina Outward Bound participant in their own learning and personal growth.

### Outward Bound Course Characteristics and Reflective Journaling

Wilderness settings are primarily used in Outward Bound courses. It is here, in the wilderness, that adults and young people are exposed to challenging activities (e.g. rock climbing, white-water canoeing, orienteering, backpack expeditioning) and it is through these activities that the participants' ability to know more about themselves occurs and realize, too, that many of their preconceived limits are self imposed (Isaac & Goth, 1991). A "strikingly common denominator of adventure programs is that they involve doing physically active things away from the person's normal environment" (Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997, p. 44). NCOB courses are conducted in wilderness areas and for many participants the wilderness is an unfamiliar setting that challenges them both mentally and physically. This type of environment "minimizes individual differences in background and experience and requires group members to work cooperatively to face the challenges inherent in our programs" (NCOB Instructor's Handbook, p. 23, 2006). By doing so, participants are detached from usual, comfortable settings and are afforded the opportunity to engage holistically into a learning environment without the possibility to retreat to self-perceived physical, mental and emotionally safe environs.

The common environmental features and characteristics of adventure programs, like Outward Bound, are (a) wilderness or backcountry environment; (b) a small crew or group

(usually  $\leq 14$ ); (c) assignment of a variety of mentally and/or physically challenging objectives, such as negotiating a series of river rapids in a canoe, backpacking to a specific destination, problem-solving elements on a ropes course; (d) frequent and intense interactions that usually involve group problem-solving and decision making; (e) non-intrusive, trained instructors; and (f) a duration of a few days to several months (Hattie et al., 1997). NCOB course areas are widely known for their natural beauty and rigor and vary dramatically – from the mountains of western North Carolina to the fjords and snow-capped volcanoes of Chile.

Remarkable and memorable experiences occur on Outward Bound courses. Experiences like negotiating a series of Class 3 rapids in a canoe on the Chattooga River, GA, topping out on a multi-pitch climb on Cedar Rock Mountain, NC or successfully problem-solving elements of a high ropes course are usually once-in-a lifetime occurrences for most Outward Bound students. The ability for participants to make meaning from their experiences or, stated another way, to learn from their experiences requires reflection and this reflective process can significantly be enhanced through the use of a journal (Sugarman, Doherty, Garvey & Gass, 2000). Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) stress the importance of enhancing the learning by strengthening the connection between the learning experience and the reflective activity which follows it and that this connection “can be formed by incorporating into learning activities a specific allocation of time which can be used for reflection” (p.26). To make meaning and facilitate these types of experiences North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) issues a paperback journal to every participant as part of their personal gear issue on the first day of their course.

The North Carolina Outward Bound Instructor Handbook (2006) contains a journal writing section which outlines the objectives and utilization of the participant journal. Educational objectives for journaling outlined in the NCOB handbook are: “a) to provide



students with an opportunity to collect, focus and record their thoughts; b) to enable students to create a personal account of their Outward Bound experience, and to facilitate reflection well beyond the course; and c) to contribute to the ‘End of Course Impression Statement’” (p. 128). Other aspects in the handbook are for instructors to utilize crew journals, discuss different methods of journaling (e.g. prose, poetry, illustrations) and provide time for and encourage journal entries. Also, instructors are to respect the privacy of student journals, but are to encourage students to share their entries if desired and appropriate (e.g. evening reading, solo).

What is already known through the available literature is that participants who take journal notes, meditate, and write essays about their experiences in the outdoors have a growing understanding of their own abilities and values (Moon, 1999). The most growth occurs when participants discuss their feelings about what they accomplished, record and reflect in a journal responses to their experience, meditate on the experience, and finally, reform those feelings into a personal narrative (Bennion & Olsen, 2002).

How the literature relates to this project of reflective journaling in an Outward Bound course context is that when used and facilitated correctly, journals provide an avenue for reflecting on experience that is different from speaking (Hughes & Kooy, 1997; Kerka, 1996; McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996). The literature also indicates that journals assist the thought process, bring meaning to the experience and can be a wonderful medium for expression (Cole, 1994; Hettich, 1990). Additionally, the literature specifies that participant experiences while on an expedition-style course (e.g. Outward Bound) can be made more meaningful and enhanced through reflective journaling (Bennion & Olsen, 2002; Phipps, 1988). What will also be included in this study is how the effective use and implementation of the journal while engaging in an Outward Bound course can reinforce this practice of reflective journaling.

This research contributes to adult education because it examines the learning experiences of adults within the outdoor classroom, where learning is frequently unrehearsed, unexpected and full of stimuli, both desired and not desired. Participants decide what to make of these experiences, and their comfort zone is stretched, forcing them to make meaning out of the experiences (Taniguchi & Freeman, 2004). When reflection time is scheduled in these experiences, whether through debriefing periods or by allowing time for keeping a diary or journal, a participant and/or the crew is afforded the opportunity to enhance the overall learning of the activity or event (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of the reflective journal while being used on a North Carolina Outward Bound course. Journals are used at North Carolina Outward Bound, however very little is known just how useful the journal really is on making meaning or enhancing the wilderness and adventure experience for the Outward Bound participant.

Wilderness and adventure settings are primarily used in Outward Bound courses and it is through these activities and experiences (e.g. rock climbing, white-water canoeing) that the Outward Bound participants' ability to know more about themselves is realized. Additionally, many participants realize that through adventure activities that they possess preconceived limits about their ability (e.g. "There's no way I'll ever climb that!"); and that those preconceived limits are often self imposed, but can be revealed, challenged and enhanced when they reflect on the experience (Isaac & Goth, 1991, Sugarman, Doherty, Garvey & Gass, 2000). North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) courses and activities are conducted in wilderness areas and for many participants the wilderness is an unfamiliar setting through which remarkable and memorable

experiences occur. This wilderness context and the unexpected and unknown experiences that take place provide a rich environment for reflection on experience as experiences unfold for the Outward Bound participant. Additionally, this study involves the researcher as a heuristic inquirer of the studied phenomenon of reflective journaling.

Heuristic inquiry involves the researcher seeking to solve a personal challenge or question that is significant in some way to the researcher. Furthermore, the heuristic researcher is included and present in the study process and while experiencing the phenomenon under study gains personal growth and understanding (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological heuristic inquiry research method is being employed because of the researcher having experience as a participant on a North Carolina Outward Bound School course that journaled in a reflective manner without prompting or guidance from the instructors.

The researcher understands that the ability for participants to make meaning from their experiences or, stated another way, to learn from their experiences requires reflection and this reflective process can significantly be enhanced through the use of a journal (Sugarman et al., 2000). As stated prior, to make meaning and facilitate these types of experiences, journals are used at NCOB. However, little is known at NCOB in how reflective journals are used in enhancing the experience of the participant. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the participants and my experience of using reflective journaling on a North Carolina Outward Bound course.

### Research Questions

This research did investigate and within this dissertation will reveal the findings from a heuristic inquiry-based phenomenological research study that explored the experience of using reflective journaling during a North Carolina Outward Bound course for study participants and

the researcher during the time of June 21 – 28, 2008. Specific questions that I was concerned with were:

1. What is the lived experience of participants' journaling in relation to their personal development through their while on a North Carolina Outward Bound course?
2. What is the lived experience of participants' journaling in relation to their social development while on a North Carolina Outward Bound course?
3. How did I, as instructor, make meaning of my experience when instructing a North Carolina Outward Bound course through my reflective journal?

#### Overview of Design and Methodology

This study utilized qualitative research methods to gain an understanding of the experience of using reflective journals on a North Carolina Outward Bound course. Qualitative research places the researcher in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, that values the participants and their perspectives and the discovering of those perspectives, that views inquiry as a viable process between the researcher and the participants, and “is primarily descriptive and relies on people’s words as the primary data” (Marshall & Rossman, p. 11, 1989). Furthermore, this research paradigm used various empirical methods (e.g. case study, personal experience, introspective, historical) to describe phenomena – whether moments or meanings – in individuals’ lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The purpose of this study and the related research questions were best attended to with a qualitative research approach. The study of the experience of using reflective journals in the natural setting that occurs on an Outward Bound course as well as the observation of study participants in this outdoor context made qualitative research the chosen investigative process because it attempts to “understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction”

and is mainly a “process where the researcher makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study” (Creswell, p.198, 2003). Research strategies within qualitative research assist in clarifying and constructing views and philosophical beliefs to illustrate the event, activity or process that is being studied.

Phenomenological research is the qualitative strategy that was used to identify the human experience concerning the lived experience of participants using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course. Phenomenology’s aim is to determine what a lived experience “means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, p. 13, 1994). Understanding the lived experiences involved studying an Outward Bound crew of six participants and the use of the qualitative method of phenomenology calls for the researcher to bracket his or her own experiences in order to better understand those participating in the study. However, in this study a heuristic process was used to portray the experience of using reflective journals on a North Carolina Outward Bound course (Creswell, 2003, Moustakas, 1990).

Heuristic inquiry is a qualitative strategy of phenomenology that involves the researcher “returning to self, recognition of self-awareness, and a valuing of one’s own experience” (Moustakas, p. 13, 1990). The heuristic researcher has to have had a direct experience with the phenomenon being studied and is passionately interested in seeking to illuminate or answer what is questioned. I was once a North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) participant before I became a NCOB instructor who happened to journal as a participant. In this study I was interested in illuminating the lived experience of my and NCOB participants using the reflective journal to enhance the overall Outward Bound experience.

The study participants numbering six had to be at least twenty-one years of age and be an educator or possess a state teacher's certificate. In addition, the study participants were required to complete the pre-course information packet and pass the NCOB medical screener criteria to be eligible to participate (e.g. no pre-existing heart conditions).

Data collection consisted of several methods and sources. Methods used were observations, journals and discussions and all involved participants and this researcher. Participants and the researcher answered questions in reflective journals, engaged in experiential adventure activities (e.g. rock climbing) and engaged in discussions and debriefs. Observations assisted this heuristic researcher in linking lived experiences with journal entries made by participants. Furthermore, a second journal which was not collected, was distributed to each participant for the sole purpose of their being able to reflect and journal for personal reasons should they have chosen to do so. Reflective journals for the study were collected and analyzed to determine themes and perspectives of participants lived experiences. Crew discussions and debriefs with reflective-type questions engaged in the course provided additional insight into the lived experience of the North Carolina Outward Bound participant.

#### Overview of Conceptual Framework

Research investigation of appropriate strategies to support the study on the meaning making possibilities that reflective journals have on participants on a North Carolina Outward Bound course has uncovered two supporting approaches: experiential learning theory and reflective practice.

##### *Experiential Learning Theory*

The theory of experiential learning, or experiential education, has been known, at least in part, since John Dewey introduced the theory in the 1930's. Dewey (1938) who challenged

traditional pedagogical theory and gave credence to education that is based on learning by doing writes, “In what I have said I have taken for granted the soundness of the principle that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience – which is always the actual life-experience of some individual” (p.113). However, experience in education is only one aspect for positively influencing education. Important to experience in education is the *quality* of the experience. The quality of the experience is not only the agreeableness or disagreeableness of the experience, but also the influential return to later experiences. It is the role of the experiential educator to arrange for experience and activity that promotes desirable future experiences (Dewey 1938/1998).

The role of the Outward Bound instructor in providing reflection time and facilitating exciting and meaning making experiences for the Outward Bound student is central in Dewey’s experiential learning theory. In his book *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938/1998) refers to the role of the educator, or in this case the Outward Bound instructor, as facilitating appropriate experiences that engage students. In the theory of experiential learning, he states that “the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of the leader of group activities” (p.59). Dewey (1938) specifically stresses that the educator (e.g. Outward Bound instructor) must arrange for the kind of experiences which promote having desirable further experiences for the student and that this is the central criterion of education based upon experience – “to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17).

Experiential learning theory has also expanded the field of andragogy and become an increasingly non-traditional approach to higher education. Furthermore, experiential learning theory has even become a fairly popular area of research and is regarded as a continuous process

in which knowledge is created by transforming experience into cognitive frameworks, thereby influencing the way a person thinks and behaves (Sewchuk, 2005; Domask, 2007).

Contributions and definitions of experiential learning theory in the field of andragogy have occurred over the past several decades. Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1991) offer that specific contexts shape an individual's experience in different ways, and also those differences among individuals (e.g. past histories, learning strategies, emotion) influence the sort of learning that is developed through reflection on experience. Cantor's (1995) definition of experiential learning is specific in that the experience that is taking place occurs directly as a result of concepts or phenomena that are being studied. Concepts or phenomena of experiential learning has generally included activities such as participating in in-class simulations, service learning, conducting field work, participating in overseas travel courses and partnering with outside organizations (Domask, 2007).

Fenwick's (2000) contribution to the theory of experiential learning stresses a broader consideration of learning through experience. Beyond the commonly understood education forums of schools and institutions and their associated connections (e.g. fieldwork, internships, etc.) to experiential learning, she classifies experiential learning as a process of human cognition. Fenwick's (2000) epistemological construct of experiential learning occurs through the many concepts of adult learning: self-directed learning, lifelong learning, working knowledge, practical intelligence, and situated learning. Additionally, Fenwick (2000) stresses the centrality of experiential learning in adult education as "theories and practices based on reflection on concrete experience" (p.1). The common themes that are evident from what has been offered with this account of experiential learning are, 1) that the learning theory is student-centered in nature, 2) fosters active engagement and learning, 3) includes reflection, and 4) places the experiential



learning instructor in a position to offer quality, exciting and rich activities that facilitate the learner to return to future experiences.

David Kolb (1984) using the works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget introduced a cycle of learning as a central principle in his experiential learning theory. The cycle is comprised of four stages in which an immediate or concrete experience occurs which provides a foundation for observation and reflections. These observations and reflections are then utilized in forming abstract concepts which foster and initiate strategies that can be actively tested and applied. Furthermore, Kolb's model stresses more than doing. Learning from participation must involve connections between the stages. In an Outward Bound context, participants engage in concrete experiences constantly, are afforded the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, experience abstract conceptualization and engage in active experimentation as a result of the previous experiential modes. An example is offered of how Kolb's cycle relates contextually to an Outward Bound participant that is backpack expeditioning:

- 1) *Concrete experience*: participant engages in an Outward bound component (e.g. backpack expedition).
- 2) *Reflective observation*: consideration and reflection is applied to the concrete experience (e.g. "What things or factors occurred while expeditioning today?").
- 3) *Abstract conceptualization*: participant processes the reflective response (s) (e.g. "How did I effectively support the crew with route finding today; with organizing camp?").
- 4) *Active experimentation*: application of concepts (e.g. "Learnings that I experienced today will be applied tomorrow").

The concepts that Kolb (1984) presents to this theory are epistemologically grounded and are the building blocks of the experiential learning theory. His articulate descriptions in this

learning process expresses that experience alone “is not sufficient for learning; something must be done with it” (Kolb, 1984, p. 42). Beyond the initial, concrete experience, time for reflection, abstract conceptualization and application of the learnings is what is at the heart of this theory.

The common themes that are evident from what has been offered with this account of experiential learning are that the learning theory is student-centered in nature, fosters active engagement and learnings and includes reflection. Additionally and important is for the experiential learning educator to use activities that are exciting, rich and places the learner in situations which draw them to future experiences.

### *Reflective Practice*

Capitalizing and enhancing Kolb’s segment of reflection in the experiential learning process are the works by Schön (1983) and the concerted efforts of Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, 1991). Reflective practice offers the participant the ability to make judgements in complex and vague situations. Commonly associated with professional practice, reflective practice can be applied to other types of learning situations, both formal as well as informal. Additionally, the knowledge a person gains through experience, both past and current, and by reflecting either upon or in those experiences permits the person’s learning background to develop (Boud & Walker, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Reflection-on-action involves thinking about a situation after it has occurred. People engaging in this form of reflection reevaluate experiences, decide what could be done differently, and then apply the changes accordingly. Often, this form of reflection results in new perspectives on experiences, changes in behavior, and even commitments to action (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Essential to meaningful experience is Boud, Keogh and Walker’s (1985) attending to one’s feelings whether while reflecting during or after the experience. Additionally,

Boud et al. (1991) conceptually offer that by being aware of one's feelings during an experience that a greater involvement in the experience will be attained that will deepen or inhibit involvement – both current and future.

Epistemologically grounded in the use of reflection, the concept of reflecting-on-action occurs on Outward Bound courses routinely. For example tarp construction, that if quality and craftsmanship are employed, the residing Outward Bound participants will stay dry, warm and will reflect favorably on their “attention to detail” paying off for them while sleeping during a nighttime rain storm. Conversely applied, if a tarp is constructed with haste, lack of craftsmanship and users of it getting wet and cold, reflecting-on-action will result in the next night tarp construction exhibiting qualities of good site selection, appropriately tied knots and hitches and tautness applied thereby resulting in a better prepared shelter for the occupants.

Reflection-in-action, according to Schön (1983) is recognizing that we sometimes think about what we are doing. When one is “thinking on their feet”, “keeping their wits about them”, “learning by doing” and “engaged and responding in the moment” (p.26) these statements imply “not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it” and that “some of the most interesting examples of this process occur in the midst of a performance” (p.54). Numerous situations exist on Outward Bound courses in which participants are extended the opportunity to engage in reflection-in-action. Negotiating “The Narrows”, a class III series of rapids on the Chattooga River, is a prime example. As a canoe enters the rapid and runs the first ledge, the bow and stern paddlers “reflect-in-action” as to what paddle strokes to employ (e.g. bow draw & stern pry) to successfully run the entry rapid. Soon after, an eddy (calm area of water) appears and the paddlers perform an eddy-turn to “catch” the eddy and then engage in discussion or “reflect-on-action” of the just recently performed rapid. It

is not so important that this type of reflection occurs, it is important because Schön and others provide understanding to the kinds of reflection that often take place in the Outward Bound setting. Reflecting-in and on action are main components in reflection theory, however sub-components to reflecting-in and on action assist in enhancing the learning to the reflective participant.

Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) identify three points that need to be kept in mind regarding reflection and learning. First, and most pointedly, only the students can learn and only they can reflect on their own experiences. Educators can intervene and frame reflective processes, but they only have access to students' thoughts and feelings through what the student chooses to reveal about themselves and their experiences.

Secondly, Boud et al. describe the reflection on learning they propose as purposeful and is driven by intent in which the educator formats activities that incorporate reflection. They write that it is understandable that people can meditate and daydream and that it is helpful to have periods of reflection that are associated with conscious reflection, however, the reflection that they are referencing pertains to goal-directed critical reflection.

Lastly, the reflective process is complex and involves cognitive and as well affective domains. Negative feelings, especially directed at oneself, can be powerful and be problematic and form barriers to the students' learning resulting in distorted perceptions, false interpretation of events, as well as undermining their will to succeed and participate effectively. Conversely, positive feelings and emotions can greatly influence and empower the learning process; they can keep the student on task and provide a foundation for additional learning.

Boud and Walker (1991) acknowledge that they have written extensively on aspects of reflection; however their previous work focused more on reflection after the experience. They

still consider their previous work valid, however they emphasize in their later work that “It is our view that these elements are just as much part of reflection during the experience as they are of reflection after it” (p.19). The *these* that the quote is referring to are the qualities or phases that Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) state are critical elements of reflection: returning to the experience, attending to feelings and re-evaluating the experience. They offer additional insight of these elements that occur within or during the context of the experience and capture these elements with contextual questions: What is happening, how do I feel and what does it mean (Boud & Walker, 1991)?

### Significance of the Study

This study of exploring reflective journaling on a North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) course is significant on several levels. It expands upon the field of adult education by focusing on the experience of reflection and journaling in a unique outdoor wilderness setting. As participants on a NCOBS course experience components (e.g. rock climbing) they enter a processing phase following the component that involves reflection. Here they are able to recapture what they recently experienced, think about it, ponder and evaluate it. As Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) emphasize regarding adult learners, most events which preclude reflection arise out of the normal, as well as non-normal occurrences of one’s life. Participating in an Outward Bound course places the participant in an unfamiliar environment with usually unfamiliar activities. Events which precipitate reflection may arise from a loss of confidence or may be also prompted by more positive states by “an experience of successfully completing a task which was previously thought impossible” (p.19). Coincidentally, Outward Bound participants report accomplishing feats and tasks far beyond their perceived capabilities.

Processing experiences by reflective journaling can give further emphasis on what was personally experienced and facilitate the learning to a higher degree.

This study will help adventure learning schools, specifically North Carolina Outward Bound understand the experience of journals that are utilized by participants. Instructors are present during the Outward Bound experience and can assist the interaction between participants and the learning process. Although facilitators can influence and create the learning experience, it is the learners who actually experience and reflect upon the event (Boud & Walker, 1991). Outward Bound instructors can indicate aspects to be noticed, or direct participants in a direction which will lead them to reflect and become aware of things that might have otherwise been unnoticed. An example of this may be when an Outward Bound instructor questions the crew about their tarp construction (e.g. beneath dead tree limbs). Because this is a potentially dangerous situation, the instructor has created a learning opportunity for the crew by asking questions of reflection and suggests necessary changes that effect immediate and future circumstances.

Additionally, the instructor can be alert to the participants' feelings when he/she senses anxiety or distress and calls a 'time out' to reflect and journal within the experience. For example, when a crew is "storming" about continued mistakes regarding orienteering, the instructor will encourage their taking a few moments to reflect and journal on how they could improve on this task. Moreover, when the experience is unplanned, which can be rather frequent on Outward Bound courses, the role of the instructor can "range from learner's companion and partner in the learning, or more experienced colearner, to that of personal counselor" (Boud & Walker, 1991, p.25). An example is when two participants are striking up an exclusive relationship; the instructor intervenes and has the two reflect on how their exclusivity is

impacting the crew. Summating this significance feature then, the more North Carolina Outward Bound becomes aware of how reflection and the personal journal can enhance making meaning of the experience, the more the school and instructors become understanding of “this reflective aspect of learning and organize learning activities which are consistent with it, the more effective the learning can be” (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985, p.20).

Personally, this study is of interest and significance as it will inform me as a North Carolina Outward Bound instructor how using the reflective journal affects my own personal experience on an Outward Bound course. I have had personal experience using a reflective journal on an Outward Bound course as an undergraduate, and more importantly, reflected in a journal without prompting while on this course. Why is this important to me? It is important because I still have this journal from March 1982 and by occasionally referencing and reading it brings back fond memories and more importantly, personal learnings that I encountered while on course. Reflection can orient oneself in different ways to action and interest, whether it be political, cultural, social, or in my case human (Boud et al., 1985). Because of this personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated – reflective journaling in an Outward Bound context – I’m incorporating heuristic inquiry as a methodology as I perform this study because the heuristic research investigator “must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14).

Concluding this significance section then, Moustakas (1990) writes that heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question, or problem in which the researcher seeks to illuminate, clarify or answer. The question is of personal significance and challenge with a “search to understand” and is “aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences”

(p.15). The task of researching the experience of reflective journaling on an Outward Bound course can bring more meaning and emphasis to not only me as a heuristic researcher, but to the Outward Bound participant as well is one of intense interest and passion; this problem calls out to me. Furthermore, in the field of adult education and reflection of experience, Dewey (1938) writes that learning requires more than just doing. The process of thinking or reflecting is an experience in itself. Adventure programs place strong emphasis on experience and physical activity, which is one-half of the equation. The other half pertains to “making the connections between what was done and why” (Wurdinger, 1997, p.40). The field of outdoor experiential education performs phenomenally well at providing experiences for its participants, but if participants are not afforded the opportunity to reflect on experience, or connect them to other experiences, then the learning process is thwarted and the discourse is made obsolete. Finally, the outcomes of this study has social relevance in that knowledge uncovered regarding the experience and meaning making capability of reflective journals on adventure learning programs, like Outward Bound courses “holds possibilities for scientific knowledge and social impact and meaning” (Moustakas, 1990, p.53) as well. Findings relative to the experience of reflective journaling by the North Carolina Outward Bound participant on this study have the potential to inform future NCOB instructors, participants and similar programs as well.

#### Definition of Terms

Briefly defined below are some common terms used throughout this dissertation.

1. Challenge by Choice is a Project Adventure concept that allows participants to choose the *level* of experience that supports their optimal learning; however, it does not give the participant the choice of opting out of activities or remain in their comfort zones. Common approaches are: 1) participants have the right to choose when to participate and at what level, 2) participants must



add value to the experience and sitting out is not an option, and 3) participants must respect and value the decisions of their crewmates (Prouty, Panicucci & Collinson, 2007).

2. Experiential learning theory is pedagogical theory of education that is based on learning by doing (Dewey, 1938). David Kolb (1984) introduced a cycle of learning to the experiential learning theory. The cycle is comprised of four stages in which an immediate or concrete experience occurs which provides a foundation for observation and reflections. These observations and reflections are then utilized in forming abstract concepts which foster and initiate strategies that can be actively applied and tested.

4. Five Finger Contract is a concept of personal as well as group conduct. The thumb represents *agree to work together*; the index finger represents *taking responsibility; not blaming*, the middle finger represents *put-down awareness*, the fourth finger represents *commitment*, and the fifth finger represents *safety awareness*. I became aware of this concept while attending a ropes/challenge workshop course instructed by Gordon Nesbitt (2005).

3. Four Pillars of Outward Bound are concepts that were originated by Kurt Hahn and are instilled in each Outward Bound course and presented to each Outward Bound participant. The Four Pillars are: Craftsmanship, Physical Fitness, Self-Reliance, and Compassion.

4. Full-Value Contract is a Project Adventure concept which provides a structure for creating behavioral norms that the crew agrees to follow and maintain throughout the life of the course (e.g. Be present, Pay attention, Speak your Truth, Four Pillars of Outward Bound). There are many different ways to develop a full-value contract, from presenting a series of commitments for the crew to discuss and consider to asking the crew to develop their own contract (Prouty et al., 2007).

5. Heuristic inquiry as a form of phenomenological inquiry which focuses on intense human experiences. The root meaning, heuristic, is derived from the Greek word heuriskein, meaning to discover or to find out. As a research process, heuristic inquiry refers to a process of internal investigation through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and then develops methods and procedures to further investigate and analyze (Moustakas, 1994).
6. Journaling is the recording of daily events and life experiences and has been a long lasting human tradition (O'Connell & Dymont, 2003). Journals "have a long history as a means of self-expression" (Kerka, 1996, p.1) and have been used as an effective tool in the educational and learning processes of children, adolescents, and adults (Palmer, Alexander, & Olson-Dinges, 1999).
7. Outward Bound is an educational process dedicated to the principal that individuals, when engaged by adversity and drawn into shared experiences of adventure and service, enhance their self-respect and concern for others (North Carolina Outward Bound Instructor's Handbook, 2004). The largest and oldest adventure-based educational institution in the world, Outward Bound is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. It is best known for its ability to build participants' self-confidence, self-reliance, compassion for others, responsibility to the community, sensitivity to the environment and development of leadership skills (Isaac & Goth, 1991).
8. Phenomenology "aims to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld" (van Manen, 1990, p.19). Phenomenology is a method of discovery which, by reflecting upon the experience itself, results in uncovering the details, description and meaning of a phenomenon. As a method of qualitative research, phenomenology is not used to test hypotheses, assumptions, theories or

casual relationships. Likewise, it is not the intent of the phenomenological method of inquiry to make generalizations, assumptions or even generate empirical facts. Phenomenology investigates and describes simply what the phenomenon of interest in the study is. It attempts to reveal the nature or essence of the human experience as it is lived and is played out (Moustakas, 1994; Munhall, 1993; Ray, 1990).

9. Reflection is a concept and practice that offers the participant the ability to make judgements in casual, complex and vague situations. It can be applied to types of learning situations, both formal as well as informal and the knowledge a person gains through experience, both past and current, and reflecting upon those experiences permits the person's learning milieu to develop (Boud & Walker, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Essential to experience meaningfulness, reflection affords attending to one's feelings and is helpful whether reflecting during or after the experience and that by being aware of our feelings a greater involvement in the experience is attained that "will deepen or inhibit our involvement" (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985, p.20).

10. Reflective Practice, characterized by Schön (1987) and Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) in that people often think about what they are doing, sometimes even while doing it and are reflecting *in* action. Reflecting *on* action involves thinking back on what was done in order to discover learnings that can be applied to future situations.

#### Assumptions of the Study

There were several embedded assumptions within this dissertation to make explicit.

1. The experiences on an Outward Bound course will provide genuine opportunities for reflection for the participants.

2. Participants will be willing to reflect on their experiences. As a result, reflective journaling on an Outward Bound course will make the lived experience more meaningful and relevant to the participant.
3. The questions and activities that are led by the instructor will provide the Outward Bound participant with reflective journaling opportunities.
4. Reflective journaling on an Outward Bound course by the researcher of this study, who will be also instructing the course, will result in a more meaningful course experience and further illuminate the usefulness of the reflective journal.
5. By studying the reflective journals of Outward Bound study participants, it is possible to come to a greater understanding of how the reflective journal is used.

#### Limitations of the Study

The study examined the reflective journaling experiences of participants on an eight day North Carolina Outward Bound Educator's Course. The crew size of the study group involved six participants and all participants were educators. These criteria are common to qualitative research (e.g. small, homogeneous group) and therefore the data gained from this study may or may not be able to be generalized and used in other settings. I say *may be able* to be generalized in that adventure programs are often a small crew or group of usually  $\leq 14$  and sometimes of specific homogeneous grouping (Hattie et al., 1997). Conversely, the data *may not be able* to be generalized in that adventure programs, like Outward Bound, run hundreds of courses each year with thousands of participants experiencing the programs offered. Furthermore, as a heuristic researcher *and* instructor of this course, being an Outward Bound instructor for over fifteen years and being very familiar with the wilderness setting of the North Carolina Outward Bound course area, therefore may have limited my observation, interpretation and understanding of what a first

time Outward Bound participant is experiencing and may effect my own reflective journaling experience. Moreover, as an instructor for the course, my own journaling may have been hindered because of my instructor duties and responsibilities. For instance, during the solo component of the course which is an opportune time to reflect in one's journal, I was called away from the same solo time of the participants because of discussing end-of-course details with the co-instructors.

In addition, daily journaling questions are anticipated for the eight day course, however, with outdoor experiential education programs like Outward Bound, it is here, in the wilderness, that participants are exposed to challenging activities (e.g. rock climbing, white-water canoeing, orienteering) which can make for extra long days and unforeseen logistical happenings (e.g. lightening storm canceling rock climbing) which can effect overall course experiences for the crew and therefore limit effective opportunities for reflective journaling (Isaac & Goth, 1991). Lastly, participants' journals were collected immediately at the conclusion of the eight day course denying possible continued reflective opportunities for participants.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of a study that examines the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course. The chapter begins with providing a historical and pedagogical account of Kurt Hahn and the Outward Bound system. By providing this account, the reader receives a more informed awareness of what Outward Bound is. Next is reflective journaling and the attributes associated with it and how it is used to enhance and make meaning from experience. This sets the stage for introducing the study's purpose and research questions and the accompanying theoretical frameworks used. This study uses a twofold theoretical framework involving experiential leaning theory and reflection theory. These

theories provide a clear lens for illuminating the experience of using reflective journals and the notion that experience is best made meaning of when one thinks, considers and reflects on what just happened. Next is how the study is significant, in part to the field of adult education. Adult education will benefit from this study in that a heightened awareness in the use of reflective journals in an Outward Bound context is applicable to other settings of experiential learning – wherever there is experience and learning, by reflecting and using reflective journals, the teacher can make a more lived experience for the participant available. Definition of terms, assumptions and limitations to the study concluded this chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review involves several key elements to format the topic of research. The researcher selects documents on the topic which contain fundamental data and evidence from a particular position to reinforce purposeful aims and views on the nature of the topic. In addition, information is included on how the research is investigated and the evaluation methods used to approve documents that relate to the research being proposed (Hart, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to explore the participants' experience of using a reflective journal while on a North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) course. This literature review will inform the study by making clear the role of reflective journals in outdoor education and what exists in the conceptual and data-based literature related to reflective journals. Four main sections of the literature related to this study were explored: Section I: Conceptual Framework: Experiential Learning Theory and Reflective Practice, Section II: Outdoor Education, Section III: The Reflective Journal, and lastly, Section IV: Reflective Journals in Outdoor Education.

#### Conceptual Framework: Experiential Learning Theory

This section discusses the conceptual framework of this study. The theory that guided this study conceptually is experiential learning theory. Foundational principals related to experiential learning theory are presented (Dewey, 1938; Moon, 2004; Silberman, 2007) followed by theoretical foundations of experiential learning theory (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985 & 1991; Kolb, 1984; Silberman, 2007). Lastly, experiential learning theory principles or methodologies that offer critical procedures of inquiry to the theory of experiential learning are discussed (Moon, 2004; Silberman, 2007; Wurdinger, 2005).

*Foundations of Experiential Learning Theory*

The progressive and influential educator John Dewey (1938) challenged pedagogical theory and gave credence to education that is based on learning by doing. Dewey stresses that for learning to take place, an experience must contain two key dimensions, namely continuity and interaction. Continuity refers to the learner being able to connect aspects of the new experience to what she or he already possesses. Interaction relates to the learner being engaged with his or her environment; testing and surveying the learning developed in that environment, and it is the learning environment – traditional, that Dewey stresses requires attention and change.

When characterizing the ideology underlying traditional education – “its time schedules, schemes of classification, of examination and promotion, of rules of order” (p. 2) – Dewey’s criticism of traditional education is of dissatisfaction and discontent. Traditional education and learning is thought of as generally static and this teaching style simply is regurgitation “of what is already in books and in the heads of the elders” (p. 5). However, Dewey does not discount that all of traditional education is not worthy. The progressive or experiential educator bonds experience and traditional learning together. The problem for the progressive educator is finding the place, meaning and organization of traditional subject matter within experience. Dewey cautions that rejecting something on the premise that it is simply old and incorporating something new just because of its newness is dangerous and reckless. Rather, a well thought out philosophy and construction of general principles of the new, progressive, experiential form of education will elicit educational positiveness and offer “constructive development of purposes, methods and its educational potentialities” (p. 10). Departing from traditional, banking styles of teaching and incorporating experience into education is what Dewey stresses, but simultaneously alerts one to understanding what experience is.



Foundationally congruent and central to Dewey's experiential education theory is the connection between life experiences and learning. He writes, "I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p. 12). The 'personal experience' he is referring to is the personal experience in the classroom. However, he notes that not all personal experience is equally educative. Some personal experiences are mis-educative in that the experience has the effect of detaining or distorting the growth of further experience as what often occurs with teachers who are mentally, emotionally and socially insensitive to students; students, because of their teachers "were rendered callous to ideas...lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them...came to associate the learning process with ennui and boredom...came to associate books with dull drudgery, so that they were conditioned to all but flashy reading matter" (p. 15).

In stark contrast to mis-educative personal experiences in education is the consideration of agreeable or positive quality of experiences. Educator's should arrange for the kind of experiences that "do not repel the student, but rather engage" the student (Dewey, 1938, p. 16). Dewey contests that the effect of the experience is not immediately known to the student and therefore places the educator in a position to consider using experiences that engage the learner, are more than immediately enjoyable and promote having positive, desirable future personal learning experiences. Fundamentally then, the primary concern of education which is based upon experience is for the educator to select "the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 17) for the student. This *is* the challenge for the experiential educator – not only including experience in education, but stressing that the educative experience is distinctive, quality-filled and personal to the learner.

Dewey offers an organization of conditions that promote and foster enriched growth of further learning in the learner. Initially the subject matter must fall within the scope of ordinary educative life experiences of the learner – whether the subject is mathematics, the life sciences or history and the ordinary, traditional style of teaching is what the learner has been associated to. Then the educator applies experience to the subject matter – which contrasts to the ordinary life experience – yielding the result for the learner of gaining an understanding of how the ‘new’ or experiential education style of learning contrasts with the procedures of the ordinary method and how the learning is therefore more distinctive and positive to the learner. Second, following finding material for learning within experience is for the subject matter to develop progressively into a more adult form – departing from the formal school environment to an out-of-school environment. For example, a history class attending a historical park related to the subject matter being discussed in class or the biology class doing a stream survey in the local waterway. Subsequent organizational criteria that Dewey writes concerning the application of experience to education involve the educator understanding past customs as a means of understanding present needs, ideas and practices. Having this awareness will assist with the application of new, experientially-based educational ideas and practices. Similarly, progressive educational systems depend on life experiences and reject static, cut and dried material which is the source of the old education. In the field of experience, places and contents of those places will change from time to time resulting in uncertainty and even possibly a laxity in the choice and organization of subject matter. This is expected in the field of experience and “is no ground for fundamental criticism and complaint” (Dewey, 1938, p. 95). Unforeseen circumstances will occur in experiential learning settings therefore requiring the educator to utilize improvisation and adaptability in special situations. These processes of experience and experimentation lead to

reflection which Dewey writes “is at the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind” (p. 110).

In his classic book, *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) has made numerous observations and offerings to education of the relationship between life experiences and learning and writes that the *new* philosophy of education “is committed to some kind of empirical and experimental philosophy” (p. 13). A component to this philosophy of learning through experience involves reflection. Dewey (1938) offers that reflection on personal experience is critical to one’s overall learning. He writes that what is paramount to one’s learning is “...keeping track of ideas, activities, and observed consequences. Keeping track is a matter of reflective review and summarizing, in which there is both discrimination and record of the significant features of a developing experience. To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind” (p. 110).

The role of the Outward Bound instructor in providing reflection time and facilitating meaning making experiences for the Outward Bound student is central in Dewey’s (1938) experiential learning theory. In his book, Dewey (1938) refers to the role of the educator, or in this case the Outward Bound instructor, as facilitating appropriate experiences that engage students. In the theory of experiential learning, he states that “the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of the leader of group activities” (p. 59). He specifically stresses that the educator (e.g. Outward Bound instructor) must arrange for the kind of experiences which promote having desirable further experiences for the student and that this is

the central problem of education based upon experience – to select the kind of experiences that are productive and provide a basis for further subsequent experiences.

Rooted in Outward Bound courses are epistemological foundations of Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory. The investigative inquiry to experiential learning led him to acknowledge that experience is subject to a pattern. First, experience has an immediate, responsive quality and is not, at first, reflective. Then, the qualities of the experience evolve from the vague and indeterminate to determinate and meaningful. Finally, experience is then subject to closure and reflective meaningfulness. Fittingly suited, Crosby (1995) using Dewey (1938) claims that human life, "is a rhythmic movement from events of doubt and conflict to events of integrity and harmony" (Crosby, 1995, p. 11).

