

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF A ONE-DAY CHALLENGE COURSE PROGRAM

by

BRENT DAVID WOLFE

(Under the Direction of John Dattilo)

ABSTRACT

While many studies have sought to understand challenge courses and their benefits, few studies have sought to understand participants' perceptions of these programs. In this study, 16 adults working at a dental office attended a one-day challenge course program designed to teach them lessons about communication and cooperation. Research questions focused on understanding participants' perceptions of the program in general and, more specifically, their perceptions about communication, cooperation, and team functioning during and after the program. Data were collected via in vivo observations, digital video observations, one focus group, and two individual interviews with 11 of 16 participants. These qualitative sources of data were analyzed and nine themes emerged: (a) Support and Encouragement, (b) I've Gotta Do It, (c) Individual Emphasis, (d) Changes in Emotion, (e) Effectiveness of Communication, (f) Too Many Chiefs, (g) Cooperation, (h) Camaraderie, and (i) Impact of the Program. Presentation and discussion of these themes allowed for exploration of participants' perceptions of the one-day challenge course program and offered answers to established research questions. Findings suggested that participants identified individual benefits and while improvements to team functioning related to communication and cooperation were not clearly recognized, a sense of

enhanced camaraderie was acknowledged. Connections to related literature and suggestions for research and practice are also provided.

INDEX WORDS: Challenge course, Ropes course, Qualitative data, Interviews, Focus group, Participants' perceptions, Video recording

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BRENT DAVID WOLFE

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M.A., The University of Georgia, 2001

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by

BRENT DAVID WOLFE

Major Professor: John Dattilo

Committee: Diane M. Samdahl
Douglas A. Kleiber
William Finlay

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2004

DEDICATION

To my wife...

For her patient,

Thoughtful,

Caring,

And loving support throughout the entire process.

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As I learned through the participants in this study, support and encouragement in a stressful situation is of utmost importance. With that thought in mind, there are several people who deserve acknowledgement for their assistance with this project. First, I would like to recognize my committee members for the time and guidance they offered throughout the process. John Dattilo's oversight has proven invaluable and his willingness to give up many a free evening or Saturday to proofread my ramblings helped my writing mature. Diane Samdahl has constantly encouraged me to critically examine my own writings and preconceptions and made me think more than I ever have. I have appreciated Doug Kleiber's thoughtful questioning and he has pushed me to understand theories related to leisure and their connections (or lack of) to my own work. Finally, William Finlay provided me with a background in sociological literature related to teams and organizations and opened my eyes to connections that can be developed between the two fields. While I have not always agreed with the committee's suggestions, they have always guided me toward the completion of this scholarly endeavor.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Business and industry have both realized teams may provide the best answer to meeting market demands because teams provide more perspectives, information, opinions, and effort than individuals alone” (Bandow, 2001, p. 41). Gordon (1992) suggested that 82% of companies with 100 or more employees supported the use of teams in their work environments, while Lawler, Mohrman, and Ledford (1995) found that 68% of Fortune 1000 companies used self-managing teams. As these numbers demonstrate, many employers are encouraging and promoting the use of teams within their organizations; however, not all organizations use, or effectively use, team-based strategies. In this chapter I briefly identify some reasons why organizations have adopted team approaches and implications of the existence of teams within these organizations. Given the prevalence of teams in industry, strategies to promote successful team functioning are presented in the chapter as well. Challenge course programs are one particular strategy that has been used to enhance team functioning within organizations. These courses, that can be designed to promote and encourage communication and cooperation, are described in this chapter. In addition, the need for research to assess participants’ perceptions of challenge course experiences is identified. Finally, a study is proposed to examine participants’ perceptions of a challenge course program specifically designed to promote communication and cooperation.

Rationale for Use of Working Teams

While the use of working teams is not a recent phenomenon, its prevalence and practice are growing because of benefits provided to employers and employees (Banker & Field, 1996).

According to Deci, Connell, and Ryan (1987), employees that have opportunity for greater decision and increased flexibility are likely to experience increased satisfaction, quality of work life, and ultimately the organization will be more effective. These benefits can include labor enhancement (Banker & Field, 1996; Buller & Bell, 1986; Moses & Stahelski, 1999; Pearce, Gallagher, & Ensley, 2002), employer control (Barker, 1993; Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998), and employee autonomy (Ammeter & Dukerich, 2002; Appelbaum, 2000).

There is support for the conclusion that both quality and quantity of labor improves in the presence of teams. For example, Banker and Field (1996) examined the impact of work groups on effectiveness of teams within an organization. The authors suggested introduction of the team system improved production levels and quality of work when compared to pre-team levels. Similarly, Pearce, et al. (2002) found greater employee production when conducting a longitudinal field study with 71 teams in the automotive industry. Pearce et al. (2002) examined the connection between team potency defined as, “collective belief within a group that it can be effective” (p. 115) and actual team effectiveness and found a positive correlation existed between team potency and team effectiveness. Authors suggested the groups’ effectiveness improved as the belief that the group could be effective improved (potency). Bandow (2001) suggested that the benefits of teams provided employers with incentives to promote teams in the workplace and develop positive relationships. When examined collectively, research (Banker & Field, 1996; Pearce et al., 2002) has identified that the use of teams within an organization can increase productivity.

Another rationale for the use of teams in the workplace is that teams can increase employer control. For example, Ezzamel and Willmott (1998) and Sewell (1998, 2001) reported that when introduced in a clothing manufacturing plant, the use of teams increased managers’

control over employees. Similarly, Barker (1993) conducted an ethnographic study to examine this issue of control within teams. According to Barker, the team strategy provided employers with a greater sense of control over their employees than traditional management techniques and allowed employers to exert coercive control without the physical presence of a supervisor. According to one team member, “Now the whole team is around me and the whole team is observing what I am doing” (p. 408). This employee “felt more closely watched now” (p. 408) and felt his team was intolerant on the issue of tardiness (in direct contrast to previous supervisors’ flexible attitudes on the issue). Similarly, other participants discussed their feelings of frustration when staying late to complete work because of pressure exerted by other team members. According to Barker, without being present, employers controlled their employees and encouraged them to work harder and more effectively through the team system.

Another reason why many employers use teams within the workplace is to eliminate levels of bureaucracy through a “hands-off” management approach and to promote employee autonomy (Barker, 1993). Moving from a Tayloristic form of management where routinization is the norm, teams provide employees with opportunities for autonomy, independence, communication with other levels within the organization, and participation in self-directed and problem solving teams (Appelbaum, 2000). The use of teams can provide employees with an environment that allows for personal expression and involvement (Reed, 1992). For example, Ammeter and Dukerich (2002) interviewed 51 individuals from eight different teams working with construction and manufacturing of military services and identified a sense of ownership as one theme raised by participants. According to their participants, being with the project from the very beginning and functioning as a team member provided a greater sense of autonomy.

Components for Successful Team Functioning

While the use of teams has been connected with several benefits for employers and employees, successful teams do not simply develop on their own. It appears that there are two primary ingredients that are helpful in the construction of a successful team. These components include (a) communication (Ingram & Desombre, 1999; Molyneux, 2001) and (b) cooperation (Henry, 2000).

Communication contributes to the success of a team, and without this factor a team may have difficulty performing its assigned tasks (Bandow 2001; Griffiths, 1997; Ingram & Desombre, 1999; Molyneux, 2001). Using interviews and research action meetings, hotel employees reported, “A lack of communication caused frustration when important information was not known. . .” (Ingram & Desombre, 1999, p. 21). Participants recognized that difficulties in communication not only lead to a decrease in their ability to work as a team, but also to a diminished experience for hotel guests. In a similar study, Molyneux (2001) interviewed a team of social workers and found that one recurrent theme related to group success was communication within the team.

Studies also provide support for the value of a group’s perceived cooperation in the functioning of a team (Henry, 2000; Molyneux, 2001). Molyneux (2001) found that a group of employees in a hospital (N= 6) perceived the value of cooperation within their team as vital to the ability to accomplish their assigned tasks. In discussing perceived cooperation within their team (as compared to other groups in the hospital), one participant stated, “I think that we don’t feel threatened by other people helping, or taking certain parts of our roles, where I feel others in hospital feel threatened if people want to take on part of their role” (30-31). In addition, Henry (2000) examined perceptions of cooperation of undergraduate students as they worked in teams

to solve social dilemmas. He reported that participant's perception of cooperation increased over time as the group worked collectively and individually to write essays.

Strategies to Promote Successful Team Functioning

For organizations to benefit from the use of teams (e.g., labor enhancement, increased control, and employee autonomy), it is important that communication and cooperation be fostered within the developed team. Since these two components appear to increase the likelihood of team successes, use of potential methods to promote communication and cooperation may be helpful. Two such methods include (a) cooperative learning (Rutherford, Mathur, & Quinn, 1998) and (b) experiential learning.

Cooperative learning is defined as the instructional use of small groups so that participants "work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 491). Johnson and Johnson (1989) studied 59 fourth graders (28 girls), and found that cooperative learning improved individuals ability to work together, increased support for others within the group, and built trust among group members. Cooperative learning activities are designed to increase personal interaction, promote cooperation with others rather than competition, and foster a sense of teamwork while attempting to overcome a common goal (Carlson, 1999; Orlick, 1981). In an effort to understand the notion of sharing (e.g., personal interaction and cooperation) within the context of cooperative activities, Orlick (1981) examined behaviors of 38 kindergartners and found those in the cooperative learning condition exhibited happier affect and greater levels of sharing than those in the competitive condition. With cooperative learning it is important to focus on goal attainment and, according to Roberts and Treasure (1992), this focus leads to positive experiences for individuals who participate. For example, Anderson and Morrow (1995) examined effects of competitive versus cooperative

instructions on aggressive behaviors of 60 college students while they were playing video games. These authors found that providing cooperative instructions and setting group goals for those in the experimental group led to a decrease in aggressive behaviors when compared to individuals in the control group.

Another technique that has been documented to improve team effectiveness is experiential learning because it provides an avenue to teach interpersonal and communication skills to individuals preparing to function as part of a group (Gremier, Hoffman, Keaveney, & Wright, 2000). According to Johnson and Johnson (2000), “. . . experiential learning may be defined as generating an action theory from your own experiences and then continually modifying it to improve your effectiveness” (p. 53). The authors elaborated on the notion of action theory and stated that it informs a person which actions will be necessary to generate a specific outcome within a specific situation.

Kolb’s (1984) model of experimental learning seeks to describe how “experience is translated into concept that can be used to guide the choice of new experiences” (Sugerman, 1985, p. 264). Kolb’s model begins with the reflective observation of a concrete experience. After a period of reflection, individuals are encouraged to abstractly conceptualize their observations. On the basis of their conceptualization, individuals then engage in active experimentation. In Kolb’s model, this experimentation leads to concrete experiences. In an attempt to gain greater understanding of experiential learning and Kolb’s (1984) model, Powell and Wells (2002) compared effects of three experiential teaching approaches on 12 fifth grade science classes. All lessons were presented using experiential methods, but several were presented with adaptations following Kolb’s model. While no significant differences were identified among treatments, effects on science knowledge gained were noticed.

Kolb's (1984) model suggested a cyclical approach to experiential learning and is grounded in Lewin's action theory (1943, 1948). Action theory has been defined as "a theory as to what actions are needed to achieve a desired consequence in a given situation" (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 51). Action theory proposes that individuals or groups learn to engage in certain activities on the basis of past experiences. With relation to challenge courses, action theory might state that if one member of a team assists another team member in completing a task, then they will be more likely to accomplish the task. According to Lewin (1944), ". . . a group is not a stationary thing but a process of interaction between people" (p. 395). It is this constant movement and fluctuation which defines both action theory and experiential learning.

Experiential learning has been used in conjunction with, and independently of, traditional teambuilding methods such as retreats and discussion groups. Baldwin and Keating (1998) attempted to create a program which would encourage development of communication, problem solving, and team building within secondary pre-service teachers. They developed a program that relied on traditional discussion activities as well as physical learning activities. Following sequencing principles practiced in challenge course programs, participants completed initiative activities and low elements in an order that allowed participants to move from simple, less complex tasks to more difficult complex tasks. According to results from structured interviews completed by participants, teachers identified the program as successfully "clarifying the importance of team building and cooperation with colleagues and students" and "developing a sense of team and cooperation..." (Baldwin & Keating, 1998, p. 303); however, because of the combination of techniques (i.e. discussion groups and physical activities), it is impossible to determine which method (if either) was instrumental to the teachers' improvement.

Similarly, Richardson, Montemuro, Mohide, Cripps, and Macpherson (1999) developed an experiential learning program designed to increase health care professional students' knowledge of aging, attitudes toward a geriatric population, and knowledge and skills in team functioning (p. 414). As a result of participating in weekly problem-based tutorials (i.e. professional roles, communication, conflict management, leadership), there was an increase in participants knowledge of aging and skills in team functioning. Upon termination of the program, participants completed exit interviews. A theme associated with participants' comments was their desire to participate in future experiential learning programs. This desire of participants to continue learning about communication and professional roles (among other topics) via experiential learning may offer suggestions as to why organizations are embracing the notion of experiential learning as they attempt to increase communication and cooperation within their teams.

One of the current conflicts related to successful management of an organization relates to the balance of individuals' experience and knowledge of theory (Herremans & Murch, 2003). Herremans and Murch argue that individuals must have a "broad-based, theoretical education" as well as "technical, experiential skills" (p. 66), and they suggest that one approach to dealing with this conflict may lie in the use of experiential learning. By teaching individuals and teams theoretical foundations related to making good decisions and the need for communicating with one another and then providing them with opportunities to make those decisions may be one method to wed experience and theory. Referring to Lewin's (1944, 1948) action theory, Herremans and Murch suggested that "interlocking the benefits of the professional education model with the action learning model lends itself to the use of experiential learning techniques" (p. 67). According to Raelin (1995) the professional education model encourages an in-depth

knowledge of one specific topic, whereas the action learning model promotes learning by doing with less focus on theoretical frameworks. The proposed study attempts to use experiential learning (in the form of a challenge course program) to begin to address an organization's desire to offer hands-on experiences, related to communication and cooperation, to their employees.

Components of a Challenge Course Program

Challenge courses have long been considered experiential learning environments as participants "learn by doing" different activities (Goldenberg, Klenosky, O'Leary, & Templin, 2000); however, challenge courses also possess characteristics of cooperative learning. Challenge courses combine experiential and cooperative learning elements by providing opportunities for participants to work together and foster a sense of team (cooperative learning), and providing opportunities for participants to learn by doing (experiential learning) (Goldenberg, et al., 2000, p. 209). Participants on a challenge course are not only asked to work together with others in their group, they are also asked to learn lessons of cooperation and communication by actively engaging in different activities known as elements.

Typically, challenge courses are comprised of four conditions: (a) socializing games, (b) group initiatives, (c) low elements, and (d) high elements (Priest, no date). These activities are presented to participants in a sequenced order by trained facilitators. Not all challenge course programs incorporate each of these components; however, some combination of the four will be present.

Socializing games are designed to introduce group members to one another and introduce facilitators to the group. During this stage, participants have opportunity to learn names and personality characteristics of everyone involved in the program. Games such as "Elbow Tag," "Giants, Wizards, and Elves," and "Bumpity-bump-bump-bump" can all be played during this

introductory time period. Initiative activities are aimed at helping the group take steps toward trust and cooperation. These activities are designed to provide opportunities to think as a group and solve problems as presented to them by the facilitator(s). Group initiatives can consist of activities such as “Magic Shoes,” “The Grid,” “Turnstile,” “Group Lap Sit,” and “Group Knot.”

Low elements are the next component in the progression of a challenge course program and consist of group-oriented activities that occur on or near the ground using pre-constructed equipment. These activities do not require belay systems as found with high elements; rather, low elements rely on the use of group members as spotters for the safety of all participants. Low elements provide additional opportunities for group members to think and work together as they solve contrived problems (e.g., gaining entry into Disney World by completing a particular task). Presumably they will develop a sense of trust and grow closer as a team. Low elements can include elements such as “Islands,” “Spider’s Web,” “TP Shuffle,” and “Nitro Crossing.”