Outward Bound courses have similar methodological stages that mirror Dewey's explanations. Namely, participants of Outward Bound arrive at their course start, which is a wilderness setting and from there they experience unfamiliar or new ways of community within their crew. The crew community usually begins rather detached and estranged, and through activities and experiences facilitated by an instructor eventually mold into a community which promotes connectedness, support and compassion. Lastly, throughout the Outward Bound experience time for reflective meaningfulness occurs for the Outward Bound participant which compliments Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory. Other theorists have made contributions to the foundational processes that compliment experiential learning.

Mel Silberman (2007) defines experiential learning as " (a) the involvement of learners in concrete activities that enable them to "experience" what they are learning about and (b) the opportunity to reflect on those activities" (p.8). Silberman (2007) expands upon Dewey's (1938) concepts and writes that experiential learning is based on both real work and or life experiences

and engages structured experiences that simulate or approximate real work and life experiences. When utilizing this theory, the experiential educator can employ the use of simulations, from using a driving simulator to engaging in a role playing drug abstinence exercise to real applications, like operating equipment – “its range is enormous” (p. 8).

Silberman (2007) stresses that experiential learning involves educational content that is both technical and hard (e.g. rappelling a cliff) as well as non-technical or soft (e.g. group processing skills). Additionally, experiential activity can be applied to learning that is cognitive (understanding information/concepts), behavioral (skill development), and affective (examining one’s beliefs). Traditional, lecture-style education affords that information is verbalized and “sometimes, no matter how clear an explanation is or how descriptive visual aids are, certain procedures are not understood” (p. 8). Silberman (2007) offers that to assist clarifying educational material, the instructor can employ student participation by having the student physically walk through the procedures or process. Role-playing exercises that progress from safe to challenging can afford confidence in the student to employ skills effectively in a variety of situations. Furthermore, skill development can be enhanced by using adventure activities, creative play and initiative activities and games.

One’s beliefs and attitudes can be illuminated and challenged by immersion in both realistic and metaphorical experiential activities. Some of these activities may only take a few minutes and others may involve hours or days (e.g. solo component on an Outward Bound course). Experiential activities succeed in bringing about an awareness of self that is unequalled, mostly because experiential activities are not just about hearing, talking and performing, but also involve powerful, beyond-belief events. These experiential learning experiences are not just confined to a seminar or workshop. Experiential learning can be experienced as part of a

classroom training session, department meeting, coaching session, as well as individual and group-centered e-learning (Silberman, 2007).

Courses conducted at North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) take into account the foundational aspects that Silberman offer as components of experiential learning theory. NCOB courses do utilize hard or technical skills (e.g. tying of knots for climbing) as well as soft, non-technical skills (e.g. compassion and reassurance while negotiating elements on the high ropes course). Additionally, the domains of educational applicability that Silberman (2007) cites that experiential learning involve through cognitive, behavioral and affective means apply on NCOB courses. Cognitively, participants are afforded information relative to course expectations and challenges that involves the phases of their course: training phase, main phase and final phase. Behaviorally, NCOB participants are exposed to a plethora of skills during their course – from compass and map use to effectively scouting river rapids. Affectively, participants on NCOB courses experience debriefing sessions following activity thus allowing examination of their belief systems (e.g. Has everyone’s viewpoint been heard?). Participants are more amiable to consider new attitudes and behavior and try them out, voice their concerns, examine their beliefs, be open to new information and seek support when exposed to “well-designed and well-placed experiential activities” (Silberman, 2007, p. 18).

Jennifer Moon (2004) offers foundations or “outside boundaries” (p. 112) of what experiential learning entails. First, experiential learning takes effort and will not just occur automatically when someone has an experience. Simply stated, we do not learn from experience. For learning to take place, the experience must be processed so that knowledge can result from the experience. The processing (e.g. debriefing) is significant and is instrumental to the development of learning by way of experience.

The second outside boundary that Moon (2004) offers that is inherent with experiential learning is that not just any experience can result in learning, but specific experiences happening at the right time and the right place are the key to this learning. Some kinds of experiences offer more effective outcomes than others and capitalizing on the teachable moment can be experiential for the learner. Educators, managers, supervisors, etc. can confront unique or novel situations in their setting as they unfold, seize them, process them and develop more effective learnings for their colleagues, co-workers and staff.

The third boundary or foundational aspect of experiential learning is that of unlearning. Moon (2004) explains that unlearning, or changing a pre-existing state (e.g. behavior) due to engaging in experience and realizing individual change, openness and flexibility – “can be important in the learning” (p. 113). This boundary emphasizes that experience is important; however, if the experience stimulates self-awareness of individual tendencies and attitudes, then the experience can be characterized as truly experiential.

Lastly, Moon (2004) identifies subjectivity of the experience. Experiential educators have to recognize that individual variances of learners’ perceptions occur while engaged in the experience (e.g. not everyone may experience the same outcomes). Therefore an experiential educator processing of the experience needs to be subjective and personal in the processing stage.

Moon’s (2004) foundational/outside boundaries contribution to experiential learning also rings a resonance to NCOB courses. Processing the experience occurs on Outward Bound courses. Whether the experiential activity is backpack expeditioning or conducting service at a food bank, debriefing through discussion, journaling or an activity brings not only closure to the experience, but also appreciations, awarenesses and meaning. Secondly, NCOB instructors look for those ‘teachable moments’ or unique phenomena that occur while on course, thus capitalizing

on an experiential learning situation. Getting wet due to poor knot tying and construction of a crew tarp usually is significant to the point that from that point on good, solid tarp construction occurs for the remainder of the NCOB course. Thirdly, unlearning or awareness of one's pre-existing attitudes or behavior occurs on Outward Bound courses. Whether the topic or activity is diversity awareness or LNT (Leave No Trace) practices that minimize human impact on the natural environment, organized activities and processing permits a NCOB participant to examination their predetermined habits of mind and develop an awareness of such practices. Finally, Outward Bound instructors are constantly taking into account the specific, subjective needs of each participant. Whether it is the obvious awareness that a participant is not being challenged on a rock climb (leading the instructor to offer to the climber a bandana as a blindfold) or the participant that mentally struggles with group processing (leading the instructor to counsel the participant), the Outward Bound instructor has a responsibility to subjectively reorganize the course on an individual basis for the participant. These "outside boundaries" that Moon recognizes that should occur when experiential learning takes place "are fairly obvious but are important" (p. 112) do occur on NCOB courses and therefore explicitly emphasize that experiential learning does takes place on NCOB courses.

#### Theoretical Foundations of Experiential Learning Theory

A theoretical integration of factors within experiential learning supports the overall theory. Theoretical factors covered in this section support the affective, behavioral and cognitive elements within experiential learning theory. This section will use the works of Kolb, Cantor, and Fenwick.



### *Experiential Learning Cycle*

Enhancing Dewey's contribution to experiential learning, David Kolb (1984) uses the works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget and introduces a theoretical cycle of learning as a central principle in his experiential learning theory. The cycle is comprised of four stages in which an immediate or concrete experience provides a foundation for observation and reflections. These observations and reflections are then utilized in forming abstract concepts which foster and initiate strategies that can be actively tested. Each component of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is worthy of consideration.

The first component of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle – *concrete experience* focuses on the participant being involved in experiences and confronting immediate human situations in a personal way. This component of the cycle emphasizes feeling as opposed to thinking and involves uniqueness and complexity of present reality experiences to learn from.

The second aspect, *reflective observation* involves the participant focusing on “understanding the meaning of ideas and situations by carefully observing and impartially describing them” (p. 68). When participants engage in reflective observation they intuitively determine what is true and how things happened from the concrete experience. The meaning of situations and ideas are thoughtfully explored and realized. Reflective observation values the participant taking time and being patient, thoughtful and compliments the understanding that things occur from different perspectives and fosters appreciating different points of view.

The third component of Kolb's (1984) cycle is that of *abstract conceptualization*. Abstract conceptualization utilizes logic, concepts and ideas that evolved from the concrete experience and reflective observation aspects of the experiential learning cycle. With this component, the participant is engaged in thinking as opposed to feeling and experiencing. The

experiential learning participant systematically builds general theories and concepts from the prior cycle learnings and prepares to apply those concepts.

Finally, the fourth and last component of Kolb's (1984) cycle is *active experimentation*. This final aspect of the cycle focuses on actively applying the learnings from the concrete experience, reflective observation and abstract conceptualization phases. It emphasizes application and resists reflection and fosters "doing as opposed to observing" (p. 69). The experiential learning participant understands that through experiencing what happened, and then reflects on the happening, which then forms a response or plan and subsequently actively experiments or applies the theorized concepts accomplishes the overall learning and epistemologically brings closure to the experiential learning cycle.

The four components of Kolb's cycle encompass the elements of affective, behavioral and cognitive assumptions in that the concrete experience and abstract conceptualization pertains to cognition, reflective observation pertains to the affective domain and active experimentation pertains to the behavioral domain. Additionally, Kolb explains that criteria within the cycle are important in supporting each component fully and strengthens the effectiveness of the experiential learning for the individual.

In his theory of experiential learning, Kolb (1984) draws into focus two criteria pertinent to the cycle that are particularly worthy of attention and that enhance the overall learning. First, he emphasizes on *here-and-now concrete experience* to validate and test abstract concepts. A step beyond Dewey's (1938) foundational assumption of "the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p. 12), Kolb (1984) delineates that *immediate* personal experience is the focal point for learning, which gives "life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete, publicly shared

reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process” (p. 21). Initiating the experiential learning cycle after an immediate, here-and-now personal experience capitalizes on making the most of a personal experience.

Secondly, Kolb (1984) emphasizes that *feedback processes* are important throughout the cycle because feedback generates information to determine deviations from desired directions and goals. Information feedback provides a basis for a continual process that is goal-directed and evaluative of the consequences of actions. Educational and organizational ineffectiveness can be linked to an inadequate feedback process. The ineffectiveness is often associated with an imbalance between observation and action which tends to occur because either, 1) individuals and organizations fail to make decisions and take action because they did not gather information or, 2) they have become “bogged down by data collection and analysis” (p. 22) and therefore inhibited the learning process. Kolb’s (1984) aim in experiential learning theory is to integrate immediate and personal concrete experience and then use effective feedback and discussion to develop effective, goal-directed learning.

#### *Reflective or Constructivist View of Experiential Learning*

Tara Fenwick (2000) describes and critiques five orientations, or theoretical foundations related to the concept of experiential learning: constructivist, psychoanalytic, situative, critical cultural, and enactivist. For the purpose and direction of this literature review, the *reflection* or *constructivist* view of experiential learning is reviewed as this is the discourse that this study is situated and also this is the “view of experiential learning dominating adult education” (p. 27). Expanding upon Kolb’s (1984) component of reflective observation, Fenwick (2000) describes perspectives that add specificity, congruence and enhancement during the reflective cycle of experiential learning.

The reflection or constructivist view of experiential learning has brought to the forefront the importance of reflection and the need to take into account pedagogical and andragogical considerations when acknowledging the many facets of experience that engage the learner. Fenwick (2000) discusses four conceptions of the constructivist view that address experiential learning and cognition because they offer perspective on the relationships among experience, context, mind and learning. The four conceptions are *interference* (a psycho-analytic view that has its roots in Freudian tradition), *participation* (from perspectives associated with situated cognition), *resistance* (from a cultural critical perspective), and *co-emergence* (from the enactivist perspective associated with neuroscience and evolution theory). Fenwick states that these four perspectives assist in “explaining learning in experience, issues about relationships between knower and context, between learning and action, between mind and learning, and between educator and the process of learning” (p. 28).

*Interference: A psychoanalytic perspective.*

The field of psychoanalytic theory is characterized by such noted theorists as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Psychoanalytic theory is used by educational theorists to dispel notions of progressive development, assurance, and resistance to knowledge. Additionally, psychoanalytic theory helps make aware the sometimes mysterious and obscure tensions among learner, educators, and knowledge. How the interference perspective of experiential learning assists overall learning is by relating the learner’s situation between the outside world of culture and objects of knowledge as well as taking into consideration the psychogenic energies of the learner’s inside world and dilemmas relating to the objects of knowledge that are experienced. The role of the educator in this perspective is to be conscious of learner’s acts, thoughts,

dreams, wishes and understand that “we learn by working through the conflicts” (Fenwick, 2000, p. 31) while experiencing learning.

Within the interference perspective of experiential learning, the educator has to resist the impulse to “solve the problem” (Fenwick, 2000, p. 32) for the learner. Not all experience is positive. Conflicts and dilemmas occur in experience and the educator must be able to resist the temptation to *rescue* students that are struggling with a learning that is taking place. An educator that is in the situation with the struggling student needs to be aware of how they speak, listen and what is said. Allow the student to operate within their own learning. “To learn, people need to be deliberate experimenters in their own learning. Willingly engaging in traumas of the self” (Fenwick, 2000, p. 33).

*Participation: A situative perspective.*

Fenwick (2000) suggests that the participation view within experiential learning is proposed by situative perspectives. Situated cognition asserts that learning is grounded in the situation in which the person participates. It is not intellectual as in being produced by reflection, nor is it of inner strengths produced by mental and emotional conflict. Instead, the knowledge that is attained occurs due to engaging in changing processes of human activity in a particular setting. The learnings that occur are not situations “to be ingested and then transferred to a new situation, but part of the very process of participation in the immediate situation” (p. 34). The educator within this perspective operates and understands that a student learns through participation in the moment at hand.

The role of the experiential educator is to assist the student with participating meaningfully in the practices they are engaged in. It is not uncommon for the educator to arrange authentic and meaningful situations and activities in which the students practice

interacting with each other. However, Fenwick (2000) does state that the educator who arranges for improved participation contradicts certain premises of situated cognition. The deliberate action of an educator to enhance the participation can be problematic in regard to the positionality of students within a system. Educator's employing this perspective need to be aware of knowledge, power and desire in relation to assigning positions within a context. With this understanding, the participation or "situated view may be understood to assume that encouraging participation in the existing community is a good thing" (p. 39) and thus provides a basis for authentic and experiential learning to take place.

*Resistance: A critical cultural perspective.*

Fenwick (2000) states that critical cultural perspectives position power as a core issue in experience. Writers in critical cultural pedagogy (e.g. Paulo Freire) claim that to understand human cognition, one must analyze structures of dominance that promote or govern social relationships, forms of communication, and cultural practices. Additionally, when the mechanisms of cultural power are made known, "ways and means to resist them appear" (p. 39). With resistance people are afforded the awareness that unexpected, unimagined possibilities for careers, life and development become possible. An applied system of cognition that is free from historical, gender, political, and cultural concerns can make some people vulnerable to those others who want to sustain their power over people that they oppress. Educator's working with learning need to understand and be aware that learning in a particular cultural space is shaped by the discourses and semiotics that are most visible and granted authority by different groups.

In critical cultural processes, learners investigate the politics and constraints of their contexts and come to a critical awareness of their own being (e.g. interests, who judges whom and why, etc.). Educators assist in helping themselves and others in becoming aware of their

own self-made natures, how difference is perceived, enacted and why, how representations unfold to represent and depict reality, and their personal role in power relations. Fenwick (2000) notes the process of *problem posing* in which educators engage in dialogue with students to name their oppressive experiences and then rename them in a process of transformation in which an empowered feeling becomes an agent for social change. Educators utilizing experiential learning can play a vital role in helping students become aware of their experiences and the driving forces that shape them. However, beyond this being just a cognitive learning activity, “educators help people engage in social action to name and resist inequalities, work collectively to change their own circumstances, and seek alternate possibilities for democratic life” (p. 44). Fenwick cautions the educator to not instill “their own grand visions” (p. 45) for people’s lives when problem posing. Simply providing the opportunity for people to verbalize their oppressions and dialogue about how they can instill change establishes a beginning, an awakening for people to continue with and supports the “grassroots experiential learning through social change that Freire wrote about” (p. 45).

*Co-Emergence: The “enactivist” perspective.*

Enactivism is a perspective which explains the *co-emergence* of the learner and the setting. It applies the discourse that cognition “depends on the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities embedded in a biological, psychological, cultural context” (Fenwick, 2000, p. 47). Fenwick (2000) further explains that enactivists explore cognition and its relationship with the environment and how together they become simultaneously enacted through experiential learning. Educators need to realize that learning cannot be understood except in terms of co-emergence: that each student’s

understandings are co-mingled with those of other students, and individual knowledge co-emerges with joined, collective knowledge.

Fenwick (2000) states that educators can assist students through this perspective by first being a *communicator* – assisting the students in describing what is occurring around them and inside them. Second, the educator assumes the role of *story-maker* – helping to depict and meaningfully record the interaction of students and objects in the expanding environment. Third, the educator becomes an *interpreter* – helps to establish community among complex, entwined systems and help others to understand their own involvement in these patterns of systems. Together the deliberate utilization of these three roles by the educator can assist the influences on patterns of co-emergence as they develop as the experience unfolds.

Fenwick's (2000) contribution to the theoretical foundation of experiential learning overwhelmingly support the cognitive, affective and behavioral constructs of the conceptual framework. The psychoanalytic theory (interference) encompasses the behavioral construct in that the student confronts and problem-solves dilemmas as they occur and the educator resists rescuing. Situated sociocultural theory (participation) embraces the cognitive construct in that learning is grounded in the situation in which the person participates. It is not intellectual – as in reflecting and transferring the experience, instead its attaining knowledge by participating in human activity that occurs in a particular setting. Critical cultural learning theory (resistance) and enactivist learning theory (co-emergence) place themselves in the affective construct of experiential learning. Resistance occurs when oppression is made known and power tendencies are confronted. Co-emergence involves interacting and taking into account each others knowledge and understandings.



### *Implementation Considerations to Experiential Learning*

Writing on the theoretical principles related to human learning through learning from experience, Cantor (1995) stipulates several considerations that are fundamental to experiential learning – especially among adult learners. First, using Schön (1983) and Dewey (1938) in that adult learning and teacher preparation require reflection in the moment and that this reflective opportunity “comes about through learning from experience” (p. 41). Objectives and goals of education are better attained when thoughtful insight occurs when stimulated by action.

Second, Cantor (1995) argues that critical questioning followed by discussion is instrumental within experiential learning. Offering opportunities for constructive dialogue in experienced-oriented learning situations helps students to compare their current experiences and knowledge to the past. Furthermore, current knowledge and experience can challenge pre-existing values and add to a learner’s overall wisdom and experience. This practice within experiential learning develops a “contextual knowledge” (p. 42) in which learners are afforded the opportunity to explore, think, struggle with ideas, and establish opinions. Additionally, teachers who use experiential, contextual knowledge-based learning environments make it possible for learners to connect the learning to their beliefs and identities.

Third, Cantor (1995) describes how cognitive development is a construct of experiential learning. Establishing an environment which places the learner in the setting in which they will engage in authentic dilemmas and situations assists in establishing cognition. The placing of the learner in the environment, or a simulation of the environment, makes available to the learner a setting which functionally engages cognition. Cognitive development is most likely to occur in settings which permit fluidity (e.g. stability as well as change), are pluralistic (e.g. multiple

sources, interpretations and actions), are contextually social and or cultural and are “simultaneous, holistic, and predominately subconscious as well as conscious” (p. 42).

Cantor’s (1995) theoretical principles support the affective, behavioral and cognitive elements within experiential learning theory. Cantor’s theoretical assumptions of experience and reflection are associated within the behavioral construct and his inclusion of formatting experiences to develop contextual knowledge establishes an affective discourse within experiential learning. Lastly, Cantor’s theoretical and ideological stance of using environments that promote authentic conditions and consequences support the cognition element within experiential learning.

### Experiential Learning Methodologies

This section addresses learner needs as well as educator considerations when implementing experiential learning. A review of the strategies or methodologies that are common in the field of experiential learning are included. The methodologies referenced present aspects of external experience strategies in which the learner is expected to unite with their internal capabilities and thereby develop further learning.

#### *Determining Student Needs*

Since learners benefit from experiential approaches for a variety of reasons, the educator who decides to use experiential learning needs to consider the learning needs of the learners. Analyzing one’s learner population through surveys, questionnaires, and dialoging can assist the educator in choosing appropriate strategies to utilize because “experiential learning has proved to be a good practice for helping to reinforce learner mastery and thus promote successful learning for a multitude of learner groups” (Cantor,1995, p. 80). Cantor (1995) explains the various types of learning populations that an experiential learning instructor may encounter in the classroom.

These include: a) the adult learner who has been away from the formal classroom environment and possibly needs to be uplifted and motivated to learn again, b) the learner who is motivated by seeing and experiencing the subject to be learned, c) the learner who has not been successful in the past and needs contextual-type learning to motivate and reinforce that learning can be successful, and d) the learner who knowingly excels with experientially-based hands-on learning activities. Analyzing the learners' need(s) assists the educator in understanding the different approaches that may be necessary to accomplish and fulfill learning. However, as Cranton (2006) writes "it does not mean that we need to develop four or eight or sixteen ways of doing everything, but rather that we are conscious of the variety of responses to what we do and how the same act on our part can lead to completely different reactions" (p. 130).

There are other concerns or situations that should be considered when an educator proposes experiential learning activities for their learners. What is the nature of the learner population in the classroom? Some may teach in a very homogenous learner situation whereas others may teach in a classroom that is rich in diversity and culture. When a classroom has mixed learner populations along with a mixture of ages, learning styles, and goals and interests, an educator should intently look at experiential learning "as a tool that can aid any and all students in their learning mastery process and therefore aid the instructor in successfully teaching the subject – any subject" (Cantor, 1995, p. 81).

Another consideration for the experiential learning educator to take into account is the learners' ability and opportunity to interact with others in the group. A group that has little processing time, or none at all, may exhibit tendencies that inhibit interacting with fellow students of different social and cultural backgrounds. Experiential learning can help promote an awareness and understanding of others and an appreciation of cultural differences. Framed to

address social and cultural differences, experiential learning activities can be catalytic for promoting diversity within the classroom and beyond and “brings together people of different social, ethnic, and economic classes” (Cantor, 1995, p. 81).

Identifying activities of experiential learning that are most appropriate for a group is another aspect that beckons consideration. The experiential educator should consider the course of study and determine contextual learning techniques that reinforce cognitive development and build upon understanding the learning theories – in this case experiential learning. To assist with facilitating this, Cranton (2006) suggests using “learner decision making” (p. 129) to engage students with the educational strategies. Encouraging learners to decide on some or all of the topics for the course, suggesting that learners develop evaluative criteria for the course, regularly asking learners about their learning experience during the course, and providing learners with choices of methods to cover a topic (e.g. group discussion vs. online discussion) are some strategies Cranton (2006) suggests. Cantor (1995) suggests that once learning styles and needs are clarified, exercising appropriate experiential environs should be considered. Are classroom-based activities such as group projects, role plays, laboratories and experiments called for? What about external practices, such as fieldwork, practicums, or community-based experiences?

Whether classroom-based or externally driven, the educator who utilizes experiential learning into his or her teaching situation provides a stimulating learning environment for the learners. In addition, when the educator takes into account learner needs and learning styles, as well as learner characteristics and then exercises appropriate activities that reinforce the learning, the result is offering the learner an exciting and meaningful experience based upon experiential learning considerations of practice.

### *Experiential Learning Strategies*

This section deals directly with the enhancement of reflective and experiential learning by use of creative activities and processes. Moon (2004) states that whether simple or complex in nature, experiential learning activities present the learner with external experience “that she is expected to meet with her internal experience and thus develop further learning” (Moon, 2004, p. 159). Some exercises present material that is current and offer pictures of reality where other exercises fall into the world of imagination and futurism. Additionally, some exercises relate to ordinary and taken-for-granted instances in life and others propose creative means whereby the more intense or less predictable experience can be made aware of and examined.

#### *Implementing appropriate activities*

An educator, institution or organization that has decided to include experiential learning activities into the course programming must take into the nature of the activities that will meet the specific objectives of the courses of study. More specifically, an educator should consider which components of the course can be enhanced or instructed more effectively by implementing the use of experiential learning. For example, after performing a review of the instructional objectives of a course, it may be decided that an action-oriented approach is most suitable and the course should begin with an introductory ice-breaker activity or later in the course it “can involve acting out literature through a play in an English-literature class or actively using a laboratory in a biological-science class” (Cantor, 1995, p.82). Externally applied out of the classroom, this approach could also apply to learners observing local businesses or community organizations, performing internships, and conducting fieldwork.

Time is a consideration when using experiential learning activities, especially when using external, out-of-classroom field-based experiences. In some cases due to time constraints,

the educator may be able to conduct short-lived field experiences which occur outside the regular class time. If the educator can apply field-based experience, the external extension of the experiential learning activity “provides variety and keeps students interested and involved in the learning process” (Wurdinger, 2005, p.55). An example of internally-applied experiential learning to a course would be a Shakespeare course in which active discussions, debates, role-playing and acting out a portion of the play being studied would be conducted within the confines of the classroom. The class then attending an actual Shakespeare play – not necessarily the one being studied, would be an extension of the classroom experience and exemplify external experiential learning. Experiential learning can be applied to all subjects with some creativity and adding experiential learning to a curriculum takes additional planning time. Learners do not have to leave the classroom to engage in experiential learning. A creative, internal experientially-based learning experience can occur which provides the opportunity for learners “to test out their ideas and be engaged in the pattern of inquiry in the classroom” (p.55). The important mechanisms here are for the educator to identify how experiential learning can be implemented into their course, take the time to appropriate meaningful activities and ultimately provide learners with an educational experience they love and feel alive with.

#### *Action learning sets*

Action learning is a remarkable experiential learning methodology (Marquardt, 2007; Silberman, 2007; Wurdinger, 2005; Moon, 2004) that has been associated with building leaders, teams and organizations. The main purpose behind action learning is to support a project or enhance a program that is already occurring. Generally there is an individual, team or organization that presents a project to a set of members who in turn will listen, discuss, reflect and problem solve the project with the expectation that implementing the project is achieved. In

essence, all forms of action learning “share the elements of real people resolving and taking action on real problems in real time and learning while doing” (Silberman, 2007, p. 95). The principles that guide the use of action learning includes the existence of an important and critical problem, a diverse people that represent all departments of the organization, a reflective examination process, a commitment to learning by all members of the set, and development of an action plan that “could be a change in practice, or a particular activity” (Moon, 2004, p. 160).

A closer look at the guiding principals of action learning is explained by Marquardt (2007) who establishes procedural guidance for inclusion of this experiential learning strategy for situations that are in need to resolve real issues and problems or implement a project:

1. An individual, team or organization must have a challenge, task, problem or issue of extreme importance that should provide for the group learning opportunities, build knowledge, and develop individual, team and organizational skills.
2. “The core entity in action learning is the action learning group (also called a set or team)” (p.97). The group is ideally comprised of four to eight individuals that represent the organization wholly and who examine a problem that has no easily identifiable solution.
3. Action learning emphasizes insightful questioning of and reflective listening to statements and opinions. First, questions are asked to help clarify the exact problem and secondly, reflecting upon the questions and identifying possible solutions occurs.
4. Members of the action learning group decide on a solution and take action.

Marquardt (2007) emphasizes that the action learning group must have the power to take action or be assured that their recommendations will be implemented and if the group is

only allowed to make recommendations, “it loses its energy, creativity, and commitment” (p.97) to solving the problem.

5. An action that is implemented provides immediate, short-term benefits. However, there’s a greater, long-term benefit that is gained. When the group as well as the entire system as a whole takes part in the action, then “learnings are applied on a system-wide basis throughout the organization. Thus the learning that occurs...has greater value strategically for the organization than the immediate tactical advantage of early problem correction” (p.98).

6. Effective coaching through the action learning process is important for the organization to achieve the benefits of this strategy. The coach doesn’t take sides, instead through questioning the coach encourages group members to reflect on their listening skills, how they frame their questions to others about the problem, how they respond to and give feedback, how they are planning and working, and keeps the group focused on achieving the ultimate goal – a solution to the problem.

Action learning can be a powerful learning experience, generating tremendous personal, intellectual and social growth. Learners engaged in action learning can experience heightened awareness when they become attuned to the need to reach beyond their conscious beliefs and assumptions. This approach to experiential learning helps develop critical listening and reflective skills, the ability to adapt and change, and enhances problem, strategy, presentation and facilitation skills (Marquardt, 2007).

### *Learning games*

There’s a multitude of learning games ranging from broad, multiple outcomes initiative-type games and activities (Rohnke, 1994, 1991, 1989, 1984) to more targeted activities that are



geared to achieve certain group specific outcomes (Silberman, 2007; Ukens, 2007; Moon, 2004). Learning games are a common approach for conducting training sessions that stem from our early experiences of play as children. Play is essential to one's development, and as adults we can incorporate early learning experiences creatively into our adult real world "where we can practice behaviors and improve on our mistakes" (Silberman, 2007, p. 125). A game-based activity that provides challenge and opportunities to confront real obstacles with real feelings and generates feelings of success will be interesting to adults, "even if the situation is a virtual one" (p. 125).

Hands on, learner-centered games can be added to a course of study to stimulate discussion and assist in summarizing, illustrating, or emphasizing a learning in a very innovative and enjoyable way. Learning games that follow an experiential learning approach (e.g. include reflection) are often very flexible in meeting the needs of a variety of learning styles and can be applied to a range of situations, virtually any subject matter, any segment of the workforce, and to any training segment. Beyond being enjoyable and fun, learning games are regarded as a means to an end and a way of facilitating experiential learning (Ukens, 2007).

Due to the vast number of different types of games and activities available, Ukens (2007) also stipulates that an educator needs to examine how and when learning games or activities are best used in terms of process, content, and audience. When choosing among the thousands of published games and activities the educator/facilitator should be familiar with the various types of experiential games that are most appropriate to the specific needs for the task at hand and be flexible when implementing the game. For example, at the beginning of a course or program what are good "name games" for the group? If the group is already familiar with names of group members, then a "tweaking" to the game occurs in which the members announce their names

along with an action and pantomimed that begins with the first letter of their first name (e.g. Drumming Dave, Patient Patricia, Excited Ed) and everyone follows suit naming and pantomiming the action along with their first name and then must repeat everyone before them. This kind of adaptation takes place when the facilitator has taken into account the history and familiarity of the group making the activity of just another name game rather an initiative activity that is active, participation-centered and that fosters active listening, imagination, improvisation, interaction and laughter.

The adaptability that is used when engaging experiential learning games and activities is a feature that experiential educators practice. Learning games and activities that are experientially-based generally have four critical features: a) obstacles that prevent the solution or achievement of a goal (*conflict*), b) rules that control different aspects of play (*control*), c) a special or unique condition that signals how the game ends (*closure*), and d) some built-in inefficiencies that allow a degree of adaptability in the degree of play (*contrivance*). When experiential games and activities are used in training situations, a fifth characteristic is used – *competency*. The objective of the competency feature in an experientially-based game or activity used in a training situation is meant to improve the player's competency in a particular area (Ukens, 2007).

Outward Bound courses routinely foster the features that Ukens (2007) describes that are characteristic of the methodology of experiential learning activities and games. For example, during backpack expeditioning and land navigation, the Outward Bound instructors pose to the crew of Outward Bound participants the route that they are to embark upon that has unique characteristics that test the crew's competence in land navigation (e.g. many trail junctions to negotiate). This exemplifies the *conflict* and *competency* feature. Secondly, the Outward Bound

instructors place *controls* or specific rules to the crew (e.g. must place stick arrows and rock cairns at all trail junctions and must remain together at all times while expeditioning). Third, the Outward Bound instructors consider the crew's adaptability or ability to *contrive* the route (e.g. if off-trail hiking is decided upon, then learners must place strips of surveyor tape on tree branches every 50 feet). Lastly, the route is completed (*closure*) when the crew arrives at the destination arranged for by the instructors when the route was originally explained.

Experiential learning games and activities also consist of situating learners within parameters that have been recognized as means of supporting experiential learning. A listing and brief explanation of some noted means are offered and how they are used on Outward Bound courses (Lauber, 2007; Lord, 2007; Remer, 2007; Silberman, 2007; Ukens, 2007; Moon, 2004):

1. *Simulations*. A simulation is a contrived situation that contains enough reality to instill a real-world response by those participating in the event. On an Outward Bound (OB) course, simulating and assisting a rescue litter lowering of a fallen climber is initiated for the crew to engage in.
2. *Process simulations*. Process simulations involve plausible but imaginary situations in which group members are free to learn about how their behavior affects others and involve the ways that one's beliefs, assumptions, goals, and actions may be hindered or assisted when interacting with others. On North Carolina Outward Bound courses, the instructors engage the crew in a discussion regarding the movie *Deliverance* and interacting with people of southern Appalachia.
3. *Role Plays*. Although similar to simulations, role playing differs in the degree to which the participant controls the simulated environment, the amount of decision making that occurs, and is usually used when teaching awareness of soft skills. On OB courses,

role playing could occur in a skit on communication styles (passive, aggressive or argumentative, and determined) when confronting problems and disagreements.

4. *Human inquiry groups*. Human inquiry groups are groups that come together for a limited period of time to explore, learn and research aspects of human behavior or the condition of being human. On OB courses, the instructors initiate a discussion on an upcoming service component involving the OB crew volunteering at a homeless shelter.

5. *Action research*. Action research involves a process of linking experience and the potential for change through discussion and reflection and may be associated with staff development or an issue in the workplace. At OB All-Staff Training, discussing and reflecting how diversity training is dealt with on OB courses to OB participants.

6. *Problem-based learning (PBL)*. Learners are exposed to a problem in which they are to solve in a topic area, rather than the content knowledge about a topic. They have to gather information, research, and integrate the knowledge in order to solve the problem. On OB courses, often times “established initiatives” (e.g. The Wall) as well as “mobile initiatives” (e.g. Plane Crash) require the crew members to attain limited information about the initiative from the instructors and then work together to solve the problem.

7. *Adventure learning*. Adventure learning involves a specific subset of experiential learning wherein the outcome of the experience is never guaranteed and includes actual and perceived risk or hazard (physical, mental, and/or emotional) as well as action, uncertainty and challenge. This is what OB conducts its course in – the rivers, mountains and cliffs where no one knows for certain that the environment and all that occurs on and in it is what is expected.

8. *Story telling*. Stories can offer an abundance of opportunities for promoting insight in others. Stories are powerful tools for experiential learning because they have the power to move learners away from their usual, comfortable setting and transport them to encounter something new. OB course instructors are expected to tell the Kurt Hahn and OB story to course participants as well as any other pertinent, local historical stories of the course area they are in to further engage the learner in the OB experience.

9. *Reflective practice*. Expanding upon the works of Kolb and Schön, Remer (2007) proposes the GURU questioning process which combines reflection *in* the moment with reflection *about* the moment. “G” refers to ground questions (those that assist the learner in recalling); “U” refers to understanding-type questions (those that assist the learner in understanding the situation in a larger context); “R” refers to revising-type questions (learner thinks of modifications they might make to their actions or attitudes), and “U” refers to Use-type questions (those that are asked to assist the learner plan their next actions and use what they learned). In OB courses, reflecting and reflection occur through journal writing as well as debriefing activities and occurrences. Instilled in OB methodology is the assumption that the OB participant can apply the learning they have experienced beyond the OB course.

10. *Metaphors*. Similar to storytelling, yet fundamentally different, metaphors help learners visualize the idea or concept that the instructor is trying to explain by applying an analogy from another domain. In NCOB courses, I routinely use the metaphor activity “River of Life” with crew members when on the Chattooga River. The crew is instructed to draw a river in their journals and place on their river where their “put-in” is (this represents their birth), rapids of various difficulty (representing turbulent and difficult

times in their life), beaches (representing peaceful, relaxing times), and “eddies” – which is a calm area of water in the immediate vicinity of a rapid (this represents times where they had to stop and look at options that lay before them before proceeding).

The methodologies or strategies of experiential learning generate tremendous personal, intellectual, psychological and social growth and change. Learners who are exposed to action learning and experiential learning activities and games experience “breakthrough learning” (Ukens, 2007, p.108) when they become aware of their comfort zones and are able to extend beyond their self-perceived limits, challenging their assumptions about present worldviews and establish a readiness to change and grow. Ukens (2007) establishes clear and specific skills and abilities that learners develop when participating in experiential learning methodologies. Experientially-informed learners develop: a) critical reflection skills, b) inquiry and questioning abilities, c) systems thinking so that they see things in a less linear, accurate fashion, d) ability to adapt and change, e) enhance communication skills and greater self-awareness, f) empathy, g) problem-solving and strategy-selection skills, and h) presentation and facilitation skills. An educator, who uses experiential learning strategies, whether wholly or selectively, can stimulate their students to become more engaged in their learning and therefore more substantially educated and aware of their capabilities.

### Reflective Practice

The experiential learning model that David Kolb (1984) formulated uses the learning processes and ideas of Piaget, Lewin, Dewey, as well as Freire and Jung. Kolb (1984) acknowledges that all the models offered suggest that learning by its very nature is a tension and conflict-filled process. In addition, new knowledge, skills, or attitudes are achieved when the four modes of experiential learning are confronted. Specifically, Kolb stresses that in order for

the learning to be effective, four different kinds of abilities must occur – concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities. The learner must be able to involve themselves fully, openly, and without prejudicial tendencies and be able to reflect on and observe their experiences from different points of view. Furthermore, the experiential learner must be able to create concepts and experiences that utilize their observations and explain the phenomena that have occurred and then apply those concepts to make decisions and solve problems.

Kolb (1984) stresses that experience alone is not sufficient for learning; it is critical that “something must be done with” (p. 42). This *something* that Kolb stresses is the complexity of reflective practice which follows the experience. The reflection that he references involves the learner being analytical and objective when comprehending the experience. It is imperative that the learner internally reflects on the experience if the experience is to be influential to the learner.

With applying the praxis of reflection, the learner experiences a change or shift in the frame of reference used to engage and experience life, evaluate activities and make choices. For a reflective person, attending to developmental awakenings may bring a new sense of risk; opening up new dimensions. Through internal reflection, rather than just being influenced, the learner now sees opportunities to influence others. For the learner who utilizes the reflective dimension, “the emergence of the reflective side broadens the range of choice and deepens the ability to sense implications for actions” (Kolb, 1984, p. 145).

This consciousness-raising notion of reflection that Kolb (1984) eludes to has paved the way for increased, higher-order forms of reflection to be processed and studied. However, Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) state, “Kolb does not discuss the nature of his stage of reflection and

observation in much detail” (p.13). Although Kolb’s work is important fundamentally, I need to include others’ works that offer specific reflective practices that are conducive to my research.

### *Contributions to Reflective Practice*

The concept of *knowing-in-action* (Schön, 1983) is understood as a process in which spontaneous, intuitive performance of actions occurs and that in turn describes oneself as knowledgeable in a special way. Most often so tacitly performed, when questioned about our performance of a distinct performance, “when we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate” (Schön, 1983, p.49). This knowing is ordinarily implied, but not expressed, however is implicit in our individual patterns of action and in our feel, or instinct for the special knowledge with which we are conducting ourselves. For example, in white-water canoeing when people who know how to perform eddy turns with a canoe, respond by saying that the bow paddler initiates the appropriate bow stroke and the stern paddler responds accordingly with the appropriate stern stroke. What is missing here is the importance of leaning into the turn to compliment the strokes. Not leaning will most likely render the eddy turn sloppy and not tight; fortunately however, the know-how implicit in the experienced paddlers actions is incongruent with their description of it.

Schön (1987) also adds that even with tacitly applied performance people often think about what they are doing, sometimes even while doing it. Stimulated often by surprise, they turn thought back on action and on the knowing which is indicated in the action. Schön (1987) stipulates that people may respond to the element of surprise by preserving the pattern of knowing-in-action by responding to it in one of two ways. They may reflect *on* action, thinking back on what they have done in order to discover how their knowing-in-action may have contributed to the unexpected outcome or they may pause in the midst of action and make a



difference to the situation at hand – “our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it. I shall say, in cases like this, that we reflect-*in-action*” (Schön, 1987, p.26).

Schön (1987) introduces a sequence of moments that assist defining a process of reflection-in-action. He is careful to say however, that moments of reflection-in-action are rarely as distinct from one another as he has made them out to be. The five descriptors that Schön (1987) offers that are epistemically relative to reflection-in-action practices are:

1. To begin with, a situation of action to which spontaneous, routinized responses can be generated. Based initially from a knowing-in-action situation that may be described in terms of strategies, understandings of phenomena, and ways of framing a task or problem associated to the situation. The knowing-in-action situation is conducted successfully and is tacit and spontaneous producing intended outcomes falling within the boundaries of what was learned.
2. A surprise is produced from the routine responses or actions. The surprise is unexpected and may be pleasant or unpleasant and does not fit the expected outcomes of the knowing-in-action. Imperative in this surprise is that it draws attention.
3. The surprise leads to reflection within an action-present – a period of time. The reflection is conscious to some extent and need not occur in words. Consideration of the unexpected event and the knowing-in-action that led up to it takes place and questioning commences, such as, “What is this?” and at the same time, “How did this come to be?” and “How have I been acting or thinking about it?” Thought processes return back to the surprising phenomenon and, at the same time, back on itself.
4. Critical analysis of the reflection-in-action takes places in which the assumptional structure of knowing-in-action is questioned. Thinking and thought processes about what

actually happened that landed us into this situation or opportunity occurs; and in this process, restructuring strategies of action, understandings of phenomena, and ways of framing problems takes place.

5. Reflection segues to on-the-spot experimentation. New and different actions and strategies related to the new phenomena are thought about and tried. With this exploration of new processes, results may be favorable and suitable, or on-the-spot experimentation may produce surprises that call for further reflection and experiment.

As was stated, Schön (1987) offers these descriptions, but notes that they are idealized. Moments of reflection-in-action are rarely as distinct as he outlines. The experience of surprise may be construed in such a way as to seem already explained. The knowing-in-action may be restructured and criticized into a single process. Regardless of the distinctiveness of the moments of reflection-in-action, Schön (1987) is adamant in saying that “What distinguishes reflection-in-action from other forms of reflection is its immediate significance for action” (p.29). The rethinking of some part of one’s knowing-in-action leads to on-the-spot experimentation and further reflection that affects what we do, how we perform and how we act – in the present situation and possibly also in others that are considered similar to it.

Additionally, Schön (1987) points out the subtleness between reflection and knowing-in-action. He explains how a skilled performer adjusts his responses to *variations* in phenomena. In the moment-by-moment particulars of a process, the skilled performer deploys a wide-ranging repertoire of actions and applications. A white-water paddler will respond differently to a rapid during high water than from the same rapid on another day and week when water levels are below normal. In this example, we can say that the paddler responds to *variations* rather than

*surprise* because the changes in contexts and response never exceed the boundaries of the familiar.

Are there limitations to the application of reflecting-in-action? Schön (1983) suggests that reflection-on-action tends to occur when reflection-in-action isn't feasible. For instance, "when on the firing line; if we stop to think, we may be dead" (p.277) as well as in situations where stopping or pausing may disrupt the smooth flow of the action. Schön (1983) states that moments relating to being on the firing line or in the midst of traffic where there is an immediate, on-line response necessary and failing to do so could result in serious consequences do happen but are few and far between. The period of time that one remains in the same situation and can reflect, referred to action-present, varies greatly from case to case and that in many situations there *is* time to think about what one is doing. "Even when the action-present is brief, performers can train themselves to think about their actions and gauge the time available for reflection correctly and integrates his reflection into the smooth flow of action" (p.279).

David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker (1985) offer good insight as to what constitutes reflection in learning. Important in the process is in the role of a teacher, facilitator, or instructor to allow the learner to "draw upon prior experience and to provide opportunities for them to be engaged actively in what they are learning" and that "experience alone is not the key to learning" (p. 7). They also reveal that the skill of experiential learning that people tend to be most deficient in is reflection and that by simply raising the consciousness level in people of what reflection in learning involves and how it can influence learning then, as educators we "may be able to improve our own practice of learning and help those who learn with it" (p.8).

Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) make apparent the components that relate to reflection and experiential learning: preparation, engagement in an activity, and then the processing of

what has been experienced. Important to these phases is the understanding that reflection occurs in all three stages.

In the preparatory phase, students are reflective when they begin to explore what is required of them, what are the demands of the setting they are in and what resources are available to them as well as what they have to bring. Typically there is a heightened sense of anxiety present with students in the preparation stage. A reflective reply to this would be some students responding with additional planning and others by incorporating an amount of advanced planning.

The second phase presented by Boud et al. (1985) is the reflective nuances that typically occur in some form or another during the actual field experience. Initially the experience may generate overwhelming feelings and new observations may occur so frequently and rapidly that students may find that field work is more exhausting than they anticipated. Processing information in the field may be difficult and even non-existent for a time. Boud et al. (1985) point out that short duration experiences of a week or so may result in the student not coming to terms with the relationship between theory and practice until they return back to their typical surroundings or institution. Even then they may require that they engage in considerable debriefing to bring closure and to make the necessary connections and transference of what they have learned.

Thirdly, if there is some formal amount of framing the experience around reflection, the student processes what has been learned after the field experience has been completed. If related to a course of study, they may refer to notes, gather their memories and try to recreate an account of the noticeable features they believe are required by their teachers. Even if students are not required to submit a post-experiential account to their teachers, they may still find that reflecting

after the experience has occurred is beneficial to them. They may realize the experience has revealed things that are left undone, questions that still have to be answered and issues that need to be addressed.

These components and the reflective involvement they allow, as depicted by Boud et al. (1985), relate to my context in being a North Carolina Outward Bound instructor. In relation to the first phase referencing preparation, it is evident when participants first arrive to their course area which participants took the time and energy to prepare not only physically, but also mentally and organizationally (e.g. physically trained and critiqued and, if needed changed their diet prior to their course starting, obtained the necessary clothing as listed in the pre-course information packet).

As Boud et al. (1985) depict during the field experience, the first few days, especially the first two days are filled to capacity with training items during an Outward Bound course (e.g. safety talk, packing a backpack, cooking with a camp stove, proper cleaning of food utensils utilizing Leave No Trace practices, erecting tarps, and expeditioning with backpacks, etc.). Outward Bound courses are framed this way to facilitate the self-reliance and directedness that Outward Bound affords its participants. This being the case, it may be very difficult for the Outward Bound participant to reflect in their journal during the first few days when “information saturation” is occurring or, as Boud et al. (1985) state, “they struggle to write up their notes in the tent in the evening” and “there is little or no time to think about it” (p.10).

As the Outward Bound course continues, Boud’s et al. (1985) third and final phase regarding reflection after the field experience takes place. During the final day of an Outward Bound course participants are afforded the opportunity to reflect on their recently completed course by completing a form entitled “Final Course Impressions.” This shadows Boud et al.’s

(1985) notion of reflecting after the experience is finished. However, as an Outward Bound instructor, I provide definitive time for participants to reflect into their journals throughout their experience. For instance, after completing the rock climbing component, I have asked crews to enter into their journals responses to a metaphor I present them. The instructions are something like this: “Now that you’ve completed this rock climbing component, I’d like you to write into your journals:

As a climber:

- 1) Who in my life represents the anchor(s)?
- 2) Who in my life represents the belayer?
- 3) Who in my life represents the rope?
- 4) Who in my life represents the carabiners and other climbing gear used?”

At the evening meeting, I then offer participants time to share their journal entries if they choose to do so. The results are usually the pouring out of very strong and emotional responses associated with the metaphor exercise and an awareness of appreciating those people in our lives. Boud et al. (1985) state it nicely when they say that in this final phase involving reflection “They begin to make sense of the experience. In this process the student will realize many things left undone, questions unasked...All this is a part of the learning process” (p. 10).

Reinforcing the components that relate to reflection and experiential learning, Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) offer and identify three points that should be kept in mind regarding reflection and learning. First, and most pointedly, only the students can learn and only they can reflect on their own experiences. Educators can intervene and frame reflective processes, but

they only have access to students' thoughts and feelings through what the student chooses to reveal about themselves and their experiences.

Secondly, Boud et al. (1985) describe the reflection on learning they propose as purposeful and is driven by intent in which the educator formats activities that incorporate reflection. They write that it is understandable that people can meditate and daydream and that it is helpful to have periods of reflection that are associated with conscious reflection, however, the reflection that they are referencing pertains to goal-directed critical reflection.

Lastly, the reflective process is complex and involves cognitive and as well affective domains. Negative feelings, especially directed at oneself, can be powerful and be problematic and form barriers to the students' learning resulting in distorted perceptions, false interpretation of events, as well as undermining their will to succeed and participate effectively. Conversely, positive feelings and emotions can greatly influence and empower the learning process; they can keep the student on task and provide a foundation for additional learning.

Boud and Walker (1991) acknowledge that they have written extensively on aspects of reflection; however their previous work focused more on reflection after the experience. They still consider their previous work valid, however they emphasize in their later work that "It is our view that these elements are just as much part of reflection during the experience as they are of reflection after it" (p.19). The *these* that the quote is referring to are the qualities or phases that Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) state are critical elements of reflection: returning to the experience, attending to feelings and re-evaluating the experience. They offer additional insight of these elements that occur within or during the context of the experience and capture these elements with contextual questions: What is happening, how do I feel and what does it mean (Boud & Walker, 1991)?

*What is happening?* The reflective process needs to be connected to the event which is occurring. The more connected and involved learners are with the context and features of what is/are unfolding, the more creative and effective the experience can be. This involvement in the experience is what Boud and Walker (1991) claim includes perceiving (what is going on in both the situation and the learner) and intervening (involves the learner reaching out to explore, test the data that's been processed and to express the learning acquired).

The interaction between learners and the learning milieu is an integral part of the experience. Particularly important is for the learner to be aware of their feelings, their thoughts, and their actions that may be generated as a result of reflection. Reflecting in the experience is simply capturing the experience and "being in continual touch with it, being aware of all that is happening and trying to grasp the situation as it is, including feelings that are generated" (Boud & Walker, 1991, p. 20).

*How do I feel?* Whether reflecting during or after, feelings significantly influence experience. On occasion the emotional reactions can be so powerful that one's rationality is obscured which may produce unthinkable perceptions and place limits on our true abilities. On other occasions they may foster the development of confidence and self-reliance which can lead to increased heights in self-worth that previously may have been not known or inaccessible. Feeling can restrict or enhance what is perceived during the experience. By noticing our reflective tone of our involvement in the experience, we can assert feelings that will either deepen or inhibit our involvement (Boud & Walker, 1991).

*What does it mean?* Connecting with the experience and attending to feelings opens the door for learners to evaluate more freely the experience itself. Boud and Walker have identified four aspects of re-evaluation: association, integration, validation and appropriation. They stress



that these aspects should not be regarded or thought of as stages but parts of a whole; that some parts may precede others.

Association is linking together the data obtained from reflecting in or after the experience to learnings in the past. By associating new conceptions to existing cognitive structures, new ideas and feelings can be tested and possibly integrated to influence the learner intellectually and affectively.

Integration involves processing the material gained from the current experience and from pre-existing knowledge in order to bring meaningfulness and usefulness. The aim is to synthesize the current learnings to past knowledge to provide a foundation of further searching and learning. Boud and Walker (1991) offer that this process, although seemingly related to reflection after the experience, is also applicable to reflection within the experience; the processing may take place more quickly as learners meet the need to respond to the demands around them. They point out that if facilitators afford opportunities to learners that provide more deliberate reflection during experience, then meaningfulness and value can be known in the present rather than later and after the experience.

Validation scrutinizes the new learning to past learnings resulting in exploring the new learning more fully and/or intervening in such a way as to understand and express it. When reflecting within the experience, validation can sometimes take place immediately and prompt processing of working through the learning may take place. Validating while in experience provides the basis for incorporating the new learning “into the basic store of the knowledge that forms our past learning” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p. 22).

Appropriation is the final acceptance of the new learning; it becomes a part of our value system – “this is how this task *must* be tackled!” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p. 22). The learning

has such profound power and qualities that often other learnings are interpreted in the scope of it. Appropriated knowledge may involve strong emotions and therefore radically alter the way other data is processed and appropriated. Facilitators need to be aware of how important the knowledge is to the individual so to not offend and transgress.

As I reflect on how these re-evaluation principles in an Outward Bound context apply to the reflective learner, I think of Leave No Trace practices that are incorporated into every Outward Bound course. For instance, when *associating* Leave No Trace (LNT) camping practices the Outward Bound participant is taught the less impactful environmental means relative to setting up and performing camping functions (e.g. site selection, washing/hygiene, tent/tarp placement, cooking and cleaning) and realizes that their past camping practices were highly impactful to the environment (e.g. washing with soap in the stream). When *integrating* LNT camping practices the Outward Bound participant realizes the meaningfulness of LNT and how by practicing LNT concepts, the environment is less impacted upon and therefore other users in the future are afforded a healthy ecosystem. *Validating* may occur as the LNT-educated Outward Bound participant realizes past horrific camping practices they engaged in prior and when home and camping on their own and with friends continue to practice LNT concepts and even express their LNT discoveries they learned while attending Outward Bound. *Appropriation* occurs when the Outward Bound LNT educated learner walks onto a trashed campsite and is so furious and enraged that the participant/learner takes it upon themselves to clean the area and even recruit others that may be nearby to assist in the event.

#### Outdoor Adventure-based Education

Outdoor education involves the learning of *any* subject matter outside the traditional classroom (Garrison, 1966; Rillo, 1985) while other sources have explained outdoor education as

learning that occurs in *wilderness contexts* (Gair, 1997; Hammerman, Hammerman & Hammerman, 1985; Martin, Franc & Zounková, 2004). Adventure education is a field that combines personal growth and social skills with definitive cognitive work and has been linked to learning that occurs in a wilderness context (Gass, 1998). There has been significant progress in adventure education that is referred to as adventure-based education and uses all sorts, settings and environments and has evolved from an almost wilderness-only setting where one had to travel to get to “to a variety of venues, equipment, and content applications” (Prouty, Panicucci & Collinson, p.11, 2007). For the purpose of this literature review, this section of the review will research outdoor education *and* adventure-based education sources that involve innovative, direct, active and engaging learning experiences “that involve the whole person and have real consequences (p. 12). Outdoor and adventure-based education is an emerging and evolving field of education and to effectively evaluate this field several essential components are reviewed that characterize both outdoor and adventure-based education.

#### *Evolution of Outdoor and Adventure-based Education*

Outdoor education’s curricular development in America began in 1930 and was historically known by a variety of terms, such as camping education, school camping, and resident outdoor education (Hammerman, 1980). However, there are several noted philosophical roots or “earlier events and activities that contributed to or helped to nurture the genesis of that development” (p. xv). John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was an advocate of sensory learning who believed that experiencing through one’s senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing and tasting prior to reading about the object of study was critical to one’s overall learning. He argued for the importance of: a) the interconnection of theory and experience, b) the interrelationship between school subjects, and c) encouraging self-directed and self-motivated study and problem-solving

(Martin et al., 2004). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) building on Comenius' work believed that physical activity was very important in education. Rousseau advocated that education should be more sensory and rational and less literary and linguistic; that learning through direct experience is better than learning indirectly from books. Johann Henrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) emphasized direct, firsthand experiences and real situations. In addition to teaching the traditional academic subjects, he used the school yard for nature study and geology. Other philosophers who embraced the notion of "learning by doing" includes Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776- 1841) and Herbert Spencer (1820 – 1903) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and philosopher-educators John Dewey (1859-1952), Alfred North Kilpatrick (1871-1965), and William James (1842-1910) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hammerman, 1980).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several historical occurrences affected educational programming in the United States: the World Wars and the Great Depression. Undernourishment of children and congested living prompted reappraisal of the objectives of education. The result which ensued was that school systems and state departments of education revised curricula and developed new programs which involved instructional experimentation. The evolvement of camping education, or outdoor education was one of these developments. Additionally, during the postwar period, people turned to the outdoors for family vacations and recreation. Outdoor equipment supply catalogs became popular and state and national parks began to overflow with campers each summer (Hammerman, Hammerman & Hammerman, 1985).

Another educational development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the *child-centered school* which consisted of orienting activities that provided the "learner with concrete acquaintance with the physical world, and the world of plants and animals" (Hammerman, et al., 1985). Furthermore, *community schools* began forming where the school became the agency through which

community involvement would take place and the focus of book learning supplemented firsthand experience of community life.

The educational needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century vary differently from the last century due to today's information age and the added value in the workplace of the "knowledge worker" (Prouty, Panicucci & Collinson, 2007, p. 5). Prouty et al. (2007) describe skills that are expected of the knowledge worker in today's workplace. They are a) collaborative teamwork capabilities, b) creative problem-solving and product development, c) communication with passion and skill to influence others, and d) a sense of ethics and corporate responsibility for the greater community. Outdoor adventure-based education is poised to meet these expected skills and through a variety of experiential learning techniques and concepts can "create a classroom of orchestrated immersion" (p. 5). Orchestrated immersion in a learning environment means that students are alert and relaxed, feel accepted and safe and take risks knowingly to grow and learn – which occurs in outdoor/adventure education. Whether the learning is experientially-oriented in schools or classrooms, peak-experience fieldtrips or character education programs, more and more students today are exposed to adventure education and "at least receive some of the social and emotional skills necessary to succeed in this century" (p.6).

#### *Types of Outdoor Education Programs*

Outdoor education programs often depend on curriculum goals of the program as well as human, material and natural resource availability. Rillo (1985) classifies general characteristics that define different types of outdoor programs:

1. *Resident* or *long-term*-type outdoor programs usually include living in an outdoor setting for an intensive and extended period of time, which may be of a week or more.

2. *Day-long or short-term*-type outdoor programs usually include all-day trips, field trips, individual research investigations and work projects.
3. *Recreational*-type outdoor programs are usually devoted to day trips, weekend outings, and overnight campouts which encompass a recreation-only emphasis.
4. *Cultural and aesthetic enrichment*-type outdoor programs in which the outdoors provide the setting for music, drama, art, dance and other performing arts activities.

The review focuses on the resident or long and short-term outdoor adventure-based programs and their characteristics, objectives and programming. The earlier types of outdoor adventure programs emphasized personal growth through physical challenge and allowing the “mountains to speak for themselves.” Later programs added an intellectual component by processing the experience through facilitation and reflection. However, what have been advocated recently are approaches in outdoor adventure-based education that balance “physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of personal development (Martin, Franc & Zoukova, 2004, p. 7). The learning or enhancement of these aspects of personal development does not necessarily have to only take place in a rugged, wilderness setting. Outdoor adventure-based education programs can often extend beyond the traditional classroom. Hammerman et al., (1985) offer that whether the school campus, a business’s courtyard or using the local park, many potential outdoor teaching sites can be located inside the city limits or within a few miles of most communities and it was this utilization of local resources that prompted Kurt Hahn to use with his students which is now referred to as adventure education.

Outdoor adventure education-based programs began with Kurt Hahn. Educated and influenced by the works of Plato, Baden Powell and Cecil Reddie, Hahn’s learning-style approach in using the outdoor environment to enhance overall learning became the impetus of

adventure education. Adventure education programs did occur prior to Hahn; however Hahn's contributions to the field are enormous and are what most adventure-based outdoor education programs are based on today. Prouty et al. (2007) provide a chronological list of what they term as *Milestones in Adventure Education*. The time line represents examples of types of adventure education programs and key contributors in both Europe and the United States:

1. *1910 to 1920: Whole-Child Camping Experiences in the United States:* The YMCA, YWCA and American Youth Foundation addressed the needs of the whole child and used hiking, camping and cooperative play in its educative programming. William H. Danforth, founder of the AYF believed that camp can assist in developing a child's social, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions.
2. *1920 to 1932: Kurt Hahn's First Schools:* The schools that were founded by Hahn (Salem School, Germany and Gordonstoun, Scotland) were developed to build character and resilience through education. Challenging physical activities and academics were equally balanced to develop the whole person.
3. *1920 to 1940: John Dewey's Progressive Education:* It was Dewey that advocated a combination of hands-on practical experience with classroom work all within a high level of democracy. Often cited and used by others that developed educational theories (e.g. Kolb); Dewey's models to education and school practices have been adopted by participatory schools that use adventure education in its curricula.
4. *1946: Outward UK:* Kurt Hahn introduced the first Outward Bound School in Aberdovey, Wales in which students experienced a month-long course of intense physical, emotional and mental challenges to instill a sense of physical fitness, craftsmanship, tenacity in spirit, self-reliance, service and compassion.

5. *1955 to 1965: Wilderness Therapeutic Camps*: Campbell Loughmiller, who authored the book *Wilderness Road* in 1965, founded a series of wilderness camps established for at-risk children and included activities such as hiking and canoeing.
6. *1960 to 1970: Outward Bound USA*: Josh Miner, who taught with Kurt Hahn in the UK, introduced Outward Bound methodology in the United States. By 1970 there were four schools in the United States that used the month-long intense challenge methodology established by Kurt Hahn. Beginning in the 1970's and occurring today, Outward Bound includes in its programming the development of personal skills and became the largest organization in the field of adventure education, "a position that it retains today" (p. 8).
7. *1964: Student Conservation Association (SCA)*: The SCA was developed to instill in youth volunteers natural resource conservation and environmental stewardship. The SCA is still active in the United States and provides service opportunities, outdoor skills and leadership training to young men and women each year.
8. *1965: National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)*: Paul Petzoldt founded NOLS after helping to find and working for two years with the Colorado Outward Bound School. His vision for NOLS was to use extended wilderness expeditions to develop and train participants in the skills necessary, technical as well as interpersonal and judgment skills, for leading others in the wilderness.
9. *1971: Project Adventure (PA)*: The concept of PA originated with another Outward Bound-influenced person – Jerry Pieh. Jerry's vision was to make the benefits of Outward Bound be available to everyone, especially to educators, who with training, can then apply adventure education into curricula. Today, PA has become the leader



- in providing facilities-based training and development for teachers and counselors, all using PA's cornerstone applications of *Full-Value Contract* and *Challenge by Choice*.
10. *1972: Association for Experiential Education (AEE)*: The AEE was founded on the principle of promoting the study and dissemination of experiential education. Early incorporators were mostly Outward Bound, NOLS or Project Adventure staff; however, today the AEE remains the recognized leader of the adventure movement with large international attendance and specializing on accreditation and increased research in the field.
  11. *1978: Publication of Cowstails and Cobras*: This book, written by Karl Rohnke – another Outward Bound-influenced person, and published by Project Adventure, outlined the PA approach to physical education and offered instructions on initiative games and activities, as well as instructions on constructing low and high ropes courses. With more than 30,000 copies sold, “thousands of ropes courses were constructed in the fields and woods behind schools, camps, and colleges all over the world” (p. 9).
  12. *1979 to 1980: Executive Challenge*: Tony Langston, a professor at Boston University, using a ropes course and considerable concentration with corporate training, was the first example of a facilities-based corporate training program using adventure education.
  13. *1983: Pecos River Learning Center*: A for-profit training company created by Larry Wilson, Pecos River combined a facilities-based approach of adventure learning, including challenge courses and initiative activities, with a focus of managing change in corporate settings. Among its customers, a variety of Fortune 500 corporations

- contract Pecos River Learning Center to conduct change management trainings among their employees.
14. 1983: *National Youth Leadership Conference (NYLC)*: Understood to be the most influential program advocating experiential education in the field of adventure education and developed by Jim Kielsmeier, the NYLC is the recognized leader in developing curricula templates and models of service learning through its annual conference.
  15. 1986: *National Indian Youth Leadership Project (NIYLP)*: McClellan Hall, a Cherokee, has assisted in making the NIYLP the “principle organization doing significant and culturally appropriate adventure learning work with native peoples in the United States” (p. 10). Project Venture, a model program of the NIYLP, uses elements of adventure and service learning in an after-school and summer camp format.
  16. 1986: *Publication of Islands of Healing*: Authored by Schoel, Radcliffe, and Prouty and published by Project Adventure, the book author’s introduced the term *adventure-based counseling* (ABC) which was the first book to outline a systematic approach with integrating adventure learning and group counseling together.
  17. 1992: *Wilderness Risk Managers Committee*: Formed after a tragic accident which resulted in a student’s death, NOLS, Outward Bound, SCA, the AEE, and other institutions collaborate annually to share and practice field and administrative risk management techniques.
  18. 1994: *Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT)*: The ACCT was formed by challenge course vendors to establish both a promotion for adventure education

through challenge courses and to set industry standards in the construction and management of challenge courses.

19. *1994: Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound (ELS)*: Greg Farrell and Meg Campbell, with the financial assistance of the Anneberg Foundation developed transformative educational models and used a team approach of Outward Bound to initiate a comprehensive model of adventure learning. A design team composed of Project Adventure, Educators for Social Responsibility, and Facing History and Ourselves developed and implemented a model of an integrated and project-based adventure curricula. As of 2005, more than 100 institutions in the United States were using varying levels of ELS in their schools.

20. *1996: AEE Accreditation Council*: An initiative by the AEE, the AEE Accreditation Council was the first nationally recognized accreditation program whose focus is on adventure experiential programming excellence. Educational institutions as well as the general public are served by having such a comprehensive, rigorous set of standards in risk management and program outcomes to critically assess from.

This evolution and compilation of outdoor adventure education programs and contributing accounts establish questions relative to programming and methodological practices. There is obvious progression and development within the field of outdoor adventure education from Kurt Hahn's influence to Project Adventure's methodology. So with this stated, what are key characteristics inherent in outdoor adventure education programming? What are considered outcomes with regard to outdoor adventure-based education? What tools and techniques provide unique discovery and learning situations for the participant engaged in outdoor adventure education?

### *Characteristics of Outdoor Adventure-based Education*

Outdoor adventure-based education can begin as soon as the participants and instructor step beyond the traditional classroom door. The outdoor activity may be short term, as short as ten minutes, or may involve overnight experience lasting a day to several months (Rillo, 1985). With the continuing rise and popularity of outdoor adventure learning, just about any conceivable educational setting uses adventure education. Groups using outdoor adventure education range from NASA scientists, entering freshman during college orientation, government bureaucrats, and groups of Iraqi elementary and middle school physical education students from diverse religious backgrounds engaged initiative-type games that foster breaking cultural & religious barriers (Prouty, 2007).

Beyond the “trip” experience and “out of the classroom experience” of adventure education are activities or initiative-type games which are common with adventure-based education. Initiative-type games create worlds which allow participants to enter various life situations that are otherwise not accessed, experiment with various situations or roles, and explore reactions to new situations (Martin, Franc & Zounková, 2004). Martin et al. explain that adventure-based initiative games: a) aim to have a certain effect on people who are involved in them as participants, b) may or may not take place in special environments, c) use a special set of rules, d) do not provide material benefit to winners, e) are usually framed in a fantasy setting which may or may not be distant from daily life, and e) involve a group of participants who interact together and with the environment. What makes a game connect to familiarity is the realization that emotions, processes, and interactions during the game are real. The game takes place in a fantasy environment, but the acting out is real with a resulting impact on the

participants. Framed and initiated properly “the stronger the reality of the in-game processes, the stronger is the resulting effect on the participants” (p. 58).

Although wilderness settings continue to be the dominant scene for outdoor adventure-based education, more facilities-based programs are gaining popularity offering peak experience-type programs consisting of several days at a local facility. The facility can range from outdoor, experientially-based portable-type initiative games and ropes courses to established sites involving a wide offering of adventure-based course initiatives such as permanent problem-solving initiatives and pole or tree ropes courses. However, whether in a wilderness setting or from a facility on a college campus, specific goals, outcomes or results of outdoor adventure education programs provide an understanding for outdoor adventure educators (Prouty, 2007).

#### *Outcomes of Outdoor Adventure Education*

A developing body of research continues to examine the outcomes or effectiveness of outdoor adventure education programs. Ewert and Garvey (2007) offer that *moral development* occurs with outdoor adventure education. Experiential education in general and adventure education have been found to have a positive outcome on participants’ fairness and moral reasoning. Citing various studies, Ewert and Garvey (2007) report that when participants are offered opportunities to analyze their behavior, as well as the behaviors of others within an adventure education context, positive results occur in their level of moral development. Adventure education has the potential to make participants observe themselves in a different lens and even select better behavior when communicating with others – “behavior that will be more effective in the attainment of personal and group goals” (p.29).

Another outcome of outdoor adventure education that Ewert and Garvey (2007) describe is *personal growth*. Personal growth is one outcome that has been widely advertised and claimed

regarding adventure education. Improvement in personal constructs such as self-concept, self-esteem, confidence and personal motivation have been measured typically before, during and after an adventure experience. Ewert and Garvey (2007) claim that an increase in personal growth is not an automatic outcome in adventure education. They state that outdoor adventure education programs must be properly designed and implemented to permit these positive changes within individuals who experience adventure education.

In addition to facilitating moral and personal development, outdoor adventure education has been found to assist in *group development*. Adventure education has been used in the private sector, as well as professional and corporate settings and in other capacities where an improvement in group effectiveness is desired. Groups tend to go through stages, or accomplishments when working towards group effectiveness, they are: a) *forming*: when a group first comes together and individuals are figuring each other out, b) *storming*: when a group negotiates their individual expectations and asserts personalities, c) *norming*: the group agrees and accepts what will permit group success, d) *performing*: when a group functions together in the accomplishment of a task, and e) *adjourning*: is when a group closes and separates, with or without a ritualized end (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Group development also depends on the ability of the adventure educators to design and execute activities that promote enhanced group performance (Ewert & Garvey, 2007).

Following closely with group development is the outcome of *leadership development*. Whether the development is internal – as in the form of increased motivation, organization, and responsibility, or externally-poised – as in leading others, facilitating discussions, or using technical skills, leadership development is a significant outcome experienced by many participants of adventure education programs. Facilitated and executed with appropriate

methods and activities, an adventure educator can provide opportunities that “train students in the ability to institute change, inspire a shared vision, empower members, lead by example, and promote member improvement” (Ewert & Garvey, 2007, p. 31) which is more valuable than just teaching outdoor skills to participants.

### *Methods and Practices of Adventure-based Learning*

With an understanding of the contributions that educators Dewey and Kolb describe in regard to experiential education, an investigation into the role of adventure in teaching and learning seems fitting. What clearly stand out are the obvious experiences and multiple ideas and practices that go into planning and implementing an adventure-based experience. One practice that I have encountered and now have researched occurs with structuring outdoor adventure education in conjunction with the proper use of *stretch-zone experiences* (Panicucci, 2007). People exist in states or zones and “experience has shown that learning occurs when people are in their stretch zone” (p. 38). Think of two concentric circles, with the inner circle representing a person’s *comfort zone* – where a sense of calm and there is no disequilibrium. The space or area between the inner, *comfort zone* circle and the next circle is a person’s *stretch zone* – a place where interest is aroused, a sense of some imbalance exists and one’s senses are aroused. The outer circle represents a person’s *panic zone* – a place where high adrenaline produces stress that prevents processing information fully and makes it impossible for the participant to settle into a learning situation. Intellectual development and personal growth do not take place if there is not some amount of disequilibrium in a person’s feeling and thinking. Likewise, if the disequilibrium is too high learning will also be impeded. The means for personal growth exists both in the events that are essential to a given experience and in ways tangential to that experience. Adventure educators must provide stretch-zone experiences that do

not become panic situations and that offer the participant the opportunity to grasp and take hold of the moment and grow (Panicucci, 2007).

Instrumental and expected in outdoor adventure education after the completion of a stretch-zone experience is when the group pauses to discuss and reflect on what just occurred – both personally and collectively (Panicucci, 2007). Reflection provides time for the integration of what has been experienced and learned in terms of understandings and appreciations (Rillo, 1985). In outdoor adventure education courses reflection is structured in a variety of ways, for example, periods of solitude (solo), the use of diaries or journals, and through reviews or debriefs (Martin, et al., 2004). Understanding the personal impact of the experiences that are undertaken bring meaning and purpose to the participant. The adventure educator who provides purposeful reflection time to take place provides assurance that the experience presents ways in which participants can – “possibly for the first time ever – offer meaningful evaluations of themselves” (Gair, p. 32, 1997).

Another concept that I’ve encountered and researched is the simple, yet practical approach referred to as *challenge by choice*. Project Adventure established this concept “to support the evolution of the field to a more sophisticated approach that focuses on allowing students to choose the level of experience that supports their optimal learning” (Panicucci, p. 41, 2007). Challenge by choice does not give participants the choice to continually opt out of experiences because they have chosen not to engage in the experience. Instead, the concept assumes that participants will learn how to participate safely in their stretch zone while understanding their level of participation will not put them in their panic zone – it does not permit participants to choose to remain in their comfort zone. The following particulars describe the concept of challenge by choice (Panicucci, 2007; Rohnke, 1989):



1. A chance to try potentially difficult and/or frightening challenges in an atmosphere of support and caring.
2. The opportunity to 'back off' when performance pressures or self doubt become too strong, knowing that an opportunity for a future attempt will always be available.
3. A chance to try difficult task, recognizing that the attempt is more significant than performance results.
4. Respect and value individual ideas and choices.

Additionally, Rohnke (1989) offers principles for instructors to consider when implementing challenge by choice to outdoor adventure participants. These are, a) not everyone needs to do everything, b) utilize the activity sequencing information, c) time spent setting goals is time well spent when dealing with the challenge of an event, d) group pressure is very real and can be used in a positive way, e) trust is a great support of challenge, f) individualize the challenge when necessary, and g) regularly infuse a sense of fun and fantasy into what can easily become a too serious approach. An instructor of outdoor adventure education who understands challenge by choice and its suggested applications provides settings in which participants can be coached to manage the level and intensity of their involvement and move from panic or comfort zone to stretch zone in order to provide an educative experience.

Another concept introduced by Project Adventure to assist participants having a feeling of emotional and physical safety within the group experience is a behavioral contract known as the *full-value contract*. Behavioral contracts provide structure for creating behavioral norms that everyone understands and agrees to follow and practice throughout the life of the group. The contents of the full-value contract as offered by Rohnke and Project Adventure (1989, 1994) for outdoor adventure education settings involve: a) the agreement to work together as a group and

to work toward individual and group goals, b) the agreement to adhere to certain safety and group behavior guidelines, and c) the agreement to give and receive feedback, both positive and negative, and to work toward changing behavior when it is appropriate. Furthermore, the awareness of: a) to *play hard*: try your best, play with spirit, challenge yourself, give 100%, with enthusiasm, etc., b) to *play safe*: avoid careless risks, look out for others, practice Challenge by Choice, show an awareness of your own and others' bodies and abilities, etc., c) to *play fair*: adhere to rules, agree to be honest, play cooperatively and with respect, be respectful of group members and value others, yourself, and the process, etc. and, d) to *have fun!!!*.

Panicucci (2007) stipulates that full-value contracts should mirror the unique qualities, spirit and purpose of the group and that instructors need to be attuned to group characteristics. A full value contract can be introduced by the adventure education instructor or can be a “shared creation, developed in words or symbols that all group members understand” (p. 42).

#### *Assessments in Adventure-based Education*

The adventure experience which includes behavioral contracts requires planning but also spontaneity and flexibility of the instructor. The planning of components such as where to camp, what days are for climbing, canoeing, and expeditioning can all be pre-arranged however what if the crew, who abides by the crew-created behavioral contract, and thus is extraordinarily efficient with their campcraft and navigation that results in that they will arrive at their next component a half day or more ahead of schedule, interrupting logistics at the other end? This is where the outdoor adventure educator can take a moment to evaluate the situation and insert an additional activity into the program. By doing so not only slows their pace, but more importantly increases the challenge for the group. In the case above, an off-trail hike that requires enhanced

scrutiny of the map, topography and compass may serve both objectives by slowing the crew and the crew achieving a heightened sense of group efficacy.

Outdoor adventure education instructors when faced with situations in which group dynamics warrant changing or re-adjusting the plan can use the GRABBSS assessment tool (Panicucci, 2007). Developed by Project Adventure, the GRABBSS model assists adventure educators in discerning the right activity at the right time. GRABBSS is an acronym and the letters represent areas of group consideration that should be questioned if changing the plan is appropriate. GRABBSS refers to: a) *goals*: how does the suggested activity relate to the goals the group and program initiated? b) *readiness*: is the group emotional, socially and physically ready for the suggested activity? Do they have the necessary skills; if not can the activity be altered to meet their level of readiness? c) *affect*: what is the feeling, or affect of the group? Are they excited, energetic, or apathetic and low on energy? d) *behavior*: how is the group acting? Are they displaying agreeableness or disruptiveness; generally positive or negative? e) *body*: is the group physically ready for this; too tired or too hyper? If physical touch is involved, are they ready at this time? f) *setting*: what is the setting – the weather, physical conditions (e.g. ground, water temperature) and space (e.g. for solo reflection time)? and g) *stage*: at what stage of group development is the crew? Are they ready for a more challenging activity? Do they need additional skills to work at a higher level together?