The final components of a challenge course are high elements, which are usually suspended 20-40 feet above the ground. These elements are constructed in the trees or on man-made poles sunk into the ground. While the emphasis of high elements can focus on cooperation and communication (e.g., Dangle Duo, group support), their primary purpose is to encourage individuals to conquer their fears. It is the intent of the preceding activities (e.g., socializing games, initiative activities, low elements) to build confidence and trust in participants so they might attempt the high elements. For these elements, participants wear traditional rock climbing gear (e.g., harness and helmet) and are tied into an elaborate safety system called a belay, which protects them if they should fall. High elements can include activities such as “Dangle Duo,” “Flying Squirrel,” “Pamper Pole,” and “Zip Line.”

Rationale for Study

As outlined above, organizations use team strategies within their businesses to provide benefits to both employers and employees. In an effort to increase teamwork among employees', employers have sought to increase communication and cooperation among members of teams. While studies document benefits of teams (e.g., Banker & Field, 1996; Pearce, et al., 2002) and the ability of challenge course programs to increase these qualities (e.g., communication and cooperation) among team members (e.g., Bronson, Gibson, Kichar, & Priest, 1992; Priest, 1998a, b), few studies have sought opinions and impressions of these practices by program participants (cf. Bramwell, Forrester, Houle, Larocque, Villeneuve, & Priest, 1997, Bronson, et al., 1992; Hayllar, 2000). One study that solicited participants' perceptions of their experience was conducted by Hayllar (2000). Hayllar examined managers from different organizations and sought to understand how they learned during their three day Organizational Management Development (OMD) program. Hayllar found the essence of the experience was marked by transcendence (e.g., immersion in physical setting and a "psychological shift" related to the social environment), dissonance (e.g., disjuncture, existing in a social and psychological setting outside of one's comfort zone), *communitas* (e.g., relationships among individuals, sense of belonging), and *viscerality* (e.g., emotional range of experiences marked by engagement), and the formal learning experiences of high risk activities and processing were integral to the experience. By using a qualitative approach from a phenomenological framework to solicit participants' perceptions related to learning, Hayllar diverged from typical research conducted on challenge courses seeking to determine the program's effectiveness.

Apart from Hayllar (2000), the above studies that solicited participants' perceptions related to a challenge course program have used interview techniques to either confirm

quantitative survey data or to collect follow-up data after completion of a project. While these studies have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, their discussions were primarily focused on results associated with quantitative measures. Studies focusing primarily on efficacy may be less likely to address assumptions related to the experience than studies attempting to understand participants' perceptions. Similar to Hallyar, this study sought to give participants an opportunity to express their thoughts and perceptions related to participation, communication, cooperation, and team functioning in a one-day challenge course program. Due to the in-depth qualitative data collection and analysis methods, this study extended previous research by moving from questions of efficacy (e.g., how effective was the program at improving participants' communication and cooperation?) to questions of perception (e.g., what are participants' perception related to this program?) (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000). Allison and Pomeroy suggested this process of understanding participant perceptions is more suitable to the ever-fluctuating reality of experiences encountered on a challenge course. While other types of studies may provide information related to overall effects of an intervention, studies soliciting participants' perceptions allow for individual perceptions related to the overall program to be emphasized and expounded. By soliciting participants' perceptions, assumptions about effects of challenge course programs can be examined.

Typically facilitators of challenge courses are taught that challenge course programs promote communication and cooperation within the context of teams (e.g., Bronson, Gibson, Kishar, & Priest, 1992; Goldenberg, Klenosky, O'Leary, & Templin, 2000; Priest & Lesperance, 1994). Current research related to challenge courses and teambuilding have not attempted to understand the concepts of communication and cooperation from participants' perspective. It has been assumed that communication and cooperation are critical in team functioning and that

participation in challenge course programs results in enhanced communication and cooperation that can be transferred to the workplace. Soliciting participants' opinions via in-depth repeated interviews may provide an understanding of these concepts as participants report their perceptions of the experience.

While Hayllar (2000) sought to understand participants' perceptions related to how they learned during an OMD program, this study extends his research in three ways. First, the current research focused on perceptions related to communication, cooperation, and team functioning during and after the program as opposed to how participants learned or the essence of their learning experience. This distinction allowed for comparisons to be made to participants' actions within the work place and offered understanding related to behaviors transferred from the challenge course program to the dental office. Second, the current research was designed to examine a program that specifically provided lessons related to communication, cooperation, and team functioning to members of a pre-existing work group. Participants in Hallyar's study included managers from a variety of organizations, and they were not returning to an environment where skills taught and learned during the program would be practiced with those present during the experience. The current work was designed so members of a pre-existing team could participate in a program designed to teach lessons related to communication, cooperation, and team functioning and have opportunity to practice those lessons in the workplace. A final way in which Hayllar's study was extended related to differences in the programs. Hayllar incorporated a three day program involving initiative activities, low elements, high elements, theory sessions, formal reviews in the evenings, Myers-Briggs indicator, rappelling, and rock climbing. To accommodate the schedule of participants for the current project, a one-day

program including one socializing game, two initiative activities, two low elements, and three high elements was developed.

While different challenge course programs may comprise different combinations of elements, literature related to this topic has identified *challenge courses* as interventions typically designed to increase participants' cooperation (Meyer, 2000) and communication (Goldenberg, et al., 2000). This study added to the current literature on challenge courses by presenting a concrete, replicable challenge course program. While the reviewed studies indicated that participants engaged in initiative activities, low elements, or high elements during challenge course programs, details related to the specific elements which comprised the challenge course program were not provided. In addition to the unique qualitative methods that were used in this study, a detailed description of the program has been developed. If other researchers seek to replicate or evaluate this work, their efforts may be aided by the explanation of the specific elements participants used as well as specific debriefing questions asked by facilitators. Similarly, details of the training offered to facilitators are discussed and presented within this work. Soliciting participants' perceptions related to their experience during a challenge course program and specifically attempting to understand issues related to communication and cooperation, may offer future researchers and practitioners suggestions for research and program design.

Research Purpose and Questions

Research Purpose: Gain an understanding of participants' perceptions of their experiences in a one-day challenge course program.

Research Question #1: What are participants' perceptions related to a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #2: What are participants' perceptions related to communication during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #3: What are participants' perceptions related to cooperation during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #4: What are participants' perceptions related to team functioning during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of the literature provided a foundation that served to ground the intended research. This chapter includes three general literature categories: organizational teams, challenge courses, and theories related to leisure. The first section of this review addresses studies which have examined the use of teams within organizational literature. The second section, related to challenge courses, provides information on the historical development of such courses and examines effects of challenge courses on self-concept, trust, risk taking behaviors, group cohesion, and teamwork. The final section of this review examines the relationship between challenge courses and theories associated with leisure. By examining literature related to leisure-related concepts such as perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and flow, the relationship between challenge courses and leisure may be better understood.

Collection of the Literature

To conduct this literature review, both electronic and hand searches were completed. Key words including: ropes courses, challenge courses, challenge activities, adventure education, experiential education, outdoor education, team, teambuilding, teamwork, and corporate teambuilding were entered into the following electronic databases: PsychINFO, Web of Science, Ebscohost, ProQuest, SPORT Discus, ERIC, ABI Inform Complete, and Business Source Premier. These databases were searched for information dating back to 1995; however, as directed by the literature, articles prior to 1995 were selected for review. Requests for

information regarding challenge courses and teams were also placed on two electronic listservs: ropes-lserv@ropesonline.org and SPREnet.

Hand searches were conducted on the following journals: Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, American Journal of Management Development, Human Relations, Journal of Experiential Education, Journal of Leisure Research, Journal of Management Education, Journal of Management Studies, Journal of Quality Management, Management Communication Quarterly, Organization Studies, Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Organizational Dynamics, Organizational Research Methods, Performance Improvement Quarterly, Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, Review of Educational Research, and Small Group Research. Similarly to the electronic searches, these journals were searched back to 1995 unless otherwise warranted.

Literature on Organizations' Use of Teams

Benefits from the Use of Teams

There is support for the conclusion that both quality and quantity of labor improve in the presence of teams. For example, Banker and Field (1996) used a longitudinal design to examine impacts of newly created teams within an electromechanical assembly plant. Quality and productivity were measured by collecting data from the plant's records over a period of 19 months and results demonstrated introduction of the team system improved production levels and quality of work when compared to pre-team levels. Conducting follow-up meetings a year and a half after data collection, authors were informed that teams at the site were still functioning effectively. Plant managers suggested that one reason for the continued success of teams within their plant was the focus on, and continuation of team meetings. It should be noted that while empirical measures supported the authors' claims that quality and quantity improved as a result

of teams, follow-up meetings lacked methodological rigor that could lend credence to claims regarding long term effects of teams within this electromechanical assembly plant.

Similarly, when conducting a longitudinal field study with 71 teams (mean size=7.2; males=97.5%; mean age=49.6) in the automotive industry, Pearce, Gallagher, and Ensley (2002) found benefits of teams including greater employee production. Pearce et al. (2002) examined the connection between team potency defined as, “collective belief within a group that it can be effective” (p.115) and actual team effectiveness by collecting questionnaire data from team members, team leaders, and external raters. Results demonstrated that a positive correlation existed between team potency and team effectiveness ($r=.46$, $p<.01$) leading authors to suggest that effectiveness improved as belief that the group could be effective improved (potency). Unfortunately, details regarding team training and formation were not provided within this work, limiting its practical applications to organizations wishing to develop teams to increase productivity.

Moses and Stahelski (1999) used a reversal design to examine effects of productivity within problem solving teams (teams with a medium degree of autonomy focused on solving work place problems and improving work procedures) in an aluminum manufacturing plant. Data were collected across four conditions (no teams, teams, no teams, teams) lasting for 15 years, and productivity was measured by cell life, current efficiency, carbon factor, DC kilowatt hours, and people production. During two separate team phases (4.5 and 3 years respectively) the team intervention was systematically employed. All four measures increased with the introduction of the first teams period; however, when the team condition was removed in phase three, decreases in production were not seen. With the reintroduction of teams in the final phase, improvements were visible when compared to baseline, but no improvements were seen when

compared to the most recent “no teams” condition. Throughout their results and discussion, authors continued to compare from time 1 (no teams) to time 4 (second condition involving teams); however, the lack of data reversal across conditions was ignored. As a result, trends in production did not follow the implementation and removal of the team condition.

Using a 2x2 factorial design, Buller and Bell (1986) assigned 36 miners to a team building condition where half of the miners participated in goal setting exercises. Authors assigned 17 miners to a no-team building condition where eight participated in goal setting. The team building intervention consisted of six 45-minute meetings over the course of ten weeks where outside consultants worked with miners to develop specific problem solving techniques for issues faced by team members. Miners assigned to the goal setting condition participated in two separate one-hour training sessions where the first author provided information related to goal setting and helped participants to set goals based on past performance. Three specific dependent variables related to productivity were measured: (a) tons per manshift, (b) grade of ore, and (c) strategy development. Results demonstrated no significant differences among any of the four conditions; however, there were slight increases on the strategy development variable. Authors suggest two primary causes for the lack of significant results. First, individuals within all four conditions were not randomly assigned and authors were unable to determine if groups were equivalent. Second, rock conditions for the different groups were not the same, and as a result, conditions were not the same among groups. While there was some improvement on teams’ abilities to develop strategies for work related problems, different participants operating in different conditions limit the effectiveness of this work.

Grutter, Field, and Faull (2002) examined three case studies involving implementation and use of teams within a drink company, an automotive plant, and an arms manufacturing

company in South Africa. In the soft drink organization, teams received full support of management via time and money. Consultants provided training to all employees and identified specific individuals for additional training to become team leaders. Team members worked together to identify areas for improvement within their realm of responsibility, and as a result, one year after implementation of teams, efficiency had improved and waste had decreased (specific measures were not provided by the authors). In the automotive plant, the decision to use teams was developed in the organization's overseas office. Facilitators received training to facilitate team meetings and direct problem solving around specific organizational issues. While authors reported that as a result of team meetings (called workshops), quality and productivity were increased, no specific measures were reported. In the arms manufacturing company, all employees received teamwork training and were divided into teams according to specific job requirements. Results demonstrated that output increased by three-fold and components not to specification decreased from 40 out of every 10,000 to three out of every 10,000. While the results from these three case studies may be encouraging when considering teams' effectiveness on labor enhancement, their generalizability is limited due to the case study method. Similarly, caution is also advised when considering these results due to the lack of measures and data reported.

While studies have generally reported positive results when considering teams' effectiveness at improving labor enhancement, results have not been consistently positive (e.g., Buller & Bell, 1986). However, when examined collectively, researchers (Banker & Field, 1996; Pearce et al., 2002; Moses & Stahelski, 1999; Maier & Thurber, 1969; Grutter, et al., 2002) have presented several conditions where teams have increased both the quality and quantity of a product produced by an organization.

Another benefit provided to employers when teams are used is increased employer control. For example, Barker (1993) conducted an ethnographic study (275 total hours of observation) with 150 employees in a manufacturing company. To revitalize the company, the vice president determined that self-managing teams should be created. One year prior to the team intervention, planning and training sessions were conducted with one group of employees while remaining employees formed teams over the course of the following year. As a result of these self-managing teams, teams communicated directly with the vice president, organized the plant, managed personnel issues within their team, were responsible for production, disciplined themselves, and hired and fired team members. According to Barker (1993), the team strategy provided employers with a greater sense of control over their employees and allowed employers to exert coercive control without being physically present. According to one of his participants, “Now the whole team is around me and the whole team is observing what I am doing” (p. 408). This employee “felt more closely watched now” (p. 408) and felt that his team was intolerant on the issue of tardiness (in direct contrast to previous supervisors’ flexible attitudes on the issue). Similarly, other participants discussed their feelings of frustration when staying late to complete work because of pressure exerted by other team members. According to Barker, without being present, management had achieved their goal of having employees work harder and more effectively through implementation of the team system.

Conducting interviews in a clothing manufacturing plant, Ezzamel and Willmott (1998) collected data from 33 employees in different positions within the organizational hierarchy. Interviews addressed issues related to the recent team conversion within the workplace and were transcribed and thematically analyzed. Management’s intent for the use of teams was to reduce supervisory roles by creating teams that were self-managing; however, authors reported that this

ideal was not recognized. According to the authors, lack of team members' commitment, unwillingness to accept responsibility for others on the team, and frustration with the creation of teams led to failure of self-managing teams within this organization. Rather than eliminate the traditional hierarchical form of management, the creation of self-managing teams was seen by employees as adding another level to the hierarchy and an attempt to control them. Within this setting, the introduction of self-managing teams created hostility between employees and management. As has been previously discussed, the creation of teams can increase productivity within an organization, but the creation of teams can also provide employers with a greater ability to control their employees (Murakami, 1995; Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998). This increased control can lead to hostility between employees and upper levels of management thus encouraging cautious acceptance of the team concept.

Although some employers use teams within the workplace to reduce levels of bureaucracy through a "hands-off" management approach and promote employee autonomy (Barker, 1993), the level of autonomy within teams depends on the purpose and type of team that exists. Banker and Field (1996) presented four different types of teams ranging from low to high autonomy: (a) quality circles (e.g., voluntary membership, no authority to make decisions, regular meetings, created by upper management), (b) semi-autonomous work groups (e.g., manage and enact major production activities, external groups perform quality control, narrow scope of tasks), (c) self-managing teams (e.g., control over management and performance of tasks, oversee entire process, responsible for final product), and (d) self-designing teams (e.g., similar to self-managing teams, determine issues of team membership). Members of self-managing and self-designing teams control and manage entire projects and therefore experience more autonomy than individuals who belong to quality circles or semi-autonomous work groups

(Moses & Stahelski, 1999). According to these different types of teams, individuals may have differing levels of autonomy based on management's conception of the team and specific tasks the team is assigned.

Compared to a Tayloristic form of management where routinization is the norm, teams may provide employees opportunities for autonomy, communication with other levels within the organization, and self-directed participation (Appelbaum, 2000). For instance, Ammeter and Dukerich (2002) interviewed 51 individuals (30-120 minutes) from eight different teams working with construction and manufacturing of military service industries (e.g., constructing chemical facilities, designing jets). Nine different themes were gleaned from the interviews: (a) sense of belonging to a team, (b) leader behaviors, (c) communication/frequent team meetings, (d) ownership, (e) location of team, (f) team building, (g) competition, (h) rewards, and (i) high level of support. Within the themes of belonging and ownership, instances of autonomy were observed. Team members felt satisfaction with being connected to the project from beginning to end and that satisfaction allowed them to feel they had control over establishing project goals. Similarly, according to Ammeter and Dukerich, functioning as a part of a team allowed individuals the opportunity to experience feelings of prestige and synergy.

While the above benefits (e.g., labor enhancement, employer control, and employee autonomy) have been reported in the literature (e.g., Ammeter & Dukerich, 2002; Appelbaum, 2000; Banker & Field, 1996; Barker, 1993; Buller & Bell, 1986; Ezzamel & Willmott, 1998; Grutter et al., 2002; Moses & Stahelski, 1999; Pearce et al., 2002), additional factors may dictate the success or failure of teams within an organization. As presented previously, introduction of teams has not always led to success. For example, in results reported by Buller and Bell (1986) introduction of teams did not increase productivity of hard-rock miners. Similarly, in Barker's

(1993) ethnography and through Ezzamel and Willmott's (1998) interviews, it was apparent that the introduction of teams led to a distrust of management and feelings of hostility. From this review of the literature, it appears that there are two factors crucial to the successful and effective implementation of teams within organizations: (a) *opportunities for positive interaction* among team members (e.g., communication, cooperation, and commitment) and (b) *opportunities for education* of team members (e.g., training and meetings).

Characteristics of Successful Teams

Opportunities for positive interaction. Badow (2001) suggested that communication contributes to the success of a team, and in the absence of communication, a team may have difficulty performing its assigned tasks. Using interviews and research action meetings (e.g., opportunities for participants to plan problem solving techniques and for researchers to observe participants' interactions), Ingram and Desombre (1999) attempted to understand perceptions of teams within a multi-unit hospitality organization. Teams were comprised of employees from different levels of the organizational hierarchy and were designed to problem solve every-day situations encountered in the hotel. Researchers specifically explored the importance of teamwork, the nature of teamwork, problems encountered, and solutions developed. Results demonstrated that most all team members recognized the importance of teamwork within their environment and communication was identified as a constant theme. Ingram and Desombre reported that "a lack of communication caused frustration when important information was not known, and this could adversely affect the guest experience" (p. 21). Participants recognized that difficulties in communication not only lead to a decrease in their ability to work as a team, but also to a diminished experience for hotel guests.

In an attempt to further understand inter-team communications, Griffiths (1997) transcribed team meetings and individual interviews from two community mental health teams. Teams were comprised of several different mental health professionals including psychiatrists, nurses, and social workers and were responsible for determining admittance into mental health programs. In both teams, psychiatrists functioned as team leaders; however, in team A the psychiatrist did not regularly attend meetings, allowing members of his team to make decisions and function autonomously. Occasionally disputes arose and it was left to team members to interpret meanings due to the psychiatrist's absence. In team B, the psychiatrist was present at all meetings and discrepancies were dealt with face to face rather than communicated via phone and other team members. While the psychiatrist for team A relied on his team to function without him, "communication with the team was limited, and referrals were often blocked or delayed by team members" (Griffiths, 1997, p. 75). A lack of the psychiatrist's presence in the group led to difficulties communicating with other members of team A; however, the presence of the psychiatrist within team B encouraged communication among members and led to more effective handling of assigned tasks. In providing an opportunity for communication, the psychiatrist with team B reinforced the importance of communication within successful teams.

In an effort to understand positive characteristics of teams, Molyneux (2001) conducted semi-structured interviews (45-60 min) with six members of a team created to examine stroke patients' discharge from hospitals. Team members included occupational therapists, physiotherapists, a speech and language therapist, and a social worker who had had no opportunities for team building prior to their team experience. Interviews were analyzed thematically and findings were presented to group members as a form of member checking. According to Molyneux, three themes appeared to indicate positive team interactions: (a)

personal qualities and commitment of staff (e.g., equal status of team members, choice to join the team, lack of a dominating personality), (b) communication within the team (e.g., encouraged by the small number of team members and physical proximity to one another), and (c) opportunities for creativity (lack of established guidelines and criteria allowed team to develop new solutions). While Molyneux presented three factors which led to a successful team environment, caution is advised when interpreting these results. For instance, the personal qualities which worked smoothly within the group studied may not be found in other groups. These factors led to the success of this particular team, but the research methods did not lend themselves to generalizing these findings to other teams. Molyneux's findings also provide support for the value of a group's perceived cooperation in the functioning of a team. In discussing perceived cooperation within their team (as compared to other groups in the hospital), one participant stated, "I think that we don't feel threatened by other people helping, or taking certain parts of our roles, where I feel others in the hospital feel threatened if people want to take on part of their role" (30-31). These opportunities for cooperation and creativity led to an environment conducive for the existence of teams.

Continuing to examine issues related to opportunities for team interactions, Henry (2000) examined perceptions of cooperation of 119 undergraduate students as they worked in teams to solve social dilemmas. Using a 2x2 factorial design (face to face versus computer mediated communication x early versus late) Henry asked participants to work as a team (3-4 people, 1hr/wk, 7wks) to solve organizational psychology dilemmas and write an essay based on solutions presented. Participants rated perceptions of participation level on a scale of 1-7 across four measures: (a) amount of contribution, (b) value of contributions, (c) effort, and (d) number of ideas. Results indicated that perceived cooperation increased as the study progressed (from

early to late) ($F=5.73$, $p<.05$) and did not significantly change based on method of communication. According to these results, computer mediated and face-to-face communications were equally effective in increasing perceived cooperation within student teams. Organizations wishing to successfully implement teams may benefit by fostering a sense of cooperation among team members.

According to research presented, one factor which leads to team success is positive interactions among team members (e.g., communication, cooperation, and commitment). Research supports the conclusion that these specific factors provide organizations with an environment for successful and effective teams; however, providing *opportunities for education* will also increase the likelihood of teams functioning successfully within an organization.

Opportunities for education. When surveying faculty within his business college, Bolton (1999) learned that while 72% of instructors assigned teamwork to their students, 81% of those faculty provided modest, limited, or no support in how to function as a team. In response to these findings, Bolton suggested three strategies to encourage successful functioning of teams: (a) getting teams “started on the right foot” (e.g., encouraging teams to develop a strategy), (b) managing diversity and conflict, and (c) learning from the experience. Bolton suggested that allowing teams to exist without training or preparation “takes the positives of experiential learning to absurd extremes” (p. 246). While experiential learning is designed for participants to “learn through experience,” this does not mean that teachers or trainers are absolved of responsibility. One method that may increase the potential for success of a team involves teaching individuals *how* to interact together and work as a team.

Using a quasi-experimental design, Gibson (2001) examined effects of training (e.g., goal setting, determining obstacles to achieving their goals, and assessing group efficacy) on team

effectiveness, individual effectiveness, self-efficacy, and group efficacy of teams of nurses (71 teams, 187 nurses). Teams in the training condition (51 teams, 120 nurses) engaged in a one-day training session focused on goal setting and brainstorming solutions for commonly faced problems within the hospital. Pre-tests on self and group-efficacy were provided to nurses in both conditions and post-tests were provided to nurses in the experimental condition 2 weeks following their training. Meanwhile post-tests were provided to nurses in the control condition shortly following their pre-tests. Results demonstrated that participation in the training was associated with statistically significant increases in *individual* effectiveness ($r=0.41$, $p<0.001$) (as measured by patient surveys), but training was not shown to have a statistically significant association with *team* effectiveness. Caution is advised when considering these results due to potential contamination effects between nurses in the training and no-training conditions; however, results do suggest that training teams can make individuals within teams more effective.

As suggested by Gibson (2001) and Bolton (1999) training members within a team is necessary if the team is to function effectively. To help a team achieve success, managers can educate team members on setting team goals, recognizing barriers to team goals, and evaluating team progress. More generally, opportunities for interaction and education can lay a solid foundation for creation of effective teams within organizations.

Characteristics of Unsuccessful Teams

While factors that appear to result in the successful implementation of a team strategy are present in the literature, several factors related to conflict and team failure are also present. According to Rainey (1997), “Excessive conflict can induce stress, frustration, dissatisfaction, high turnover, absenteeism, and poor performance among employees. When poorly managed, it

can damage organizations” (p. 307). Two factors that have been associated with unsuccessful teamwork attempts within organizations include: (a) *internal conflicts* (e.g., avoidance and lack of purpose) and (b) *external conflicts* (e.g., employer created teams and unions).

Internal conflict. In a study directly related to understanding internal team conflicts, Victor, Boynton, and Stephens-Jang (2000) conducted 55 qualitative interviews, observed participants in paper and plastic manufacturing plants, and conducted a survey measuring type of work, behaviors, and outcomes. One theme consistently raised throughout the interviews related to avoidance of tasks. According to the authors, total quality management teams within the plants were not as successful as was hoped due to employees feeling overloaded and avoiding work demands expected of them. Quantitative results appeared to bolster qualitative findings due to study-specific surveys whose results suggested that 30% of all line-employees engaged in avoidance. Authors suggested this feeling of being overloaded was due to competing demands (e.g., creating solutions *and* solving problems as opposed to pre-team conditions where employees were just asked to implement others’ solutions) that can be found in a team setting. While not all team settings place competing demands on employees, avoiding job tasks can lead to the failure of a team within an organization.

In his presentation of a case study involving a General Motors plant in Germany, Murakami (1995) examined the introduction of teams and the challenges faced within this particular organization. Management in the automotive plant desired to increase flexibility and motivation within the workplace and decided that the team concept was the most effective method for achieving these goals. Management informed employees that teams possessed the ability to distribute work, create work schedules, improve production, meet quality expectations, and communicate with members of the team and the supervisor. Team speakers (leaders) were

elected by members and were expected to act in the best interest of the team. Teams ranged in size from eight to 15, and team meetings occurred typically less than once a month. A questionnaire was distributed to 51 teams to determine members' attitudes toward the existence of the teams. While only 28.6% felt teams were a waste of time, a majority of team members (94%) agreed that the main benefit of teams was that it allowed team members to work together to voice complaints. As expected by the author, a "harmonious working relationship" did not develop, but rather an additional layer of the organizational hierarchy was created (p. 301). Viewing this case study, one can see two problems preventing the successful implementation of teams. First, employees viewed the creation of teams as a management tool and rather than eliminate levels of the organizational hierarchy, additional levels were created. Second, in this plant, implementation of teams was created and encouraged by management, and this management driven focus may have lead to difficulties in the implementation process. When teams create additional levels of the hierarchy and management drives their implementation, difficulties may exist when trying to utilize teams within this setting.

External conflict. Moving from internal group conflicts to conflicts arising from external sources, unions pose a unique set of challenges to the implementation of teams. Carr (1994) presented a case study examining interactions between management and unions related to the implementation of teams within an automotive plant in the United Kingdom. Within the plant, management wanted to create teams of less than 15 members to "take responsibility for quality, output, inspection, repair, cleanliness, and some maintenance..." (p. 203); however, unions within the plant were skeptical for two reasons. First, unions were concerned that peer pressure would increase among team members and that the presence of semi-autonomous teams could lead to differing work conditions. Second, unions were fearful for the status of "shop stewards"

within the new team system. In an effort to prevent their implementation, unions were first openly hostile to the concept of teams within the plant and exerted pressure on managers to avoid implementation of teams. As unions discovered that management was intent on the team concept, they attempted to modify the concept to fit their desires by participating in the team design (e.g., making sure their power was not limited by the new management tool). Finally, with the introduction of the team concept, unions attempted to adapt to the new reality and weave themselves into the new framework by ensuring that they would maintain certain responsibilities and positions within the organization. Within this automotive plant, unions presented a difficult barrier to embracing the team concept. While no data related to effectiveness were presented, teams were initiated within this plant even over the complaints of the union. The presence of a union has the potential to lead to team failure.

Literature on Challenge Courses

Since the 1940's when Kurt Hahn first introduced the use of the outdoors as a learning experience for naval sailors (McKenzie, 2003), benefits of programs involving risk and the outdoors have been reported. The intent of challenge courses has been to provide an intervention capable of enhancing "both personal and professional growth" (Attarian, 2001, p. 145). Research related to challenge courses can be divided into two general categories: research on adolescents focusing on social and personal development and research on adults focusing on their personal development as it benefits a larger organization. Researchers studying adolescents have examined outcomes of challenge courses including self-efficacy (Constantine, 1993), self-concept (Finkenberg, Shows, & DiNucci, 1994), values (Goldenberg, Klenosky, O'Leary, & Templin, 2000), and resiliency (Green, Kleiber, & Tarrant, 2000). Outcomes of challenge courses have been examined across adolescents with varied characteristics including adolescents

with cerebral palsy (Carlson & Evans, 2001), high school students (Constantine, 1993), and low-income minority youth (Green, et al., 2000). Researchers studying adults have examined participants' risk taking behavior (Goldman & Priest, 1990), development of organizational trust (Priest, 1996a), and the potential to create teamwork within an organization (Priest & Lesperance, 1994). Since their beginnings as naval training programs, challenge courses have been used across various groups.

Research has examined effects of participation in a challenge course program on changes within individuals. Whether they are used for corporate executives or adolescents who are at-risk, the intent is to improve participants' behaviors (e.g., encourage group members to learn to take socially accepted risks). When using challenge course programs to change behaviors of organizational employees, the intent is to improve participants' behaviors within the work environment. Several examples of traditional challenge course research have been selected for review.

In general, much research on challenge courses has employed methods that include pre- and post-test measurement of dependent variables. In some instances researchers collected data via a questionnaire administered immediately prior to participation in the challenge course program and then at the completion of the program (within one week) (cf. Constantine, 1993; Finkenberg, et al., 1994; Green, et al., 2000). Another data collection method has included administration of a questionnaire immediately prior to participation in the challenge course program, immediately following the program, and then again within six months following the intervention (cf. Bronson, et al., 1992; Goldman & Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997; Priest & Lesperance, 1994). Researchers have also used a hybrid of the previous data collection methods mentioned including collecting data prior to the intervention, at specific points during the

intervention, and specific points after completion of the challenge course (cf. Priest, 1995; Priest, 1996a; Priest, 1998a).

Many instruments used for research examining organizations were developed for specific studies or developed by an expert panel convened at the 1992 Association for Experiential Education Training and Development Research Conference including (a) Team Development Inventory—TDI (Priest & Gass, 1997), (b) Priest Attarian Risk Taking Inventory—PARTI (Goldman & Priest, 1990), and (c) Interpersonal Trust Inventory—ITI- including the partnership, organizational, self, and group versions (Priest, 1995; Priest, 1996b; Priest, 1998a; Priest & Lesperance, 1994). These questionnaires typically ask participants to assess their agreement with a particular dependent variable (e.g., trust, team development) in a series of sub-scales based on a five-point likert-type scale. For example, the TDI asks participants to rate comments such as “team members understand group goals and are committed to them” and “team members look to each other for consultation on resolving challenges (Bronson, et al., 1992, p. 51), while the ITI asks participants to score their agreement on five sub-scales including acceptance, believability, confidentiality, dependability, and encouragement (Priest, 1996b, p. 37). These instruments have modified semantic differentials where participants were asked to determine which of two adjectives better represented their organization (Priest, 1996a). Only a few studies examining organizations have used methods other than (or in addition to) pre- and post-test instruments (e.g., interviews and open-ended questionnaires) (Bramwell, et al, 1997; Hayllar, 2000; Priest, Gass, & Fitzpatrick, 1999).