The GRABBSS group assessment tool is good to use when outdoor adventure facilitators are faced with the dilemma of changing the programming to possibly give the crew an enhanced experience (Prouty, et al, 2007). As an instructor at North Carolina Outward Bound, I've been regularly faced with crews that are on both sides of the spectrum when it comes to course component flow. Sometimes the crew is slow at group forming and it takes longer to achieve

tasks which require adjusting the day and sometimes longer. Other times I've experienced crews that were extremely high achieving and successful at everything they encountered which required me and my co-instructor to be really creative to continue offering a challenging Outward Bound course. Even though I've been using and practicing the concepts of the GRABBSS assessment tool over the years while on Outward Bound courses, I was not aware of the terms and acronym – which is new to me and now am more knowledgeable in the field of group dynamics and methods.

In addition to the GRABBSS assessment tool, Stiehl and Parker (2007) outline three questions that can guide adventure programmers and educators with assessing the effectiveness of the adventure program: a) *What do we want our participants to know and be able to do as a result of being in our program?* Educationally, this is a curricular question; however, adventure programmers and educators identify what is important and what are the intentional, deliberate outcomes of the program. Attending to this question represents what educators want their participants to gain from the program experiences, b) *How do we know when participants have been successful?* Answering this question affords the programmers and educators knowledge when they have achieved the desired outcomes. In the past, subjective observation was used to answer this question; however, in addition to subjective, field observation and to promote and guide future programming, current practice is to systematically and objectively document achievement, and c) *How can we get participants to achieve desired outcomes in the most challenging and engaging ways possible?* If adventure education is to reach optimal levels among participants, then learning experiences (instruction) must be designed and purposefully implemented to lead participants toward the desired goals and benefits.

I think how Stiehl and Parker's (2007) program efficiency questions can apply to my instruction of; say hiking to Outward Bound participants. Question one, which confronts main topics inherent to Outward Bound methodology is answered by wanting the participant to have a firm grasp of land navigation skills (e.g. compass and topographic map knowledge). Question two refers to assessing at what point it is confirmed that participants met intended outcomes. With the hiking example, Outward Bound participants not only exhibit "hard" practical skills and compliance, but also exhibit the necessary "soft" communicative and group skills to complete this component. Additionally, at North Carolina Outward Bound an "expedition pre and post form" is completed by instructors that then are evaluated by the course director and noted in the final course report for future consideration. Finally, question three refers to instructor creativity in making the experience as engaging and challenging as possible. At Outward Bound, often initiative-type games and activities are used to enhance or introduce a topic or component. In the hiking example, using journaling activities (e.g. tree and plant identification, signs of human habitation and influence, how was "Leave No Trace" practiced by me today), trail activities (e.g. changing leaders, blind trust walk, walk silently with no talking for an established time or distance), and permitting increased responsibility (e.g. Outward Bound instructors allow participants to detail the next day's route and implement it) are common methods I incorporate among my crew members. Lambert (1999) uses a metaphor of a three-legged stool to describe the importance of each aspect of program assessment – curricular, measurement and teaching. When all three aspects are weighted equally in a program, the stool is solid. If one or two aspects (legs) are removed or not given full consideration, the program's (stool) stability is compromised.

## The Reflective Journal

The writing literature stipulates that cognitive mechanisms are used both in learning to write and also in writing to learn. Cognitive processes (e.g. awareness of a problem) provide students the opportunity to synthesize new knowledge through writing (Bazerman, 2008). Numerous studies have documented positive effects on learning that occur through writing and the activities or styles used; whether formal writing (e.g. analytic essays) or informal writing events, like through the use of journals (Ackerman, 1991). Journals provide an avenue for reflection that is different from speaking. Some people who are reluctant to speak up in a group find that journals provide a safe and secure place to express in written words what is on their minds. Journals assist in opening the channels of communication for some individuals who are later able to speak about their journal entries (Sugarman, Doherty, Garvey & Gass, 2000) and when used to critically reflect on learning have been instrumental in adult education practice to facilitate consciousness-raising and a means of expressing oneself (Cranton, 2006).

### *Historical Accounts of Journaling*

Journal writing is not only a current trend. Recording daily events and life experiences has been a lasting human tradition (O'Connell & Dymont, 2003). "Journals have a long history as a means of self-expression" (Kerka, 1996, p.1) and historical accounts of journaling can be traced back to Greek and Roman times. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese women kept thorough journals on daily life and personal impressions. During the Renaissance, enlightened individuals felt obligated to keep a record of their feelings and experiences. In the Victorian era, religious and political journals were common. Perhaps the greatest influence on modern journaling is the westward expansion in North America by Lewis and Clark. Lewis and Clark kept highly

detailed accounts of not only what they experienced, but also recorded their personal reactions to their experiences. Other prominent journal writers include Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Virginia Wolf and Anne Frank (Janesick, 1998; Raffan & Barrett, 1989).

In modern times, journals have been used as an effective tool in the educational and learning processes of children, adolescents, and adults (Palmer, Alexander, & Olson-Dinges, 1999). Parr, Haberstroh and Kottler (2000) report findings of writing and journaling assisting as an adjunct in marriage counseling, assisting victims of trauma, facilitating communication between hearing-impaired students and their teachers and improving “individuals’ physical and emotional well-being” (p.230). In addition, in the arena of reading comprehension, writing performance, and self-esteem of adults, journal writing helps individuals to achieve literacy acquisition through their written responses to learning activities (Palmer, Alexander & Olson-Dinges, 1999).

Today, newer aspects of journaling include the everyday life occurrences in which professionals in many fields consider journaling an integral aspect of their profession (Conhaim, 2003). For example, a journaling intervention study (Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002) compared the effects of emotional expression in opposition to cognitive processing plus emotional expression during one month of journaling about a stressful or traumatic event. The researchers found that the journal writers focusing on both cognition and emotion developed greater awareness of the positive benefits of the stressful event than did the other group. The group that focused on writing about emotion only reported more severe illness symptoms during the study. Offering the ability to reflect what happens by both “emoting and thinking allowed individuals to see the benefits of a difficult experience” (p. 492) and may offer greater benefits than journaling which focuses only on negative emotion.

There has been a noticeable shift in the use of journaling. Beyond the typical documentation of everyday occurrences and facts, the exploration of feelings, self-discovery, self-expression and personal growth are becoming the focus of journaling (Conhaim, 2003; NCOBS, 2004; Palmer et al., 1999). Ira Progoff's (1975) *Intensive Journal* process as an instrument with its varied techniques has helped people make decisions, assisted with goal identification, and supported finding the meaning of their own distinctive life.

#### *Purpose and Benefits of Reflective Journaling*

Moon (1999) examined the purposes of journaling and reports that journals may be used to record experiences, facilitate learning from experience, develop critical thinking, encourage meta-cognition, increase involvement in and ownership of learning, increase ability in reflection and thinking, and enhance reflective practice. Similarly, McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996) describe some purposes of journaling which are (a) a systematic and regularly kept record of occurrences, dates and people; (b) an interpretive, self-evaluative account of the participant's personal experiences, thoughts and feelings, with a reflective view to try to understand their actions; (c) a useful way of purging painful experiences; (d) a reflective account where the participant can resolve the intricacy, complexity, or obscurity of interpretations; and (e) an analytic tool where data can be distinguished, determined, studied, examined and analyzed.

Phipps (1988) remarks that the use of a journal on expedition-style courses (e.g. Outward Bound) can be beneficial and assist the participant in reflecting, interpreting, forming abstract concepts, and developing new personal insights which can assist when processing meaning from new experiences. Similarly, journaling, as a means of reflection, has been shown to be a popular technique used in many university settings, especially those settings that utilize outdoor recreation and include a field component or extended outdoor trip experience (Bennion & Olsen,



2002). Used in this setting, the journal provides a method of collecting information, assisting with knowledge, developing and answering questions, enhancing revelations, encouraging self-awareness, and serves as a means of reflection both during and after the learning experience (Kerka, 1996).

Journal writing has shown to be positively viewed by instructors and to have beneficial academic value. Some of these positive benefits include a sense of self-directness in that the responsibility for learning belongs to the participant and that participants are actively engaged in the reflective process (Cole, 1994; Hettich, 1990). Hughes and Kooy (1997) and Kerka (1996) offer that journal writing is participant-centered and actively engages the participant in the reflective process. In addition, journal writing may assume the characteristics of natural speech, and students may shape knowledge as they see fit (e.g. literacy acquisition). For the instructor, journaling provides insights into the participants' modes of thoughts (Phipps, 1988) and "offers the instructor a chance to dialogue with students about the issues and to give feedback on their comments" (Mio & Barker-Hackett, 2003, p. 15).

Posner (1996) claims that more learning takes place from reflecting on an experience than from the experience itself. Educators who utilize reflective journaling make their practice more educative. For educators, Norton (1994) suggests two guidelines for constructing reflective thinking among students through their journal writing: a) formulate topics that compliment discussions and vice versa, and b) provide extensive, probing feedback to the journal. Cranton (2006) similarly remarks, "When we (educators) have the opportunity to read and comment on students' journals, our comments should be challenging and provocative but not judgmental" (p. 148).

Reflective journaling by educators as they instruct provide numerous benefits that enable the educator to perform at a higher, more educative level. Taggart and Wilson (2005) offer that journals provide the reflective instructor with a means of: a) analyzing and reasoning through dilemmas, b) enhancing self-development and reflection, c) promoting awareness in critical analysis of teaching, d) promoting alertness of relationships between educational psychology and practical experiences, e) systematically reflecting on growth and on actions within the classroom and other work contexts, f) practicing reflective examination, g) fostering understanding by writing about what is learned, and h) linking understanding with classroom practice. However educators should not simply expect students to reflect. Some students may find writing comes naturally and assists with working through feelings, but for others writing can be arduous and even distressful, especially if the instructor has not included journaling options and methods to assist facilitating reflection through journaling (Johns, 2004).

### *Journaling Methods*

The literature indicates that methods employed or used in journaling are critical in facilitating meaning making and learning. Additionally, journal writing contributes to reflection when participants are taught journaling techniques and receive thoughtful and meaningful feedback (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Several studies have revealed practices or procedures that are conducive to journaling (Bennion & Olsen, 2000; Cardno, 1998; Cranton, 2006; Luckner & Nadler, 1997, Sugarman, Doherty, Garvey & Gass, 2000). For example, discussion or debriefing of the experience (e.g. high ropes course) prior to writing assists with focusing participants' minds and frames the journal entry. Additionally, utilizing various themes or exercises (e.g. list and describe three considerations prior to canoeing a rapid) allows for a change of pace for the participant when writing than just documenting events of the day.

Similarly, the literature has revealed different styles of journaling. Dialogue journaling is a widely used method of recording events and personal insights and is the form of journaling that Taggart and Wilson (2005) strongly support. Dialogue journals allow the reflective participant to gain the benefits of journaling and offer the facilitator with a tool for responding to events and to reflections on events by participants. Dialogue journals provide the author the “opportunity to chronicle over a period of time, and then reflect on the events” (p. 78). The author may describe an event, analyze cause and effect, and then attempt to determine roles and beliefs occurring from the event. Assumptions and responses may be noted and then analyzed, especially relationships between the event and typically held beliefs, traditions, or concepts. Important to this method of journaling for clarity and documentation is to make the journal entry as soon as possible following the event. Follow-up entries may be added at later dates once the initial journal entry was entered. But the key feature of dialogue journaling is that people respond to each other’s writing—either student to student or teacher to student.

Other styles of journaling include critical incident journals (Sugarman et al., 2000, Rhoads & Howard, 1998) in which the participant reflects on specific experiences that were critical in their life, either in a positive or negative way. Rather than providing the typical account of daily life, a critical incident journal includes a detailed analysis of only those situations, or incidents which change the author or the authors’ perspective. Participants are instructed “to focus on, write about, and draw meaning from specific events that happened during an experience” (Sugarman, et al., p. 37, 2000). Rhoads and Howard (1998), using Brookfield (1991) explain in further detail that this reflective technique enables the participant to use the incident and its impact as a means for self-monitoring and personal discovery. In addition to isolating an event and describing its relevance, the format of using critical incident

journals requires participants to pursue the three abstract steps of description, analysis, and reflection:

*Step 1:* Describe your role in the incident. What did you do? How did you react? How did other people react to the incident?

*Step 2:* Analyze the incident. How well or poorly did you comprehend the incident? Was your reaction – or the reaction of others well informed or based on misinformation?

*Step 3:* What overall impact did the incident have on you? Why do you consider it “critical”? How has the incident influenced your feelings about your work or place in the group? What have you learned? How has your perspective on yourself or on others been affected? Where do you go from this point?

With the assistance of the critical incident journaling format involving description, analysis, and reflection, a participant is offered intellectual responsibility and is more critically engaged in events as they unfold. Participants are encouraged “to think in new ways, to reflect critically, and to question their own perceptions” (p. 49) as they relate to their environment.

Log journaling (Sugarman, et al., 2000), which is a written record of facts, activities, weather, etc., is also a common form of journaling. This form of journaling stimulates what happened in an experience and initially can be used as a record of events in an experience. In the process of writing the log other reflective insights that occur are encouraged to be recorded, too. The specific reflective entries can be used later in the experience as a debriefing tool. The instructor may ask the participant to read or choose a particular instance from their log journal that is important to them; however if this is expected, then instructors should forewarn participants so that participants can decide what to share with the group. Used in this fashion,

log journals are a catalyst to help participants remember what happened to them, and can be a staging point for further discussion and reflective insight of other journaling methods (e.g. dialogue journaling).

Free response (Sugarman et al., 2000) or free writing (Luckner & Nadler, 1997) is a form of journaling where participants write continuously for a specific amount of time focusing more on “getting out their ideas rather than focusing on their writing skills” (Sugarman et al., p. 37, 2000). They can write about (a) their day, (b) their goals, thoughts, and feelings about an upcoming experience, (c) their thoughts and feelings about their performance and involvement so far in the overall experience, or (d) be artistic and creative (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). The underlying purpose of free response or free writing is to encourage writing among participants with as little structure as possible. This form of journaling is a safe place where participants can experiment with the process of writing. As time continues in the course, the instructor can introduce more specific topics around which participants can focus their writing. Called “focused free writing” (Sugarman et al., p. 37, 2000), participants because of their previous free writing experience, are more familiar and comfortable with their writing and can focus their writing on specific topics. Focused topics might include leadership issues during an experience, or relations among group members. The focused topics provide more structure; however there is still inclusion for free responses and creation of thoughts.

Other methods of journaling include dialectic (double entry) journaling and prompt journaling (Sugarman et al., 2000). Dialectic journaling occurs when the participant records entries on the left side of the journal similar to what was done in the log journal (facts, notes, observations, etc.) and then writes on the right side of the journal reactions and reflections to the original entries that were made. Important to this method is that the entries that are made to the

left side are completed as close in time to the actual experience. The right side, or reaction side, can be completed at a later time, affording the participant time to absorb and reflect on the experience. Prompt journaling (Sugarman, et al., 2000) or assigning processing questions (Luckner & Nadler, 1997) involves the participant responding to questions posed by the instructor. Depending on the goals of the instructor, answers to the questions can either be kept private or shared with the group. Luckner and Nadler (1997) offer two reasons why assigning processing questions benefit a group. One, assigning questions provide a degree of focus on issues that may need to be surfaced and attended to and, two assigning questions involves everyone – even those who tend to sit back and not get actively involved. Giving questions that focus on topics that the instructor may want to discuss potentially allows participants to feel more comfortable and confident when the group reconvenes. Sugarman et al. (2000) stipulate the importance that the questions are open-ended, affording the participant the opportunity to write extensively about the topic. Some examples of processing questions that exemplify prompt journaling are (Luckner & Nadler, 1997; Sugarman, et al., 2000):

1. Questions pertaining to observations made during an activity/experience (What group processes did you notice that occurred while accomplishing the Wall?)
2. Questions that ask the participant to reflect about the importance of an event (What stood out for you about the climbing experience today? Why was it important?)
3. Questions that ask participants to draw meaning from experiences (What did you learn about yourself this week?)
4. Questions that spark future transference of the experience (How will you use the skills you learned at home – with your family, friends, co-workers?)

5. Questions that concentrate on oneself (What are three biggest challenges in your life right now?)
6. Questions that focus on personal and group interaction (Think of one person in the group that you are having a difficult time with. In what ways are you similar to that person? In what ways are you different? What can you do to improve the relationship?)

Another method of journaling is the group journal (Cardno, 1998; Sugarman et al., 2000). The group journal is a shared book in which participants take turns recording events, impressions thoughts and commenting on previous entries or group debriefs and discussions. This journaling method “tends to foster group cohesion and creativity, as participants are able to read the entries of others and add their own thoughts” (Sugarman et al., p. 38, 2000). Additionally, this method of journaling affords the instructor the opportunity to read what participants are thinking about and how they comprehend their experiences. Entries written into the group journal can be brought to the attention of the whole group or used as topics for discussion during debriefing and reflection times. Another possibility with the group journal is for participants to pose questions in the journal and other participants answer by written responses.

The group journal can also be used as a closure activity to the course experience. Both Cardno (1998) and Sugarman et al., (2000) suggest that individual copies of the group journal be made available to each participant following the course experience and before the participants depart “have each one write their address and a short good-bye message” (Cardno, p. 17, 1998). Individual copies of the group journal provide each participant with a written record of the group’s thoughts, ideas, and reflections of the entire experience.

Lastly, the project journal (Sugarman et al., 2000) involves entries that relate to a future project that is to be accomplished by a participant or by the entire group. This method of journaling fosters long-term type experiences and “offers participants the opportunity to reflect on the process of working on a project” (p. 39). For example, if the group was planning their final expedition phase of their Outward Bound course and was involved in the planning, preparation, and logistics of the component, a project journal would be a place for participants to record the process of the planning, their reactions to the process and their learnings. A variation of the project journal is the goal journal, in which the participants write about the process as they go to reaching an established goal. For example, a participant who wants to work on the goal of being more vocal in the group would write about their experiences of working toward meeting the goal, what it felt like to work on it, plans for continuing and living the goal after the course ends, etc.

Framed and explained appropriately, journaling can be used in variety of ways and be used to achieve different goals and purposes. However, as Cranton (2006) cautions, journals which are made accessible to others can be a “manifestation of disciplinary power” (p. 147) as whoever is reading the journal are afforded to “see inside of the mind” (p. 147) of the writer. Recognizing this, she cautions educators that because of this intrusion, participants may hold back on writing about true feelings, and worse, may “lead to a situation where people write what they think the educator wants to hear” and even “invent stories to demonstrate critical reflection or dramatic breakthroughs” (p. 148). Important to consider is that journaling is personal and therefore people choose the format that they enjoy, which should stimulate reflection, and instructors and educators need to understand that the journal writer has the ultimate decision whether to make their journal accessible to others or not.



Journal writing is a tool that can be used for processing experience and exploring personal knowledge. A journal allows participants to concentrate on thoughts and feelings without criticism by external audiences. Journal writing creates conditions that foster reflection and awarenesses that often lead to renewed consciousness of a person's knowledge (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Several methods of journaling were discussed in this section. Cranton (2006) suggests to her students to choose a format that they are comfortable with, whether it be thematic (e.g. My personal expectations of this Outward Bound course...), dialectic, using letter formats, working with poetry or incorporating artistic representations with text. Journal writing captures emotions, thoughts, and feelings, and is a record of a participant's progression through an experience which can be referred to long after the experience has concluded.

#### Studies in Adventure-based Education

Location of contributing research materials to this study was accomplished through the following databases: Proquest Direct, Eric, Illiad, and Educational Abstracts Full Text (Wilson). The search included an on-line search of scholarly journals on the Proquest Direct database and Dissertation Abstracts International. Search terms used were: Outward Bound, outdoor education, adventure education, journaling, journal writing and diary writing. The criteria that were used to select research for this section of the literature involved: 1) the review had to occur in an outdoor adventure education setting, 2) was empirical in nature, and 3) had to have a methodology section that addressed how the data was collected. What was specifically sought after was the use of journaling as a methodology in an outdoor education context and if so, how the journals were used. The search did not yield many studies that used journaling as a data collecting methodology; however, the search found twenty-five empirical research articles and

three dissertations that used a methodology to collect data in studies that occurred in an outdoor education context.

### *Outdoor Education Studies*

Outdoor adventure education involves direct and purposeful exposure to activities that are adventurous to influence both intra- and interpersonal growth (Sheard & Golby, 2006). Adventure activities and experiences such as rock climbing, white-water canoeing, backpack expeditioning and ropes courses have been suggested to foster personal qualities such as initiative, perseverance, enhanced self-confidence, determination, cooperation, and environmental awareness (Ewert and Garvey, 2007; Martin, Franc & Zounková, 2004; Sheard & Golby, 2006; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). The personal and group benefits that outdoor adventure education fosters has been recognized anecdotally for decades; however recently the amount of empirical research conducted has increased to examine the efficacy of outdoor adventure education (Sheard & Golby, 2006). So what does the recent empirical research have to say about results and findings related to outdoor adventure education, and more importantly for this research what methods were used on study samples to extract results? Additionally, what were the settings and who were the participants used in the studies? These questions will be investigated to help illuminate the need for additional research that this work is dedicated to – the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course.

### *Settings*

Several empirical studies used in this research took place on Outward Bound courses (Caldwell, 2000; Goldenberg, McAvoy & Klenosky, 2005; Hattie, Marsh, Neill and Richards, 1997; Martin & Leberman, 2005; McKenzie, 2003; Sills, 1993). The schools used were Outward Bound Western Canada, North Carolina Outward Bound, Hurricane Island Outward Bound

(Maine), Outward Bound New Zealand, and Australian Outward Bound. Although course areas differ geographically between Outward Bound schools, the five schools mentioned all provide experiences involving expeditions by land, sea and river. The activities and components that take place at these Outward Bound schools range from, but are not limited to, backpack expeditioning, rock climbing, rappelling, caving, canoeing, rafting, cross-country skiing, meal planning, sailing and completing ropes courses. Time of duration of course lengths for the Caldwell (2000) study was not provided; however educator courses at Outward Bound are typically eight days in length. The Goldenberg et al. (2005) study involved ranges between 4 to 21 days, with half of studied courses lasting 21 days. The Hattie et al. (1997) study used courses that ranged between 1 and 120 days, with seventy-two percent of the courses being between 20 and 26 days in length. The Martin and Leberman (2005) study did not provide course length information; however, the study involved four courses. The McKenzie (2003) study used courses that ranged between 7 to 36 days whereas the Sills (1993) studies used course lengths of seven and nine days.

Challenge courses, or ropes courses were the settings which were used for several other empirical studies used for this review (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Irish, 2006; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006). Challenge courses typically include “low elements”, which are close to the ground (e.g. within 2 meters of the ground) and “high elements” or “high ropes elements” which are higher than 2 meters. The elements are usually constructed of a variety of materials, ranging from weatherized lumber, logs, planks, cables and ropes. For safety precautions, low elements utilize “spotters” where as “high elements” use belays (the use of safety ropes between climber and ground person). Time that the participants engaged in the challenge course studies were: four

hours for the Hatch and McCarthy (2005) study, and one day (8.5 hours) for both the Wolfe and Dattilo (2006) and Irish (2006) studies.

The remaining studies used various outdoor education contexts and activities when conducting their research. Bennion and Olsen (2002), Daniel (2007), Grube, Phipps and Grube (2002), O'Connell and Dymont (2003), Raffan and Barrett (1989), Taniguchi, Freeman, Taylor, and Malcarne (2006), Sibthorp and Arthur-Banning (2004), and Whittington (2006) all included the type of activities and components that were used in the study. Components mentioned included, but are not limited to, canyoneering, sailing, canoeing, rafting, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, backpacking, and climbing. Seven studies – Bell (2006), Carlson and McKenna (2000), Jones and Hinton (2007), Little (2002), Sheard and Golby (2006), Taniguchi and Freeman (2004), Ward & Yoshino, (2007) – state “wilderness experience”, “adventure education” and/or “outdoor adventure”; however do not disclose the components or activities used. Seaman's (2006) study also did not disclose activities or components used in the study; however the Seaman study occurred at Project Adventure, Inc. which uses low and high ropes elements, as well as initiative games and activities in its programming. Duration of course experiences ranged from as little as eight days in length (Grube, Phipps & Grube, 2002), to college/university semester lengths (e.g. Bennion & Olsen, 2002), and to Little's (2002) study that included participants that experienced outdoor adventure activities “only once their children had left home, while others begun as children” (p. 161).

### *Participants*

Participants that were used in university wilderness or outdoor adventure education studies were adults that were of college-age and enrolled in the institution whose program was being researched (Bell, 2006; Bennion & Olsen, 2002; Carlson & McKenna, 2000; Daniel, 2007;

Jones & Hinton 2007; O'Connell & Dymont, 2003; Raffan and Barrett, 1989; Sheard & Golby, 2006; Taniguchi & Freeman, 2004; Ward & Yoshino, 2007). All studies included the sample size, which ranged from 18 (Jones & Hinton, 2007) to 1,601 (Bell, 2006) and all studies, except Ward and Yoshino (2007), claimed that the sample participants volunteered to be studied. In respect to gender classification Bell (2006), Carlson and McKenna (2000) and Sheard and Golby (2006) study included this demographic. No study included race or ethnicity, profession, etc. among participating subjects.

Participants who volunteered to be studied in the challenge or ropes course studies were students at universities (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Irish, 2006); however, the Wolfe and Dattilo (2006) study involved consenting participants that were from a dental office. In all studies participants were over the age of 21. Gender was classified in all studies and two studies included the race/ethnicity of its consenting participants (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006). Sample size in these studies were 11 participants in the Wolfe & Dattilo (2006) study, 166 participants in the Irish (2006) study, and 181 participants in the Hatch and McCarthy (2005) study.

Studies used in this review in which participants that consented in wilderness or outdoor education studies and were of non-institution or ropes course contexts, ranged in age from 13 to 18 (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning, 2004; Whittington, 2006) to a mean age of 23.6 years in the Taniguchi et al. (2006) study and in the Little (2002) study participants ranged in age from 30 to 86. The Sibthorp and Arthur-Banning study (2004), along with the Whittington (2006) study used adolescents, whereas the Taniguchi et al. (2006) study used married couples. All studies involved consenting, volunteering participants. In terms of sample size and gender, the Taniguchi et al. (2006) study used six married couples ( $n = 12$ ), the Whittington (2006) study

used nine adolescent girls and the Sibthorp and Arthur-Banning (2004) study used 190 co-ed adolescents in which 105 were females. Only one study (Whittington, 2006) included race or ethnicity information in their sample information and the Little (2002) study, which focuses on women who are involved in adventure pursuits, provides demographic information related to marital status, employment status, number of children, and sexual preference.

The Outward Bound studies used in this review involved participants who volunteered to not only attend an Outward Bound course, but also consented to being studied. The Caldwell (2000) study involved eight participants (four male and four female) who were all white and were educators by profession. No other demographic information related to age, geographic area, etc. is provided. The Goldenberg et al. (2005) study involved 216 participants with an age range from 14 to 66 years old, with the majority (90.3%) between 14 and 17 years old. The only other demographic offered by Goldenberg et al. (2005) is that the majority of participants were male (57.4%), white (84.3%), and were high school students (90.3%). The McKenzie (2003) sample size was 92, with 55% of the sample being female and 45% male. The only suggestion as to age was located in the findings section of the study where it is mentioned that 84% of the females were adults and 64% of the males were youth aged. No other demographic information was provided in the McKenzie et al. (2003) study. The Hattie et al. (1997) study is a meta-analysis of 96 Outward Bound studies published. There were 12,057 participants, with the average age being 22 years of age, and 72% being male and 28% being female. The majority (75%) of participants were classified as adults or university students. Beyond age and gender, no other demographic data is provided. The Martin and Leberman (2005) study involved 157 participants; however no other demographic information was provided. The Sills (1993) study involved a sample size of 14 participants who were educators by profession. An equal number

of male and female participants engaged in the Sills (1993) study; however no other demographic information was offered by Sills (1993) for his study.

### *Findings*

The results from studies differed in relation to what was being studied. For instance, the Irish (2006) studied challenge course participants' response to verbal "muting" among course participants and found that muting participants dependant upon their gender differentially impacts initial and sustained challenge initiative involvement. Hatch and McCarthy's (2005) study of college student organizations engaged in challenge courses and the long-term effect possibilities in relation to group cohesion, group effectiveness, and personal effectiveness within the group found that short-term gains were evident, but not long-term gains. Wolfe and Dattilo's (2006) study of communication perceptions among dental office workers engaged in a one-day challenge course resulted in participant's realizing and improving their communication skills.

College or university outdoor adventure studies related to the effectiveness of wilderness adventure preorientation and adventure education curriculum-based courses (Bell, 2006; Jones & Hinton, 2007; Sheard & Golby, 2006) show that enhanced self-efficacy, development of social support on campus, mental toughness and hardiness result from engaging in courses both as a freshman and majoring in adventure education disciplines at college. Daniel's (2007) and Ward and Yoshino's (2007) studies of college student's meanings and life significance awarenesses while engaged in outdoor adventure and wilderness expedition courses show: a) a broadened understanding of self and the world, b) enhanced awareness of personal strengths and limitations, c) group and teamwork improvement, and d) environmental sensitivity and stewardship.

Studies reviewed that were wilderness or adventure education courses not affiliated with college or universities show the development of life effectiveness among adolescents (Sibthorp

& Arthur-Banning, 2004). Additionally, some findings of the Whittington (2006) study of adolescent girls revealed that: a) qualities of perseverance, strength, and determination occurred on the course, b) the challenging of assumptions of girls' abilities occurred, c) feelings of accomplishment and pride took place, and d) increased ability to speak out and be heard, as well as leadership skills occurred. Taniguchi et al.'s (2006) study of married couples engaged in outdoor adventure activities show that couples that had previously shared outdoor adventure experiences have almost 25% fewer conflicts and that marital satisfaction plays a part whether engaged in outdoor adventure activities or not.

The Outward Bound studies researched how course components enhance course outcomes (Goldberg, et al. 2005; McKenzie, 2003), if long-term gains occur after the Outward Bound course (Hattie, et al. 1997), and the study of teacher's efficacy following an Outward Bound course (Sills, 1993). Course components that have the most influence on personal qualities such as transference, self-awareness, improvement, and self-confidence are rock-climbing and backpack expeditioning. The Hattie, et al. (1997) meta-analysis of 96 Outward Bound studies show qualities such as self-esteem and confidence improve as the length of the program and ages of participants age increase. Teachers engaged in an Educator's Outward Bound course suggest that teachers do have a greater sense of efficacy than teachers who attend non-Outward Bound teacher training workshops (Sills, 1993).

### *Methodology*

The methodologies used in the empirical studies of this review were varied and involved *questionnaires or surveys* (Bell, 2006; Caldwell, 2000; Daniels, 2007; Goldenberg et al., 2005; Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Jones & Hinton, 2007; Martin & Leberman, 2005; McKenzie, 2003; O'Connell & Dymont, 2003; Sheard & Golby, 2006; Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning, 2004; Sills,



1993; Whittington, 2006), *interviews* (Caldwell, 2000; Little, 2002; McKenzie, 2003; Sills, 1993; Taniguchi et al., 2006; Taniguchi & Freeman, 2004; Whittington, 2006; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006), *observations* (Daniels, 2007; McKenzie, 2003; Sills, 1993; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006), *field notes* (Daniels, 2007; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006), *pre/post testing* (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Sills, 1993; Taniguchi et al., 2006), *reflection papers* (Daniels, 2007; Jones & Hinton, 2007; Ward & Yoshino, 2007), *debriefing sessions* (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005), *focus groups* (Jones & Hinton, 2007; Taniguchi et al., 2006; Whittington, 2006), *taped debriefing sessions* (Daniels, 2007; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006), and *journals* (Bennion & Olsen, 2002; Carlson & McKenna, 2000; Daniels, 2007; Little, 2002; Raffan & Barrett, 1989; Taniguchi & Freeman, 2004).

### Chapter Summary

For this research, David Kolb's (1984), Donald Schön's (1983, 1987), and Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1985) work offer articulate insight into key components of this research. Their in-depth contributions to reflection and experiential learning detailing the components of preparation, engagement and processing have definite application to my research. Additionally, when focusing on reflection-on learning, their discussion relative to the knowledge that only the learner can experience and reflect on their experience and that the reflection in learning Boud et al. (1985) propose is purposeful and is driven by intent. Additionally, the reflective process is complex and involves cognitive and as well affective domains which can yield positive feelings and emotions which can lead to greater influence and empowerment for the learner in the learning process.

Boud and Walker's (1991) contributions to the process of reflection-in learning are also important to this research. The elements: *What is happening, how do I feel, what does it mean as*

well as the re-evaluative descriptors of association, integration, validation and appropriation can and are used in my practice as an Outward Bound instructor.

The review offered a historical perspective of outdoor adventure education and has shown a progression in the approach and delivery of the concept. From the early influences of Rousseau and Kurt Hahn to the current 21<sup>st</sup> century influences of contributors to Project Adventure, the field of outdoor adventure education merges personal growth and group or social skills with solid and convincingly disciplined cognitive work. The philosophy and theory that comprise this discipline make apparent to adventure educators of why we do what we do. Carefully considering activities to achieve intended educational outcomes that promote enhanced personal and group qualities are the responsibility of the adventure educator. Similarly, questioning the flow of the program, keeping participants aware and accountable of behavioral contracts, keeping in mind the group's and program's outcomes, and allowing time for purposeful reflection are constant, significant concepts that need consideration when employing adventure education. If not, noneducative adventure experience occurs and the real loss is what the participant and group could have gained through the adventure experience.

The studies used in this review were of empirical design using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The settings in which the studies took place ranged from college or university-based outdoor adventure courses and challenge or ropes courses to wilderness adventure courses and Outward Bound. The participants that made up the samples ranged from college students, dental office workers, married couples, adolescents, and adults all of which volunteered to be studied. Findings relative to the studies share commonalities relative to personal and group growth, as well as appreciation and awareness of the environment. Methodologies varied from routine, Likert-type scale questions and surveys to interviews,

observations, and journals. However, in regard to the six studies that used participants' journal entries, what was primarily emphasized or explained is the role the journal performs with regard to reflection. There is a gap or absence in the literature which pertains to the exploration of the phenomenon or *experience* of journaling in an outdoor education context.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The study used a qualitative research methodology, specifically phenomenological heuristic inquiry, to understand how participants experience reflective journaling in a North Carolina Outward Bound course. The focus of this chapter is to discuss the methodology used and to provide a review of the guiding research questions, research design, participant selection, data collection, data analysis and verification of the study.

#### Research Paradigm: Qualitative

This section of the chapter depicts the research paradigm that guided this study. Specifically, a justification is offered for the use of phenomenology with a heuristic inquiry emphasis to gain an understanding of the experience of using reflective journaling during a North Carolina Outward Bound School course.

Heuristic inquiry falls within qualitative research. “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) maintain that qualitative research involves the use and study of collected empirical data (e.g. case study, personal experience, interviews, artifacts) and the fact that the qualitative researcher studies “things in their natural settings making sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). Similarly, Palys (1997) explains that qualitative research involves reflecting a particular world view, one that informs researchers' approaches to the design, implementation and analysis of a research project. Qualitative research advocates a "human-centered approach" (p.22) where the researcher seeks to

understand how individuals make sense of the world around them by asking people directly, what they think is important about the topic or issue under study.

Patton (1990) summarizes the value of qualitative or participant observation research by noting that: (1) Through direct observation the researcher is better situated to understand the context in which the people live and share activities and their lives; (2) Direct experience enables the researcher to be open to decipher the significance of what is being observed; (3) The researcher is able to observe activities and construe meanings not evident in the awareness of the study participants; (4) Through direct observation, the researcher can attain knowledge that research participants may not be willing to disclose; (5) The researcher can include their own perceptions of what is congruous in understanding the setting and participants; and (6) First-hand observation and participation enables the researcher to collect data through direct experience and therefore be able to understand and interpret what is being studied and evaluated.

These qualitative research assumptions outlined provided a perfect “fit” for this research in that the researcher was a participant observer. As a participant observer, multiple and converging data collection strategies were used by “being fully engaged in experiencing the setting while at the same time observing and talking with other participants about whatever is happening” (Patton, 2002, p.265-266). The researcher in this study encountered the same setting, experienced the same field components that the study participants encountered (e.g. rock climbing, backpack expeditioning) and was afforded the opportunity to observe, listen, evaluate and study participant behavior.

Outward Bound participants were allocated personal time to journal and also were provided questions to answer in their personal reflective journals. One reflective journaling activity, a metaphor enhanced the meaning of a recently completed experience (e.g. rock

climbing). In this context, through the framing of reflective questions, knowledge attained, at both an individual and cultural level, can be “socially constructed and inextricably linked to individuals' backgrounds, personal histories, cultural place, and other contextual elements that define the human condition” (Given, 2006, p. 378). Considering this perspective then, participants will have the opportunity to read their reflective journal years after their Outward Bound experience and will be able to recall their learnings and feelings of excitement, success, failure, and personal challenge while on Outward Bound and remember, or even apply those learnings to their current situation.

As a North Carolina Outward Bound instructor who has worked in the field for seventeen years and experienced first hand how Outward Bound participants experience memory making events and illuminates those events through reflective journaling, the use of qualitative research inquiry that focuses on the experience of reflective journaling in an Outward Bound context is long overdue. By utilizing the qualitative research paradigm I studied the phenomenon of reflective journaling in an Outward Bound context following Patton's (1990) criteria concerning human science research. Additionally, as a qualitative research perspective, phenomenology concentrates on Patton's (1990) notion of the researcher construing meanings of what is being observed; that when the qualitative researcher is describing the lived experience of the subjects, he/she is utilizing phenomenology as a research tool (Munhall, 1993).