The literature offers little detail about the nature of the actual challenge course elements used during the experiences. Some studies used only low elements or initiative activities (cf. Priest, 1998a; Priest & Gass, 1997; Priest, et al., 1999), while others employed initiative

activities, low elements, and high elements (cf. Constantine, 1993; Finkenberg, et al., 1994; Goldenberg, et al., 2000; Robitschek, 1996). For all studies, activities occurred over variable periods of time from five hours (Constantine, 1993) to weekly meetings over the course of a semester (Finkenberg, et al., 1994) and specific times spent on elements were not mentioned. No study reviewed contained specific information relating to facilitator training and experience nor sufficient detail of the program for replication of the procedures.

Although participation in challenge course programs has been associated with positive changes in self-esteem, trust between participants, teamwork, risk-taking behaviors, and hope, pre- to post-test differences, though statistically significant at the completion of the intervention, were not typically maintained over time. Researchers who have collected data at least six months post intervention have indicated diminishing effects over time. The following paragraphs serve as a more in-depth review of specific studies related to challenge courses.

Introductory Literature

Using means-end theory, Goldenberg, et al. (2000) attempted to gain a better understanding of benefits participants achieved as result of their participation in a challenge course. “Means-end theory seeks to understand the important meanings that individuals associate with the products and services they purchase, consume, and experience” (p. 208). The authors distributed questionnaires with open ended questions to 142 adults asking them to identify benefits they achieved as a result of participation in a challenge course. (Participants engaged in one of two experiences. The first group participated in initiative activities and low elements for 3-4 hours while the second group participated in initiative activities, low elements, and high elements for 8 hours.) For each benefit listed by participants, researchers asked them to list why that benefit was important. This process (the continued focusing of responses by asking why a

response was important to the participant) known as “laddering” (Reynolds & Gutman, 1982), continued until participants could not provide a meaningful answer. Data were analyzed by two independent coders (intercoder agreement = 97.5%) and collapsed into thematic categories. Findings highlighted benefits including fun and enjoyment, self-fulfillment, and accomplishment and suggested that outcomes of these benefits (why they were important) included, teamwork, communication, trust, and understanding others. Because participants did not engage in similar types of activities for similar lengths of time, caution is advised when interpreting these results. Similarly, since questions asked were all related to “benefits” of participation, participants’ responses may have been skewed to address only positive aspects of participation without addressing negative aspects of participation. Therefore, rather than assessing overall effects of the intervention, only a subset of effects, benefits, was addressed.

To determine benefits associated with short term programs (one day or less) Bramwell, et al. (1997) surveyed 72 employees within a Canadian retail company known for its extensive use of adventure training programs. Attitudes and perceptions prior to experiences with adventure training programs and impacts of the program were assessed via open-ended questionnaires. Authors intentionally selected 24 (15 males, 9 females; age=39.6) of the 72 participants for follow-up interviews based on the presence of robust positive or negative responses related to past experiences with adventure training in the workplace. Thematic, question-by-question analyses of interviews and open-ended questions revealed that participants typically did not know what to expect prior to an adventure training program, but upon completion of the program felt it had been beneficial (e.g., interesting, successful, exciting, valuable, safe, pleasurable, and worthwhile, p. 16); however, several months (specific number not specified by the authors) after the program ended, benefits were no longer reported. These findings demonstrated that while

adventure training can produce perceived positive results within an organization, these results may be temporary. Future research examining the use of follow-up procedures on long-term effects is warranted. Caution is advised when attempting to generalize these results to other settings due to the qualitative methodology that provides thick description of a particular sample.

In his unpublished dissertation, Hayllar (2000) expanded on the qualitative methods used by others (e.g., Bramwell, et al., 1997) as he sought to understand the essence of participants' learning experiences in an Outdoor Management Development (OMD) program. Employing a phenomenological theoretical framework designed to explore essences of an experience, Hayllar used participant observation, interviews, and focus groups to try to understand how participants learned during an OMD program. Working with three groups of graduate students (N=25) enrolled in different OMD courses (courses were offered different semesters), Hayllar identified eight themes: (a) internal learning environment (e.g., receiving feedback from individuals, novelty, playfulness), (b) external learning environment (e.g., outdoor environment, activities comprising the program), (c) personal learning (e.g., reflection and testing of ideas, future plan development), (d) emotion (e.g., experiencing or feeling that allows for learning), (e) immersion (e.g., movement from one environment to another, a sense of place), (f) relationship building (e.g., trust, physical contact, group spirit), (g) affective perceptions (e.g., freedom, challenge, enjoyment, fun, play), and (h) learning outcomes (e.g., self-awareness, management skills, awareness of others). Ultimately, Hayllar suggested the essence of these participants' experience was the ludic nature (playful) and formal learning experiences of high risk activities. In addition, processing that occurred during the OMD was identified as being integral to the experience. Similarly, he found self-awareness, management skills, and awareness of others to be key learning outcomes of the experience.

Effects of Challenge Courses on Participants' Teamwork

A common rationale for participation in challenge course programs is to improve teamwork among participants. Authors have studied effects of challenge course programs on participants' ability to learn teamwork skills while participating on a challenge course and subsequently demonstrating those skills in the workplace.

To compare effects on teamwork between two groups of managers from intact work units, Bronson, et al., (1992) used a traditional experimental versus control group design. Participants from intact work units (not randomly assigned) were separated into a control group (n=11) and an experimental group (n=17) and completed the Team Development Inventory (TDI) (face validity =.95) (Bronson, 1990). The TDI measured items such as commitment to goals, decision making, standards for team performance, and recognition and reward of team efforts. The experimental group participated in a three-day residential corporate adventure training program consisting of low and high elements. All participants completed the inventory at least one month before the program began and at least two months after completion. Through analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistically significant differences were found between the two groups on eight of the ten indicators of the TDI (F values ranged from 3.35-4.00, $p < .05$). Comments from interviews conducted following the adventure experience supported statistical findings. (Calling into question the value of these data in supporting the researchers' findings, authors did not discuss specific analysis procedures used with the qualitative data.) Results from Bronson et al. (1992) imply that corporate executives attending a three-day challenge course adventure may improve their sense of teamwork as a result of their experience. A concern of the study is that participants were only from one organization, therefore, generalizability of effects is

limited. As no follow-up data were collected, caution is advised when considering the long-term impact on the group's sense of team.

Smith and Priest (in press) randomly selected 60 participants from a Canadian corporation to participate in a one-day corporate adventure training program consisting of initiative activities. Participants were divided into five groups of 12 to examine effects of the program on team building and determine barriers to transference. The Team Development Inventory was administered before the activities began, during lunch, and after the activities were completed. One month following the intervention, the authors interviewed (open-ended, 30 min sessions) participants to discover program highlights, learning applications, barriers to transfer, and strategies for overcoming the barriers. As measured by the TDI (100 pt scale), participants improved their teamwork between 22 and 41%. As observed through content analysis, results from interviews reinforced the positive gains in teamwork, but also suggested that barriers to transference occurred for two reasons: (a) lack of complete employee participation in the program and (b) lack of time to practice new techniques learned during the program. Participants were not from intact work groups and upon return to their individual office environments, gains in teamwork created by the adventure intervention were lost. The authors suggested that for effects of the intervention to permeate the workplace, participants should be members of intact work groups.

Using participant observation and individual interviews, Klint and Priest (in press) examined the experience of a challenge course program (1 day) with initiative activities on 11 male employees from an intact Canadian manufacturing team. Participant observations were conducted during the adventure experience and participants were interviewed immediately after the experience, four days, and then four months following the experience. In an effort to improve

their ability to assess reliability, Klint and Priest used triangulation (questioning different members of the group about similar topics) and member checks (providing participants opportunities to verify transcripts). Data were analyzed by time period (e.g., immediately after the experience, four days, and then four months after the experience) and then categorized thematically. Across all three time periods, participant comments remained positive and demonstrated characteristics associated with improved teamwork (e.g., trust, relationships, problem solving, reciprocity). The authors noted that as initially observed in the activities, the group engaged in dysfunctional behaviors and had difficulties accomplishing simple tasks on the challenge course. Four months after the intervention, participants recognized their earlier dysfunction and reported that they functioned more efficiently as a result of their experience. Upon completion of the intervention and four months following, participants who initially exhibited dysfunctional group behaviors recognized and practiced trust and effective communication techniques. Due to the small sample size ($n = 11$, however there was only one group for comparison purposes effectively making $n = 1$), and the inclusion of only males, caution is advised when interpreting these results.

Meyer (2000) used a pre-post test experimental design to observe effects of a challenge course intervention (1 day) on cohesion and sport motivation of 35 members of a girl's high school tennis team (ages, 14-18). The experimental group (members of the varsity team, $n = 16$) participated in a challenge course adventure involving initiative activities, low elements, and high elements. At the completion of the intervention, facilitators processed issues encountered during the activities and encouraged transference from the challenge course setting to the tennis courts. Four days prior to the intervention and two days following the intervention both groups completed the Group Environment Questionnaire (measuring group cohesiveness and unity)

(reliability of internal scales ranges from .64-.76) (Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1985) and the Sport Orientation Questionnaire (measuring desire to win and achieve personal goals in sport) (reliability of internal scales ranges from .73-.94) (Gill & Deeter, 1988). According to scores on the Group Environment Questionnaire, the control group experienced a significant ($t = 2.45$, $p < .03$) decrease in cohesion, while a significant ($t = 2.08$, $p < .05$) difference existed between group's post-test; however, no statistically significant results were found related to motivation in sports. When interpreting these results it is important to consider that between group differences (younger students on the junior varsity team) may have influenced findings. Due to the lack of statistically significant differences on the Sport Orientation Questionnaire, caution is advised if attempting to use challenge courses to increase competitive desires. Similarly, due to the non-random assignment of participants (younger participants were in the control group), results related to group cohesion and motivation may be due to age rather than the challenge course program.

Effect of Challenge Courses on Participants' Sense of Self

While challenge courses are traditionally used to improve group behaviors, (e.g., teamwork, communication, trust between members) researchers have examined individual benefits as well. When investigating effects of challenge courses, researchers have examined effects on participants' sense of self. Studies have supported the conclusion that participation in challenge course activities can improve self-concept and self-efficacy of those who participate.

Using a pre-post test experimental design, Finkenberger et al. (1994) compared a sample of 18 college students (8 women; age=19-25) enrolled in an adventure education class to 32 college students (17 women; age=19-30) enrolled in a general health class using the Tennessee Self-concept Scale (Roid & Fitts, 1989). The experimental group participated in initiative activities,

low elements, and high elements among other classroom experiences (2 x wk, 16 wks, 75 min session) while the control group participated in the traditional classroom activities for the semester. For male participants, significant differences were seen on the physical self scale ($F=6.31, p<.05$), social self scale ($F=4.72, p<.05$), behavior scale ($F=6.91, p<.05$), and total self-concept scale ($F=7.38, p<.05$) while female participants demonstrated significant differences on the physical self scale ($F=4.39, p<.05$), the personal self scale ($F=5.19, p<.05$), and total self-concept scale ($F=5.49, p<.05$). Through participation in a challenge course (along with other experiences), participants learned more about themselves and others in the class with them in comparison to those students in the control group. Therefore, the implementation of a challenge course program, in conjunction with classroom activities, had a positive effect on the total self-concept of both male and female college students. Due to the lack of follow-up involved in the work, maintenance of effects is not known. Since participants experienced multiple interventions (e.g., initiative activities and other classroom experiences) the specific cause of the results cannot be determined.

Constantine (1993) used a pre-post test experimental design to evaluate effects of a challenge course adventure program (5 hours) on 188 high school students' (juniors and seniors) feelings of self-efficacy. The control group consisted of students enrolled in a weight training class, while members of the experimental group were enrolled in a Project Adventure unit and participated in initiative activities, low elements, and high elements with debriefing and processing of each specific activity. Prior to and immediately following the session, participants completed an investigator-developed scale entitled the Ropes Course Self-Efficacy Scale (an adapted version of the Self-Efficacy Scale) (Sherer, et al., 1985). Analyses conducted on participants' responses prior to and following the experience showed students who participated

in the challenge course adventure improved their scores from pre to post intervention and ranked higher than control group participants. Reliability and validity data for the instrument as well as indicators of statistical significance were not provided; therefore, since the accuracy of the instrument or strength of the results could not be determined, caution is advised when interpreting this study's findings.

Using a modified pre-post technique, Priest (1996b) examined effects of two different forms of debriefing on self-confidence of 72 new employees in a British automobile corporation. Participants were divided into six groups (2 control that completed the program after data collection, 2 general debrief, and 2 specific debrief on self-confidence) and engaged in a 3-day challenge course including initiative activities, low elements, and high elements. Participants completed the Interpersonal Trust Inventory (ITI-s designed specifically to measure self-confidence) immediately prior to and following the intervention and again four months later. Participants' self-concept (as measured by all sub-scales) increased significantly for both experimental groups ($F=13.17$, $p<.05$); however, no significant differences were present between the general debriefing group and the specific debriefing group. Therefore, the specific type of debriefing did not impact participants' self-concept; however, the presence of a debriefing session was associated with statistically significant improvements in participants' self-concept. Due to the combination of interventions (challenge course activities and different debriefing techniques), it is not possible to determine if effects on self-concept were due to the challenge activities or the debriefing techniques.

Effects of Challenge Courses on Participants' Perception of Risk

Inherent in all challenge course activities is the characteristic of risk (Priest, 1992). In some cases these risks are psychological (fear of heights, fear of embarrassment) while in other

instances the risks are physical (personal injury). Several authors have attempted to examine how these risks impact and influence challenge course participants. These studies examine if risk taking behaviors (e.g., participation in high elements) demonstrated on the challenge course can be transferred to different workplace environments.

Goldman and Priest (1990) examined effects of a one-day adventure training program involving rappelling on the at-work risk taking behaviors (e.g., confronting a boss, handling financial emergencies) of 27 managers from a financial corporation. Prior to and following the program, participants completed the business version of the Priest Attarian Risk Taking Inventory (PARTI) that asked participants to choose between two scenarios, provide a short sentence justifying their choice, and place an “X” on a line representing amount of risk involved in the situation. Immediately before and after each rappel (e.g., descending from the top of a cliff or man made structure), participants completed the activity version (questions regarding risk and perception of risk in relation to their current task) of the PARTI. During the day of the training, as participants completed more rappels (three rappels total for each participant), their perception of risk decreased significantly (t values ranged from -2.51 to -11.27, $p < .05$) while their willingness to engage in the risky behavior of rappelling increased significantly (t values ranged from 2.09 to 4.97, $p < .05$) (except in the case of the second rappel $p = .93$ that was not significant). In five of the ten scenarios presented in the business version of the PARTI, participants demonstrated significantly (t values ranged from -2.24 to 1.44, $p < .05$) increased risk taking propensities after completing the program. As a result of participation in a rappelling experience, participants exhibited statistically significant changes in risk taking behavior as measured by the PARTI scale. While these changes may not directly lead to increased risk taking behaviors at work, participation in this adventure experience did lead to changes in behavior. Due the absence

of reliability and validity data for the PARTI instrument, information related to the accuracy and consistency of this measure are not present; therefore, caution is advised when considering the results produced via this measure.

Using a pre-post test experimental design MacRae, Moore, Savage, Soehner, and Priest (1993) examined impacts of a one-day challenge course program on risk taking behaviors of 74 male fire fighters. Participants were divided into three groups: control (n=37), standard experimental (n=20), and isomorphic experimental (n=17). Participants in the standard experimental and the isomorphic experimental group engaged in the same eight high elements, but the isomorphic experimental group's elements were presented with modifications to make them more applicable to everyday situations faced by fire fighters (e.g., to simulate visual challenges caused by smoke, participants were blindfolded). Immediately before and after completing the challenge course program, fire fighters completed the Choice Dilemma Survey (Kogan & Wallach, 1964) which asked participants to rate the odds (from 1-10) that they would engage in a particular scenario involving risk. Although participants significantly (t values ranged from 2.9 to 6.47, $p < .05$) increased their risk taking behaviors when compared to the control group, there was no significant (t values ranged from 2.9 to 5.3, $p > .05$) difference between the two experimental groups. According to this work, a challenge course intervention led to an increase in risk taking behaviors of male firefighters; however, the presence of isomorphs was not associated with increased risk taking behaviors. MacRae et al. (1993) suggested that future research relating to risk taking behaviors not only include those in physically risky professions such as fire fighters and police, but also corporate managers. Since reliability and validity data for the Choice Dilemma Survey were not provided, one cannot know if the instrument measures choice dilemmas or if it measures them consistently. Similarly,

because facilitators were not aware of the risks involved in firefighting, the metaphors constructed may not have been sufficient to encourage firefighters to increase their risk taking behaviors.

Effects of Challenge Courses on Participants' Perception of Trust

Closely related to the notion of risk taking behaviors is the idea of trust. Authors have attempted to determine if level of physicality and type of activity influence are associated with differences of perceptions of trust among participants. Similar to studies examining transference of risk taking behaviors into the workplace, authors studying trust have sought to determine if increases in trust seen in the challenge course environment can be transferred to the workplace.

Using a pre-post test experimental design, Priest (1998a) randomly assigned corporate executives (n=75) to two experimental groups (where one group's initiative activities were more physical—Spider's Web, than the other—Traffic Jam) and one control group that participated in a variety of non-challenge course activities. The two-day adventure training program included initiative activities and debriefings to provide participants with different levels of physicality between the groups. Participants completed the Interpersonal Trust Inventory (ITI) (Priest, 1995) (reliability (.93) and face validity for the ITI were determined by experts at the 1992 Association for Experiential Training and Development Research Conference) one month prior to the intervention, one week before the intervention, at the immediate start and end of the program, and finally two months after the completion of the program. Results demonstrated no significant differences on overall trust; however, significant differences between the experimental groups and the control group were found on three of the five subscales of the ITI (believability, $F=3.40$, $p<.05$; dependability, $F=8.56$, $p<.05$; encouragement, $F=9.31$, $p<.05$). Therefore, the subscales of believability, dependability, and encouragement may offer a more accurate measure of the

concept trust. Since significant differences between the more and less physical groups were not present, it appears that initiative activities requiring greater physical skill may not necessarily increase trust within groups; trust may increase regardless of level of physical challenge. Due to the absence of significant overall increases in trust, caution is advised when considering the use of challenge courses to increase overall trust within a group.

In a similar study, Priest (1996a) used a pre-post test experimental design to compare effects of initiative activities and low elements on organizational trust. Participants (n=156) from a Canadian corporation engaged in an adventure training program (1x wk, 5wks, 8hr sessions) and were divided into three groups (low and high elements, initiative activities, and control). Participants completed the organizational version of the ITI following the same increments as in Priest (1998a). Significant differences were seen between the experimental groups and the control group on overall trust and the five subscales (F values ranged from 3.02 to 6.45, $p < .05$); however no statistical differences were seen between the two experimental groups. Similarly to Priest (1998a), differences in challenge course program interventions (initiative activities, low elements, and high elements) failed to demonstrate significant differences between experimental groups; however, participation in a challenge course intervention was still helpful in increasing trust among participants.

Effects of Challenge Courses on Participants' Resiliency and Hope

When studying effects of challenge courses, several studies have examined effects of these interventions on resiliency and a sense of hope on adolescents viewed as “at-risk.” While samples used in these studies are not adults in organizations, they reinforce a goal associated with challenge course programs—to transfer learning acquired on the challenge course to another context more typically experienced by participants. In the studies reviewed in this section,

authors attempted to increase both the resiliency and a sense of hope within participants as a result of their involvement in a challenge course.

Using a pre-post test experimental design Green, et al. (2000) examined effects of a challenge course with processing element (4 hrs, 1 x wk, 4-6wks) on resiliency of low income minority youth (ages, 10-16). Four domains (social environment, perceived environment, personality, and behavior) addressed the construct of resiliency and were measured using an adapted Protective Factors Scale (reliability=.76-.90) (Witt, Baker, & Scott, 1996). Participants were divided into a treatment group (summer program and challenge course) (n=25), summer program comparison group (n=95), and no-treatment comparison group (n=57). Statistically significant differences were present between the treatment and summer program groups on all eight indicators of the Protective Factors Scale (F values ranged from 3.29 to 5.335, $p < .001$). Comparisons between the treatment group and no-treatment comparison group were significant for three of the eight indicators (F values ranged from 2.209 to 3.453, $p < .05$). Therefore, participating in the challenge course intervention had a greater impact on indicators of protective factors than participation in the summer program alone or the comparison group. Authors suggested that future research involving adventure interventions should include multiple treatment groups for greater generalizability. Due to the mixed interventions with the treatment group (e.g., challenge course and summer program), caution is advised when considering these results; it is not possible to determine if effects were due to the challenge course intervention or the summer program.

Using a pre-post test experimental design, Robitschek (1996) examined effects of a one day challenge course experience on participants' (n=98; 50 boys; ages 14-18) perceptions of hope while attending a summer jobs program. Participants were divided into coed groups of 7-15

and participated in low elements during the morning and high elements in the afternoon. Participants completed the Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1991) pre and post intervention and finished a thought-listing exercise upon completion of the program. Significant increases on both Hope Scale subscales occurred (Agency, $t = -3.87$, $p < .001$; Pathways, $t = -5.35$, $p < .001$). Data from the thought-listing exercise included 448 positive responses, 50 neutral responses, and 37 negative responses. When considering both the quantitative and qualitative results, Robitschek suggested that participants appeared to view the experience positively and, according to comments, enjoyed the experience. The absence of a control group limits the strength of these results since the potential that other factors may have influenced results was not evaluated. Due to the absence of reliability and validity data related to the Hope Scale, questions related to accuracy and consistency of the measurement arise.

Challenge Courses and Their Connection to Theories Related to Leisure

Three prevailing theories, related to leisure, which appear to have particular connection to challenge courses are perceived freedom (Neulinger, 1981), intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975), and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Although these closely related theories do *not* appear to have influenced the development of challenge course programs or challenge course research, their presence can be felt within challenge course research.

Perceived Freedom (Choice) and its Connection to Challenge Courses

If one accepts Neulinger's (1974) view that leisure is a state of mind, then a shift from the idea of *leisure activities* (e.g., challenge courses) to a more social-psychological definition is necessary. Fundamental to leisure (as a state of mind) is the idea of "perceived freedom," which Neulinger defined as "a state in which the person feels that what he/she is doing is done by choice and because one wants to do it" (p.15). Neulinger elaborated that the concept of perceived

freedom is the only essential element necessary for an individual to enter into the state of mind he called “leisure.” While perceived freedom is dichotomized in Neulinger’s paradigm of leisure (compared to perceived constraint), he stressed the importance of viewing the term more as a continuum as opposed to a strict dichotomy.

In an attempt to explain differences between leisure and nonleisure, Neulinger (1981) focused on the two categories of perceived freedom (including pure leisure, leisure-work, and leisure-job) and perceived constraint (including pure work, work-job, pure job). Within these categories, behaviors are identified according to motivational factors (e.g., intrinsic or extrinsic motivation). An activity undertaken under the condition of perceived freedom and for intrinsic reasons is defined as “pure leisure.” Within this condition, individuals are free from external constraints including rewards and personal needs. Participants on a challenge course under this condition would volunteer to participate and engage in the activities for purely intrinsic reasons; the challenge course program becomes an activity done for its own sake. “Leisure-work” is the second unit on the continuum and is identified by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. To enter into this state of mind, an individual must be free to select the action, but also must be motivated by internal and external forces. One example of this condition would be a challenge course participant who freely chooses to participate but does so because of potential intrinsic rewards (e.g., learn more about the self), as well as tangible, extrinsic rewards (e.g., greater productivity as a team in the workplace). “Leisure-job” is the final component within the leisure segment of this continuum. For this condition to occur individuals must feel free to select an activity, but chose the activity for purely external reasons. An example of leisure-job would be the challenge course participant who chooses to attend the program but does so for the extrinsic reward of receiving monetary compensation for attendance.

In the nonleisure component of the continuum proposed by Neulinger (1981), individuals who engage in an activity under perceived constraints but for intrinsic reasons are said to have the state of mind known as “pure-work.” Any activity that an individual enjoys doing simply because of the activity itself, yet is not freely chosen, falls into this category. For instance, consider a person who must attend a challenge course session because a supervisor’s mandate. This person did not have a choice to participate, but could be motivated by intrinsic rewards (e.g., gain an understanding of other group members). When an individual is constrained and is motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, Neulinger (1981) suggested that the person is in the state of mind of “work-job.” These individuals feel that they are not free to select the activity in which they are engaged, but sometimes they are motivated for internal reasons such as enjoying time outdoors at the challenge course as well as external reasons such as compensation for participation. The final state of mind within Neulinger’s paradigm of leisure is “pure job.” Under this condition, individuals do not feel they have ability to choose an activity and may only participate for external rewards. An individual who does not want to be outside or participate in the physical activities associated with challenge courses and only participates in the challenge course program for reasons of receiving approval from his/her supervisor, fits into this category.

Based on the theoretical work of Neulinger’s (1974) leisure paradigm, Iso-Ahola (1979) conducted an experiment with undergraduate students (N= 81, 36 females). Researchers presented participants with eight hypothetical situations and asked them to rate (from 1-10) whether they considered the situation not to be leisure at all (1) or to be leisure completely (10). According to Iso-Ahola, results supported Neulinger’s theoretical leisure paradigm because freedom and intrinsic motivation were identified by participants as primary indicators of the leisure experience.

Of the 15 challenge course studies reviewed, only two provided participants with an overt (e.g., volunteers were requested) choice to participate (Green et al., 2000; MacRae et al., 1993). While participants in all studies agreed to participate through some form of consent, due to unspoken forms of control (e.g., supervisor requested that all employees participate in the challenge course program) exercised within the workplace environment, the presence of freedom of choice is questionable. According to Neulinger (1981), without the presence of perceived freedom, an activity is considered nonleisure (work). Within the context of challenge courses, if participants do not have freedom of choice to participate, the activity cannot be considered a leisure activity; only when the condition of choice is present can a challenge course be considered leisure. When “intact” work groups (Bronson et al., 1992) participate in challenge course programs, constraints to the level of freedom of choice experienced by participants may exist. Following Neulinger’s paradigm, in all but two of the studies reviewed, participants were operating under the perceived constraint of a lack of freedom. In cases where organizations established goals for the challenge course (such as a New Zealand computer company that wanted employees to learn team skills, Priest, 1998a), participants’ motivation was at least partially extrinsic. In this case, participants’ state of mind would be classified as pure work, work-job, or pure job (Neulinger, 1981).

The potential exists for challenge course program participants to lack the freedom to decline to attend the entire (1, 2, 3 day) challenge course intervention, but possess the freedom to choose to participate in different elements on the course. In these cases freedom of choice exists on the micro as opposed to macro level (e.g., required attendance at the challenge course program, but can choose to participate or not participate in specific elements); however, in none of the studies reviewed did authors address issues of freedom to participate on specific elements.

The idea of choosing specific challenge course elements is referred to as challenge by choice (Rohnke, 1989) and is comprised of three components identified by Carlson and Evans, (2001). The first component of challenge by choice provides each participant with opportunity to establish his/her own goals for the program and only attempt challenges (e.g. initiative activities, low elements, high elements, and their components) which he/she feels are appropriate. The second component focuses on allowing a participant to determine how much of an element he/she will attempt. With this idea, the participant is given the opportunity to choose how far he/she would like to progress within a specific element (Carlson & Evans, 2001). The final component of challenge by choice deals with the issue of informed decision making. Individuals must receive appropriate information related to the entire experience as well as specific elements so they are free to choose their level of participation throughout the entire program (Carlson & Evans, 2001). Returning to Neulinger's (1974) components of the leisure state of mind, if participants in a challenge course program are to experience leisure, they must have the opportunity to make choices related to their participation in the challenge course activities.

Intrinsic Motivation and its Connection to Challenge Courses

According to Deci (1975), "Intrinsically motivated behaviors are behaviors which a person engages in to feel competent and self-determining" (p. 61). Deci and Ryan (2002) further stated that intrinsic motivation is the foundation for self-determination. Individuals who participate in activities for intrinsic reasons, participate for the sake of the activity itself, not some external reward. Intrinsic motivation is demonstrated by a challenge course participant who is involved strictly for the joy of participating that can include interacting with other members of the group, performing the associated activities, and experiencing nature. Participation itself is the goal and the reward.

Early researchers seeking to understand this phenomena of motivation attempted to determine effects of external motivation (e.g., receiving some for of reward for participation) on behaviors. Deci (1971) and Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett, (1973) learned that when external rewards in the form of money and awards came to be expected, these rewards served to decrease intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Kruglanski, Alon, and Lewis (1972) provided unexpected rewards to children following playing a competitive game and found less intrinsic motivation in these participants than in participants who did not receive any rewards. Based on these and similar studies, conclusions have been made that extrinsic rewards given to individuals for behaviors can decrease individuals' intrinsic motivation which will have a negative impact on their ability to be self-determined.

Issues of participant intrinsic motivation have yet to be addressed within challenge course literature. While no studies reviewed examined *why* individuals participated in the activities, many interventions were designed to offer intrinsic rewards for participation (e.g., increased teamwork, Smith & Priest, in press; development of organizational trust, Priest, 1996a), which, according to Deci (1971), Lepper, et al. (1973), and Kruglanski et al. (1972), could serve to increase individuals intrinsic motivation. Typically challenge course programs are implemented to achieve positive outcomes for the organization or participant, yet the notion of intrinsic motivation within participants appears to have been overlooked in this literature.

Flow and its Connection to Challenge Courses

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) coined and defined the term *flow* as “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (p. 36). When individuals enter into a state of flow, they are seeking intrinsic rewards for their participation rather than extrinsic rewards. They are seeking an enjoyable activity that tests their skills and allows them to focus all their attention

on the activity at hand. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975) there are six conditions present in a flow-like situation: integration of action and awareness, focused attention on a limited field, loss of ego, personal control of actions and environment, consistent demands for participant action with clear, non-contradictory feedback, and its autotelic nature.

Participants who have entered into the state of flow may focus so intently on the activity in which they engage that a melding of their actions and awareness occurs. While thoughts are present during flow, conscious thoughts related to mechanics and details of the activity and distractions in the environment are absent. This can be understood as being so involved in an activity, that a sense of time is forgotten. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975), “Flow seems to only occur when tasks are within one’s ability to perform” (p. 39). An impossible task (e.g., a task with undefined rules and beyond the skill level of participants) will not lead to the condition of flow. Under conditions when a participant’s “action capabilities (skills)” exceed the “action opportunities (challenges)” (p. 49), boredom will be present; however, under conditions where the challenges of the activity exceed the skills of the individual, anxiety will result (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Flow is the “merging of action and awareness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 38) to the point where the participant is only focused on the current activity. To explore this notion of skill requirement and challenge level, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) interviewed 30 rock climbers (25 male; age 19-53) and found that for the climbers to enter into a state of flow, participant skill and conditioning must be in balance with the challenge presented. When participants had not yet gained skills necessary to attempt specific climbs, they were less likely to enter into a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Through elements presented and processing those elements, challenge courses provide an opportunity for individuals to attempt to reconcile differences between their skill level and the

challenge level of the elements presented (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Luckner and Nadler suggested that there are three zones (comfort zone, groan zone, and growth zone) through which individuals must progress to experience the ultimate desired outcome (e.g., growth). Participants begin challenge course programs in the comfort zone where they experience familiar challenges with familiar individuals (Luckner & Nadler). In the groan zone participants begin to move away from their comfort zone by participating in activities that are more risky and uncomfortable (Luckner & Nadler). When participants enter the growth zone they have developed feelings of competence and the ability to use new skills learned to accomplish challenges (Luckner & Nadler). This idea of a connection between skill level and challenge level closely follows Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) concept of balancing skill and activity to provide an opportunity for flow to occur. If challenge course participants possess skills that are less than the challenge presented, they may experience anxiety; however, if challenge course participants possess skills (gained through movement from the comfort zone to the groan zone, to the growth zone) that are balanced with the challenges presented, they may experience flow.