#### Research Methodology: Phenomenology and Heuristic Inquiry

This study used the research methodology of phenomenology and heuristic inquiry to explore the lived experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course. The qualitative researcher van Manen (1990) stated, “Phenomenology aims to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in

the lifeworld” (p.19). It is a method of discovery which, by reflecting upon the experience itself, results in uncovering the details, description and meaning of a phenomenon. The phenomenological method of qualitative research is not used to test hypotheses, assumptions, theories or casual relationships. It is not the intent of the phenomenological method of inquiry to make generalizations, assumptions or even generate empirical facts. Phenomenology investigates and describes simply what the phenomenon of interest in the study is. It attempts to reveal the nature or essence of the human experience as it is lived and is played out. For this research purpose, exploring the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course was the phenomenon of interest.

According to Ray (1990), “Phenomenology’s purpose is to seek a fuller understanding through description, reflection, and direct awareness of a phenomenon to reveal the multiplicity of coherent and integral meanings of the phenomenon” (p.173). This aspect of qualitative research revealed the meaning of phenomena so that a deeper, holistic level of understanding with consideration of the subjective as well as the objective (observable) findings could be described. Qualitative studies which reveal actions are based upon how the objective reality is perceived and “by itself the data merely exists, but for the situation to have meaning one must perceive it in a certain way. Everything beckons for us to perceive it” (Munhall, 1993, p.21) and it is the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course that is the phenomenon that required exploring. In short, qualitative phenomenological studies focus on perception, add depth, meaning and fosters understanding subjective, aesthetical research.

A qualitative phenomenological approach to research is a useful method when little is known about a phenomenon and is particularly suitable to facilitating rich and detailed exploration and description of the phenomenon in question. Although journaling occurs on

North Carolina Outward Bound courses, what is missing is an accounting of the *experience* of using reflective journals for participants who are on a North Carolina Outward Bound course. In turn this nonintrusive approach was not to generalize findings to other populations but to detail the lived experience and explicate the themes and meanings that were shared among a relatively homogeneous group of participants so that the phenomenon is better understood (Osborne, 1994).

Qualitative research methods involving phenomenology emphasize discovery, description and meaning rather than the traditional natural science criteria of prediction, control and measurement. Traditional notions of random sampling, reliability, validity, and replicability are not necessarily appropriate in the qualitative context. Phenomenological methods attempt to explore conscious experience directly through a specialized form of introspection rather than inferentially through observation. Additionally, descriptions and interpretations of experience can be so intertwined that they often are viewed as one. Interpretation is essential to understanding experience and experience includes the interpretation. Hence this phenomenology focused Outward Bound instructor patterned the phenomena that were experienced in such a way that it made sense to the participant, which can then be applied to the world by developing a worldview. For example participants answered prompt-style questions after they learned the value of effective communication and problem-solving while negotiating trail navigation during backpack expeditioning. What is fundamentally true with phenomenology is that there is no separate reality for people. What is intended is what they know their experience is and what it means to them through journaling and thus the focus on meaning making as the essence of human experience (Osborne, 1994; Patton, 2002). A reflective journal is the catalyst that allows the North Carolina Outward Bound participant to know and assist with making meaning of their experience.



Central characteristics of phenomenology focus on how humans make sense of experiences and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared social meaning. This method of qualitative research required methodologically, carefully and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experienced the phenomenon – how they viewed it, described it, may remember it, feel about it and make sense of it. A reflective journal enabled participants on this North Carolina Outward Bound course in this process by being the source for the recording of events, feelings and emotions. Additionally and fundamentally important is that the phenomenological researcher must engage in in-depth interviews with people who have lived and directly experienced the phenomenon of interest and the researcher has intimately connected with the phenomenon being considered (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). This has heuristic underpinnings.

As the researcher of this study and one of the North Carolina Outward Bound instructors of the course, I was the principal interviewer and facilitator of the reflective journal assignments. Critical to this study is that I have experienced what I'm researching – the experience of reflective journaling in a North Carolina Outward Bound course. I experienced North Carolina Outward Bound when I was twenty years old and an undergraduate student. I kept a reflective journal without prompting from my instructors while on this course. This heuristic quality that I possess is the sole reason for me to include heuristic inquiry as a research perspective.

The noted phenomenological researcher Clark Moustakas (1990, 1994) outlines heuristics as a form of phenomenological inquiry that focuses on intense human experiences. The root meaning of heuristic is derived from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or to find out. As a research process, heuristic inquiry refers to a process of internal investigation through

which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and then develops methods and procedures to further investigate and analyze.

The process of heuristic inquiry begins with the researcher questioning or seeking to address a personal challenge or question that is significant in some way to the researcher. The researcher is involved and present throughout the process and, “while understanding the phenomenon with increasing awareness, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 17) in that “the heuristic process requires a return to self, a recognition of self-awareness, and a valuing of one’s own experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p.13). As the researcher, I also kept a reflective journal as the course unfolded and was subject to the same questions and activities as was the crew of participants was subject to. Through reflective journaling, I anticipated learning from my North Carolina Outward Bound experience and gaining a deeper, richer outcome. In addition to heuristic processes being conducive to self-processing and discovery, heuristic inquiry leads investigators to new images and meanings regarding human phenomena which, although autobiographic initially, have social and even universal significance.

Heuristics focus on a scientific search through methods and processes aimed at uncovering the underlying meanings of important human experiences. This process involves that the deliberate and purposeful application of meaning and knowledge occurs within the individual through their senses, perceptions, beliefs and judgements. The onus of this process requires the heuristic researcher to be impassioned and committed to remain with a research question earnestly and continuously until it is made clear or answered (Moustakas, 1990).

Moustakas (1990) suggests that several constructs take place that define concepts and processes relative to heuristic research. These constructs engage the researcher to achieve what is integral to this form of qualitative research:

1. *Identifying with the Focus of Inquiry.* Through exploratory open-ended inquiry, self-directed search and involvement, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to get inside the question, become one with it, and achieve an understanding of it.
2. *Self-Dialogue.* By becoming one with what is sought after, the researcher may enter into dialogue with the phenomenon; allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one's experience and be questioned by it. When engaging in self-dialogue, the heuristic researcher faces oneself and is honest with oneself and the experience they are characterizing remains consistent with the established question or problem.
3. *Tacit Knowing.* Tacit knowing is a foundational source of meaning that is rooted in heuristic discovery. Simply stated, tacit knowing involves people sensing phenomena, yet may have difficulty putting the knowledge into words (e.g. An Outward Bound participant realizes that they're more compassionate and understanding to others and to themselves towards the end of their experience but has difficulty explaining this phenomenon). Tacit knowing contributes and illuminates the dimensions that underlie a problem and "guides the researcher into untapped directions and sources of meaning" (p.22).
4. *Intuition.* Tacit knowing segues from knowledge based in mystery to knowledge that is describable. Intuition develops from clues, senses or

conditions that enable the researcher to characterize the reality, state of mind or condition that is evident. In intuition, the heuristic researcher perceives a knowing or awareness, observes it and examines and seeks all inherent clues until the truth of the phenomenon surfaces.

5. *Indwelling*. The aspect of indwelling in the heuristic process involves focusing inward to reveal a deeper, broader realization of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience. It involves a full submersion into some aspect of human experience in order to comprehend the principal qualities and its wholeness. When the researcher engages in indwelling, the researcher “dwells inside the subsidiary and focal factors to draw from every possible nuance, texture, fact, and meaning” (p.24). The process of indwelling is conscious, deliberate and follows clues wherever they occur; the researcher positions themselves inside these notions and expands their meanings and connections until a fundamental realization is revealed.

6. *Focusing*. This concept in heuristic inquiry involves tapping into thoughts and feelings that clarify the question, get a grasp of the question, explain essential components of the question, and assist in processing themes generated from the question. An inner attention, focusing enables one to concentrate on the more central meanings of an experience and “eliminate the clutter and make contact with necessary awarenesses and insights into one’s experiences” (p.25). By incorporating the focusing process, the heuristic researcher is more capable of discerning the core themes that constitute an experience, can identify and assess

feelings and thoughts more acutely, and becomes more knowledgeable to the key meanings and perceptions generated from the experience.

7. *The Internal Frame of Reference.* Whether the knowledge is heightened through the processes of dialogue with others, indwelling, focusing, self-searching or intuition – its base is the internal frame of reference. To become aware of the nature, meanings and particulars of any human experience, the researcher depends on the internal frame of reference of the person who is having, had, or will have the experience. “Only the experiencing persons – by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings and sense – can validly provide portrayals of the experience” (p.26).

The internal frame of reference emphasizes significant awarenesses; however, in order for these awarenesses to occur important processes must take place. Critical to heuristic inquiry and knowing and understanding another’s experience is for the researcher to converse directly with the person. This requires an atmosphere that supports and is conducive for the person to offer, express, explore, and explicate the meanings that are associated with his or her experience. Additionally, imperative to this process is that the heuristic researcher offers a setting that fosters openness, trust and a feeling that encourages and inspires the person to share his or her experience in a positive, non-judgmental surrounding (Moustakas, 1990).

Heuristic inquiry entails the rigors of observations and dialogues within both the participants and the researcher. This in-depth mode of inquiry asserts the feasibility that the researcher can live deeply in the human experience – encounter on a personal level the phenomena that are taking place, all while engaging in purposeful research. It emphasizes meanings and knowledge through personal experience, places front and center the researcher as

the primary instrument in qualitative inquiry, and it challenges the traditional scientific concerns about researcher objectivity and detachment by placing the experience and voice of the researcher in the forefront (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002).

Unique to heuristic inquiry is that the researcher must have had a direct, personal experience with the phenomenon being investigated which is unlike other approaches to phenomenology. As stated previously, phenomenology requires that the researcher has a connection or interest in what is being investigated, whereas with heuristic research there must have been actual autobiographical connections involving the researcher. That is the heuristic researcher has undergone a similar experience in an intense way and is now conducting research on the phenomenon. For example, as a heuristic investigator of this research, I was a North Carolina Outward Bound participant in 1983 and 1984. During these times as a participant I kept a reflective journal. I took the time and energy to reflect on events of the course – primarily when under the tarp, in my sleeping bag and by the use of my flashlight. What is surprising to me is that I also reflected on how I felt at times and how the course was impacting me as a person far beyond just experiencing the components of backpacking and rock climbing. I realize that because I made the conscious attempt to reflect into my personal journal without being prompted or guided by the instructors that the experience of journaling while being a participant in an Outward Bound made the course more meaningful to me – my personal journal and the journaling experience were of benefit to me.

#### Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological and heuristic inquiry-based study was to examine the meaning of the reflective journaling experience in a North Carolina Outward Bound course context. Specifically, the heuristic objective was to illuminate the experience of using journals

during an Outward Bound experience for the study participants and the researcher.

Phenomenology and heuristic inquiry methodology was used to gain a deeper, more enriched sense that the reflective journal affords the North Carolina Outward Bound participant and this researcher while engaging in a wilderness experientially-based adventure course.

North Carolina Outward Bound courses are conducted in wilderness areas and for many participants the wilderness is an unfamiliar setting through which remarkable and memorable experiences occur. These environments are primarily used in Outward Bound courses and it is through these environments and activities that the participants can develop the ability to know more about themselves (Isaac & Goth, 1991). The ability for participants to learn about themselves from their experiences requires reflection and this reflective process can significantly be enhanced through the use of a journal (Sugarman, Doherty, Garvey & Gass, 2000). Journals are used at North Carolina Outward Bound; however little is known about the actual reflective journal experience of the Outward Bound participant.

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of this phenomenological, heuristic inquiry based research was to explore the participants and my experiences of using reflective journaling on a North Carolina Outward Bound course. My specific questions were:

1. What is the lived experience of participants' reflective journaling in relation to their personal development while on a North Carolina Outward Bound course?
2. What is the lived experience of participants' reflective journaling in relation to their social development among crewmates while on a North Carolina Outward Bound course?
3. How did I, as instructor, make meaning of my experience when instructing a North Carolina Outward Bound course through my reflective journal?

### Background of Researcher

It is my position as both the researcher in this study as well as one of the three instructors assigned to this North Carolina Outward Bound course that I must reveal my interest in and motivation for exploring the role of reflective journaling in an Outward Bound course context. Since the use of heuristic inquiry as a methodology requires that “the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14), I begin my background with my first encounter with North Carolina Outward Bound and the reflective journal.

It was January, 1982, and I was an undergraduate in my second year at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. My major studies were in Health and Physical Education and my minor studies were in Recreation and Outdoor Pursuits Education when I learned that I could attend a short North Carolina Outward Bound course during the spring break in March. My parents agreed to fund the tuition for the trip and as some of my college friends were heading off to the sandy beaches of Florida, I was heading to the southern Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina to attend a wilderness adventure program known as North Carolina Outward Bound.

While at North Carolina Outward Bound, among our issued gear of water bottles, backpack, compass, etc., was a paperback personal journal. I do not recall any explanations about journaling from the instructors other than its use for taking notes and writing about experiences as they unfold, if one chooses to do so. I’m very glad that I took the time and energy to write in my journal back then and I still have that old paperback journal today. Although the format I used was log journaling (a written record of facts, activities, weather and some feelings/reflection), it was still a journal and reading it even today brings back memories of excitement, anxiety, anticipation and elation of those days and an awareness of personal



dimensions that still resonate within me. Beyond the scope of the journal, I was transformed by the experience of Outward Bound. I was transformed to the point that I wanted to aspire some day to become a North Carolina Outward Bound instructor myself so that I could share, inspire, encourage and support other participants in the experiential pedagogy and phenomenon of Outward Bound.

Ten years after my first North Carolina Outward Bound experience, I became a North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) instructor in 1992. As I matured from an assistant instructor to full instructor, I have used reflective journaling more and more with the crews that I've instructed. I give structural explanations about journaling and even assignments (e.g. metaphors) for participants to share, if they choose to, of what their journal entry yields about their experience. For establishing a favorable journaling tone I believe that I, as an instructor am sensitive to the tone of the course at hand and provide the appropriate atmosphere that promotes personal and social growth and development among crew members. This atmosphere is one in which a positive approach – even in the most challenging of environmental, personal and group circumstances – occurs by me modeling and practicing authentic positive and encouraging ways and styles of behavior. The Outward Bound instructor is expected to possess not only hard skills inherent for the course components (e.g. wilderness medical certification, navigation skills, rock site management skills) but also possess and use appropriately personal and relational skills (e.g. exhibiting compassion and sensitivity, good communication, processing situations, facilitating personal conversations and meetings) which are integral to what Kurt Hahn and the concept of what Outward Bound is truly about. I believe that because of my inherent holistic and intrinsic instructor skills that crew members respond by being able to journal in a comfortable, non-intrusive or intimidating mindset.

I've been witness to many insightful, deep, and rich journal descriptions about personal growth and experience from NCOB participants. I also know that there is a gap in understanding the experience of the reflective journal among other NCOB instructors and in the courses that they facilitate as well as in the literature. It is my goal to illuminate the powerful experiential possibilities of what reflective journaling can afford the NCOB participant through the methodology of heuristics that I believe this phenomenological inquiry can unfold.

### Participant Selection

Patton (2002) explains that when a “review and study of all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (p.238) occurs, this is called criterion sampling in qualitative research. When criterion sampling is implemented, all cases used in the data collection exhibit predetermined characteristics that are “likely to be information rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses that become targets of opportunity for program or system improvement” (p.238). This heuristic phenomenological study of the reflective journal in this Outward Bound course context included seven participants. Six of the participants were North Carolina Outward Bound course participants. The seventh participant was this researcher performing in the role of heuristic inquirer. Specifically, the criteria to be one of the six participants for the study were:

1. Enroll as a participant for the June 21-28, 2008 North Carolina Outward Bound “Educator’s Course.”
2. Be a current teacher or educator in primary, secondary or higher education setting.

3. Meet the requirements (e.g. completed application/questionnaire, tuition payment) for inclusion as a participant for this North Carolina Outward Bound “Educator’s Course.”
4. Sign the consent form to have their personal journal collected at course end.
5. Complete the North Carolina Outward Bound “Educator’s Course” eight-day course in its entirety.
6. Engage in debrief sessions and reflective journaling times.
7. Actively engage in all course components (e.g. journaling, backpacking, rock climbing, solo).

Criteria characteristics one, two and three were mandated by North Carolina Outward Bound for this specific course. The course planners developed this specific group course, as opposed to an open-enrollment type course, for participants to share an Outward Bound experience with a group of diverse teachers and educators from across the country and abroad.

Because the participants were educators, they most likely were familiar with teaching styles, methodology, communicating, discussing and debriefing. Participants were expected to be accepting of these strategies and the exposure to the theory of experiential education in the Outward Bound program. Furthermore, North Carolina Outward Bound designed this course so that participants would be challenged, gain new leadership skills and return to the classroom refreshed and recharged.

I devised the remaining criteria to have the potential of effectively answering the research questions. Primarily I needed consenting participants to attend and participate in all the debriefing and reflective journaling sessions, experience the same objective components (e.g. rock climbing, solo, backpack expeditioning) and complete the full eight day course. By

following these criteria, the results were anticipated to show that each study participant had experienced the same phenomena (e.g. components), was intensely engaged in understanding the nature and meanings of the phenomena – through reflective debriefing and journaling – and was open to participate in a study providing data that would be used in a dissertation and possibly in other publications (Moustakas, 1994).

### Data Collection

In qualitative research, data collection involves qualitative inquiry. Patton (2002) explains that when the researcher employs qualitative inquiry the researcher is in the field capturing what is happening, “where the action is, getting one’s hands dirty, participating where possible in actual program activities, and getting to know program staff and participants on a personal level” (p.48). Additionally, the qualitative researcher sets the boundaries for the study, collects information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, as well as determines the process for recording information (Creswell, 2003). Actively participating in the life of the study subjects sets the boundaries of this research and is what this researcher plans to do. As one of the North Carolina Outward Bound field instructors for this course, I observed first hand and personally was engaged, along with the study participants. I was able to use all my senses and capacities to synthesize the rich data that became available as the course progressed.

The observation of participants in the field provided a lens to this researcher that added depth and meaning to support the data. Moustakas (1994) describes the value of participant observation as follows: (a) by directly observing participants, the researcher is in a position to understand the context in which the people share activities and their lives. For example, I was able to witness the exhilarating comments and see the facial expressions when participants

successfully reached their destination after backpacking a rugged section of the Appalachian Mountains; (b) first-hand experience enables the researcher to have an open mind to ascertain and deduce what is significant. For example, there was the occasion after an extremely long first day – which extended until eleven o'clock in the evening that I decided to forego asking participants and myself to answer the prompt-style questions. I then gave the questions for the first day during the morning of the second day; (c) the researcher is able to directly observe activities and infer meanings that may not be apparent to participants and staff. For example, sometimes during Outward Bound courses the crew tends to not be aware of crew members who have established exclusive relationships (e.g. clique) which alienate them from the rest of the crew and can lead to adverse group development tendencies. A specific example to this would be when two crew members are always pairing up (e.g. canoeing partners, climbing partners, expedition partners). The Outward Bound instructor intervenes by addressing the exclusivity problem to those involved and an agreement is reached for those involved to be made aware of this concern and to open themselves to involve others; (d) through direct observation, the researcher can become aware of things that the participants and other staff may not be willing to disclose. For example, occasionally on Outward Bound courses there are instances in which crewmembers place too much pressure onto themselves to succeed (e.g. fail to complete a rock climb) and how it apparently makes them seem over-stressed. In response, the Outward Bound instructor reassures them that it is appropriate to relax, to know that attempting the challenge is equally as important and to not be so critical of themselves; (e) when determining what is essential in understanding the setting to the participants and staff, the researcher can include his or her own perceptions. For example, after a wonderful day of climbing, a metaphor as the reflective journal entry was used for the participants because the data from metaphors can be

“richer, more complete” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 221); and (f) first-hand observation and participation enables the researcher to gather data through direct experience and understanding and understand and interpret the setting as well as the participants being studied and evaluated. Simply being in the field twenty-four hours a day for eight straight days and observing and participating with the participants provided this researcher with a plethora of rich, descriptive reflective journal and field notes. Participant observation was one lens used in this study; the other lens was the reflective journal.

During the process of research, the qualitative researcher may collect documents, and in this case, reflective journals were collected and analyzed. The advantages of journals as data documents enable the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants. Additionally, journals can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher. In this case, it was intended that journals would be collected at the end of the Outward Bound course and they were. Furthermore, journal data entries “are a means of self-expression” (Cranton, 2006, p.146) and represent thoughtful, considerate and reflective insight to the experience and save the researcher time and expense in transcribing the data (Creswell, 2003). Attending to the realization that participants may want to journal on a more in-depth and personal level, a second journal was given to each participant. The second journal was explained to the participants as just mentioned and was not collected for use in this study.

This research followed the Pennsylvania State University and federal regulations for studying human subjects and was approved by the Pennsylvania State University Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent and confidentiality protocols for the study followed Patton’s (2002) simple, straightforward approach when recruiting human subjects. At the Asheville, NC International Airport participants were informed that the study that they

were asked to participate in was IRB approved, the purpose of the study was conveyed in a brief, concise manner and was explained in a non-intrusive way. Additionally, confidentiality and respect would be in place at all times during the study and pseudonyms would be used in place of their real names. All six participants enrolled in the North Carolina Outward Bound “Educators Course” and consented to this researcher to have their journals, as well as their photographs, be used in the research study. The following details the questions that were used as daily journal questions as well as a metaphor that participants were asked to comment on in their reflective journals and at daily debriefing sessions. Daily prompt-style questions were provided to the study participants via a strip of paper with the questions type-written on them. Additionally, a small dry-erase marker board was also carried by the researcher in his backpack for purposes of drawing and explaining the experiential learning cycle, for listing equipment needed for rock climbing and other lessons.

### *Day One*

The first day of the course involved meeting everyone at the Asheville, NC International Airport. It was at the airport that welcome and greetings to the course took place as well as addressing this study to the crew and distribution of consent forms. Following this, engaging in a group initiative/game, performing duffle shuffle (transferring items from personal duffles into a backpack), explaining personal and group gear, food and loading up in a van and heading into the Pisgah National Forest to begin the backpack expedition. The expedition began from the Tunnel Gap pull-off along the Blue Ridge Parkway and then accessing the Bridges Camp Gap trail. While expeditioning, map and compass tactics were briefly explained as well as trail hiking practices and procedures (e.g. staying together). At the destination for the day campcraft, dinner, LNT (Leave No Trace) practices and sleeping dry and warm were explained.

Additionally, due to the lateness of the day (midnight!) the first day questions regarding the participant's reflective journal were postponed until the next morning.

Participants were instructed during duffle shuffle to have their reflective journals readily accessible so that experiences can be recorded and reflected upon and not merely "an impulse, quickly felt and then forgotten" (Bennion & Olsen, 2002, p. 251). To make this a reality for the participants, the researcher/instructor recommended to the participants the following for journal accessibility: (a) while backpack expeditioning: keep the journal in the "lid," "brain," or "top" of the backpack for quick access; and (b) while climbing: pack the journal in the climber's individual day pack along with water bottles, rain top, warm top, camera, etc. Use journals when waiting to climb, after a climb, while taking a rest along the trail, etc. Participants were asked to address the following questions relating to day one in their journals at the beginning of the second day. They positioned themselves along the beautiful Yellowstone Prong Creek to journal:

1. Why did you enroll in this Outward Bound course?
2. What was the most difficult part of the day for you?
3. How have you challenged yourself so far in the course?
4. What can you do to challenge yourself for the rest of the course?
5. What do you hope to accomplish, both personally, professionally, and socially during this course?
6. What is it like to journal?

### *Day Two*

After answering the day one questions and breakfast, the second day of the course involved a short lesson by the researcher/instructor to the crew on Kolb's (1984) experiential



learning cycle, Challenge by Choice, Five Finger Contract, Full Value Contract and the Four Pillars of Outward Bound. An initiative was introduced involving a corded bracelet that was tied and worn by all crew members representing a commitment to the lessons learned that morning. Following this a more detailed lesson in map and compass navigation – called *Navigation 101* – were taught by the co-instructors. After this a full day of backpack expeditioning occurred on the Graveyard Ridge trail. The crew learned more about map and compasses and therefore experienced a little more responsibility this day as the instructors “stepped back” a bit to afford the crew some self-directedness on their day (e.g. route finding, deciding when to snack, eat lunch, etc.). Arriving at the Black Balsam campsite for the evening, questions asked on day two of the course that were answered in participant journals were:

1. What was the most difficult part of the day for you?
2. How have you challenged yourself so far in the course?
3. What can you do to challenge yourself for the rest of the course?
4. Is everyone fulfilling the “Full Value Contract?” Explain.
5. Is everyone fulfilling the “Five Finger Contract?” Explain.
6. What did you learn about yourself yesterday that you implemented today?

Day two concluded with the evening meal, followed by the evening meeting (debrief of the day, reading of the crew journal entry and answering the “Question of the Day”) and a brief explanation of what day three was going to entail.

### *Day Three*

The third day of the course involved continued backpack expeditioning. Leaving the Black Balsam site, the crew headed in a southerly direction hiking the Art Loeb/Mountains-to-Sea trail. At a vista location on Shuck Ridge along the Art Loeb/Mountains to-Sea trail a brief

lesson – *Navigation 102* – took place which involved reviewing and re-enforcing prior map and compass learnings. Following this lesson expeditioning ensued and the crew making good time arrived at their campsite in the vicinity of Sassafras Knob at 4 p.m. Because of the efficiency in time management, the crew was afforded a time to snack, rest and write into their journals the reflective journal questions of the day as well as other personal entries if they chose. The questions for day three of the course were:

1. What has had the most impact on your trust level of the group?
2. As an educator, how can you apply the “Full Value Contract” and “Five Finger Contract” into your discipline/curriculum at your school/institution?
3. Record any other thoughts or comments that you are thinking/feeling about how the course is going.
4. How do you feel reflective journaling has contributed to your course experience thus far?

#### *Day Four*

The fourth day of the course continued with backpack expeditioning a short distance to a service project site. Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, placed emphasis on community service and social cooperation in his teachings to his students (Zelinski, 2002). Service, whether environmental, societal or humanitarian continues to be a component of Outward Bound courses. During the pre-course planning phase of the course I mentioned to my co-instructors that we should be aware of environmental service possibilities as we progress through the eight day course. What appeared to me as a service project was on this trail leading from our previous campsite to our next destination. The environmental service project consisted of aiding a severely impacted, trampled and devastated spring that crossed the trail we were on. Due to the

location of the spring on the trail, hikers were trekking through this spring and severely damaging the flow of the spring. The project involved placing locally accessed rocks alongside or parallel to the spring to re-establish the normal flow. Further application of rocks known as rock armoring increased the stability to the immediate area on both sides of the spring, too. The placement of four, ten foot long logs over the spring to serve as makeshift planks to walk across concluded this project. The crew's sense of ownership and purpose to this service project was very apparent in their faces during and immediately following this event. A tremendous sense of duty, ownership and appreciation was evident by all members of this crew.

The backpacking continued after the service project which consisted trekking up and over Pilot Mountain. While on the summit of Pilot Mountain, the crew had lunch and took in the beautiful and stunning panoramic view of the Pisgah National Forest with views of surrounding ridges and mountains such as Looking Glass Rock, Cedar Rock and John Rock.

The crew hiked into their campsite for the evening – Sacred Knoll, which is a North Carolina Outward Bound Cedar Rock Base Camp property campsite. The time was early evening, they had a snack and I gave to them their reflective journal questions for the day:

1. My feelings regarding the service component...
2. Do you have any thoughts or ideas how you can involve your students and include service that is related/unrelated to your discipline at your school/institution?
3. How do you feel reflective journaling has contributed to your course experience thus far?

After reflecting in their journals and having a snack, at this point in the course the crew was demonstrating increased self-reliance with campcraft and successfully constructed the tarps, made supper and conducted the evening meeting.

### *Day Five*

The fifth day of the course continued with backpack expeditioning to the base of Cedar Rock Mountain. The crew arrived at the base of the mountain around 2 p.m. Exhausted and happy to get to the base, the crew rested and had lunch. Following lunch the crew was trained on how to ascend a fixed line using prussik wraps. A prussik is thin accessory cord tied in a series of loops and attached to the climber that when secured correctly on the fixed rope permits sliding of the prussik, so the climber can ascend but when weighted – as in a slip or fall – the prussik will catch preventing the climber from falling beyond the stretch of the prussik and fixed rope.

The prussik activity took place on the East Face of Cedar Rock Mountain and involved three pitches, or four 200 foot rope lengths to the summit. The summit view atop Cedar Rock Mountain was fabulous and the crew decided to eat dinner and watch the sunset from a vista overlooking the rolling ridges and mountains of the Pisgah National Forest. It was at this location that I gave the crew their questions for the fifth day of the course. The open-ended prompt-style questions were:

1. The feelings I had when first seeing the rock to ascend...
2. The feelings I had when “prussiking” and high up on the rock...
3. The feelings I had when completing the prussik and then being “off belay”...
4. Other reflections or insights of my rock experience...

*Day Six*

The sixth day of the course began with the crew descending Cedar Rock Mountain via a hand line and hiking to a NCOB climbing site called “Halloween” which is along the base of Cedar Rock Mountain. While co-instructors Sweet Pea and Brenda (pseudonyms) briefed the crew about harness donning, knot tying and belay technique, Tishy (pseudonym) and I set up two climbs. All crew members successfully climbed a route before the rain started. Due to the rain and thunderstorm situation Tishy and I agreed to close down the climbs. The crew was hiked out from the climbing site and as we approached an open area referred to as “Sunny Slab” the skies cleared and the sun came out. At this site, which offered a nice view of the valley below I decided to take this moment and have the crew respond into their journals a metaphor and therefore “*reflect on*” their climbing activity. This follows what Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) refer to when framing experience around reflection; the student processes what has been learned *after* the field experience has occurred. The metaphor statement was: “Considering the equipment and techniques used today for the climbs, who or what in your life represents to you the anchor, belayer, monitor, rope, harness, carabiners and helmet and why?” The crew was afforded about thirty minutes to respond to the metaphor at which time the participants were offered the option of sharing their responses to the crew.

Following the metaphor activity the crew hiked from Sunny Slab into the NCOB Cedar Rock Base Camp and arrived at a base camp constructed platform campsite called “Self Reliance.” It was planned that the crew would be put on “solo” for the rest of this day and into the late morning hours of the seventh day of their course. Tishy located suitable solo sites for the participants and I briefed the crew on the purpose, logistics and processes of solo. Included in this is a “safety talk” regarding solo (e.g. staying within ten yards of your assigned area, blowing

your whistle three times if an emergency occurs). I also distributed day seven questions for them to answer in their reflective journals. The questions were:

1. What have I learned about myself and the crew since the start of the course?
2. What personal learnings do I anticipate taking with me when the course ends?
3. How has journaling on this course affected this course experience?
4. Who is an influential person in your life and why? Do they know these feelings you have?
5. Activity: Be ready to share the story of the construction of your solo tarp to the crew.
6. Activity: Write a letter to yourself using the supplied paper and envelope. Be sure to address and seal it. It will be mailed to you in six months.
7. Activity: Bring back a “memory” or object from your solo site to share with the crew.

### *Day Seven*

Day seven involved having the crew depart from their solo sites at 10 a.m. and return to the solo watch camp to meet with the instructors for a late breakfast and debrief of their solo experience. Sweet Pea conducted the solo debriefing session which involved covering questions and activities four through seven of the day seven journal questions. Following the solo debrief the crew walked to the NCOB Cedar Rock Base Camp’s lodge for an afternoon workshop. The facilitators of this workshop involved two prominent educators within the NCOB community and their session focused on experiential education implementation in a school’s curriculum. Content of this educator’s workshop included discussion and reflection on what was personally

experienced this past week on the course, as well as outcomes, learning processes and design principles associated with expeditionary learning.

When the workshop concluded, the crew began the task of de-issuing some of the crew issued gear and equipment. The ‘de-issuing’ phase of the course infers cleaning the gear. For example, because the crew was finished backpacking and was sleeping on a platform under a constructed roof this night the crew maps, tarps, rain gear and backpacks could all be cleaned. A practice at NCOB is for crew members to participate in cleaning and de-issuing their assigned gear and equipment which fosters one of the four pillars of Outward Bound – craftsmanship. Craftsmanship in that the crew understands that the crew before them cleaned and prepped the gear that they used for their course and that in turn they will do the same by placing emphasis in the quality of cleaning and making ready the equipment for the next crew.

The evening of seventh day of the course – the last night of the course – involved a graduation ceremony. The ceremony took place at a structure called the “Pavilion”. The significance of this structure is that it is one of the first buildings constructed at the Cedar Rock Base Camp and when walking on the wood plank floor and using the Pavilion shoes are not to be worn for respect and cleanliness. Crew members sat in the center of the Pavilion in a circle and Tishy conducted the ceremony. With a meaningful summarization of the course and the sharing of learnings that occurred among crewmates, crew members were issued a certificate and pin for their participation in the Outward Bound course. The evening concluded with a brief explanation of tomorrow’s agenda.

### *Day Eight*

Day eight, the final day of the course, participants engaged in a six mile PCE (Personal Challenge Event) which began at 6:00 a.m. The PCE was a circular route which occurred on

foot trails and forest service roads. The finish line of the PCE was at the base camp's pond where orange and watermelon slices as well as water were available. Some crew members (including me!) took a refreshing "plunge" into the pond to cool off and celebrate a personal physical achievement. Following the PCE a final de-issuing of personal gear (e.g. stoves, pots, water bottles, bowl, spoon, sleeping bag) occurred and then participants received their personal duffles and the welcome opportunity to shower and get into clothes for the travel to the airport and home. Final questions were given to participants after they showered or while waiting for a shower to become available. The final day eight questions were:

1. What was it like to journal while on your Outward Bound experience?
2. What have you learned about yourself during this course?
3. What particular event(s) affected your overall experience (physically, socially and mentally) during this course?
4. What learnings, if any will you take with you and apply to your everyday life following the course?
5. What learnings can you apply to your teaching situation that you gained from this course?
6. What did I think and learn about myself and the group during this Outward Bound course?

When all the crew members were finished showering and changing into their travel clothes, we gathered for one last time under the pavilion to complete the NCOB "Course Impression and Evaluation" form. Following the completion of the evaluation form, all six participants – having consented to the study at the onset of the course – handed their personal journal to me. The participants were informed that their personal journals would be returned to



them, along with a DVD of the course and a final position statement/narrative via mail within three weeks following the end of the course. The final position statement/narrative was “My overall experience of reflective journaling while engaged in an Outward Bound course...”

Farewells, goodbyes and group picture taking took place as participants prepared to load into the van and drive to the airport. The van departed the NCOB Cedar Rock Base Camp to drive to the Asheville, NC International Airport at 11:00 a.m.

The three instructors met in the afternoon and engaged in what is referred to as “Post Course” meetings. In addition to meeting and having discussions with the Course Director and the head climber, post course entails reading the participants final impression evaluations, critiquing the support and logistics personnel associated with the course and completing instructor to instructor written performance evaluations. As for me, following post course, analyzing the participant’s journals was about to commence. The next section details the study’s data analysis that took place from this course.

#### Data Analysis

Phenomenological analysis was used to clarify the results of the participants’ and the heuristic researcher’s reflective journaling experience when engaged in a North Carolina Outward Bound School course. Phenomenological analysis “seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 482). The qualitative researcher transforms the study data by creating codes and themes that stand out, are descriptive and relate to the research questions (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) explains that organization of data begins when the primary investigator places the transcribed data, in this case reflective journals before him or her and studies the material

through the methods and procedures that are subject to phenomenal analysis. This requires *horizontalizing* the data and regarding every horizon or statement that has relevance and equal value to the topic (e.g. journal questions relating to “Full Value Contract”). Following this procedure, *meaning or meaning units* are listed. These are clustered into common categories or *themes* and these themes and meanings are “used to develop textural descriptions of the experience” (p.118). Textural structures, along with structural descriptions and a combination of textures and structures evolve into results that inform meanings and essences of the phenomenon being investigated.

The data in this study was guided by the questions posed for the journal writing and consisted of hand written entries and comments from the participants. The questions explored and delved into the participant’s perceptions of the impact experienced by engaging in the components of the Outward Bound course and then reflecting on the experience into a personal journal. It was anticipated that all participants and the researcher would experience the same components during the study (backpacking, evening meetings, journaling, rock climbing, solo, PCE). All participants and the researcher/instructor did indeed experience all the same components. The data from the course journal entries and the final position statement/narrative was interpreted by bracketing the information into structures and patterns and then organizing the data into meaningful clusters (Patton, 2002). The data analysis was expected to yield themes that support the research questions.

The process that was used to analyze the journal entries involved reading and noting horizontalizing characteristics among the entries that related to common topics. For example, questions were specifically assigned to days in which components took place (e.g. day four

questions referred to service; day six was the climbing equipment/technique metaphor). To further determine the phenomenological characteristics associated with course components, and thus establish meaning and meaning units (Moustakas, 1994) journal entries that resonated descriptive and deep personal and crew qualities to course components (e.g. rock climbing, journaling) were marked with colored Post-It® flags. Yellow flags referred to crew cohesiveness, orange flags referred to journaling reactions, green flags referred to the phenomenon and experience of journaling, and blue flags referred to introspection. However, because introspection qualities were noted by this researcher to be quite broad and descriptive among participants, letters were written on the blue flags that depicted sub-characteristics or supporting tendencies of introspection. The letter “H” was written on blue flags in which *humbleness* was noted, “A” was written on blue flags that consisted of personal *awarenesses*, “C” for heightened *confidence*, “P” for enhanced *perseverance* and determination, and “S” for personal and crew *satisfaction*. The process of using Post-It ® flags and letters tremendously assisted the organizing of the data. The colored flags were quick reference signals to this researcher among the six journals that were being analyzed.

### Verification

Verification entails using processes when analyzing, concluding, and confirming findings in a field study that protect against “biases that can steal into the process of drawing conclusions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 198) and relate to the overall trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This section describes the use of triangulation, member-checking and peer debriefing as strategies that helped to verify accuracy of the findings. In addition, researcher preparedness, evaluation, transferability, dependability and confirmability will be discussed as components to verify this study.

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation refers to using several different data sources of information that will build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell, 2003). This study used participants' reflective journals, interviews, observations and daily evening debriefings as strategies to explore the phenomena of the lived experience of participants using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course. Use of these varying strategies whereby the researcher reads, sees and hears multiple instances of phenomena increased the credibility of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Although the reading of personal reflective journals by the researcher did not occur until after the course concluded, the observations, talks and discussions with crew members while hiking, climbing, eating and evening meetings support the participant journal entries.

### *Member-checking*

Member-checking was used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by returning the information to the participant to determine its validity (Creswell, 2003) by acting "as a panel of judges, evaluating singly and collectively the major findings of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.242). Since the data from the study was interpreted through the reading of participants' reflective journals, observations, interviews and debriefs, providing the participants with the interpreted data (Chapter Four) has confirmed the existence of themes or categories implied as well as those incomplete categories of information that may have been missed by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). However, the responses from the participants did not disclose missing categories; all were quite pleased with the results. The results of the study, sent five months after the course ended did employ member checks by reporting to the participants the themes and specific descriptions of the study and then requesting the participants to

determine whether or not they felt the findings were accurate (See Appendix G for the letter to the participants).

### *Peer Review*

Peer review, or peer debriefing involves engaging other people to review and assess the data of the study. This strategy will enhance the accuracy of the study by critically analyzing and asking questions about the qualitative study “so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2003, p.196). Debriefing sessions between the researcher and colleagues that are familiar with the research under investigation will strengthen the outcomes of the study by offering other insights and awarenesses for possible inclusion. In this study, the researcher’s dissertation advisor as well as other committee members will serve as peer reviewers.

### *Other Supporting Strategies*

Other important strategies to produce an authentic and credible study involve researcher preparedness, the inclusion of negative or discrepant information and using rich, thick description to convey the findings. Investigator preparedness is of critical importance in qualitative research – “Qualitative research is only as good as the investigator” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.66). It is the researcher who, through his or her knowledge or wisdom associated with the research, as well as skill and patience obtains pertinent information during field work and data analysis to produce a rich qualitative study. Good qualitative researchers must be trusted in the setting and wait patiently until the study subjects are willing to engage; be willing to be flexible and resilient in data gathering; be versatile in research methods and have the knowledge that there are numerous ways to obtain information; be persistent in recognizing that good fieldwork is often a matter of simply completing one task at a time; and must be

constantly verifying, cross-checking and reviewing notes and other data collected constantly to produce a well grounded work that will be a contribution to the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Including negative or discrepant information in a study that contradicts or runs counter to themes offers a realistic accounting to the reader of the study. Because real life consists of different perspectives that do not always unite, providing contrary information adds to the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2003). Neuman (2000) considers it a breach of ethics when a researcher omits or consciously does not report aspects relative to the study. This takes place when the researcher fails to present the data or evidence that does not support his or her argument or interpretation of the data. Researchers should include evidence that both supports and fails to confirm an interpretation and allow the reader to “weigh both types of evidence and judge the support for the researcher’s interpretation” (p.459). Negative or discrepant information from this study was included, as you will read in Chapter Four (e.g. as related to the experience of journaling).

Lastly, qualitative researchers use thick, rich description to convey findings. A thick description of an experience provides intentions and meanings that organized the experience, reveals the experience as a process and “creates the conditions for authentic, or deep, emotional understanding” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 325). Thick descriptions of the data transport the reader to the setting and offer the discussion an element of understanding the experience (Creswell, 2003). These strategies that support and make more authentic the research study are directly associated with the researcher (e.g. preparedness) and how the data is presented or offered (e.g. descriptive accounts). Other aspects must be included to make the study credible and dependable as well as transfer beyond the researcher constructs.

### *Credibility*

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that all research must be evaluated and critiqued according to its trustworthiness. Credibility is a construct of trustworthiness that demonstrates that the study was conducted in such a manner to ensure that the subject, experience or phenomenon was accurately identified and described. The strength of a qualitative study that aims to explore a phenomenon or problem uses credible, in-depth descriptions which show the complexities inherent in the setting that it cannot help but be trustworthy, credible and valid (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Triangulating multiple sources of data through journal analysis, observations, debriefs and member checks increased the credibility and quality by countering the concern that the study's data was based solely on a single method or source (Patton, 2002).

### *Transferability*

Another construct of trustworthiness is that of transferability and extrapolation. Transferability of a study demonstrates that the findings can be generalizable, or transfer to another similar or particular sample in the likeness of the study sample (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Extrapolations are modest speculations in which the findings are applicable to other situations which are similar, but not identical, to the initial research conditions (Patton, 2002). The knowledge that is gained from the findings of this study on the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course are expected to transfer to other Outward Bound courses and extrapolate to other outdoor adventure programs that use similar programming constructs to that of Outward Bound (e.g. small crew size, adventure-based).

### *Dependability*

The dependability or reliability of a research study occurs when the researcher accounts for changes in the conditions of the phenomenon under study, as well as changes in the study

design (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). This researcher understood that changes may occur as the study took place and that this qualitative assumption of change should be accepted because the setting and the “world is always changing and the concept of replication is itself problematic” (p. 147). The assumptive goal behind the dependability of a study is for the researcher to describe and explain phenomena as accurately and completely as possible so that the “explanations and descriptions correlate as closely as possible to the way the world is and actually operates” (Patton, 2002, p. 546). By documenting and explaining how the findings were gathered and patterned, dependability is established warranting that the study is sound and reliable.

### *Confirmability*

The confirmability of a study rests on the concept of researcher objectivity and the notion of researcher bias when confirming conclusions (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Using multiple methods can assist in reducing researcher bias and assures that the basic quality of the data collected is confirmable. Miles and Huberman (1984) offer twelve tactics, or methods to ensure that confirmability of a study take place. They are: (a) *check for representativeness* – does the data correlate and represent the research question(s)? ; (b) *check for researcher effects* – on the study site, situation, or vice versa; (c) *triangulate* – across various data collection methods and sources; (d) *weigh the evidence* – deciding which data are most trustworthy and representative; (e) *contrast and compare* – the data to add richness and depth; (f) *check the meaning of outliers* – otherwise known as ‘exceptions’ in the findings; (g) *use extreme cases* – which can be useful in verifying and confirming conclusions; (h) *rule out spurious relations* – “when two variables look correlated...wait a beat, and consider whether some third variable might be underlying/influencing/causing them both” (p.238); (i) *replicating findings* – dependability of data is enhanced when more than one instrument measures the same



trait or outcome; (j) *check out rival explanations* – look for and include the best of several alternative accounts to enhance the data; (k) *include negative evidence* – seek disconfirming traits to add confidence to the study which discounts researcher bias, and; (l) *acquire feedback from informants* – member-checking assists in substantiating and confirming the findings in the study.

To review, verification involves many methods and sources to establish trustworthiness and integrity within a research study. This researcher implemented the before-mentioned strategies and concepts in reaching conclusions that support and confirm the findings related to exploring the experience of using reflective journals in an Outward Bound course.

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a review of the purpose of the study, which is to explore the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course. Following this was an overview of how the research paradigm and the research methodology, phenomenology and heuristic inquiry, support and confirm the purpose of the study. Ensuing sections discussed the guiding research questions, my background and procedures used for selecting the participants. Lastly, the chapter discusses the methods used for collecting and analyzing data – namely reflective journals, observations and debriefing, as well as strategies to assure the trustworthiness and reliability of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH RESULTS

The North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) Educator's Course took place from June 21-28, 2008 in the Pisgah National Forest located in the southwest mountains of North Carolina. Six adult participants and three instructors comprised the crew. The six participants consented to be a part of this study. The researcher is also included in the findings of this study. This chapter's specific focus is on the NCOB Educator's Course and the themes that were generated from prompt-style questions written by the participants and the researcher into their personal reflective journals while engaged in the course. The themes that emerged as a result of the data analysis are presented in four major sections: 1) Introspection Depicted through Reflective Journaling, 2) Crew Cohesiveness Depicted through Reflective Journaling, 3) Participant Reactions to Reflective Journaling, and 4) The Phenomenon of Reflective Journaling.

#### The Course

I have been instructing courses at North Carolina Outward Bound since 1992. As an instructor I am obligated to keep current on my CPR and Wilderness First Responder certifications, as well as attend staff trainings and workshops to keep me current and focused on topics pertinent to the vocation. Instructing the adult Educator's Course was the first of its kind for me, so significant time and energy during pre-course planning focused on delivering a solid, empowering course for the six teachers that were attending this eight day course. However, before continuing the description of the course, I need to start at the beginning of this journey.

My assignment to instruct the eight day Educator's Course began during the summer of 2007 when I contacted the Asheville, North Carolina office of NCOB to arrange instructing an all-adult NCOB course during the summer of 2008 for my doctoral study. I explained my

purpose of studying the experience of reflective journaling while on a NCOB course and needing to have participants that were adult aged to satisfy the Doctorate in Adult Education program that I'm enrolled in at The Pennsylvania State University. Because my background is in education and I teach outdoor experiential education at a secondary school, as well as an adjunct professor at a local university, NCOB suggested that I instruct the Educator's Course that was to occur during the week of June 21-28, 2008. I immediately accepted the offer and was ecstatic and relieved that I was both instructing a course to satisfy my doctoral objectives, as well as instructing educators – people in a profession like me!

The eight-day Educator's Course follows the traditional Outward Bound model, which through guiding principles intends to inspire people to discover and heighten their potential to care for themselves and others as well as the world around them through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings. Incorporating the added emphasis on experiential education, educator courses offer teachers to push beyond personal limits to uncover new potential within – both physically and emotionally – to reignite their passion for education by collaborating with their peers, to think outside the box, problem solving, develop an understanding of experiential education and develop strategies for implementing this methodology into their own practice. Additionally, educator courses foster compassion for what it means to be a student participant and re-evaluate how they approach their students' needs in their personal practices back home.

Components that are indicative of an eight-day Educator's Course include backpacking for three to four days, rock climbing/rappelling for two days, a solo period not exceeding 24 hours, a service project and personal challenge event. Beyond the hard skills of the course (e.g. tarp construction, rock climbing, knot tying, Leave No Trace camping practices) and woven throughout the eight day course is Outward Bound methodology, experiential education theory,

transference and goal-setting, structured reflective time and introduction to resources (books, articles, etc.).

The flow and sequence of components and topics are planned during what is called “Pre-Course Planning.” The pre-course planning began two days before the course starting date – June 21. The outline (see Appendix A) was prepared by the course director and co-instructor Tishy (pseudonym) for the NEE-821 8-Day Educator Course. The pre-course days of June 19 and June 20 occurred as planned. June 19 was rather intense as reviewing and taking notes regarding specifics of each participant’s medicals/applications, planning the menu and then packing the food for the entire course. Additionally, establishing the expedition route and packing all the gear took a lot of mental energy, discussion and collaboration among instructors. June 20 involved discussing among the instructors curricular progression of the course and establishing and finalizing in detail the first 72 hours of the course. Furthermore, the afternoon of June 20 involved discussing individual instructor goals and meeting with the NCOBS Cedar Rock Base Camp Manager for a safety briefing as well as the chief climber for finalizing the climbing component.

The various components of the eight day course were planned during the first day of pre-course; however the climbing days – course days five and six – were reserved on the calendar earlier in June with the head climber. Meeting with the logistics manager to schedule food pack out as well as gear pack out, end-of-course de-issuing of equipment and determining the PCE – the personal challenge event (a distance, which is usually run and walked by a participant in which it is a final personal challenge of their Outward Bound course) also occurred during pre-course. With all the known dates of climbing, de-issue, type and distance of the PCE, Tishy and

the other co-instructor Sweet Pea (pseudonym) and I planned the other components for the course referred to as “course details” (see Appendix B).

Another aspect of pre-course planning is for the instructors to plan what is referred to as the “72 Hour Plan.” This is simply planning every detail and teaching topic relevant to the course in the first 72 hours or three days, of an Outward Bound course. Rather than a detailed 72 hour plan, the instructor trio decided that a 48 hour plan was sufficient for this course. Also decided upon by the instructor trio was agreeing who would assume responsibility for teaching each of the topics during the first 48 hours of the course (see Appendix C).

As one can imagine, the two days of pre-course were quite intense. By the time dinner came around and the duty, or clean up that occurred afterward, there was not much time for personal preparation and planning. However, I did find the energy to get my items together and pack my own backpack and do the final preparations for the course – including photocopying and cutting into strips the daily journal questions (see Appendix D), polishing my initial welcoming talk, introducing my field study and gaining their consent when meeting everyone at the Asheville Airport on Saturday, June 21, 2008.

Tishy, Sweet Pea and I departed North Carolina Outward Bound Cedar Rock Base camp at 11:30 a.m. on June 21 to meet the course participants at the Asheville International Airport. Pre-course material that the participants received via mail informed them that the course started at the Asheville International Airport at 1:30 p.m. on June 21. It was here at the airport that I introduced myself as one of their instructors of the course and was also a graduate student conducting a research study. I asked if they had received the recruitment letter and if so would consent to my study. Each of the six participants stated that they had received the invitation letter and agreed to take part in the study.

Before presenting the results of the data analysis, the following is a brief profile of each participant.

### Profiles of the Participants

Participant profiles were partly derived from information in their application as well as from their first journal entry question: “Why did you enroll in this Outward Bound course?” For anonymity purposes each participant chose a pseudonym for this study.

#### Grace

Grace is a white 25 year old female who teaches music to pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students. Grace’s answer to question one on day one of her Outward Bound course:

*I enrolled in this outward bound course to learn more about wilderness skills first and foremost. Through living in the wilderness for a time, I would like to gain a new perspective of life – one that focuses on basic needs and simplicity, rather than constant stress and time constraints.*

*This past year has been a year of great change for me – graduating from my Master’s degree [program], looking for a job, and moving to a new city. The change has been difficult and insecurities in my life left me feeling bitter, anxious, and less confident.*

*During this trip I hope to have experiences that help me leave any remaining negative energy behind. I also hope to gain the skills that would allow me to take a trip like this another time, with less help from instructors.*

#### Raymond

Raymond, a white 62 year old male is a high school principal. Raymond’s entry to question one as to why he enrolled in the course:

*I chose this course because I love the out-of-doors. I like challenges, and I thought this would be good for me. I've learned through running that most limits are mental. I want to put myself in situations where I need to do more.*

*One of the other reasons I did this course was to put myself in unknown social situation[s]. I'm with 8 others I did not know until we met at the airport. I'm used to being known, being in charge, [and] being respected. One challenge is to avoid trying to impress others with my experiences.*

### Michelle

Michelle, a white 31 year old female teaches fourth grade at an Experiential Learning School. Her response to why she enrolled in this course:

*To travel somewhere I haven't been. And actually this was supposed to be a "team bonding" thing for me and my teammate, but she had to cancel. My principal wants our staff to do these [trips] together but no one but me ever wants to go!*

### Rico

Rico is a white 23 year old male who teaches language arts to seventh grade students. His journal entry response to question one:

*I enrolled in the Outward Bound course because I want to introduce the [Outward Bound] program to my students beginning in the fall.*

### Herman

Herman is a white 26 year old male who is an outdoor educator at a university. Herman's journal response to question one referring to why he's attending this course:

*To have a new experience [and] learn skills that I can use in my profession.*

## Willie

Willie is a white 31 year old male who is a teaching associate and after-school coordinator. His journal entry response to question one:

*I enrolled in this course to get out in the woods, learn from other educators and prepare myself mentally for upcoming events this summer.*

The data from the journal entries were interpreted by bracketing the information into structures and patterns and then organizing into meaningful clusters and themes (Patton, 2002). The data analysis yielded four themes.

### Introspection Depicted through Reflective Journaling

A journal allows participants to concentrate on thoughts and feelings and creates conditions that foster reflection and awareness that often lead to renewed consciousness or introspection of a person's knowledge (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Introspection pertains to this consciousness raising, is a reflective personal look inwards, and is an examination of one's thoughts and feelings.

Participants revealed that the experience of keeping reflective journals led them to introspection. They identified that they had an increased level of humbleness, awareness, confidence, perseverance, and satisfaction.

### *Humbleness*

Fenwick (2000), when explaining aspects of experiential learning asserts that situated cognition, or self knowledge occurs when the participant attains awarenesses when engaging in human activity. Several participants initially experienced feelings of physical, mental and emotional frustration while backpacking and rock climbing and humbling themselves as well as suppressing the urge to vent personally to the group and instructors. Raymond states:



*There were times I had to narrow my focus to the next few steps to keep going. I had to push down negative thoughts – like stopping, complaining, quitting. I know I wouldn't do that, but the thoughts were there.*

The journal experience allowed Michelle to use humor and to express her physical frustration while backpacking:

*The hike! The up parts are f-ing killing me! I just get so hot!! I don't know how I made it through today. I seriously wanted to just quit many times – or throw my body off the side of the trail. Painful yes, but hopefully a helicopter would come and get me. I wish we didn't have to carry packs and we had llamas or alpacas with us!*

Herman – having prior camping and backpacking experience – through journaling found he was able to express his feelings of being challenged with the groups pace, of experiencing an awareness of humbling himself, and making a conscious decision to simply “go with the flow” and let the moment take care of itself:

*The hike was very slow. I'm used to setting the pace, so it was difficult to adjust to others' paces. [I want to] work on bonding with my group mates [and] learned that I like to be in charge, so I stayed closer to the back today.*

Rico expressed in his journal how he sensed that the style and method of instruction that the instructors were using to the crew regarding prussiking (a type of friction wrap of a cord on a climbing rope to ascend a rock face) was rather elementary and superfluous. Not expressing verbally his initial dissatisfaction, following the rock climbing activity the journal offered Rico a means of expression. Only after actually performing the prussik climb did he understand the reasoning behind such instruction:

*I sort of felt babied at first prior to [learning] the prussik [during ground instruction], but when I truly realized the extent to which we would be climbing I understood why and just how necessary everything was.*

#### *Awareness*

Awareness of one's conscious and subconscious feelings becomes more apparent from reflecting on an experience than the experience itself (Posner, 1996). Every day during the course, participants were given prompt-style questions that pertained to them seeking understanding obvious, as well as unveiling obscure aspects of their thought processes and thinking. Grace came into the course experiencing anxiety of how people view her and expecting that her crew mates would treat her as she feels she is treated at home. The experience of keeping a reflective journal gave her the opportunity to express this:

*During my life at home, I constantly worry that people do not like me. I worry that they don't see anything good in me and that is because there isn't. On this trip [however] the crew has shown me that there are good things about me. I have always worried that people only liked me for my talents. Here, I have no talents as far as camping skills, but I felt that people just appreciated my company. This course has helped me to see some of the things that are good about myself again, and that is helping the anxiety to dissipate.*

Towards the end of the eight day course, in his journal Herman came to realize that what he placed upon himself at home was always the belief that he had to do everything himself, not allow others to assist, and immerse himself in activity to not feel emotions:

*I keep myself so busy that I don't have time to deal with emotions and think about things. I'm such an active person and I use that to escape from dealing with things*

*that bother me. I learned that I am very hurt by a lot of things that happened to me, and I'm jealous of others that are from more supportive families. I hate the fact that I can't feel normal emotions for others because I don't grow close to people (no matter how hard I try). I have learned more about myself and my own escapism than anything else on this trip. I also learned that I wish I weren't so "do it yourself". I wish I would allow others into my life to help me with my problems instead of trying to take the world by myself.*

The course experience chronicled through reflective journaling has enlightened Rico into realizing how much he relies on a substance, how noteworthy upcoming decisions involving a significant other will be, and desiring sharing learnings he experienced on this course to his students at his school:

*I have just realized how much I've changed and how much I'm still changing at 23. I also have made some realizations about where I prioritize things in my life. Specifically my drinking habits need to be reconsidered and put under some scrutiny. I've also realized just how important my girlfriend is to me and how the decisions I am making now may seriously affect me for the rest of my life. I also am looking forward to introducing things I love to my students in the near future.*

On day four of the course a service project occurred involving a small stream severely impacted due to trail use through it. An explanation and need of the service project ensued and the crew responded judiciously. The service consisted of lining rocks on the side of the small stream and then placing logs perpendicular over the stream as a walkway for trail users over the stream. Willie's journal experience allowed him to express his feelings about the service component. On day four, he wrote:

*I appreciate the service component greatly. This gives back and opens up a different angle on things. Our service project was fixing a natural spring crossing in the forest. The forest has given us so much – it is the least we can do. In general I believe service has great significance no matter where you come from or who you are. Service has a positive input no matter how large or small.*

### *Confidence*

The Outward Bound course combined with the journaling that participants engaged in during the experience supported consciousness-raising and provided a means of expressing oneself (Cranton, 2006). Several participants articulated in their journals enhanced levels of self-belief and confidence. Grace was able to use her journal to provide a very detailed description of how the prussiking component enhanced her level of confidence:

*While prussiking up the rock I felt amazed by what I could actually do. It turned out that you could not actually see how tall the rock face really was. It was three pitches, the top two of which were not visible from the ground. My ankles were hurting and I was holding on tight but each time I looked back over my shoulder – at our fearless sweep Herman – I was more and more shocked by the beauty of the world around [me]. When I got to the top and was off-belay I felt truly thankful to Tishy for providing me this opportunity with as much support and encouragement possible. I felt exhausted and hot and glad to put down my pack. More than that, I felt a triumph at overcoming my anxieties. I hadn't cried or flipped out or even really complained and had accomplished something that I wasn't sure I could do when I came on this trip. I was searching to leave my anxieties in the dust, close a chapter in my life, and re-discover the self-confident woman that I know I can be. Tishy said the mountain would be a mirror to*

*reflect our true selves and when I looked in the mirror I saw not an anxious and sad girl, but rather that confident self that I have been seeking.*

During the “solo” experience on day seven of the course, Rico took the opportunity and reflected in his journal about how aspects within his life became more apparent while on the course and how he developed an enhanced level of assurance:

*[While on solo] I have learned just how much I have changed since the last time I went backpacking and climbing. I've matured mentally and emotionally. I was much less self-conscious amongst this group than I was as a teenager. I am also in better physical condition than I was 7 – 8 months ago when I decided that I wanted to spend the summer backpacking.*

*I really expect to return with a renewed sense of self and simply be more appreciative of the people around me. I have learned [just] how much I love the outdoors and how much I miss doing stuff like this. I have also reaffirmed or reassured myself that I can go 8 days without a drink. When I thought about that it made me realize just how much alcohol can consume me sometimes and how much better I feel without it.*

### *Perseverance*

Daily opportunities for journaling occurred on this Outward Bound course. By doing so, participants were able to reflect-in-action and therefore engaged in on-the-spot experimentation; this contributed to further reflection (Schön, 1987). The sense of determination was apparent in participants' journals. Michelle journaled about her challenge with hiking, especially uphill:

*[I'm] trying not to complain too much or call anyone names while I'm going uphill! Oh, and at one point I started telling myself that it was that whole mind over matter stuff and I should stop being negative. It did work when I remembered to do it!*

In addition, Michelle practiced reflection-on-action several weeks after the course ended by emailing me some journal entries that she did not complete while on course. Part of her day eight journal entry related to awarenesses about her and of what she put into the course:

*This course was a huge kick in the ass for me physically! It really humbled (this is a word I picked up on the course) me about my age and physical abilities. It made me aware that it is not okay how far [that] I've let myself go in the past few years. This course was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. I began to make changes as soon as I returned [home]!*

Raymond writes in his journal about the feelings he was having while climbing.

Raymond was able to use his journal to articulate the step-by-step detail of his rock climbing encounter. Initial feelings of concern were quelled as he applied, trusted himself and his belayer, and persevered on the rock:

*When we came through the woods to the rock climbing site, I told myself, "I will not freak out." The rock face was steep, 60° or more. I was the last one in my group to climb. I was ready to do it. As I waited for Herman to set up the belay it began to rain – a gentle rain – but it made the rock slippery. I moved up the rock in 10 foot segments of the 100 foot climb. I slipped often, but the belay caught me. About 50' up the rock got a little steeper. I tried and tried, but couldn't get up another [step]. I stopped and caught my breath. Dave called up, "Raymond, what do you want to do?" I said, "I'm going to give it one more try." I found a foothold and moved up a few feet.*

*It was so difficult. I was the only one climbing at this point. I called down to Tishy, "Is it climbable in the rain?" "Yes", she replied, "But it's harder." I moved over to the left a few feet, ducking under the belay line. I scrambled to about 20 feet from the top. I couldn't get past that point. I tried and slipped. I tried and slipped again. I even growled at the rock. I began to think, "I've shown I can climb. I don't have to get all the way to the top." After slipping and falling a few more times, I yelled, "I'm ready to come down!" Herman told me later [that] he thought [to himself] "He's so close. I don't want him to stop there." Dave yelled up, "Try it to your right." I moved over and was able to climb a foot, then a couple more, then five and five more. Every one below was cheering. The last five a foot was over a lip – that was quite a step. It took a few minutes and a couple of falls before I could step over. It was then an easy two feet to the top. I let out a yell, "YES!!!" Everyone cheered. I felt great. Even when I was ready to give up I kept going. I was determined. I did something I thought I couldn't do. After I climbed down, which was a very easy walk down the rock, I got high fives from all. Tishy gave me a hug. Herman said, "You are my hero!" Later, when he and I were by ourselves, I told him that comment made me feel good. They say you learn a lot about yourself on the rock. I learned I am very determined. I will keep trying. I hate to give up. I want to finish, and I'm willing to try again and again. I'm already thinking about how that will apply back at school.*

Grace expressed in her journal feelings and symptoms of anxiety (adrenal glands functioning). She was determined to proceed with the prussik component by suppressing those

initial emotions and sensations, go beyond her comfort zone and in the end gain rewards from the experience:

*When I first saw the rock we had to ascend I could not believe how immense it appeared. My conscious thoughts [initially] were not those of anxiety, but within minutes of arriving at the bottom my fight or flight senses were kicking in. My mouth went dry, heavy chest, felt light-headed. Tishy asked me how I was feeling. In a shaky voice I told her about my anxiety. She took the extra time to work with me on the knots and put me in her group on the climb up. Right before we started the ascent I wanted to burst into tears and run away, but I didn't.*

*During this course I have learned that I am physically, mentally and emotionally stronger than ever before. I have learned that it is hard for me to trust but that I can do it and need to do it. I have also learned that I can count on myself to do what needs to be done when no one else is around.*

The reflective journal also offered a way for Herman to convey his thoughts regarding the rock climbing and prussiking component. Feelings of persevering and purpose are evident in his entry:

*The rock was great. There were quite a few times I thought I couldn't do it anymore, but I pushed through and made it. The prussik line was one of the hardest things I've physically done. It took a lot of physical, emotional, and spiritual strength to keep going.*

### *Satisfaction*

Experiential learning does not occur just because of an experience – as in experiencing an Outward Bound course, learning occurs when the experience is processed so that knowledge can



result from the experience (Moon, 2004). For this study, debriefing as well as reflective journaling allowed the overall Outward Bound experience to be processed, and therefore participants chronicled into their journals learnings that were not otherwise verbalized in-depth during debriefings. Satisfaction – another component of introspection was evident among participants. Willy, who acquired a nagging stomach illness, was taken off the course for a day and missed one day of climbing prior to returning to the field and crew. In his journal Willy expresses his sadness of missing the crew and the prussiking event that occurred the day he was not with the crew, but conveys in his journal a sense of satisfaction and appreciation for returning to the field and meeting back up with the crew:

*Not being able to climb Cedar Rock with the crew affected me greatly. I felt that I missed out on a great experience – I wanted to be with my crew to support them. Returning was a very special feeling to me.*

During day five Raymond expressed in his journal how he was eager to write in his journal about revelations he encountered and was excited to record such feelings:

*Late afternoon [and] and this is the first day I have looked forward to journal writing. I have some thoughts I want to write down. We started out early for a long winding hike towards our climbing spot. We were on our own. The instructors let us make all the decisions. We worked well as a group and chose the right trails.*

*My pack started off around 60 lbs. again because we got a food re-supply last night. Sometime during the day the pack stopped being something I carried and became a part of my journey, something that just came with me like a t-shirt or pair of shorts.*

Raymond was satisfied that his body was strengthening and acclimating to the backpack and was elated how the crew responded to the day's challenges. Later this same day Raymond was equally satisfied and proud of his accomplishment while prussiking Cedar Rock Mountain:

*When I saw the rock face I thought it was crazy to climb with full packs.*

*Sometime during the 2 hour lunch and instruction time I convinced myself [that] I could do it. By the time we started climbing I was eager. I was surprised [that] I was not afraid. That emotion was just not dominant. I found a rhythm and climbed easily. Even the steep parts were fun. I felt great while climbing. I hardly thought about the pack on my back. I just wore it as I climbed. Awesome. When I reached the top and joined the others I was almost disappointed the climb was over.*

The journal was a means for Raymond to specify his learnings during the eight day course. Raymond's final journal entry prior to handing his journal to me was of satisfaction, reliance and contentment. He titled his final journal entry "Applications to School and Life":

- *"I will not let you fall" will be my attitude and support.*
- *When things are hard, show students the path; be an example.*
- *When I feel I can't go on, look for help and guidance from others.*
- *I can carry a heavy load, both gear and emotions.*
- *I can be part of making a group come together.*
- *I am appreciated for what I do, not what I did.*

As stated earlier, some of Michelle's journal entries occurred after the course ended and she emailed me her responses to questions she received in the field. Although being challenged physically during the backpacking and climbing components and even after the course ended, by

reflecting on her experience Michelle expressed her notions of feeling satisfied, appreciative and suggesting even returning to North Carolina Outward Bound if she could:

*It's not about what I learned on this course that matters, but how I felt. I was so relaxed and able to "live in the moment." Everything from my outside world was blocked for the most part and I like that. It was an escape for me. I wish I could just be a student on OB courses forever. Reality really smacked me in the face within the first hour back in contact with the "real world." I would leave again tomorrow if I could...*

Grace used her journal to express feeling challenged, yet satisfied and grateful when her comfort zone was being stretched:

*I challenged myself so far by going to the bathroom outside, eating without washing my hands (these two together don't sound good!) and hiking the whole day without any issues or needing to stop the group.*

During the solo experience Grace reflected into her journal words describing satisfaction and personal learning that she had encountered thus far in the course:

*There are many things I know I will take from this course – far too many to actually get them all down into this journal in this solo. The overarching ideas are to take with me the compassion, self-reliance, and confidence that I have gained.*

Participants encountered various components of introspection and described these encounters into their journals. Themes related to personal awareness and humbleness to enhanced confidence and feelings of satisfaction were evident.

In addition to these reflected and journaled feelings of introspection while engaged in an Outward Bound course, participants reflected and made reference to how the crew was performing. The next section describes these experiences in more depth.

#### Crew Cohesiveness Depicted through Reflective Journaling

Adventure education has been used where an improvement in group effectiveness is sought. Ewert and Garvey (2007) stipulate that group development depends on the instructors to design and implement activities that promote enhanced group performance. During Outward Bound courses, instructors aim for the crew that they are instructing to develop and form into a tightly knit group that fosters good communication, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, and crew perception or awareness. The intensity of crew unity or cohesiveness depicted in participants' journals was sought after and revealed in this section.

The crew was informed about the concepts mentioned in Chapter 2 of the "Full Value Contract" and "Five Finger Contract" during the morning of the second day of the course. As the course progressed, participants reflected in their journals about how they felt the crew was performing. The experience of using the journal for this kind of reflection gave participants the opportunity to understand crew performance. For example, Grace wrote in her journal:

*As a group, each of us gave 100% today with enthusiasm. We waited for those who needed breaks and helped each other with heavy packs. Each person was polite to the next – sharing conversation, listening, and contributing equally.*

Willie was able to use the experience of journaling to express his thoughts about how he felt the crew was modeling the concepts that were introduced earlier in the course:

*I do believe each crew member is fulfilling the "Full Value Contract"  
Everyone is pushing themselves for the crew and being mindful of individual and*

*group needs.*

*Everyone is working together and staying on task. [The] crew is making sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible. People's commitment to the crew shows by how we have been hiking. Everyone has been very respectful to individuals and making the crew very positive. When things happen people have been taking responsibility.*

Another aspect of group cohesiveness that was sought after in this study was the trust level within the crew. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the GRABBSS group assessment tool was considered during the study. For purposes of the data analysis the "A" in GRABBSS referring to the affective level of the group is focused upon. Participants were asked on the third day about what had the most impact upon their trust level of the crew. Several participants reflected in their journals about situations that took place and in turn enhanced their personal trust of the crew. Rico confides in his journal the following:

*I have a healthy and sincere fear of authority in any form – so my trust level has increased by being able to have direct conversations with Dave and Tishy. Additionally, I think Willie's story about asking his fiancée to marry him was a point at which I really felt comfortable opening up about a lot of things.*

Herman's situation challenged him in humbling himself and accepting the majority's choice about a trail and navigation decision. For Herman this specific situation regarding the crew and then reflecting upon it in his journal stimulated personal insight:

*We came to a trail junction and had to discuss the proper way to go. I thought [that] we should go straight, but the rest of the group talked about it*

*and it was decided on [taking the other trail and] turning. It turns out that [that] was the right thing to do. I think that we work well together and respect each other and communicate well. That helps me to trust the group as a whole.*

Similarly, Raymond uses the same instance (trail decision) that Herman used as a crew trust moment. Raymond uses his journal to explain his awareness of crew trust:

*We stopped at one trail junction to discuss which way to go. We were not all in agreement about where we were, nor which way to go. I was pretty certain that the lower trail was right, but Herman thought we should take the upper one. The leaders let the group choose. We talked about the choices for 10 minutes. Everyone had a say. Opinions were solicited. Folks listened. At one point someone asked for a vote, but even after the lower trail “won” we kept talking. Someone asked a better question a few minutes later: “Who thinks the lower trail is right? Who is not sure?” I think we all came to this course knowing cooperation was important. All that we have done so far has reinforced that – cooking, cleaning, setting up camp, [and] sharing. So I think the trust level was something we came willing to do and was brought out by how we’ve talked to each other.*

Grace is pleased that compassion exists among the crew. She used her journal to share and record her feelings regarding compassion and crew trust:

*Two things have had an impact on my level of trust with the group. The first is that whenever I share things or say stupid things, no one laughs or makes fun of me. No one laughs or makes fun of anyone else either. The second thing that has made the most impact on my trust in the group is the number of people*

*who have offered to help me put my pack on. This seems like a small thing but when I am carrying water, I feel like my back might break. It is a tremendous help to me when people help me with my pack and people have offered so that I don't have to be embarrassed to ask.*

*I have sincerely enjoyed the camaraderie on our journey so far. Each person in our group has something different to give and everyone so far has already given their best to be supportive and contributing member of the group.*

Crew cohesiveness was also mentioned in several participants' journals following the service project. The journal experience allowed Herman, Grace, Raymond, and I to elaborate on how we felt the crew performed during service. Herman's reflective entry:

*I thought we did a great job. The area didn't look the same at all after we finished. Carrying the wood was very hard, but it needed to be done so I didn't mind. After we finished, I really felt a sense of teamwork and accomplishment.*

Grace's journal entry regarding the service component and her sense of crew involvement:

*I liked doing the project and I thought it made a big difference in the tiny stream that we rerouted and made a log bridge over. It seemed that everyone contributed pretty equally to the project. We all enjoyed making a small improvement to a trail that we have enjoyed so much.*

Raymond elaborates in his journal on the service experience on a personal level and of the crew, as well as to others that eventually will experience the log bridge:

*We stopped at the swampy area around the spring that supplied our water. Dave suggested a service project of building a bridge across the damp ground. At first I did not see the big picture, though I was willing to work.*

*Usually I lead things. This time I followed. I helped carry a log we found back along the trail. I helped bring rocks, but Dave and Willie had the vision, which slowly unfolded in my understanding. When the bridge was finished [there were] three logs on a solid rock foundation. I was proud of our group effort. I was glad others who will follow us will use our handiwork.*

My journal provided an avenue for me to reference thoughts and significance of the crew's efforts during service:

*I was really impressed with how the crew responded to the service [project request]. The project of stabilizing the spring and rip-rapping with stone and placing logs as foot bridge planks looked not only nice, but greatly improved the quality of the water course. The look of the crew was impressive – people engaged in duffing the area (placing leaves), carrying and laying rocks and stone, hauling and carrying logs and expressing statements of satisfaction. The crew was really proud of their work. I was proud of them.*

Several entries in participants' journals related to how the rock climbing component was a catalyst for the crew coming together, supporting and encouraging each other. Grace reflects through writing in her journal about the climb and the crew response:

*During the rock climb yesterday I had no choice but to trust my belayer Herman and instructor Dave. I did trust them and was amazed by the impact that it made on me when I got down off the rock. I wanted to hug Herman because I felt so grateful for the help he provided. When I was up on the rock I never felt scared that he would drop me for a second. Something else I learned about the crew was that I could trust them to like and accept everyone of us for who we*



*are. When I expressed frustration or made stupid jokes, no one laughed at me or talked behind my back.*

Rico and Herman write about how the climb was physically draining and their feelings about the crew. Rico writes:

*I was exhausted by the end of the ascent but when I saw the crew near the top I was re-energized.*

Herman's entry:

*When I was done all I could think about was water. I worked up quite a sweat making my way up there. I also couldn't stop ginning. I was proud of myself and my crew.*

I used my journal to capture what I witnessed and felt when observing a participant climb and the crew's response:

*Tishy climbed and I belayed her to demo to the crew how they will climb and belay each other. The crew was receptive and ready to climb; there was no hesitation! I supervised the climb to the left of the rock face and Sweet Pea was supervising the climb to the right. Michelle was about a third of the way up the climb when I heard her say that she wanted down. Sweet Pea encouraged her to continue and the next time I looked over to Michelle she was already at the top! Her face sported a huge smile. Everyone was happy and cheered for Michelle.*

It was during the final days of the course that participants were asked to reflect on learnings about the crew. The journal provided a means for participants to record their thoughts and determine what learnings they encountered thus far in the course. Willie's reflective response:

*Our crew is filled with great individuals. We are of different ages and from different parts of the country but we have come together to form a little family here in the forest. I've learned that everyone in the crew is very caring and compassionate.*

*I've learned that the group of people I have been traveling with are courageous, kind and caring individuals that want to make a difference. This O.B. course brought out the best in all of them, especially during challenging times.*

Herman used his journal to record learnings about the group. On day eight he writes:

*I've learned that I can be a good part of the group, and that our group works very well together. It takes an amazing group of people to grow that close in one week, and that is who we all are.*

The reflective journal allowed Grace to express her feelings of what she has learned about the crew:

*The most important thing I learned about the crew since the start of the course was trust. It is hard for me to trust other people to do their jobs without me going back and checking after them.*

*The group that we had on this trip was full of adventurous, compassionate teachers who were all bringing special gifts and ready to share those from the beginning. Our group was passionate about our adventures and hard work. We worked hard to do our best in our physical activities, camp duties, group relationships, and personal reflections.*

Michelle struggled at times to find time to journal throughout the course. However, she did find time and did reflect about what she learned about her crew:

*I get angry a lot. I want to quit a lot. I talk to myself a lot and I [do]*

*finish hard things even if I hate them. This crew is very supportive and full of character. I will always remember the feeling of myself struggling and others wanting to help.*

Additionally, the crew was asked about any crew influenced personal learnings they experienced during the course. By reflecting on personal learning the crew put into action Kolb's (1984) second aspect of the experiential learning cycle *reflective observation*. Reflective observation occurs after concrete experiences have taken place in which the participant intuitively determines what is true, how things happened, and explores and realizes the meanings of situations. Participants reflected into their journals about personal learnings that were associated with crew learnings that they experienced. Rico writes:

*I think this [course] reaffirmed my appreciation of physical activity in my everyday life. It also has reminded me just how quiet I can get my mind to be. After many conversations – especially with Raymond, I am looking forward to returning with a more calm and collected sense of myself when I stand in front of the classroom.*

The journaling experience allowed Herman to accept what otherwise seemed to be unrealized observations within himself. He writes:

*I've learned that I'm [too] self-reliant to almost the point where I shut others out, and refuse to accept help. I've also learned that I'm okay with my feelings. [Additionally] I've learned that the outdoor experience isn't just "doing stuff". There can be an emotional/spiritual aspect to it as well. I'll try to bring this angle to my work.*

As stated previously about some of Michelle's journal entries, Michelle learning was described to me after the course via email. She reflected on the experience in her writings and stated this about her personal learnings:

*I have really pondered about how quiet and reserved I was on the trip since I returned. My boyfriend asked me within 30 minutes of picking me up if I had been tied to a tree and left alone for eight days by the amount I talked when I got in! I have wondered if it was because there were so many other strong personalities to compete with that I just let myself sit back quietly.*

*I have already struggled with how to bring this course into my everyday life. I realize that life is like the trip – one struggle after another. But I don't know how to have those relaxed moments at the end of the day like on the trip.*

*Any suggestions are welcome. ☺*

Willie used his journal to record his thoughts about his personal learning he had while on the Outward Bound course:

*Throughout this course I was reminded to enjoy every moment you have. I learned I was physically stronger than I thought and that I can trust people more than I thought. I also confirmed once again how important the wilderness is to me.*

On the final day Raymond used his journal to express learning about himself during the eight day

Outward Bound course. He writes:

- *I've learned that I can make friends in a working group of strangers.*
- *I've learned [that] I can keep going, if I choose the right pace, even when very tired.*
- *I've learned [that] I don't like to give up. I'm tenacious. I'll keep trying.*

- *I've learned [that] I can live a week in the out-of-doors, accepting rain, dirt, sun, sweat, cold, and heat.*
- *I know to look beyond outward appearances to character and strength.*
- *I gave help when I could. I accepted help when I needed it.*
- *Even though I knew already, I saw that what people think of me depends on what I do with them rather than how much I can impress them with stories of past accomplishments.*
- *When I leave the course I will remember that my students need to look over the ledge and see the path, to see how someone can do it, to know that I will not let them fall.*
- *I think I will find ways to say this to student and parents. "I will not let you fall. While I cannot make you succeed or fail, I will not let go of you. Keep climbing for your goal. If one way is difficult, look for another. I am here for you."*

The journaling experience during Grace's solo allowed her to reflect on learnings she attained during the previous six days of the course. She writes about the learning she wants to take with her and apply after the course has ended:

*When the course ends I expect to take with me a lot. From the instructors I have been able to gain an important insight about being a good teacher. That is to accept every student for who they are and find things to like about them. Do not be judgmental of your students in any way because that interferes with building relationships. The crew has taught me the same thing about friendships. I thought all three instructors did an awesome job of*

*spending time with every person in the group. It appeared that they did not show any favoritism at all, but instead that each of us were their favorite [at] all times!*

Grace used her journal to express thoughts of her personal learning on the final day of her Outward Bound experience:

*The learnings that I will apply to my everyday life have to do with compassion. I will not laugh at anyone or talk bad about people behind their backs. This is like poison for relationships. I will try to treat all of my students like they have something unique to bring to the table, taking time to let each of them know that I like them and appreciate what they bring. I will try to incorporate some of the experiential learning activities we discussed throughout the week and at the workshop.*

The participants expressed in their journals aspects and learnings of crew bonding and cohesiveness. Additionally, throughout the eight day course both crew and personal learning were depicted in the participants' personal journals. The journal provided a means for reflections to be recorded and participants responded.