The second purported characteristic of the flow experience involves focusing on the task at hand and eliminating all other thoughts. By narrowing their attention, individuals possess the ability to ignore other issues from their daily life that might distract them from the current activity. To merge actions and awareness (the first characteristic of flow), other distractions must be cleared from the mind. One of the 30 rock climbers interviewed suggested that, "When I start on a climb, it is as if my memory input has been cut off. All I can remember is the last thirty seconds, and I can think ahead is the next five minutes" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 40). Because many challenge courses are built in locations away from participants' everyday activities, participants may find this condition of the flow state easier to achieve than when they are in a

context associated with their everyday lives. Individuals in a state of flow possess a single-mindedness that allows them to ignore other distractions and the location of many challenge courses (e.g., forests) may allow for this opportunity. Similarly, the uniqueness of challenge course activities (e.g., crawling through ropes or climbing to the top of 40 ft. poles) may allow participants to focus more clearly on the task at hand.

The notion of loss of ego or the loss of self does not suggest disconnecting with reality (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975); rather, this third characteristic of flow proposes a deeper connection to the current task and a greater awareness of physical movements connected to the activity. This loss of self-consciousness is directly connected to the merging of action and awareness and focusing attention in that it involves ignoring other concerns that are secondary to the current activity. For an individual to experience flow, the person must be able to lose the “self-ish” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 42) thoughts that distract focus from the task at hand and concentrate on the immediate demands. Upon interviewing 53 chess players (30 male), Csikszentmihalyi (1975) suggested that when in a state of flow, players’ thoughts only focused on the relevant aspects of the game and issues related to the self outside of the game, held no importance for participants. Because of the demands of the challenge course, participants are often forced to focus on the element or activity while disregarding other concerns and issues that may be a part of their lives. When considering challenge course research it is possible to see how participants would have focused their attention on group initiatives, low elements, and high elements and subsequently limited attention on distractions (e.g., MacRae et al., 1993); however, no study reviewed directly addressed this issue of participants’ focus and attention.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975), the fourth characteristic of flow involves controlling personal actions and the environment where those actions occur. While this control

might not be recognized during the activity itself, individuals' skill and the skill of other participants (e.g., confidence that others have equivalent skill level), provides a conducive context for flow to occur. If individuals are unable to control their actions or environment, they are more likely to experience anxiety than a state of flow. (While this discussion is similar to that of the first condition of flow, integration of action and awareness, the fundamental difference rests on participants' attempts and ability to *control* their actions and environment). When attempting to understand flow within Japanese motorcycle gangs, Sato (1988) conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 participants (6 female) and found that participation in these gangs offered members opportunities to experience a heightened sense of self, heroic roles, a sense of belonging, and experiences that match participant skills with appropriate challenges. Relating thoughts about skill and risk (controlling actions and environment), one participant stated, "Sometimes, shortly before we start, I think that it may be dangerous... Sometimes, I get nervous before the start. But once we start, I forget [the danger]..." (Sato, 1988, p. 100). When individuals have the skills necessary to control their actions and environment, they are likely to experience flow. While the opportunity to control personal actions is found in challenge course experiences, the opportunity to control the environment where those actions occur is beyond the control of participants. If the challenge course is located in a forest or wooded area (as many challenge courses are) and a participant possesses a specific dislike of that location, the experience becomes less conducive for the flow condition. Participants can, however, control their personal actions when engaged in challenge course elements. Operating under the condition of challenge by choice they have the opportunity to accept or refuse any challenge offered to them. This ability to select appropriate levels of challenge provides participants with a context conducive for creating a sense of flow.

The fifth characteristic of flow provides a rationale for participants' ability to control their actions and environments—they receive continuous feedback based on their actions. For flow to occur, individuals must interact with their environment in an effective manner; this can only happen when information is clearly returned to the participant (e.g., when climbing a rope ladder if a person does not grab the next rung and pull up, that individual will not reach the top of the ladder). As learned by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) when he interviewed rock climbers, when individuals experience flow, they do not consciously recognize the feedback. When exploring this notion of flow within rock climbers, one participant stated that, "You are moving in harmony with something else, the piece of rock as well as the weather and scenery" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 46). Because of participants' lack of familiarity with many challenge course elements and the feedback provided by the activities (e.g., attempting to climb a tower but not having the strength to reach the top) or others present on the course, participants may be extremely *conscious* of this feedback and thereby have a limited chance of achieving a state of flow.

One overarching theme associated with flow is the importance of goals. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997) "Flow tends to occur when a person faces a clear set of goals that require appropriate responses" (p. 29). In his earlier studies, when rock climbers entered into a state of flow, they possessed concrete goals (e.g., safety, reaching the top of the climb). These same types of goals are found in challenge course programs. All programs have the goal of keeping participants safe from harm and tasks are presented that participants are encouraged to complete.

The autotelic quality of flow is the final characteristic of flow as proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975). When experiencing flow within an activity, an individual does not seek

external rewards for his/her participation. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), “An autotelic activity is one we do for its own sake because to experience it is the main goal” (p. 117). The rationale for participation is the activity itself; it is the intrinsic rewards that participants seek. As a result of these autotelic experiences where individuals are rewarded through their participation, these individuals will continue to participate even in the absence of extrinsic rewards. One rock climber interviewed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) said that “The justification of climbing is climbing, like the justification of poetry is writing; you don’t conquer anything except things in yourself...The act of writing justifies poetry” (p. 47). To explore autotelic issues within the family, Rathunde (1988) used an Experience Sampling Method (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984) with 193 high school freshmen and sophomores. Results demonstrated that adolescents from a family with an autotelic atmosphere were more likely to engage in optimal experiences both at school and home. One challenge course example relates to participants who particularly enjoy activities that produce surges of adrenaline. This type of participant may experience the autotelic nature of a challenge course when he/she jumps off a platform and attempts to grab a trapeze swing as in the Pamper Pole—participation in the activity simply for the joy it brings.

From reviewing these theories related to leisure and challenge courses, it is apparent that these theories are interrelated. When examining Neulinger’s (1974) concept of choice, several references were made to intrinsic motivation (specifically in Neulinger’s continuum of leisure). While his work reviewed here dealt primarily with choice, the discussion of choice is closely tied to the notion of intrinsic motivation. This understanding of the relationship between choice and intrinsic motivation offers insights into challenge course literature; if participants are not offered choices, they may lack intrinsic motivation to participate in challenge course programs.

Intrinsic motivation is not only connected to choice, but also, as Deci (1975) described it, it is a precursor to self-determination. Researchers (e.g., Deci, 1971; Lepper, et al., 1973) have demonstrated that individuals who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be self-determined and similarly, individuals who are not intrinsically motivated are less likely to be self-determined. When considering challenge course research, this relationship between intrinsic motivation and self-determination is helpful when attempting to understand participants' desire or willingness to participate. Participants who are not given the choice to participate may be less intrinsically motivated to participate, and as a result, the experience may not contribute to their sense of self-determination.

According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) definition of flow ("the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement," p. 36), individuals may not experience flow unless they are intensely involved and invested in an activity. When considering research conducted with challenge courses, opportunities for flow may not exist if the other conditions (choice and intrinsic motivation) have not been met.

Based on research related to understanding leisure as defined by levels of choice and freedom (Neulinger, 1981), intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975), and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), challenge course programs may not consistently offer participants opportunity to experience leisure. The foundation for each of these theories appears to be freedom of choice, and the presence of choice helps to create a context conducive for leisure. As mentioned previously, related to challenge courses, choice can be experienced on different levels (e.g., choice to attend the sessions or choice to participate in specific elements), and therefore, participants could experience leisure in the midst of a challenge course experience that they did not choose to attend. While a challenge course program may be defined as a context to experience

leisure, the challenge course studies reviewed here did not present environments conducive for participants to experience leisure as described by Neulinger, Deci, and Csikszentmihalyi.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Purpose of Research

Research Purpose: Gain an understanding of participants' perceptions of their experiences in a one-day challenge course program.

Research Question #1: What are participants' perceptions related to a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #2: What are participants' perceptions related to communication during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #3: What are participants' perceptions related to cooperation during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #4: What are participants' perceptions related to team functioning during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Subjectivities Statement

Samdahl (1999) stated, "The challenge before us is to examine, as critically as we can, why we are interested in studying those questions that we choose to pursue" (p. 122). In an effort to explore why I am interested in studying challenge courses and offer insight into my past experiences with challenge courses, it is important to clarify *what* my beliefs related to challenge courses are and how those beliefs developed.

As both a challenge course participant and facilitator, while I do believe that negative outcomes can arise from a challenge course experience, I have come to believe that risks taken

on a challenge course are good, that participants need to be pushed past their limits, that failure can be a positive learning tool, and that benefits learned on the challenge course can be transferred into other areas of life. As can be seen through these beliefs, I hold challenge courses in a very positive, yet demanding light; however, my views continue to develop as I research and participate in challenge courses. While they have evolved over the past 12 years, my beliefs related to challenge courses stem primarily from an adventure program I participated in prior to my freshman year of college. The following excerpts taken from my journal written during that program provides some insight into my initiation into challenge courses.

I've been experiencing lots of anxiety today. I had no idea what to expect and I still don't. That is extremely frustrating! I am a high control person and I have NO control. Add to that my fears of trying to meet new brand new people and fit in and I end up a total wreck.

I'm worried about my attitude toward others. I want to fit in and make friends, but sometimes when I'm under a lot of stress I'm not the greatest person to be around.

This "Pamper Pole" has such a deceiving name. Right now my heart is going very fast. It will be extremely scary to jump, but in the same sense the feeling afterward will be incredible.

I got to go first on the Pamper Pole. Getting to the top wasn't too tough, but when I had to stand I couldn't stop shaking. It's a very humbling experience to shake so much and not be sure what's going to happen. After about five minutes of immense fear, shaking, and encouragement from my friends below, then I jumped. The immense rush I felt was unbelievable. When I reached the other side I felt relieved and the climb down didn't seem to bad.

After waiting a long time I went on the “dangly do.” I didn’t go first which probably turned out to be best. I couldn’t get past the first log. I have never failed that blatantly before. I kept trying until my arms were ripped up and bruised, but I just couldn’t make it. I can’t remember anything so humbling. As much as it still hurts I know that I will never forget that experience.

It hurt a lot because John and Rachel both went all the way to the top. I know I shouldn’t compare myself with others, but I do it constantly.

The cool thing was the disappointment I felt on the dangly do was overcome by my feelings of pure exhilaration on the Zip Line.

Last night I was extremely quiet at the camp fire because I was reflecting on my failure of the day. The feelings I felt last night at the camp fire I think are pretty much gone. I felt really bad about myself but today is a new day and I realize that I don’t make myself successful by accomplishments. I make myself successful by giving 100% and I know I did that.

While lengthy and possibly filled with some rambling, irrelevant details, the experiences described above influence the manner in which I view challenge courses and inevitably the manner in which I study them. As suggested by Samdahl (1999), my research was not objective because of the experiences which have shaped my thinking.

By providing information about my perceptions of challenge courses, it is my intention to increase the ability of consumers of this research to determine the veracity of my statements. My beliefs and experiences surrounding challenge courses influenced what I saw, asked, and wrote. According to Kuhn (1970) “What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see” (p. 113). My visual-

conceptual experience with challenge courses is the lens through which I studied and viewed these experiences. This lens has the potential to clarify or distort the image of the challenge course. Even the questions that I ask within my research are influenced by my biases. “After all, once we as researchers have framed the questions and determined how we will go about collecting data, the answer itself has already been defined (Samdahl, 1999, p. 120).

Site Selection

When considering a location for the challenge course program, it was important to consider that an appropriate location would have bathroom and drinking facilities, sufficient number of high and low elements to provide activities for eight hours, be within driving distance that would allow participants to arrive and leave on the day of the program, and have facilitators experienced with providing adult programming. The facility selected for this project employed facilitators and staff members who embraced the notion of a research project occurring within the context of their program and identified interest in results from the project.

Currently, I am employed part time as a challenge course facilitator at a large southeastern university. My connections with this program have allowed me to observe the facilities first hand, work with numerous facilitators, and understand the intent behind their program. As evidenced by programs conducted with the University’s College of Business and other organizational groups, this course has been used by groups of adults attempting to increase the sense of team among group members. While other sites also offered similar benefits, this site seemed to be appropriate. Located in a state forest, this challenge course had restroom and drinking facilities available for participants, and was comprised of eight low elements and six high elements. These 14 activities, combined with initiative activities that occur at the outset of a program offered opportunities for constant activity to participants for eight hours. In addition to

providing a sufficient number of activities, the elements at this course provided a variety of experiences to participants, and the course is arranged in such a manner that observations would easily occur. The course itself was located in an urban area (population approximately 100,000) and within 60 miles of a large metropolitan city (population in greater metropolitan area approximately 3.5 million) in the Southeastern United States. This location allowed for a large pool of potential participants that could travel and still have eight hours to participate in the challenge course program. This course was also selected because of facilitators' experience working with adults from organizational groups. Groups of individuals who are currently taking classes, completing internships, and engaging in continuing education courses regularly access this course. Finally, this course was selected because the director expressed support for a research project and was interested in viewing the results. Because of its accommodating facilities, number of elements, proximity to urban and metropolitan areas, facilitators' experience working with similar groups, and the director's willingness to support the research, this challenge course was selected as an appropriate site for this project.

Site and Activity Description

The challenge course site was located in a state forest on the grounds of a large university in the Southeastern United States. To enter the course, participants walked approximately a quarter mile down a gravel road; however, this road also served as access to many hiking, biking, and running trails, and an off-leash dog area regularly visited by university and community members. The challenge course was situated primarily in a remote wooded area (removed from many of the trails) rarely visited by those not associated with the current group on the course. While this course was located within a remote area, drinking water and restroom facilities (port-a-pot) were available. With the exception of the "Pamper Pole," "TP Shuffle," "The Wall," and

“Zip Line,” elements were built directly into the trees. Challenge course elements included eight low elements (e.g., The Wall, Islands, TP Shuffle, Nitro Crossing, Spider Web, Trust Fall, Mohawk Walk, Wild Woosey) and six high elements (e.g., Zip Line, Flying Squirrel, Two Line Bridge, Pamper Pole, Catwalk, Multi Vine). Only elements used during the challenge course program are described below.

Socializing Game

Boat/Island. This activity was similar to Simon Says. Facilitators taught participants several commands related to a nautical theme and participants were then asked to follow the commands in rapid succession. If a participant did not follow a particular command, he/she was “out” of the game. The game was played until only two participants remained.

Initiative Activities

Warp Speed. Facilitators asked participants to pass a ball to other group members as quickly as possible. The group was continuously prompted to establish new goals to improve their time. After multiple trials, the group reduced their initial time of 42 seconds down to 4.5 seconds.

Turnstile. Group members were asked to move from one side of a spinning jump rope to the other without causing the jump rope to stop spinning. Facilitators provided the riddle of $1+2+3=16$ as the method for keeping the rope spinning. The solution to this riddle (1 person jumps and leaves the rope, 2 people jump and leave the rope, 3 people run through the spinning rope without jumping) allowed for all participants to cross the jump rope; however, the group was unable to accomplish this task.

Low Elements

Islands. The Islands were comprised of three platforms (one 2x2 and two 4x4) that were laid on the ground. Participants were given one 2x8x8 board to assist in their movement from one 4x4 platform to the 2x2 platform to the final 4x4 platform. Each platform was movable and rested directly on the ground. While the first two platforms were too far apart for the board to reach across, the board would reach from the second to third platform. In this activity, facilitators asked participants to determine the number of faults (times they or the board touched the ground) they wanted to establish as a goal. The group selected 20 faults but only utilized 14 in their journey to the third island.

TP Shuffle. The TP Shuffle was approximately 20 feet long and was a telephone pole lying horizontally on the ground. Participants were asked to stand on the telephone pole and, without stepping off, rearrange their order according to birthdays. Facilitators did not provide consequences for falling off the log or ask the group to establish a goal for the number of faults.

High Elements

For participation in all of the high elements, participants wore climbing harnesses and were connected to a safety system known as a belay. This system was comprised of harnesses, ropes, belay devices known as ATC's, and spotters. All facilitators had been trained how to safely and effectively belay and spot participants on the course.