#### Participant Reactions to Reflective Journaling

Participants used journals during the eight day Outward Bound course to record personal reflections as the course progressed as well answer prompt-style questions provided to them. Through this study, I discovered varying reactions of the participants to the journal and to the act of journaling. This section describes this in more detail.

The first day of the course was a very full day. After we left the airport and completed duffle shuffle, we traveled in a van to the starting point for backpack expeditioning. As heading

into the Pisgah National Forest we experienced heavy rain and thunderstorms. When arriving at our drop sight along the Blue Ridge Parkway thunderstorms were still occurring, so the crew remained in the van for approximately an hour until the storm subsided. When the storm was no longer a problem, the crew had to unload the trailer and sort the food evenly among all members. By the time we began to backpack and head to our campsite nightfall was just an hour or so away.

It was 10 p.m. when we arrived at the campsite on the Bridges Camp Gap trail. Setting up tarps and cooking the evening meal took place with flashlights and headlamps on. I knew already that it was too late and the crew was far too tired to answer the first day's journal questions. Therefore, the first day's questions were asked during the morning hours of the second day of the course.

One of the first day questions asked the participants to consider what it is like is to write and keep a journal. Of course the purpose of this phenomenological study is to study the experience of journaling on an Outward Bound course and the researcher has an expectation that all participants in the study will enjoy keeping a journal to bring meaning to their experience. However, observing Creswell's (2003) verification viewpoint which advises that the researcher includes negative or discrepant information that may contradict or run counter to themes, I offer a realistic accounting, including the negative responses, here. Using his journal to express his feelings about journaling on day one of the course, Herman writes:

*I'd rather sit and enjoy the peace and quiet than write something down.*

*I think that writing keeps me too focused on the words and I [would rather] kindle the thoughts.*

Similarly, Michelle used her journal to express her thoughts about journaling on the first day of her Outward Bound experience:

*Interesting. I feel like I'm talking to myself as a crazy person would!*

Raymond answers the first day question regarding journaling with an expectation that the journal may eventually prove to be a catalyst for bringing meaning:

*So far the journaling is like a diary, recording the thoughts I had while hiking or setting up camp. I hope it will also help me look deeper, realize more, [and] learn more about myself.*

Grace uses her journal to express the role that the journal can provide to her:

*The journaling so far has provided me with a time to reflect and process to keep from being overwhelmed.*

The crew had been together and backpack expeditioning for three days, navigating by map and compass and ascending and descending challenging terrain. It was mid-afternoon when they arrived to their day three camp site and the crew was celebrating a good, efficient day of hiking and looking forward to having some much needed rest and relaxation. It was in the late afternoon that I took advantage of providing them with the third day's set of questions. One of the questions asked about how they felt reflective journaling has thus far contributed to their course experience. Interesting to note is the subtle yet noticeable change that Michelle and Herman express in their journals about journaling. Michelle wrote:

*I like it cause it gives me time to process and reflect about my day. I don't write as much as I could, but just the chance to [allows me to] think about my day!*

Similarly, Herman, in short detail writes that journaling can support meaning making and writes:



*I think it's helped focus my thoughts into concrete ideas. The questions help me to think about things I haven't thought about on my own.*

Rico expresses in his journal on day three that he has brought a journal along with him during previous backpacking outings, however was reluctant to write in it for unknown reasons.

However, the prompt-style process of this study has benefited him:

*I often bring a journal into the woods but I'm hesitant to write in it. This journaling experience has been very beneficial because I feel like I have some motivation and purpose in my writing. I've been doing some of my own private entries additionally that were about other topics but were prompted by this process.*

Grace also conveys how the journaling experience for her is an important reality in her Outward Bound experience. She writes that not having a journal on an experience such as Outward Bound would be similar to what Bennion and Olsen (2002) specifically state about the absence of the reflective journal in outdoor learning situations. They maintain that an outdoor learning situation without the reflective journal would be “quickly felt and then quickly forgotten” (p. 251). Grace's comparable reflective entry regarding journaling:

*Writing in our journals makes meaning of our Outward Bound experience by giving us a structured time to listen to our thoughts, reflect about our experiences and recount what we have learned. Without the journal the important moments of the day might slip from our memories without a second thought.*

The fourth day of the Outward Bound course involved backpacking to the rock climbing site as well as performing a service project on a small stream that flowed across the trail.

Participants were asked again about reflective journaling's role in their course experience. The journaling experience offered Willie the opportunity to respond to the question:

*Reflective journaling gives a person a chance to appreciate the experience during the duration. [It] helps someone enjoy each part.*

The journaling experience presented me a chance to record my thoughts regarding journaling's role on this course:

*Reflective journaling permits me to think on paper and elaborate my thoughts, awarenesses, and feelings that I may or may not share with the crew. Also, I know that I'll have this reflective journal and be able to read it and recall my experiences long after the memories have gone away.*

The journal and the experience of journaling gave Rico the means to record his developing thoughts about how journaling is contributing to his Outward Bound experience:

*Reflective journaling – especially with prompts, really motivates me to self evaluate and consider how I feel about the experience. Without the journal I might consider some questions or I might not; the journal designates a certain structure to my thought process.*

Day five and six of the course involved prussiking and climbing and the questions for these days involved reflecting on the personal and group feelings while climbing. There was also a metaphor relating to associating the climbing aspects (belayer, monitor) and equipment (e.g. anchor, rope) to “who or what” in the participants' lives. Furthermore, it was two days since participants responded to journaling questions. In addition to other questions related to course components and personal and crew insights, day's seven and eight questions pertained to journaling. The questions were “How has journaling on this course affected this course

experience?” and “What was it like to journal while on your Outward Bound experience?”

Herman, now seven and eight days into the course and initially hesitant about the journal and its use in any manner, uses his journal to express his new found realization regarding the reflective journal:

*The writing aspect hasn't done much, but the questions have definitely brought out thoughts and feelings I've been trying to avoid for the past few years.*

*At first, I didn't really like it, or find it important, but as I kept doing it, it grew on me. I will apply reflection to my every day life. I will make a point to look at how I feel and accept those feelings.*

Grace uses the journal to express her feelings and reactions to journaling altogether. Engaged in reflective journaling all week, Grace writes that the journaling experience conveys to her an understanding of the experiences as they unfold:

*Journaling on this course has added a dimension of personal growth that is just as important as the growth of the whole crew during our course. The journal time is a time to be honest with yourself about your feelings and experiences without the pressure of having to share that with other people. It takes times to process the experiences we are having and the journal provides us with a way to format that processing.*

Rico uses his journal to express that the journaling experience tested him mentally, but was nonetheless appreciative that he engaged himself in journaling, however stops short of clarifying why:

*Journaling was difficult at times. I was tired at the end of the day and didn't necessarily feel like writing. I am immensely grateful I did though.*

Michelle also experienced difficulty with journaling. Difficulty in that Michelle uses her journal to express the complexity of journaling with requiring processing time after experience:

*I didn't always do it [journaling] right away. I like to do things on my time or when I want to do them. I need to process in my head before I write it down.*

Furthermore, Michelle writes in her journal prior to handing it to me on the last day of the course with this entry:

*Dearest Dave,*

*I'm sorry this is not completed. I need more time. You will get more meaningful answers if I have more time to process this experience alone. I will have all of the journal [questions] done in a week!*

*Thanks,*

*Michelle*

Willie's journal answer reacting to the question regarding journaling during his Outward Bound experience is of appreciation and gratitude:

*Journaling was a very important aspect of this course. I appreciated the time to reflect.*

*I have enjoyed the journaling. This makes me reflect on each day of the course and anticipate what tomorrow may bring. Also, it helps me focus on what personal and crew achievements were made.*

The participant reactions to journaling yielded several outcomes. Reactions ranged initially from little and some confidence and purpose during the beginning of the course to appreciations and positive acceptance of the journal by the end of the eight day course. What is most noticeable are the level of changes with some participants, namely Michelle and Herman to understanding that their Outward Bound experience was enhanced by way of the journaling experience.

### The Phenomenon of Reflective Journaling

The qualitative researcher van Manen (1990) purports that phenomenology is a method of discovery which uses reflection on experience to uncover the details, accounts and meaning of a phenomenon. The purpose and phenomenon of interest of this research study is to explore the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course. This section continues findings of the phenomenon being studied.

Throughout the eight day Outward Bound course reflective questions were distributed to participants via slips of paper that were to be answered in their journals. The daily questions centered on main activities (e.g. backpacking, climbing, service) as well as group, individual, and reflective journaling understandings that took place. As I read the participants journals and their answers to the day's questions, I searched for text that explained in vivid detail the experience of journaling for the participant. Raymond's entries related to the experience of journaling were:

- *Many of the thoughts I've written in this journal have been worked [on] while hiking. I'm a runner, and my thoughts flow freely as I jog. I often finish a run with an understanding of some issue or solution of some problem; things [that] I didn't know before I started. Back-*

*packing has been the same for me. I am doing the reflection as I hike.*

*The journaling records the results.*

- *Day 5 – late afternoon. This is the first day I have looked forward to journal writing. I have some thoughts I want to get down...*
- *I've begun writing in this journal before getting the questions because I have thoughts and feelings [that] I want to capture close to the moment.*
- *Day 7 – early morning. Last night I wrote so much about the rock climb [that] I put off answering the Day 6 questions until now. I like to record intense feelings close to the time I experience them. I write more details and remember what people said much better the day things happen. My longer term memories are more about feelings and meaning of experiences. [Through] reflective journaling, the day by day collection of thoughts is a way to record the details and the intensity of events.*
- *Journaling has helped put my thoughts and feelings in specific words. I look forward to getting this journal back when you are done with it.*
- *At first journaling was a chore [that] I agreed to do. I knew my thoughts and feelings and didn't need to record them. As days went past, I came to want to write so I could capture the immediacy of my feelings and thoughts. I know I will value the effort I put into this journal.*

The search for experience of journaling accounts for Willie was rather limited, however the few that were noticed center on the role of journaling:

- *Journaling is great. I believe it is part of the adventure. When it's*

*hard to describe [verbally] what you have done – you can always go back and read it.*

- *Reflective journaling helps individuals process the teachings and experience of the day. Also [the journal] helps you in the future as you go back to read how the O.B. experience changed you. People can use the O.B. journal for inspiration later – long after the course is completed.*

As stated previously, the latter days of the course questions were answered by Michelle after the course had ended. Even so, Michelle's experience of journaling is appreciative as well as comprehensive in her understanding what journaling means to her:

- *The reflective journaling has caused me to think so much deeper this whole experience that I would have ever without the journaling. It continues to make me think even after the trip. It's good, but has also really made me miss the whole process now that I'm back.*
- *For me it [the journaling] was difficult in a way. I don't mind journaling as long as it's on my time or when I want to. It was hard for me to journal right after the activities. I need time to think about things before I write about them. Plus I was usually really tired when we were given time to write!*

Rico's experience of journaling has been insightful and led him to question prior journaling missed opportunities:

*Journaling has almost forced me to reflect and record my feelings. Many times I would consider journaling but never got around to it.*

Herman realizes that the experience of journaling changed what he expected the course to be – a backpacking trip – to a course that uses concrete experiences as vehicles to achieve inner qualities:

*I think that without the directed questions [that] this would have just a backpacking trip. But instead, it has become an emotional journey – something I didn't expect at all.*

Grace used the journaling experience to capture feelings and emotions as she was experiencing them. Grace not only answered daily questions, but also used the journal to elicit deeper meaning of her experiences:

- *I have always liked to take the time to journal when hiking or camping. I think we like to do it because we want to capture this feeling of open mindedness and peace. If we could just compose our thoughts in a journal, perhaps when we return to our normal lives we can read them and return to this place. It feels satisfying and reflective to sit here by the creek on a big rock writing down my goals, hopes, and feelings. It [the journal] provides a directed course for our minds as our bodies carry our packs and sleep under the trees.*
- *Today as we traveled I found that I couldn't wait to take the time to sit down and write in my journal. With the vast amount of new experiences I am having, it is important for me to take time and reflect and process everything.*
- *As I sit here and write [into] this journal we are all out on the summit of [Cedar Rock] Mountain, watching the sun set and overlooking much*



*of what we have already hiked. As the sky turns pink and blue in the last few minutes of day light, I thank God for a world as beautiful as ours and for this opportunity to commune with this beautiful earth through Outward Bound.*

- *Over the past year as I have dealt with the anxiety and depression of losing my life path, I felt like I had no support system. Writing this journal entry has brought tears to my eyes as I realize just how strong my support system actually is.*
- *The second most meaningful experience was the journal entry for that same day where we had to write about who in our lives fills the roles of the climbing equipment.*
- *Journaling on the Outward Bound trip made the whole experience a lot more personal and also more meaningful. Doing the journal gave us a time to be alone and time to apply the wilderness lessons to our own lives.*

On July 19, 2008, three weeks after the North Carolina Outward Bound Educator's Course ended, I mailed a letter to the six participants (see Appendix E). The purpose of the letter was to present participants with an open-ended style statement to summarize their experience (see Appendix F). I asked that the responses be returned to me with the accompanying self-address stamped envelope. All six participants returned responses to me; four participants returned the response via regular postal mail and two responded via email. The follow-up open-ended statement for the participants to answer was "My overall experience of reflective journaling while engaged in an Outward Bound course..."

During the initial phase of the eight day Outward Bound course Rico stated in his journal that he felt the journaling experience was of some benefit to him. Rico has had prior backpacking experience and had even taken journals with him while backpacking, but he never journaled. It was through the prompt-style reflective questioning on this course that led him to keep a separate journal and focus more on his questions and possibly realize hidden, inner feelings and thoughts. His final response to the experience of journaling on his Outward Bound course echoes sincere appreciation:

*...was good. It wasn't great. I will say that the prompts and the specified times we had for journaling were helpful. Whenever I go camping I always intend on setting aside time to reflect and journal but I'm not usually successful. Too many times I've resolved to find an opportunity to actually put my thoughts on paper and instead I end up wandering about or falling asleep. I wish that I could provide a reflection on the trip itself versus one specific to journaling. I spent a significant [amount of] time writing on my own personal thoughts instead of answering the prompts. I did enjoy the experience overall and I was glad to be a part of a project that promotes outdoor activity and self-analysis. I heard some commentary today that characterized the current state of our society as 'wallowing in infantile absorption'. Sometimes I think it's true – not that I somehow stand above it. But my point is, that activity like reflective journaling (and to a greater degree Outward Bound as a whole) allow us to step back and to think about ourselves in a self-critical way. I thought a lot about how I could improve myself on that trip. I can't say for sure, but the reflective journaling and the trip as a whole may have made a serious impact upon me as a teacher. I felt refreshed mentally and physically afterwards. I also*

*came away with an unexpected friendship with Raymond. So as I conclude this final entry I have changed my mind. My experience with reflective journaling was great after all.*

An outdoor educator by profession, Herman was exposed to Outward Bound's methods regarding campcraft, backpacking, rock climbing, service, debriefing and journaling. Reflection and journaling were rather new experiences to Herman as indicated earlier in this chapter, and initially he was not engaged in the process. As the course progressed and he accepted the time to reflect and journal on his experiences, he experienced a change of heart and developed an acceptance and appreciation of reflection and journaling:

*I think it helped me to realize a lot of things that I hadn't thought about in my life. The opportunity to take time away just for reflection was something that I really needed. I feel that most people, myself included, schedule something for every moment of their lives, and don't leave any "me" time. I think allotting ourselves some time just for thinking or writing is an extremely healthy and helpful thing.*

Teaching fourth grade at an Experiential Learning School and having experienced Outward Bound courses before this course, Michelle states that the other courses she experienced did not provide for her the level of reflection and journaling experience that this course afforded to her. Michelle is grateful for this opportunity and in her serious, yet humorous style; she offers her final statement regarding her experience of reflective journaling:

*I really enjoyed the journal parts of the course. Even though most of the time I was given to write I didn't, [yet] it was great for my mind. I had time to really think about the experiences and then go back and write to them. If I had*

*written right away I would have not been as clear as I'd wanted to.*

*I actually really miss being on this course. It was the first one that made me think. On my other [Outward Bound] courses we did the same stuff and the closing night circles, but I was able to get away with not talking (or thinking). I think having the journal time in the day made me actually want to share some stuff.*

*The only problem with the journal part is that now I can't get my head to stop thinking about things. I turn other parts of my life into damn journal topics and think too much now. Thanks a lot Dave! No, really, thanks! And if you ever need a chaperone for your trips give me a call!*

Willie is an after school coordinator and teaching associate and through his teaching assignment had experienced a four day Outward Bound Educator's course prior to this course. Because Outward Bound uses journals Willie had most likely journaled before on his prior Outward Bound course. Nonetheless, Willie welcomed the journal from the onset of the course and responds to the final statement using primarily a "second person" writing approach:

*I think that journaling while on course is a very important aspect of the experience. Like I have mentioned before, journaling helps you appreciate each moment and each day while on course. The OB instructors incorporate the journaling into the course in a way that it makes sense to write down what you have experienced. Also journaling gives some one time away from the group with their thoughts and focus on themselves (even if there is someone a few feet away from you).*

*People change while on course no matter how long the expedition.*

*Having the journal with all the writings helps a person remember what changed inside of them at what time. Also for some the journaling may be the only way he/she expresses how much the course is affecting them – fear conquered, goals accomplished, a growing confidence.*

*No matter how much you journal or talk to people about your trip, words can't describe how great an OB course is. When the course ends you don't just leave. You leave changed with a different perspective about others, the world and about yourself. OB always stays with you.*

Raymond's journal experience began as a task he agreed to participate in to something he is thankful he took seriously. The result for Raymond is that the journaling experience he applied during the course will benefit him for the times ahead:

*Well, Dave, you've shown me the value of reflective journaling. While I was on the trip, I wrote that I processed the experience as I go and know what I feel and learn as it happens. Now that I have read my journal, I see that I have already forgotten some of the details of my feelings. I wrote about my changing attitudes towards journaling. I moved from treating it as a chore to wanting to capture the immediacy and intensity of my feelings. As I reread my journal, the feelings I had on the course were stirred again. I know I will keep coming back to what I wrote as inspiration in my teaching. I do not think I will journal every day, but there will be times my experiences will be so sharp and important that I will write about them as I have journaled on the course.*

Grace's final position statement on her journaling experience resounds of celebration and transformation – both personal and professional:

*I have found that “reflection” has become a critical tool for me in teaching and lesson planning. Since our journey I have spent the summer at arts integration workshops and writing lesson plans for the symphony teaching guide for next year. I am continually surprised when I instinctively plan time and activities for reflection into every lesson. When I am collaborating with others, I find myself contributing opportunities for reflection of students more than anything else. I truly believe in reflection as a learning tool because of my Outward Bound experience. It made my learnings personalized and meaningful and permanent. Without the journaling on the Outward Bound course, the significance of some activities might have been lost. The most vivid example of this is in the rock climbing experience. I might have stopped before going to bed and thought “Wow, that was tough,” but I never would have thought about why it was so tough without the journal. I might never have realized that “Hey – I have a hard time trusting people.” Realizations such as this have truly changed my life since the Outward Bound experience. Through the journey and reflection throughout, I learned that I have to trust people to be close to them. I learned that I am strong and that I can do things I used to think I couldn't. My life has been changed because I have rekindled old friendships that I had let burnout. I realized that I had been unhappy for 7 years since the death of my father. For the first time since then I felt really, really, truly happy and fulfilled. I had been on a fast of eating almost nothing for 2 years. After coming home from Outward Bound, I actually regained my appetite. I have gained back some weight, and a little in my face, and people*

*tell me they can see that I am happy again and that I look great. Furthermore, I don't even need them to tell me that, because I feel great inside and out.*

*The reflective journaling was a large part of this transformation because it forced me to take time to take a true look in the mirror. What I saw was everything I thought I had lost. Instead it had just been hidden.*

As a heuristic researcher in this study, I also engaged in reflective journaling to better understand the experience of journaling. Heuristic inquiry involves the researcher engaging in the phenomenon being studied and the researcher having prior experience of the phenomenon. I experienced keeping a reflective journal when a participant on Outward Bound courses. I also keep a journal when instructing Outward Bound courses, including this course and my final response to my experience of journaling:

*The journal is a place that I can go and feel like I'm talking to a close friend. The only time and place that I do journal is on Outward Bound courses. I'm not sure as to why, it just is.*

*Outward Bound was really the first place that I ever journaled. In fact, when still at West Chester University as an undergrad, the minor course of study involved me going to northeastern Ontario, Canada for a 10 day canoe expedition on the Missinaibi River. On this trip I took a journal along only because I was influenced to journal the previous year by attending North Carolina Outward Bound. The remarkable thing is I still have all my early journals and refer to them occasionally for insightful and fun reading of my encounters as a young man.*

*The reasons that I journal on OB courses is to keep track of what occurs from course to course that I instruct for future reference and to reflect on the course*

*itself. This particular course was a bit more challenging for me in that not only was I answering my own research study questions as the crew was doing too, but I also had the somewhat overwhelming distractions of having the responsibility of instructing the course and always thinking of what's next on the agenda, is the crew having the Outward Bound experience they should have, is the study and the prompt journaling taking away from the course experience, am I giving of myself to my co-instructors, and on, and on, and on. I truly wonder if maybe I should have been just another participant on the crew conducting this study instead of also having instructor responsibilities. As the course progressed, though the crew made our jobs as instructors more easy day by day because the crew became more responsible, more self-reliant and compassionate to each other.*

*Still, for me, even with the stress of instructing the course I enjoy the time, sitting alone with my journal, collecting my thoughts and reflecting on the experiences. The places in the Pisgah National Forest that NCOB conducts its courses are remarkable. I couldn't think of any other beautiful place to reflect. Sometimes I'm on a mountain summit, beside a raging rapid, a cascading waterfall, nestled in a grove of Mountain Laurel, or simply in my sleeping bag under my tarp with my headlamp. I look forward to my next time with my journal when I say, "Hello Journal..."*

The phenomenon of reflective journaling of the participants resonate genuine appreciation and purpose in their Outward Bound course experience. Participants described heightened experiences with the various course components and increased personal growth as a result of keeping a personal journal. More fascinating and striking are the responses that elicit



how journaling and reflection are newly attained behaviors learned during their Outward Bound experience – behaviors which they plan to continue both personally and professionally.

#### Participant's Verification of Study Results

The data and findings from the study were interpreted by the researcher reading the participants reflective journals. Providing the study participants with the findings confirmed the themes that were apparent to the researcher as well as any other categories or information that have yet to be determined (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Member-checking determines the accuracy of qualitative findings by returning the information to the participant (Creswell, 2003).

Participants were sent this chapter via email on November 21, 2008 which was five months from the start day of the eight day Educator's Course taking place (See Appendix G). With five months passing from the course experience, participants' responses to the chapter consisted of significance to the course itself, satisfaction with reading about other crew member's experiences, and the phenomenon of reflective journaling. Grace's email response to the chapter:

*"Hi Dave,*

*Yours was the only dissertation chapter I have read that I consider to be a "page turner." I just sat down and read the whole thing! Great work! I have really enjoyed reading about everyone's experience on the trip. It's nice to remember the amazing time we had together."*

Michelle's member-checking email response echoes similar to Grace's with a "typo" she found:

*"Hey Dave,*

*The chapter looks good! It was really interesting to see other people's thoughts about the trip and know that some of them were feeling the*

*same way I was on the trip. I also really liked seeing how you guys put together all the details to make these trips happen. Gave me some ideas for my winter trip.*

*Random type-o I noticed: on day one where you put who is doing what (instructors) you put GP for the bear hang and I think you meant SP.*

*Page 51 I think..."*

Raymond's member-checking response resounds with gratitude and appreciation for the experience of journaling:

*" Dear Dave,*

*I am deeply grateful you wrote Chapter 4 and shared it with all of us.*

*Of course it takes me back to my memories and feelings of the course.*

*I've taken many trips in the out-of-doors, led many of them, to some*

*fantastic places (Wassaw Island, Okefenokee Swamp, Ten Thousand Islands,*

*Cohutta Wilderness). While I don't spend much time comparing trips, this*

*one was special. I faced and met the challenges I was seeking. I'm proud*

*of what I did. It helped me understand when students face something*

*difficult and uncertain. The journal writing helped me express my*

*feelings. I liked seeing what I wrote in print. I felt that some of what*

*I wrote was eloquent, and I work with much more accomplished writers. I*

*appreciated your analysis of what we had to say, breaking into components,*

*noting how we used the journals, describing how our perception of*

*journaling changed during the course. At the end of the course I felt we*

*had formed a wonderful, close, trusting, fun-loving, challenge-seeking,*

*accomplished group. And we did. I felt we shared tremendously important parts of our lives and ourselves. And we did. But the journaling revealed a deeper level of growth that each of us went through. You must have been awed by the self-insights everyone was willing and able to share with you. I was overwhelmed by feelings of appreciation of each person when I finished reading Chapter 4. I had tears in my eyes when I read Grace's final entry. What a wonderful gift you gave her through this experience. And you gave me a gift too, the gift of realizing how powerful journal writing can be. I'm convinced and converted. I'm going to encourage journal writing on the trips I lead.*

*P.S. I do not see anything you wrote about me that needs changing. You may have already caught this, but I did notice that [a] real name slipped into one paragraph on page 187.”*

### Summary

In summary, this chapter portrayed themes applicable to the overall purpose of this study – the experience of reflective journaling while on an Outward Bound course. Participants kept journals and answered prompt-style questions while on an eight day Outward Bound course. The data analysis involved reading participant journals and their follow-up statement; several themes emerged as a result of the data collection process.

The first theme focused on participants’ introspection as depicted in their personal journals. Introspection was analyzed into specific supporting tendencies of humbleness (e.g. participants expressed modesty and restraint), awareness (e.g. participants conscious and subconscious feelings), confidence (e.g. participates enhanced levels of self-belief and

assurance), perseverance (e.g. participants sense of determination), and satisfaction (e.g. participants contentment and accomplishment).

The second and third themes focused on crew cohesiveness and reactions to journaling. The journaling experience afforded participants to express perceptions of crew effectiveness, performance, and trust. Additionally, the experience of journaling rendered reactions to journaling. Participant reactions to journaling on their Outward Bound course ranged from questioning the usefulness and being a chore to the journal having purpose and being beneficial.

The final theme – the phenomenon of reflective journaling – resulted in uncovering the details, descriptions and meaning of the journaling experience of the participants. Participants, including me as a heuristic researcher, expressed how the reflective journaling experience made the course more meaningful, assisted in personal transformation, played a part in making the course experience something they miss, and being instrumental in implementing reflective journaling into one's practice and self.

The verification of the study utilized member-checking. The chapter was electronically emailed to all participants for their reactions and comments. Participant responses were all favorable and several were extremely grateful for the journaling experience during their Outward Bound course.

For the reader of this study, further descriptions of these experiences provide a basis for the discussion and conclusions presented in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this chapter is to present a discussion of the findings of the study. This phenomenological qualitative research study placed the researcher in a particular social group setting to understand the experience of reflective journaling (Creswell, 2003). This chapter's intention is to provide a comprehensive description of this lived experience. Subsequently then, what is offered are conclusions which are based on these findings, associating them to theory, practice and adult education.

#### Discussion of the Findings

The questions which guided this study were:

1. What is the lived experience of participants' journaling in relation to their personal development while on a North Carolina Outward Bound course?
2. What is the lived experience of participants' journaling in relation to their social development among crewmates while on a North Carolina Outward Bound course?
3. How do I, as instructor, make meaning of my experience when instructing a North Carolina Outward Bound course through my reflective journal?

To address these questions, I begin by first restating the problem of the study. North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) courses take place in wilderness areas and for many participants the wilderness is an unfamiliar environment. Wilderness environments and activities are purposefully used so that participants have an enhanced ability to know more about themselves without everyday life distractions thwarting the learning. At North Carolina Outward Bound great effort is applied to ensure that every course is as wildernesses sensed as possible so that personal learnings are enhanced. As stated in chapter three, the ability for participants to

learn more about themselves from their experiences requires reflection and the reflective process can be significantly enhanced through the use of a journal (Sugarman, Garvey & Gass, 2000). Paperback journals are used at NCOB and are issued to participants as a part of their personal gear; however little is known of the reflective journal experience of the Outward Bound participant.

### *The Essence of the Reflective Journaling Experience*

Phenomenology's intention is to seek out a more definitive understanding of a phenomenon. A phenomenological approach in a study is a useful method when little is known about a phenomenon. Osborne (1994) stipulates that it is the preferred form of methodology when a rich, detailed description of a phenomenon is in question. This qualitative, phenomenological study attempted to uncover the journaling experience of participants on a North Carolina Outward Bound course. The study's phenomenological approach was to detail the lived experience and make clear themes and meanings of the experience of reflective journaling among a homogenous group of participants – all the participants were educators. The next section describes four separate areas, both in an empirical and theoretical format that are related to the essence of the experience of reflective journaling that were revealed from the study. This essence was comprised of four main themes: introspection, crew cohesiveness, reactions to journaling and the phenomenon of reflective journaling.

### *Introspection Depicted through Reflective Journaling*

Introspection refers to renewed consciousness-raising and an assessment of one's thoughts and feelings. Journaling can be used to process experiences and explore one's own opinions, views and beliefs. Findings in this study support work with processing experience by using strategies of experiential learning that generates tremendous personal growth and change

(Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Ukens 2007). The experiential learning strategy of using questions and the use of questions at specific moments to uncover personal awarenesses and revelations is what Moon (2004) stipulates is central in processing an experience. Daily journal questions centered on not only the experiences that occurred on a specific day, but also delved into how the participant was feeling about themselves as the course was taking place. What became apparent to this researcher were specific supporting tendencies associated with introspection related to the experiential learning literature, but empirical evidence of these tendencies was either limited or non-existent. In this study introspection focused on humbleness, awareness, confidence, perseverance and satisfaction.

*Humbleness.* Some journal accounts emanated frustration – both physical and emotional and participants restrained themselves from verbalizing their frustrations because of the realization that they may simply be experiencing minor resistance to their comfort zone. Fenwick (2000) discusses *interference* as an experiential learning situation where participants engaged in learning are made aware of sometimes personal mysterious and obscure tensions. The “interference” mechanisms which brought out the sense of humbleness in several participants involved the pace and physical exertion while backpack expeditioning and during the training phase prior to rock climbing. Utilizing Kolb’s (1984) second step in the experiential learning cycle – *reflective observation* – prompt-style questions were used and revealed a sense of humbleness from several participants which is new to the journaling empirical literature. The journal replies to questions “*What was the most difficult part of the day for you?*” and “*How have you challenged yourself so far in the course?*” prompted participants to reflect on just how they were feeling as they were experiencing somewhat taxing, uncomfortable and frustrating sensations, yet were always in safe environs and settings.

*Awareness.* Outward Bound experiences tend to make the participant more aware of one's consciousness, thoughts and feelings by reflecting about their Outward Bound experience. Associated with what Boud and Walker (1991) relate to reflecting during and after experience, participants in this study were provided daily time to reflect into their personal journals and thereby attend to immediate feelings and evaluate their experiences. In this study, directed questions relating to self-awareness were used to extract learnings and feelings participants were experiencing. Results in journal accounts which are new to the journaling empirical literature include never realized notions of self-discovery, significance and worth of oneself replacing anxiety and appreciating environmental stewardship practices.

*Confidence.* Silberman (2007) offers that experiential activities succeed in making known to individual's personal beliefs and attitudes mostly because the activities not only involve hearing and talking, but also involve powerful, beyond-belief events. These events can be vehicles to uncover and tap into an individual's real potential. Participants in this study revealed in their journals how an enhanced level of confidence occurred when initially feelings of doubt and reservation existed (e.g. during backpacking and rock climbing). These findings relate to studies researched that revealed similar results in college or university settings, but not in the Outward Bound empirical literature in which students were engaged in a wilderness adventure orientation program in which enhanced self-efficacy and confidence outcomes were reported (Daniel, 2007; Ward & Yoshino, 2007).

*Perseverance.* Participants in this study experienced great obstacles – both physical and mental– yet were able to extend their comfort zone into what is regarded to at the “stretch zone” and gain benefits. New to the empirical literature are the varied accounts related to perseverance that participants reflected on in their journals. Determination is what Raymond realized in which



he learned from the rock experience that he is very determined, doesn't want to give up, wants to finish and keep trying with other tasks that may come his way. Michelle used the notion of "mind over matter" when struggling with backpacking— especially uphill. She persevered and was appreciative that she was not negative to others and herself and that when reflecting afterward understood that she should take the learnings and continue them. Both Michelle and Raymond reflected into their journals and the journal assisted them in comprehending their experience. Kolb (1984) stresses that experience is not sufficient for learning and that "something must be done with it" (p. 42). The reflection that both Michelle and Raymond utilized was influential in that they were able to evaluate how the experience re-awakened and made more apparent this quality of perseverance that they possess.

*Satisfaction.* Another aspect of introspection which is new to the journaling empirical literature is the consciousness-raising of appreciation and satisfaction related to personal learnings, contentment and self-reliance that were depicted in participant's journals. For example, Raymond and Grace both account for feeling satisfied with personal and group accomplishment. As Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) offer in what constitutes reflection and learning is when the teacher, facilitator, or instructor allows the participant to draw upon prior experience to provide opportunities to be actively engaged in what they are learning and consequently appreciate those feelings that might otherwise go unnoticed . Providing the participants in this study time to reflect upon experience into their personal journals supports this conception as well as other studies that relate to perceptions of personal effectiveness and achievements (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006).