Catwalk. The Catwalk was very similar in design to the TP Shuffle, but approximately 20 feet off of the ground. Between two trees a 20 foot telephone pole was suspended and participants climbed one of the trees (via ladder and staples) and walked across the log to the other tree. Once they reached the far tree, participants were lowered to the ground.

Pamper Pole. The Pamper Pole was comprised of a pole sunk into the ground.

Participants ascended using a ladder and staples and attempted to stand on top of the pole. Once they reached a standing position, participants attempted to leap off of the pole and grab a trapeze swing that was approximately six feet in front of them. The trapeze swing hung below a cable that was strung between two trees.

Zip Line. To complete the Zip Line, participants ascended a 40 foot tower by climbing on a ladder for the first 10 feet and then using staples (small metal pieces hammered into the pole) for the remainder of the journey. The zip tower itself was a three-sided structure constructed of three large telephone poles sunk into the ground. These three poles were connected at the top of the structure by one platform and a second platform approximately five feet below the top. Once participants reached the first platform (five feet from the top), they sat down in the space created (known as the crow's nest) and a facilitator (who remained in the crow's nest for the duration of the activity) attached the participant to the Zip Line system. Attached to the Zip Line, the participant slid off of the platform and "zipped" down the 60-foot length of wire.

Criteria for Participation

Participants for this research project consisted of one group of 8-12¹ members who worked together as a pre-existing team. To be included in this study, participants (a) were full time (approximately 40 hours per week) paid employees of the organization, (b) met together face-to-face approximately once a week to make decisions regarding projects they were working on or issues they were dealing with together, (c) made decisions within the group as a collective, (d) were at the same level on the organizational hierarchy, (e) volunteered to participate in the challenge course program, and (f) provided informed consent to participate. Therefore, this

¹ Because of the organization's desire to have as many employees participate as possible, 16 individuals actually took part in this challenge course program.

project employed one group of participants who worked, interacted, and made decisions together on a regular basis.

These criteria were established for six reasons. First, by incorporating full time employees, regular opportunities in the workplace existed for participants to employ lessons taught during the challenge course program. Second, participants who meet face-to-face on a regular basis may have more need for communication and cooperation than groups that rarely meet in face-to-face settings. Third, participants who are on the same level of the organizational hierarchy and who make decisions as a group without the direct influence of a supervisor may feel more comfortable participating in the challenge course than if their supervisors were in attendance. Since challenge course programs are typically designed for participants who are currently working with one another (cf., Bronson, Gibson, Kichar, & Priest, 1992; Priest, 1996, 1998), participants who already know one another and possess a common purpose outside of the challenge course program were sought. Because of the pre-existing group participating in this study, outcomes of the challenge course program related to group functioning in their work environment were addressed. By volunteering to be a part of the study, participants signaled their desire and intent to participate in the program. Finally, all participants offered their informed consent for this research project so they understood the activities and potential risks.

Participating in this study did present participants with potential risks. First, there was the potential for physical harm. Because activities occurred outdoors, there was a potential for injuries due to uneven terrain, animals, or flora. There was also potential for injury as a direct result of participating in the activities. Participants were asked to climb on different objects and ascend to approximately 40 feet in the air. With this type of program there is always the potential for physical harm from falling; however, when ascending high elements participants were also

connected to a belay system. This system used ropes, harnesses, helmets, and belay devices to protect participants as they ascended the elements. Accompanying physical risks, there were also emotional risks associated with participation in this program. Participants were asked to engage in activities which led to the demonstration of fears (e.g., fear of heights, fear of falling, lack of physical trust in others) and difficulties communicating and trusting.

These potential physical and emotional risks were minimized through the use of two trained facilitators. These facilitators received an intensive three-day training program through the University that taught them how to present and process all challenges in a safe manner. Facilitators for this project had at least one year of experience working at challenge courses and had previously facilitated adult groups. For the purposes of this study, facilitators also received study-specific information related to elements and processing questions. One week prior to the program I introduced the research project to the facilitators and provided information related to the program (see Appendix A) and processing cards (see Appendix B). Two days before the program I met with the facilitators to discuss the purpose of the program, particulars related to the participants, and the processing cards. Facilitator concerns and questions were addressed at this point. The morning of the program, I met with the facilitators two hours prior to the participants' arrival so I could help them set up the elements, provide them with note-card sized, laminated processing cards, and address last minute concerns. As the day progressed and the need arose, I discreetly reminded facilitators to announce the purpose of the specific activities or offer participants opportunities to establish personal and group goals.

There were also potential benefits for participating in this study. Researchers have examined outcomes of challenge courses including perceived self-efficacy (Constantine, 1993), self-concept (Finkenber, Shows, & DiNucci, 1994), values (Goldenberg, Klenosky, O'Leary, &

Templin, 2000), risk taking (Goldman & Priest, 1990), trust (Priest, 1996a), and teamwork (Priest & Lesperance, 1994). Since participants had the opportunity to express their feelings, individuals may also have felt empowered as a result of their participation.

All people who participated engaged in a one-day challenge course (8.5 hours) program. As a part of the challenge course program they participated in one socializing game, two initiative activities, two low elements, and three high elements. For inclusion in the study, participants consented to allow the researcher to observe and videotape all interactions on the challenge course and engaged in one focus group (approximately 45 minutes) and two individual qualitative interviews (approximately 45 minutes each) on two separate occasions following completion of the program.

Solicitation of Participants

Initial contact to enlist participants was conducted through connections I had developed while working and interacting with different organizations. I initially contacted individuals within these organizations and offered a general overview of the project. When the first organization (Family Dental Center²) expressed a willingness to explore possible participation, I gave a formal presentation to outline the specific challenge course program, potential risks and possible benefits of participation, and to assess goals the organization would like to accomplish (see Appendix C). Once Family Dental Center (FDC) agreed to participate in the study, solicitation of organizations concluded.

After ADC committed to participation in the project, I visited the team at their workplace and provided an orientation to the potential challenge course experience (see below). This orientation occurred one week prior to the program and also served as an opportunity for me to

² Pseudonyms have been provided for the name of the organization as well as all participants.

solicit participant consent, explain details of the project, explain my role as a researcher, and have participants complete a challenge course specific release form and a challenge course specific health history form (see Appendix D for consent, health history, and release forms).

Description of Participants

The dental center is physically comprised of 17 exam rooms located around the outer wall of the building. They employ 12 dentists, six hygienists, 20 dental assistants, and six front desk staff. When attempting to determine if employees from the center would be appropriate for this study, I spent approximately four hours observing the work environment. Below is an excerpt from my notes:

As I watched, there was constant movement and interaction among all employees. I saw doctors, hygienists, assistants, and front desk staff all interact and communicate with one another. Assistants would bring patients to the front desk, get information from the women behind the desk and then relay that information to other assistants, hygienists, or doctors. My impression was that there were very frequent opportunities for interactions among the entire office staff and that they needed to cooperate with one another in order for the process to run smoothly.

It was on the basis of these observations (and a one and a half hour presentation to and conversation with the owners) which led to their selection for this study.

Participation was made completely voluntary and no individuals were limited from participation on the basis of position within the organization. Sixteen participants (11 women) elected to attend the one-day challenge course program. Of the 16 participants, two women worked at the front desk, one man and one woman were owners, and the remaining 12 participants were dental assistants. While the owners were technically in positions of authority

over other participants, their job requirements were similar to others' who attended the program. The owners' primary job duties were front office work and dental assistant; however, they also served as liaisons between dentists and assistants. Neither owner possessed a dental degree.

While 16 employees participated in the program, only 11 participants consented to be interviewed³. Fourteen participants attended the focus group; one woman (Jenny) who participated in the program was on vacation at the time of the interview and one woman (Sierra) served as a note taker⁴. Because of expressing nervousness about speaking in a one-on-one audio-taped recorded session for 45 minutes and other reasons (e.g., relationships), five individuals did not participate in the individual interviews.

Of the 11 participants who were interviewed, ages ranged from 21 to 55 and nine were women. These employees had worked with the organization from 6 months to 20 years. Two women interviewed were front desk workers, one woman was an owner/dental assistant, and the other eight participants were dental assistants. Participants' educations ranged from high school diplomas to college degrees and several (two men and one woman) employees are currently pursuing dental hygiene degrees. Two women (one front desk worker and one assistant) self-identified as being obese on the medical release forms while two others (one front desk worker and one assistant) stated that they recently had surgery to a wrist and elbow. These self-identified limitations and injuries did not appear to hinder participants while they engaged in challenge course program.

³ Eleven participants were interviewed during the first round of interviews, but due to one assistant returning to school, only ten participants completed both interviews.

⁴ The note taker was my wife. Because of her role as a dental assistant within the organization, she participated in the challenge course program; however, because of her relationship to me, she did not participate in the focus group or individual interviews. Sierra also served as a key informant during the analysis process. As themes were developing, I presented them to her for review and suggestions. At no point in time during the study did she provide information that was used as data.

Description of Challenge Course Program

The challenge course program for this study lasted for one day (8.5 hours). Reviewed research related to challenge course programs was ambiguous when suggesting an optimal length for a challenge course program. While authors employed programs lasting two days, three days, and more than three days, in over half of the studies reviewed, authors evaluated a one-day challenge course program in their work. Of these one-day programs, only two studies (Bramwell, et al. 1997 and Meyer, 2000) suggested that outcomes were not as anticipated (e.g., authors expected to see increased teamwork, but did not). In the case of Bramwell, et al. (1997), authors suggested improving the intervention through periodic follow-up sessions; however, since this study focuses on participant's perceptions of a challenge course experience, less emphasis was placed on program follow-up. While Meyer (2000) did not find increased teamwork among tennis players, it is not clear if this outcome was due to the length of the intervention or to other methodological issues (e.g., nonrandom assignment, multiple interventions). Because of the frequency of one-day programs in the literature and potential logistics concerns (e.g., amount of work missed by participants), a one-day challenge course program was utilized in this study (see Appendix A). Specifics of the program are outlined in the following paragraphs.

When participants arrived at the challenge course they were welcomed by and introduced to the facilitators. (Safety considerations at the challenge course require two facilitators working with a group of participants. Because of the organizational focus of this project, facilitators with previous experience working with adult groups from an organization were used.) While standing in the parking lot (approximately one quarter mile from the challenge course), facilitators explained the plan for the day, outlined goals for the program (provide opportunities for communication and cooperation), and provided participants with initial instructions. Facilitators

explained to participants that they would be engaging in several activities called elements throughout the course of the day. They informed participants that these elements were selected to provide them with lessons related to communication and cooperation. Participants were made aware of restroom locations, potential dangers that exist (e.g., dogs off of their leash), and presented with the notion of “challenge by choice.”

In an effort to follow principles established by the notion of “challenge by choice,” participants were not only provided with the opportunity to choose to participate in this study, but they were also offered opportunities for choice within the program. Challenge by choice is a philosophy which encourages participants to establish their own level of participation throughout the day (Rohnke, 1989). Facilitators encouraged individuals to participate only to the extent that they were comfortable, and communicated that their level of participation within the group might change as the activities changed and the day progressed. Participants were encouraged to try their best and see how far they could push themselves while still feeling comfortable within the activity. Following principles of challenge by choice, prior to each activity and element, facilitators were asked to provide participants opportunity to verbally express whether or not they would like to participate in the element, how much of the specific element they would like to attempt (for initiative activities and low elements this was a group decision, while on high elements, this was an individual decision), and provided sufficient safety and instructional information prior to each initiative activity and element so participants could make informed choices related to their participation. Upon completion of this introduction to the course and the day, facilitators led the group down the gravel road to the course.

As explained previously, the selected socializing game and initiative activities were designed to introduce the concepts of communication and cooperation, and introduce the group

to the facilitators. These activities included: (a) “Boat/Island,” (b) “Warp Speed,” and (c) “Turnstile.” Upon arrival to the course, facilitators introduced the “Boat/Island” game as a warm-up activity designed to create a comfortable atmosphere and provide participants with an opportunity for enjoyment. The introduction included an explanation of the task, identification of the intended goal (communication), safety information, and opportunity for participants to identify whether they would like to participate and group goals related to amount of the activity to complete. Once the game was completed (there were two winners) the group stood in a circle and spent ten minutes processing the activity (see Appendix B for processing questions).

According to Luckner and Nadler (1997), experiential learning requires reflecting on the experience, generalizing from the experience, and applying lessons taught to “real-world” situations. This opportunity for reflection provided a method for participants to address a particular component of the program as well as acknowledge progress toward achieving established goals. Facilitators processed with participants around two general concepts: (a) communication and (b) cooperation. In preparation for processing activities, facilitators observed participants as they attempted to accomplish the task, solve the problem, or complete the requirements. Each socializing game, initiative activity, low element, and high element, focused on one of the two concepts (communication or cooperation) and facilitators asked questions specific to that topic area at the completion of the element (e.g., “Warp Speed” focused on communication and all processing questions addressed this specific topic) (see Appendix B). Based on participants’ behaviors, interactions, and comments during the element, facilitators processed about the notion of communication. It should be noted that while each activity had a primary focus and questions related to that focus, facilitators were informed that they could also address other relevant topics as they arose.

After processing Boat/Island, facilitators introduced “Warp Speed” to participants. The introduction for this (and all subsequent activities) included an explanation of the task, identification of the intended purpose (communication or cooperation), safety information, opportunity for participants to identify whether they would like to participate, and the group’s goal related to the amount of activity to complete. Once the group accomplished this task, (e.g., passed the object around the circle as fast as they felt possible), facilitators asked participants to stand in a circle and they spent approximately 15 minutes processing the activity (see Appendix B).

Upon completion of processing “Warp Speed,” facilitators introduced “Turnstile” to participants. Facilitators explained the task, identified the intended purpose, presented safety instructions, provided an opportunity for participants to identify whether they would like to participate and to identify the group’s goal related to the amount of activity to complete, and allowed participants to attempt the activity. After participants accomplished their goal, they spent 15 minutes processing the activity. Upon completion of these three activities, they moved on to the low elements (time spent participating in socializing games and initiative activities lasted one hour and 20 minutes).

Participation in all components of the program was sequenced so participants engaged in simple elements before progressing toward more difficult elements. By sequencing events, participants had opportunity to increase their skills (e.g., spotting, working together, developing alternative methods of thinking) while participating in simple elements so their skill levels would match the challenges of the more difficult elements presented. For this challenge course program, participants engaged in the following low elements: (a) “Islands” and (b) “TP Shuffle.” This order of presentation allowed participants to engage in elements which offered higher levels

of success before moving on to activities which might have required more skill to accomplish. Facilitators led the group to the “Islands,” explained the task, identified the intended purpose, presented safety considerations (e.g., slipping off the board), provided an opportunity for participants to identify whether they would like to participate and their group’s goal related to the amount of element to complete, allowed the group to accomplish their goal, and then asked group members to stand in a circle to process the element. Processing of low elements followed guidelines established for initiative activities. According to the specific low element, facilitators asked questions related to communication or cooperation. After the group spent approximately 15 minutes processing the “Islands,” they moved to the “TP Shuffle.” Facilitators introduced the TP Shuffle, identified the intended purpose, presented safety information, provided opportunities for participants to identify whether they would like to participate, identified their group’s goal related to amount of the element to complete, allowed participants to complete the element, and then spent 10 minutes processing the activity. (Total time spent on low elements was one and a half hours.) Once the group completed the final element, they were provided with approximately 45 minutes to rest and eat lunch. After the group completed their lunch, they began preparation for the high elements.

Prior to ascending any high elements, facilitators taught participants how to put on a harness. Facilitators asked participants to stand in a circle and provided verbal, gestural, and physical prompts to assist participants in attaching their harnesses. Facilitators inspected (e.g., view and feel each buckle) and confirmed that all participants safely donned their harnesses. Upon completion of this process, facilitators led the group to the Catwalk where they explained the activity (walk across the log), identified the intended purpose, presented safety considerations (e.g., holding the ladder, spotting participants as they climb), and provided opportunity for

participants to identify whether they would like to participate and their individual goals related to the amount of element to complete. Each participant was given the opportunity to attempt the Catwalk. Once all participants who wished to participate completed the activity (one individual elected not to participate in the Catwalk), facilitators processed with the group. Similar to processing initiative and low elements, participants' actions, behaviors, and interactions directed the processing session; however, facilitators still addressed the primary issues of communication or cooperation (see Appendix B).