### *Crew Cohesiveness Depicted through Reflective Journaling*

The Outward Bound empirical literature currently lacks reports of crew development and growth through journaling. This study shows that reflective journaling assisted in crew development, unity and harmony during the course. Participants were asked to respond to reflective questions regarding group cohesiveness and the crew used their journals to reflect on how well they felt the crew was forming and developing. One set of questions posed to the participants referenced the fulfillment of the “*Full Value and Five Finger Contracts.*” Crew members reflected how members were working together and staying together while hiking and extending themselves with assisting others with rest breaks and heavy packs. This finding illustrates Dewey’s (1938) explanation of the experiential form of education. Dewey stipulates that personal experiences can also affect the emotional and social domains of one’s learning. Congruent to this is when educators arrange for the experience or activity to *engage* the student rather than *repel* the student. To make this happen the crew was afforded the concepts of the contracts, were able to experience an activity that involved the group working in unison and then were able to reflect on the level of the crew working together.

Another aspect of crew cohesiveness that participants elaborated on in their journals was in reference to the level of cooperation and crew trust that was evident. Participants’ entries elaborated on how crew trust was apparent through several different avenues. Participants cited how the crew shared personal information during debriefing sessions, as well as just chatting while hiking. Others shared examples in which crew trust occurred through open, shared and engaged discussions when “problem solving” a situation. This in turn raised the trust level of the crew in general and follows similar study results related to crew cooperation and trust during outdoor adventure education (Ewert & Garvey, 2007; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

Other findings in this study indicate that the service project and rock climbing components were notable in developing crew cohesiveness. Participants used their journals and reflected how they felt supported while climbing and prussiking and that the crew was made of trusting, courageous and caring individuals. The service project which involved stabilizing an unnamed spring crossing a trail stimulated several study participants to reflect on how the crew when posed with a task utilized teamwork, cooperation and equally shared contribution. Several participants reflected on feelings of crew pride, accomplishment and amazement. Studies that reinforce these findings have used similar adventure activities to enhance crew cohesiveness and report heightened crew development, bonding and unity from such activities (Martin, Franc & Zounková, 2004; Sheard & Golby, 2006).

The journaling experience provided an opportunity for participants to think, reflect and write about personal learnings which they sensed and interpreted were a result of crew influences. Several participants experienced levels of personal awareness and awakenings and attributed their new personal learnings and enhanced self-knowledge as a direct result from the bonding, cohesive nature of the crew. Kolb (1984) explains that following experience the reflective learner attends to developmental awakenings and rather than just being influenced, the learner sees opportunities to influence others. Because the participants were granted the opportunity to internally reflect on questions posed to them after experience, personal realizations regarding self and crew took place. In turn, those qualities that were revealed in a personal sense (e.g. supportive, compassionate, and trusting) carried over to general, broad and inclusive crew development and awarenesses.

### *Participant Reactions to Reflective Journaling*

Journals used to critically reflect on learning have been catalytic in adult education practice by assisting in conscious-raising and a means of expressing oneself (Cranton, 2006). Educators who use reflective journals make the experience more educative for the students as enhanced learning takes place from reflecting on the experience than from the experience itself (Posner, 1996). In accordance with these findings on day two of the study participants were briefed on journaling and on the study's intent and method (e.g. prompt-style questions). This was planned to limit the possible arduous, negative or distressful feelings that may relate to journaling especially to those participants for whom the experience of journaling was new or not practiced often. Additionally, too much journal writing on an outdoor course can be demotivating, especially on hard days and late nights (Grube, Phipps & Grube, 2002). A pace that is too intense and overwhelming (e.g. long, 18-20 hour days) will render a student too fatigued, both physically and mentally, to engage in reflective journaling and "they struggle to write up their notes in the tent in the evening" and there is no time to process or "to think about it" (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985, p. 10). Conversely, a pace that is too relaxed (e.g. too much "down time") with excessive journaling may have a negative outcome by turning-off the student. A student in this situation may question the purpose of the course – an adventure education course or a writing composition course in the woods? So it was with known logistical and empirical knowledge regarding journaling by the researcher, coupled with the low energy level of the study participants and the lateness of the first day – which was a long day as we had arrived at our evening camp site at 10 p.m. – that I made the decision to forego giving the participants their day one questions as I sensed they would not welcome the journaling experience. Instead, I chose to

give them the prior days' question during the morning of day two when they were rested and hopefully more open to the experience of journaling.

Finding and striking a balance for journal use and time among participants can be a challenge for instructors. Important to experiential educators are to take the time to plan for and implement appropriate meaningful activities (e.g. journaling) which ultimately provide learners with educational experiences they appreciate and benefit from (Wurdinger, 2005). For this course, as well as for all Outward Bound courses that I instruct, discussion of how the journaling would occur took place during the pre-course or planning phase of the course with co-instructors Tishy and Sweet Pea as opposed to after the course had started and debating when to "fit in" journaling or possibly neglect journaling altogether and hope that the participant finds their own time to journal and answer the questions.

Anticipated crew responses regarding reflective journaling in this study were generally expected to be positive. However, I was pleasantly pleased that participants were honest in their entries and that not all participants initially viewed the journaling experience a positive occurrence. This is identical to the theoretical literature, but is absent from the outdoor education empirical literature. Cranton (2006) warns that when journals are made available to others that there can be a demonstration of "disciplinary power" (p.147) because the reader has access to the writer's insights. Cranton (2006) cautions that participants may hold back on writing about true feelings or worse may write what they think the instructor or educator wants to hear. The inclusion of discrepant or negative findings is not only being truthful, but also adds depth, credibility and reality to the study (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

As mentioned, several early reactions to journaling were that it was a waste of time and as something that they would rather sit and reflect upon as opposed to writing. What was

dramatic with these participants is that by the middle of the course they had experienced a shift in their thinking about their reactions to journaling. Their newly attained awareness and reactions report being appreciative in that the journal helped in focusing thoughts into concrete ideas, that they experienced pleasure with having time to reflect and journal, and questions posed assisted in having them reflect on occurrences that they would not have thought about on their own.

Not found in the journaling empirical literature, but incorporated into this study was that participants were actually given two paperback journals for this eight day course. What was explained to the crew was that one journal was for the research study for them to answer the daily questions. The other journal was for personal use, if they chose to use it and would not be turned in or collected. One participant's reaction to journaling referenced that he would generally take a journal when backpacking prior to the Outward Bound course, but that he never bothered using it. It was during this study that this participant was influenced to use both journals, affirmed that he wanted to continue to journal after the course is over and referenced that he actually was using the personal journal more than answering fully the questions for the study journal! This participant reflected that the journal permitted him to self-evaluate and process the course experience. This result follows what Moon (2004) describes as her third aspect of experiential learning of "unlearning." She explains that unlearning or changing a pre-existing behavior due to engaging in experience and then realizing individual change and flexibility is important. This example of unlearning by this participant exemplifies that the experience of journaling for this research study has stimulated awareness of prior tendencies and attitudes, has resulted in journaling on their own accord, and this change can be characterized as being truly experiential for this participant.

Several participants from the onset of the course and this study welcomed their reflective journal as an opportunity to be of use to them. As the course started they referenced what they anticipated the journal to do for them. For example, and new to the empirical literature, is that they wanted the journal to bring meaning to experience, to facilitate perception and to look deeper, and to learn more about themselves. As instructors, simply providing the time to reflect and journal during and after experience supports what Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) disclose regarding educators and reflection and learning opportunities to students. Boud et al. (1985) claim that educators are in positions to include reflection, how reflection can influence learning, and that by incorporating reflection educators may enhance their own practice of learning and assist those who learn with it.

In this study allowing participants to reflect while being actively engaged in the Outward Bound course has also allowed me – a heuristic researcher – to reflect on the questions and therefore learn with the course participants and improve my overall instructor capability because heuristic inquiry aims at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences (Moustakas, 1990). I was able to process the day's events by reflecting into my journal and learn – not only individually, but also holistically as a crew member. This is new to the Outward Bound empirical literature – the use of heuristic inquiry by the instructor to further search deep into a phenomenon of study.

#### *The Phenomenon of Reflective Journaling*

The fourth theme – which is completely new to the Outward Bound empirical literature – and which was revealed through interpreting and analyzing participants' journal entries was the phenomenon or experience of journaling. Phenomenology seeks to uncover, reveal, examine and describe the nature or essence of a human experience as it is lived and is played out (van Manen,

1990). Ray (1990) stipulates that phenomenology reveals the multiplicity of coherent and integral meanings of the phenomenon or experience that is being sought after. This form of qualitative research used in the study disclosed discovery, description and meaning of the participants' experience of reflective journaling on an Outward Bound course.

As when assisting in determining the other themes of this study, questions relative to seeking how the participants felt the experience or phenomenon of journaling were used. Benefits occur when assigning prompt or processing questions that center on an issue that is being sought after in that (a) participants are focused on the issue that is requesting their input, (b) assigning questions involves everyone – even those who tend to sit back and not get involved, and (c) prompt or processing questions potentially allow the participants to feel more comfortable and confident when the debriefing of the experience occurs (Luckner & Nadler, 1997).

Participants in this study were given 37 prompt-style questions in the field; one metaphor statement in the field and one post-course final position statement (see Appendices D & F). Of all the questions posed, six questions pertained directly to the experience of reflective journaling. For the previously analyzed theme – reactions to reflective journaling – analysis involved sensing entries which were thin, diaphanous, casual and simply reactive to journaling as opposed to this theme – the phenomenon of reflective journaling – which involved sensing emotional, evocative, vivacious, captivating and intimate entries pertaining to the experience of reflective journaling.

Several participants recorded that they looked forward to journal writing and capturing thoughts “close to the moment” that they occur. I recommended to the participants during *duffle shuffle* on day one to store their journal where it could be reached easily and I suggested the “lid”



or “brain” of their backpack to facilitate easy access. This relates to a finding in the study of Bennion and Olsen (2002) in which the criticalness of having the journal available limits the likelihood “had not had her journal with her, she might have had an impulse, quickly felt and then quickly forgotten” (p. 251).

What is exciting and new to the literature is how several participants noted their enthusiasm to want to journal as the course and experience of journaling progressed. One participant points out that she couldn't wait to journal as she was having many new experiences and stressed in her journal the importance of reflecting and processing. Heightened anticipation occurred, too with another participant indicating writing before the daily questions were posed because he wanted to capture the immediacy of his feelings and thoughts close to the moment of what he was encountering. Another participant positively remarked how the journaling experience made her think so much deeper than ever before. She bases this account on having experienced other Outward Bound courses in which reflection and journaling were not exercised as purposefully as was this course. Similarly another participant stated that without the journaling experience that the course would've been just another backpacking experience for him; however because of the journaling experience the course became an emotional journey and something that he didn't expect but was grateful for. These particular encounters relate to theoretical principles that relate to humans learning through experience and when the learning involves reflection in the moment (Cantor, 1995; Dewey, 1938; Schön, 1983).

Several participants gained from the reflective journaling experience a sharp illumination of personal knowledge which has not been reported in the empirical journaling literature. One person in particular was subconsciously in a state of personal reservation. Fenwick (2000), when explaining critical cultural perspectives of experiential learning, notes that experiential educators

enact problem posing in which reflection, dialogue, journaling are used to bring to light oppressive experiences and then rename them in a process of transformation where empowerment becomes the agent for change. This participant only realized that after experiencing crew components, reflective debriefings and through journaling that she did have a support system, she didn't have to worry about how others viewed her and realized that she had the beginnings of an eating disorder. In her words the reflective journaling provided a means for her to look inward, see the way she was oppressing herself and then made changes that improved her inner self and whole outlook in general.

Another participant who experienced a sharp clarification of an aspect in his personal life while on the Outward Bound course and journaling discovered that he had a habitual use of a substance. Outward Bound does not permit the use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco on any of its courses, yet this participant came to realize after being truthful and sincere in his response to the journal questions and possibly using the journaling experience to write in a separate journal (as an entry depicts) this participant experienced what Boud and Walker (1991) refer to re-evaluation or connecting with the experience and attending to feelings to evaluate more freely the experience itself. As was depicted in Chapter Two of this thesis, Boud and Walker's (1991) process associates new learned conceptions which are then applied to existing cognitive structures so that eventually testing and possibly integration of the newly learned knowledge and concepts can take place. Due to this study, the case of this participant experiencing Boud and Walker's (1991) re-evaluation process of experiential learning is no longer absent from the empirical journaling literature. He realized while attending Outward Bound and through reflecting and journaling that he became aware of his substance abuse and consciously aware that he can continue the abstinence of the substance beyond the course.

To conclude this section of the findings, to this researcher what was most pleasing about this study and completely new to the literature is how every participant viewed the experience of journaling to be a significant aspect of their Outward Bound experience. Some participants were more descriptive in their writings and some were less; however what is extraordinary is how most of the participants initially viewed the journal as a modest, ordinary piece of their Outward Bound personally-issued equipment. As the power and realization of Outward Bound was taking place and the reflective journal was being used in a determined and purposeful style, feelings and attitudes towards journaling changed – and for all a dramatic change.

Participants practiced *reflecting after* their Outward Bound experience when they received their final position statement three weeks following their course. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) have proposed that when people engage in reflection after it has occurred that they reevaluate experiences, make decisions, and then make applications. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) offer that attending to feelings during an experience will heighten the involvement in the experience and thus deepen the experience – both current and future.

Original to the empirical Outward Bound and journaling literature is that participants were able to reassess what their reflective experience was while they were engaged in an Outward Bound course. Absolutely new to the Outward Bound literature is that all responses clearly depict that the Outward Bound course was enhanced by the use and experience of the journal. By way of the journal course components were raised to the next level, and as one participant wrote the importance of wanting to journal so that she could remember and recount how she was feeling right after climbing. The experience of journaling among participants resulted in appreciation and thankfulness of having the time and opportunity to journal.

Personal and group awareness issues and growth were made known and all learned that their experience or phenomenon of journaling was something they didn't initially realize but later understood the magnitude, extent and application of their journaling experience.

### Implications for Theory and Practice

Reflective journaling is a component in a multitude of learning situations. What this study focused on was the reflective journaling experience in outdoor education practice and more specifically in an Outward Bound context. Reflection is a component of the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) and as research continues to explore the role of reflection, this study furthers the understanding of the experience of journaling. The next sections describe the implications this study has for experiential learning (as a theoretical framework) as well as outdoor education and Outward Bound.

Experiential learning theory was the fundamental conceptual framework that guided this study. It is already known that reflection is a basic component of experiential learning. Experiential learning or action-based learning involving reflection has been advocated for at least a century. Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, incorporated reflection into his students' adventure activities and into his educational philosophy. Although Hahn was combining and using experience and reflection to enrich one's education, it was not until John Dewey promoted the phrase "*experience and education*" that others became more inclined to probe into this type of education and expand upon it. John Dewey made clear also that experience must involve reflection for learning to occur. In my experience I've been witness to situations in which Outward Bound co-instructors sometimes disregard reflection and just capitalize on the activity or experience. If this disregard of reflection occurs at Outward Bound, it most likely happens in other outdoor and non-outdoor settings where experiential education or learning is claimed to be used. An implication for practitioners using experiential learning is to know that for activity to

be truly experientially-based reflection must occur. Dismissing reflection after experience could be regarded as just a theme park ride where the experience is felt but then is quickly forgotten with little chance of ever transferring beyond the time of the experience.

Moon (2004) expands upon John Dewey's work in which, 1) experiential learning takes effort and will not automatically occur if someone has an experience, and 2) the experience must be processed to make it personal and for learning to take place. In adult education settings she specifically asserts the importance and significance of processing for the development of personal learning by way of experience. Similarly, Cranton (2006) asserts that adults choose to become involved in their learning on a personal level because of a professional or practical need or because they want to develop personally. Questions formatted for this study were based on adult themes and developed for tapping into personal and professional awareness characteristics. For practitioners who have adult learners, an implication in adult settings which utilize experiential learning is to format the reflective process to personal and professional needs. As was the case of this study, the reflective journal experience was kept personal to the participants and therefore made more conducive the responsive characteristics of their entries.

Experiential learning can and has been used in many adult learning situations; however what is virtually absent from the adult education field are research studies related to Outward Bound. Adults do attend Outward Bound courses for reasons aforementioned; although it is the common misconception that Outward Bound courses are for the sole treatment of adjudicated youth. True, this was the lens that the media in the United States used with Outward Bound originally; however this was and is presently not the case. Kurt Hahn did begin his early Outward Bound courses for adolescent boys and young men, however as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, as Hahn's experiential educational ideology became more popular his

schools welcomed *all* people (Villiers, 1953). Outward Bound conducts courses for adolescents, college students, adults, educators, business managers and special populations (e.g. cancer victims and survivors, women only courses). The participants in this study were all educators by profession, ranging from 23 to 62 years of age. They came to Outward Bound for a variety of personal reasons (e.g. professional reasons, curiosity, to be challenged, etc.). From this study the adult education research community may be able to take a more definitive approach to what Outward Bound can offer to the field of experiential education and see how the rich, descriptive results have the potential of benefiting adult educators and practitioners, learners and education in general.

The process descriptors in regard to reflection-in action involve critically analyzing experience after it has happened. Although there are reflective structures occurring as the experience is taking place (that is in the moment and thinking about what one is doing), when reflection in the moment *is* or *is not* feasible, that time available for reflection should take place regardless following experience. This study involved purposeful reflection and journaling time which involved using prompt-style questions that were relatively given to the participants at the conclusion of the day. Although the majority of the questions occurred *after* the experience of the day, participants were encouraged to use their journals at any time they wanted to do so. I noticed some participants journaling at opportune times they encountered. Additionally, a second personal journal – which was classified as truly personal and not to be collected – was issued to all participants in the study. This second journal was provided to the participants for the opportunity to engage in their own journaling experience and for their own personal reasons. A finding in this study did report the use of the non-collectable journals which shows that participants were motivated to journal on their own accord and participate in their own

journaling experience. A consideration for similar settings which are using personal reflective journals is to provide participants with two journals for reasons just mentioned. This provides the basis for participants who journal, meditate and write essays about their outdoor experiences may experience a growing consciousness of their own abilities and values.

Attending to the reflective process in more detail, additional insights into the practice of journaling were used in this study. The reflective process involves the participant returning to the experience, attending to feelings, and then re-evaluating the experience. The manner in which this reflective process fits this study was in formatting the daily questions using Boud and Walker's (1991) progression of reflective practice. To facilitate one's returning to the experience, I developed questions related to "*what is happening?*" To assist one's attending to feelings, I developed questions related to "*how do I feel?*" To re-evaluate the experience, I developed questions related to "*what does it mean?*" By using these specific styles of questions, I was able to have the study participants experience more deliberate reflection during the experience and therefore participants realized the significance and value of the experience in the present rather than later or long after the experience. Formatting questions in these approaches to concrete experiences assists in facilitating and directing learners to involve themselves fully. As one participant referenced the belief that the study questions made him think about things that he otherwise would not have thought of or about. One implication of this study is that outdoor educators and Outward Bound instructors plan reflective questions following this study's question format which were based on Boud and Walker's (1991) work to elucidate the complete meaningfulness that the experience can be for the participant.

The skill and awareness of employing opportune moments for reflection, whether *in* or *on*, is an attained skill of the experiential educator. The literature makes known that preparation and

planning for reflection needs to be considered and will assist in making the educator feel more comfortable when incorporating the reflective process following experience. Adventure education, as well as other settings utilizing experiential learning must consciously arrange and prepare for reflection time. Earlier types of programs used the philosophy of allowing the mountains or the experience to speak for them. However, what has been advocated in the experiential learning and outdoor education literature is for educators to use approaches that balance the psychomotor with cognitive, affective and spiritual domains of personal development. Based on my study, the implication is that educators should engage in careful communication and planning regarding journaling and reflection. This includes instructors providing a considerate and caring atmosphere which involves awareness, compassion and understanding and therefore supports reflection. Discussion and planning among the co-instructors occurred for this study and the results were extremely positive. The facilitation of the questions and the debriefing sessions were smoothly orchestrated. By way of the reflective journal experience and the reflective atmosphere provided, participants experienced a broadening of personal, crew and environmental awareness, knowledge and growth.

Participants were open to this study's purpose and all took part in fulfilling the requirements (that is they completed the length of study and components). Participants were receptive and appreciative of the journaling experience. Some encountered truly phenomenal self awareness during their Outward Bound course and the reflective journal provided a means for participants to reflect and record those feelings. These findings connect with similar outdoor adventure studies which *used* journals in combination with other methods (e.g. questionnaires, surveys, pre-post testing) but did not specifically study the *experience* of journaling. In consideration to the findings of this study that confirms that the experience of journaling was



instrumental in the participants learning, an implication here is for practitioners to consider the participants understanding of their journal as a viable and real experience mechanism in their learning.

The literature is filled with countless studies that research the longevity of newly learned human behavior; however the reflective journal provides another dimension to learning (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005). The reflective journal is not only a means or vehicle to record and process experience; it also is an aide memoire permitting the journal users to revisit and re-capture what he/she experienced and reflected into a journal and therefore becomes the mechanism to continued personal effectiveness. Study participants referenced how they were anticipating the return of their journal after I finished examining and analyzing them. As a heuristic researcher I made statements regarding my early and current journaling tendencies and how I enjoy reading those personal Outward Bound journals from years ago, re-capturing the experiences and being reminded of broadened personal and instructor growth. An implication would be to explore this process in other educational settings.

Taking a look into the implications of exploring the journaling experience of Outward Bound participants, some recommendations for potential research can be made as well, and these are described in detail in the next section.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The field of outdoor education lacks research which focuses specifically on the experience of reflective journaling. As a researcher in the outdoor education field and a North Carolina Outward Bound instructor, I have become more knowledgeable, inclusionary, and aware of journaling in my practice. Over the span of courses and years I have noticed how some of my course participants were experiencing an enhanced sense of their outdoor and Outward Bound experience through journaling. Outward Bound uses primarily wilderness settings, and

its here in the wilderness that adults and young people are exposed to challenging activities that increase the potential for participants to know more about themselves and push beyond preconceived self-imposed limits. Because of these personal insights and transformations, it is not unusual for participants to stay in contact with their instructors – whether through regular letters or email – following Outward Bound experiences. For me the re-connections that stand out most are with former participants who remark on how they located their journal from a course that they recently completed or from years ago. As they began reading it they were instantly taken back to the time when challenge, adversity, excitement, personal awareness and achievement all occurred to them while on their Outward Bound course. They absolutely and unequivocally were so happy that they experienced keeping a journal to not only log their thoughts, learnings and reflections, but unbeknownst to them at the time the journal became to them a sort of time capsule. The journal assisted in transporting them back to those extraordinary times and with which could recollect their experiences and learnings. What is interesting to this researcher and could contribute to the field is uncovering similar phenomena and knowing if the journaling experience is appreciated over a longer period (e.g. one, three, and five year post course surveys). Future research could investigate the longevity the journaling experience has on participants and provide empirical data to not only Outward Bound and the outdoor education field, but to all learning contexts that use journals to assist in learning processes.

Similar, yet somewhat different from the longevity that the experience of journaling continues in time is the length of the course combined with journaling to achieving long-term gains. Studies have been performed assessing short-term and long-term gains associated with courses in outdoor education and Outward Bound (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Hattie, Marsh,

Neill & Richards, 1997). However, no research was discovered that explores the amount of the length of the course in relation to the journaling experience of participants. It would be beneficial to the field to know what the short and long-term gains are in relation to journaling and continued awareness and application of learned behavior. This study spanned eight days and some studies purport that courses of eight days or less show higher recidivism rates of learned behavior than longer length courses (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Hattie, et al. 1997). I find this rather perplexing as I affirm that a short course that utilizes high-impact components (e.g. backpacking, rock climbing, ropes courses) but which also involves reflection and journaling will lead to increased self-awareness and personal growth more so than longer courses that consist of only events with no processing, reflection and journaling of the experience. As all participants revealed with this eight day North Carolina Outward Bound Educator's Course, what they knew and realized were that they would be backpack expeditioning and rock climbing. What they wouldn't realize until the latter days of the course and for weeks after the course had ended that everyone grew and developed in his or her own unique way and as they declared their personal reflective journal was instrumental in their learning. Some of the participants were achieving these personal awakenings during the last days of the eight day course. A question is raised with the knowledge that if a participant is achieving extraordinary personal feelings on day eight, how would they feel after day twelve? What is recommended for further research is for longer Outward Bound courses utilizing the journal and the equivalent methods to explore more profound and richer accounts of self-awareness and personal growth among participants.

Demographics of researched studies in outdoor education which pertained to participants and their professions were few (e.g., dentist office personnel, college/university students) and two of the Outward Bound studies used educators as study participants. A critical lens viewpoint

of this study may reference the possibility that because all participants in the study were educators and the researcher is also an educator who is doing a graduate research study may indicate that the participants may be sensitive, sympathetic or considerate to take part and journal for simply going along and helping a fellow educator and colleague. I referred to this concern and made reference previously when including discrepant or negative information to validate and authenticate the research. Since what was reported was that not all participants were receptive and accepting of the journal at times, the perception of possible participant faulty, flawed and deceptive journal information and submission cannot be argued. However, what would be advantageous to the field would be to explore other courses (e.g. adult public enrollment, women-only, corporate, college, etc.) using the same components, theoretical framework and methodology (e.g. daily journal questions) or other methods of journaling (e.g. dialogue, dialectic, critical incident) to ascertain the reflective journal's all encompassing possibilities and applications.

With respect to replication of this study to other settings, the constructive influence that my background in journaling and Outward Bound had in conducting this study should be noted. My role as an experiential educator, North Carolina Outward Bound instructor and someone who journals may have paved the way for this study to occur. While others who are not yet comfortable with the process and utilization of journaling and with Outward Bound, a perception of the terminology, context, and overall familiarization with Outward Bound – in which one is immersed with crew members “24/7” for ever how long the course is – allowed this to be a profound and much richer study. Participants and this researcher not only took part in the study, but *lived* the study. These qualities of living the experience to uncover, bring into meaning and therefore understand is what phenomenology asserts. A hard truth; however the

recommendation for a phenomenological study of exploring an experience is to delve into the experience without reservations and conditions and feel the same true, unaffected and whole nature of the phenomenon. For outdoor educators to capture the full phenomenological characteristics of the research this implies engaging in the same activities, participating in the discussions and debriefs and completing the experiences in their entirety. Any aspect less experienced may warrant the method of study suspect and not phenomenology.

The same outcomes and results may most likely apply to other outdoor education settings in which the educator or researcher has a familiarity with the theoretical framework and methodology used in this study. Beyond the scope of outdoor education settings, this study is transferable to other fields as well. Adaptations, comparisons and contrasts between various fields and the field of outdoor education and Outward Bound will assist comprehending different views on the findings of this study, thus opening and incorporating the concepts of experiential learning.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of using reflective journals on an Outward Bound course – specifically North Carolina Outward Bound. This study identifies several specific areas of learning related to personal and social development which emerged as a result of the journaling experience.

This was a qualitative, phenomenological study which used a heuristic approach towards data analysis. One of the most important aspects of this method was the intense, rich and sincere information gathered during the data analysis; participants not only answered daily questions, they reflected beyond the questions in their journals on their own accord. Additionally,

incorporating verbal debriefs and evening meetings assisted in clarifying and substantiating journal entries and responses where further detail was necessary.

The crew, consisting of the six participants and the instructors brought a diverse, yet distinctive point-of-view which provided me with different perspectives and positions during the data analysis. The participants varied in their responses in terms of depth; however what is noted is that each participant brought relevance and application to the questions. Through answering the daily questions, several conclusions were made with respect to: 1) the lived experience of participants' personal development through journaling, 2) the lived experience of participants' social development among crewmates through journaling, and 3) my lived experience through journaling while instructing a North Carolina Outward Bound (NCOB) course. The results of this study inform NCOB, the field of outdoor education and adult education. Because of the journaling experience, an enhanced level of awareness, consciousness and comprehension of self, others, and the reflective journal developed. This is significant because only journaling and not the *experience* of journaling have been used in previous research. From this study, we have greater insights into journaling as a method of study and now have a better understanding of personal, social, and holistic learning and development.

In conclusion, this study is important to Outward Bound, outdoor education settings, and other learning settings in adult education. A better understanding of the journaling experience – when considered as within this study – can be an essential mechanism providing the potential to develop and enhance the setting, situation or whole person, in general, which is currently lacking in the literature.

## Appendix A

## Pre-Course Schedule NEE-821 8-Day Educator Course

**June 19, 2008**

- 8:30 a.m. Morning Meeting & Duty  
 9:00 a.m. Meet on Breezeway for the kick-off  
 9:30 a.m. Logistics Brief  
 10:00 a.m. Review Paperwork
- Medicals
  - Menu Planning
  - Expedition Route
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch & Duty  
 1:30 p.m. Gear Pack-out  
 2:30 p.m. Food Pack-out  
 4:00 p.m. Check in for Evening
- To-do list for the 20<sup>th</sup>
  - How are we doing as a team?
  - Anything else?
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner & Duty

**June 20, 2008**

- 8:30 a.m. Morning Meeting & Duty  
 9:00 a.m. Meet on Breezeway
- Curriculum Planning
  - 72-hour plan
  - Progression Planning
  - Finalize details
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch & Duty  
 1:00 p.m. Instructor Goal Setting  
 3:00 p.m. Safety Brief  
 4:00 p.m. Rocks Brief  
 5:00 p.m. Quitting Time  
 7:00 p.m. Dinner & Duty

**June 21, 2008**

- 8:30 a.m. Morning Meeting & Duty  
 11:30ish a.m. Depart for Course Start

## Appendix B

## Course Details

**June 21, 2008:** 11:45 a.m. depart base for course start at airport; duffle shuffle at Mill's River Park near airport; transport to Big East Fork parking lot off of Blue Ridge Parkway; expedition on trail 363 (Shining Creek Trail); camp at Shining Rock Creek.

**June 22, 2008:** Expeditioning on trail 363 (Shining Creek Trail); camp at Shining Rock Gap.

**June 23, 2008:** Expeditioning on trail 146 (Art Loeb Trail); camp at Black Balsam Knob.

**June 24, 2008:** Expeditioning on trail 146 (Art Loeb Trail); camp at Sacred Knoll (NCOB Cedar Rock Base Camp).

**June 25, 2008:** Climbing (East Face Prussik of Cedar Rock Mtn.); camp on Cedar Rock Mtn. summit.

**June 26, 2008:** Climbing on Cedar Rock Mtn. ("Halloween" climbs; sling-shot style); Expedition to p.m. "solo" in area of "Self-Reliance" site (NCOB Cedar Rock Base Camp); Solo watch camp at "Self-Reliance".

**June 27, 2008:** Solo a.m.; workshop p.m.; partial gear de-issue at 4 p.m.; camp at Self Reliance site (NCOBS Cedar Rock Base Camp)

**June 28, 2008:** 6:30 a.m. PCE; 8:30 a.m. final de-issue; 10:45 a.m. final circle/course end; 11:15 a.m. depart for airport.



## Appendix C

## 48 Hour Plan

“D” is Dave - Instructor

“T” is Tishy (pseudonym) – Instructor & course Director

“SP” is Sweet Pea (pseudonym) - Instructor

“B” is Brenda (pseudonym) – an NCOB intern:

**Day 1: June 21**

- Airport @ 1:30 p.m. Make introductions; introduce/sign consent forms, and load into van (D)
- Drive van to Mill’s River Park for course start/duffle shuffle (T)
- Course Director Intro (T)
- Name Game (T)
- Goals/Outcomes Activity (SP)
- Duffle Shuffle
  - Personal (and change clothes if needed) (D)
  - Personal OB gear (SP)
  - Group gear (SP)
  - Food (T)
  - Packing a pack; snack? (B)
  - Fitting a pack (B)
- Load up van and trailer and drive to Big East Fork (T)
- Expedition travel (stay together; buddy system; hot spots on feet, etc.) (T); van to base (B)
- Route/hike
- Arrive @ camp
- Journal time (30 minutes for Day #1 questions) (D)
- Camp site selection (Rooms of the house) (GP)
  - Tarp set-up (D)
  - Kitchen/stoves (T)
  - Bear hang (SP)
  - Journal entry into Group Journal/Dinner Circle (D)
  - Clean up (D)
- Evening Meeting
  - Group Journal reading & Question of the Day (D)
  - Meeting: tomorrow’s plan (T)
  - Sleeping dry and warm (SP)

**Day 2: June 22**

- Up at 6:30 a.m.
- Morning circle @ 6:35 a.m. (D)
- Break down camp (T)
- Breakfast (SP)

- Pack up
- Morning meeting:
  - Full Value Contract; Challenge by Choice; Five Finger Contract; OB Pillars, Commitment bracelet (D)
  - Navigation 101 (T & SP)
  - Camp sweep (D)
- Hike (until 12-1 for lunch)
- Arrive at camp
- Journal time (D)
- Camp set up
  - Tarps (SP)
  - Cooking (D); Bear hang (T)
- Eat
- Evening Meeting
  - Group journal reading & question of the day (SP)
  - 10 minute life story initiative (2 people/night for 3 days) (T)
  - Kurt Hahn/OB Story (D)
  - Next day agenda and to bed (SP)

## Appendix D

### Daily Field Study Questions

(Cut into paper strips and given to each participant on the specific day)

#### **Day 1, June 21, 2008:**

1. Why did you enroll in this Outward Bound course?
2. What was the most difficult part of the day for you?
3. How have you challenged yourself so far in the course?
4. What can you do to challenge yourself for the rest of the course?
5. What do you hope to accomplish, both personally, professionally, and socially during this course?
6. What is it like to journal?

#### **Day 2, June 22, 2008:**

1. What was the most difficult part of the day for you?
2. How have you challenged yourself so far in the course?
3. What can you do to challenge yourself for the rest of the course?
4. Is everyone fulfilling the “Full Value Contract”? Explain.
5. Is everyone fulfilling the “Five Finger Contract”? Explain.
6. What did you learn about yourself yesterday that you implemented today?

#### **Day 3, June 23, 2008:**

1. What has had the most impact on your trust level of the group?
2. As an educator, how can you apply the “Full Value Contract” and “Five Finger Contract” into your discipline/curriculum at your school/institution?
3. Record any other thoughts or comments that you are thinking/feeling about how the course is going.
4. How do you feel reflective journaling has contributed to your course experience thus far?

#### **Day 4, June 24, 2008:**

1. My feelings regarding the service component...
2. Do you have any thoughts or ideas how you can involve your students and include service that is related/unrelated to your discipline at your school/institution?
3. Elaborate how reflective journaling makes meaning of your Outward Bound experience.

#### **Day 5, June 25, 2008:**

1. The feelings I had when first seeing the rock to ascend...
2. The feelings I had when “prussiking” and high up on the rock...
3. The feelings I had when completing the prussik and then being “off belay”...
4. Other reflections or insights of my rock experience...

**Day 6, June 26, 2008:**

“Considering the equipment and techniques used today for the climbs and rappel, who or what in your life represents to you the anchor, belayer, monitor, rope, harness, carabiners and helmet and why?”

**Day 7, June 27, 2008:**

1. What have I learned about myself and the crew since the start of the course?
2. What personal learnings do I anticipate taking with me when the course ends?
3. How has journaling on this course affected this course experience?
4. Who is an influential person in your life and why? Do they know these feelings you have?
5. Activity: Be ready to share the story of the construction of your solo tarp to the crew.
6. Activity: Write a letter to yourself using the supplied paper and envelope. Be sure to address and seal it. It will be mailed to you in six months.
7. Activity: Bring back a “memory” or object from your solo site to share with the crew.

**Day 8, June 28, 2008:**

1. What was it like to journal while on your Outward Bound experience?
2. What have you learned about yourself during this course?
3. What particular event(s) affected your overall experience (physically, socially and mentally) during this course?
4. What learnings, if any will you take with you and apply to your everyday life following the course?
5. What learnings can you apply to your teaching situation that you gained from this course?
6. What did I think and learn about myself and the group during this Outward Bound course?

## Appendix E

## Research Study Follow-Up Letter to Participants

July 19, 2008

Hello Educator Course Participants!!

I hope your summer is relaxing and refreshing. Again, thank you for everything; I so appreciate your willingness to engage in my study. As I said before, you will be receiving my work regarding the eight day Outward Bound experience sometime this fall – hopefully! You will find in this mailing the following:

- 1) A photocopy of the crew journal.
- 2) A DVD of the course.
- 3) A final questionnaire and addressed, stamped envelope for return.
- 4) Your personal journal.

When completing the questionnaire, find a nice, quiet place to reflect for a few moments. Thank you.

Dave Eichler

## Appendix F

## Research Study Follow-Up Questionnaire

## Final Position Statement/Narrative

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My overall experience of reflective journaling while engaged in an Outward Bound course.....

## Appendix G

Member – Checking Email to Participants on November 21, 2008

Hello 2008 NCOB Educator Course Participants!

I hope everyone is doing well. Again, I whole-heartedly appreciate all of you for participating in my study.

Attached is Chapter 4 of my dissertation which has been approved by the PSU Advisor. I'd like you to read it and respond with any comments, editing changes you want, criticisms, praise, etc. if possible by Monday, Dec. 1. This process for qualitative research of the dissertation process is known as "Member-Checking".

Again, thank you!

Happy Thanksgiving and happy reading!

Dave

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## Curriculum Vita of David F. Eichler

### Education

#### **The Pennsylvania State University**

Doctorate in Adult Education (final defense date: 03/16/09)

Master's of Health Education (05/1999)

#### **West Chester University of Pennsylvania**

Bachelor of Science, Health and Physical Education (05/1984)

### Teaching Experience

2006 to present      **Millersville University**, P.O. Box 1002, Millersville, PA 17551-0302  
*Adjunct Professor*

2000 to present      **Hempfield Area Recreation Commission**, 950 Church Street, Landisville, PA 17538.  
*Instructor*

1991 to present      **North Carolina Outward Bound**  
*Instructor*

1985 to present      **Teacher at Donegal High School, Mount Joy, PA**  
*Health, Physical and Outdoor Education*

1985 to present      **Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission**  
*Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer*  
*Boating Education Instructor*

### Conference Presentations

Eichler, D.F. (2009, March). *The experience of using reflective journals on an outward bound course*. Poster session presented at the Poster Option of the Twenty-fourth Annual Graduate Exhibition, Pennsylvania State University. State College, PA.

Eichler, D.F. (2008, March). *A reflective analysis of a high ropes course (IRB graduate study)*. Association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Eastern District Convention. Newport, RI.

Eichler, D.F. (2007, April). *A reflective analysis of a high ropes course (IRB graduate study)*. Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg Research Day. Middletown, PA.

Eichler, D.F. (2006, June). *Orienteering*. Keystone Health Promotion Conference, Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg. Middletown, PA.