Once the group completed processing the Catwalk, they moved to the Pamper Pole. Facilitators followed the same process used on the Catwalk where they explained the nature of the activity, identified the intended purpose, presented safety considerations, provided opportunity for participants to identify whether they would like to participate and their individual goal related to the amount of element to complete, allowed participants to attempt the element, and then processed the activity around the topic of cooperation. After the group completed all components related to the Pamper Pole, they moved to the final element for the day—the Zip Line. Facilitators offered a description of the activity, identified the intended purpose, presented specific safety considerations, provided opportunity for participants to identify whether they would like to participate and their individual goal related to the amount of element to complete, allowed participants to attempt the element, and then spent approximately ten minutes processing the Zip Line. Upon completion of the high elements (participation in high elements continued until the completion of the day) the group spent 10 minutes processing events of the day where facilitators asked participants to stand in a circle and discuss lessons taught during the entire challenge course program (see Appendix E).

Data Collection

Data were collected via participant observation (on site observations of challenge course participation and review of videotapes of the same challenge course experience), one focus group with 15 participants, and two individual interviews with 11 participants. The day participants arrived at the challenge course I engaged in participant observation; I neither facilitated nor fully participated with the group during the challenge course program. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), “participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (p. 1). Both pure observation (e.g. researcher is completely removed from the setting) and pure participation (e.g., “going native”) are forms of participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Moderate participation involves a researcher who is present, but who functions more as a “bystander” or “spectator” (DeWalt & DeWalt, p. 19). For this project, I engaged in moderate participant observation as I was present during the program, and participants recognized my role as a researcher; however, I did not engage in any phase of the challenge course program (e.g., element explanation, completion, or processing).

In addition to observing participants, a research assistant also videotaped the group as they participated in all aspects of the program. This form of observation was identified as “nonparticipation” observation as described by Spradley (1980). This videotape served as an additional form of data to supplement field notes taken at the time when the program was implemented. To ensure accurate recording, I met with the research assistant two days prior to the program to demonstrate how to use the digital video cameras (e.g. inserting film, changing batteries, recording images). During this time I provided the research assistant with information

related to the importance of capturing facial expressions, verbal interactions, and social interactions. The morning of the program (once I had met with the facilitators), I walked the research assistant to each element and activity the group would be attempting. During this time I showed him the best angle from which to film and where he might need to move during the action. As necessary during the day, I asked the research assistant to move around to record sound and action of all participants and answered questions he had related to filming.

By engaging in participant observation (moderate participation and peripheral membership) it was my desire to gain an understanding of the group's experience during the challenge course program. While participants engaged in different activities for the day (see Appendix A), I attempted to unobtrusively (standing or sitting approximately ten feet away from all activities) observe their actions, comments, and interactions individually and collectively. The research assistant also attempted to unobtrusively videotape group members as they participated throughout the day. Toward this end, the research assistant remained approximately ten feet away and did not interact with the group. As I watched participants during the initiative activities, low elements, and high elements, I took "jottings" of what I saw (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Jottings are described as key words, statements, or even sentences written within the moment or shortly following an occurrence that helped me remember the situation at a later point in time (Emerson, et al., 1995). These jottings provided me with a written record of events that occurred during the challenge course program (e.g., participant who elected not to participate in an activity, comments which appeared contrary to the group's position as a whole). As suggested by Emerson et al., my jottings were expanded as quickly as possible (e.g., the following day) after completion of the program. Expanding jottings involved typing a detailed narrative that

included comments, actions, and events that were noted during the observation. This narrative functioned as data and was used during follow-up interviews to help participants remember certain incidents that occurred during the challenge course program. Jottings were clustered by activities that occurred during specific elements and also according to each participant. With these two arrangements of data, during interviews I presented participants with information specific to them or information specific to an element. For instance, when a participant was trying to remember what occurred within the group on a specific element, I referred the participant to notes related to that element. Similarly, if a participant was interested in his/her specific behavior, I referred to notes on that individual. As they related to the research questions and offered particularly positive or negative opinions, specific passages from participant observation notes and the video were also highlighted and brought to the interviews and focus group (in the form of typed text and digital video clips).

When conducting participant observations during the challenge course program, the issue of *what* to observe arose. Entering any fieldwork situation where attempts will be made to document participant behaviors and interactions can appear quite daunting and unmanageable at first; however, along with the research questions' focus on communication, cooperation, and team functioning, suggestions from Spradley (1980) and Emerson et al. (1995) provided an outline for determining exactly what I would observe during the program. Spradley (1980) offered a "descriptive question matrix" (clustered around nine categories including: space, object, act, activity, event, time, actor, goal, and feeling) designed to offer questions to guide observations within a fieldwork situation. Specifically, questions related to acting, activity, event, actor, goal, and feeling were used to help focus my observation. During my observations (during the actual program and then while observing the video) I had Spradley's descriptive

question matrix with me to provide questions for the observations. Efforts were made to attempt to answer questions from this matrix.

Emerson et al. (1995) offered three suggestions to provide assistance in choosing what to observe within a fieldwork situation. First, they suggested that observers note their initial impression of the physical location and participants within that location. Focusing on the five senses and participants' initial reaction to the challenge course provided guidance when attempting to take jottings of my first impression. Secondly, noting key events and occurrences which transpired during the challenge course program provided direction to my observations. Key occurrences were defined as events which I did not expect to see or instances which were counter-intuitive to what I expected to see (Emerson et al., 1995). Finally, observing what participants talked about, what they observed, and their reactions to different events not only focused my observations, but encouraged consideration of their perspectives of the situation. I constantly filtered suggestions from Spradley (1980) and Emerson et al. (1995) through the research questions as they related to communication and cooperation.

To ensure that my observations remained focused while at the challenge course, the night before the program I printed pages from the methods chapter which specifically addressed this topic. In the appropriate sections, I used a highlighter to emphasize "action" words (e.g., focusing on five senses, noting key occurrences, observing participants reactions). Using these actions words and aforementioned sections of Spradley's matrix, I created a 12-point document written in large, 16-point font. This document, along with Spradley's matrix, the original, highlighted text pages, and my research questions were placed in the front pocket of the notebook I used to make my jottings. Periodically, throughout the day, I reviewed my research questions and observation information.

The day following the program, I reviewed the five videotapes (7.5 hours) that were taken. Procedures for selecting what to observe while reviewing the videotapes were identical to those used during in vivo participant observation. Two days following the program I transferred all of the digital videos to my laptop computer (the videos were also saved to CD-ROMs and a second computer). Once they were stored on my computer I watched each tape in its entirety in real time. As I was watching the videos, I had copies of the printed, highlighted methods pages, Spradely's matrix, and my created "action" list visible on the desk. While the videos played, I had a Microsoft Word window open so I could type as I watched the videos. In Microsoft Word I documented different actions that occurred and times when they transpired. After completing my review the videotapes I had a newly created document (entitled videotape observations) that noted times when different interactions occurred. Along with these forms of participant observation, data were also collected via a focus group.

Because the challenge course program asked participants to work together in their group, effort was made to allow the group opportunity to explore the collective meaning of their experience. In general, focus groups allow individuals to come together to discuss a topic (e.g., perception of a one-day challenge course program) from multiple perspectives and provide an opportunity for individuals to "stimulate each other to articulate their views or even to realize what their own views are" (Bogden & Bicklin, 2003, p. 101). Using a focus group to learn more about participants' perspectives related to the challenge course program also provided me with the opportunity to continue observation of participants' interactions with one another (Madriz, 2003). Since focus groups have been identified as a successful method for (a) exploration and discovery, (b) understanding context and depth, and (c) understanding and interpreting (Morgan, 1998), they appeared to be an appropriate data collection technique for a project exploring

participants' perceptions related to an experience, gaining a greater understanding of that experience, and interpreting participants' views.

The focus group occurred three days following the challenge course program (see Appendix F for time line) and involved almost all participants (one participant was not able to attend due to scheduled time off). The purpose of the focus group was not to provide follow-up of the challenge course program (e.g., administer another, similar program); rather, the focus group served as a tool to continue to solicit participants' perceptions related to their one-day challenge course program. The focus group occurred in a large room located at the participants' workplace, which was conducive to audio recording. A focus group interview guide (see Appendix G) was used to direct the flow of questions. This guide listed a sequence of potential questions related to understanding the group's perception of the challenge course program; however, because the group explored topics not included on the original interview guide, adaptations occurred. These adaptations (e.g., questions omitted, questions added) were noted and iterations of the focus group interview guide were retained and presented (see Appendix G).

In preparation for the focus group, the night before the session I reviewed the focus group interview guide and prepared four video clips (approximately one minute and 20 seconds in total length) for the group to review. To select video clips, I searched through the videotape observation document created when reviewing the video tapes and looked for examples of communication and cooperation. As I found different potential examples I tried to determine how clear of an example of communication or cooperation was presented. Based on the clarity of the example, I selected two clips which demonstrated positive communication and cooperation and two clips which demonstrated negative communication and cooperation. These clips were spliced together using Windows Movie Maker program. Also, the night prior to the focus group I

explained the purpose and details of note taking to a research assistant who was going to take notes during the focus group. She was instructed to stand in a clearly visible location and attempt to jot down key words or phrases provided by participants in response to questions posed during the focus group.

I arrived to the focus group with the focus group interview guide, participant observation notes, pens, a 27" x 34" tablet of paper, a voice recorder, a laptop computer with pre-selected video segments, an LCD projector, and a research assistant prepared to take notes. The focus group began with me turning on the voice recorder, stating the date and location of the focus group, informing participants of the purpose, soliciting individual verbal consent and acknowledgement that the focus group was being taped, and then presenting the first question on the focus group interview guide. Questions on the focus group interview guide covered topics including: instances remembered, lessons taught, outcomes noticed, workplace impact, and perception of the challenge course program for individuals and the group. Four prepared video clips from the day at the challenge course were projected on the wall during the 45 minute focus group and participants were asked to explore their perceptions related to the particular experiences presented. As I asked the group questions, the research assistant recorded notes on the pad of paper. In an effort to provide visual reminders and promote further discussion and exploration, the assistant was instructed to write participants' answers to questions on the pad of paper. These notes provided visual cues for issues the group elected to discuss in greater detail. Upon completion of the focus group, the tape was sent to a professional transcription service to be transcribed into a word processing program; however, because of unknown technical difficulties, the service was unable to transcribe the tape. Notes taken by the research assistant were typed into a word processing program and served as the record of what occurred during the

focus group. Along with the focus group, I also collected data via individual qualitative interviews.

Immediately following the focus group I provided participants with a sign-up sheet for individual interviews. Because of the varied times during the day when participants were available, I determined it would be best to have them select which one-hour time slot would fit their schedule. While the initial plan called for selecting individuals “on the basis of giving strong opinions and uniquely positive or negative responses...” (Bramwell et. al, 1997, p. 15) this was not deemed practical due to constraints within the work environment and the desire to complete the interviews within one week of the program. Prior to each individual interview I did a word search for a participant’s name in the participant observation document. Each time the individual’s name was found, I copied and pasted the relevant section into a new document titled with the participant’s name. I continued this process until I had identified all sections within the participant observation document where the participant’s name had been mentioned. I next did a word search for the participant’s name in the videotape observation document. Again, as I found the participant’s name, the relevant section was copied and pasted into the participant’s document. In addition to copying relevant passages, times where the participant was mentioned were also noted. This process continued until I had identified all times where the participant had been mentioned. With this newly created document I reviewed the written notes and sections of video, and using Windows Movie Maker, I created a video comprised of six to ten clips totaling approximately one minute. I went to each interview with a printed copy of that participant’s notes and their video clips cued up and ready to play on my laptop computer.

During the interviews (all of which occurred in a conference room at ADC) I asked questions related to communication and cooperation and offered participants an opportunity to

express their perceptions of the program. They were also asked to explore potential outcomes associated with them as individuals and as a collective group that they may have experienced as a result of participation in the program. Particular quotes and interactions were presented (in the form of digital video clips) for feedback during the interview. Specifically, interviewees were asked to comment on their perceptions surrounding the experience occurring within the viewed digital video clip. The type of interview conducted for this study was qualitative.

Qualitative interviews are defined as “interviews that sacrifice uniformity of questioning to achieve fuller development of information...” (Weiss, 1994, p. 3). All interviews for this project followed Weiss’s definition. Through interviews I sought, at the expense of uniform questions and response categories, in-depth information from participants. This form of interviewing allowed me to learn about participants’ expectations, perceptions, and thoughts (Weiss, 1994). According to Charmaz (2002), “Qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight.” (p. 676). Since the interview strategy has been identified as a suggested method of data collection when attempting to (a) develop detailed descriptions, (b) integrate multiple perspectives, (c) describe a process, (d) develop a holistic perspective, and (e) learn how events are interpreted (Weiss, 1994, pp. 9-10), it appeared to be an appropriate strategy to answer the proposed research questions.

An interview guide (see Appendix H) that adapted and evolved as needed throughout the study directed each interview. The interview guide was created on the basis of the research questions; however, as individual interviews progressed, questions asked during the individual interviews differed slightly from the guide. Additional questions and any questions omitted from the interview process were documented and all versions of the guide were retained (see

Appendix H). Similarly, as interviews progressed, participants' responses necessitated adapting and changing questions for future interviews. These adaptations were noted and all iterations of the interview guide have been retained; however, because qualitative interviews sacrifice conformity for the fuller development of ideas, different questions posed within the interviews did not threaten the interview process.

I arrived at each interview session with an interview guide, previous data collected (transcripts of participant observation and after the initial interview, transcripts of previous interviews), pens, a tablet of paper, a voice recorder, and a laptop computer with pre-selected video segments. Each interview began with me turning on the voice recorder, stating the date, soliciting verbal consent and acknowledgement that the interview is being taped, and then beginning with the first question on the interview guide. As I asked the participant questions, I recorded notes on a pad of paper. I used this opportunity to jot down words, points, or phrases that I felt would be important to discuss further during the interview. These jottings were not a part of the final transcribed record of the interview. Upon completion of the interviews, tapes were sent to a professional transcription service.

Easton, McComish, and Greenberg (2000) suggested that equipment failure, environmental hazards (e.g., external noises and interruptions), and transcription errors are the most common problems facing qualitative researchers' attempts to record and analyze data. Therefore, based on suggestions by Easton, et al., I made sure all equipment was in working order prior to group and individual interviews, carried spare batteries and tapes, and confirmed that interview locations were quiet and free from distractions (e.g., turn off phones, pagers); however, interruptions did occur during the interviews. While the interview location was a conference room with a closed door, employee lockers located in this room necessitated an

occasional interruption from other employees. To protect the confidentiality of interviewees, the interviews were temporarily suspended at these moments.

In preparation for each follow-up interview (six-weeks after the initial interview), I reviewed all transcripts for information which I had previously identified as pertinent for follow-up within the second interview. Upon completion of this review, I printed an interview guide for each participant where I wrote participant specific questions to explore with that individual. (For instance in her initial interview, Renee stated that Nick was going to bring her a hiking book on the Appalachian Trail. On Renee's interview guide I made a notation to ask her if she had received the book.) After reviewing the initial interview transcripts, I identified 2-3 distinct questions for each participant. In an effort to understand participants' perceptions related to communication and cooperation on individual elements, I took pictures of all initiative activities, low elements, and high elements in which participants engaged. I then printed each activity or element as an 8X10 photo and presented these pictures to participants in the interviews (see Appendix I). Finally, immediately prior to an individual's interview (night or morning before) I re-read the participant's initial transcript to refresh my memory about that individual's comments and determine if there were any additional questions I might address.

The intent of these six-week follow-up interviews was not to provide an additional challenge course program designed to continue to facilitate participants' comprehension and grasp of the program's goals (e.g., communication and cooperation); rather, the follow-up interviews served as a tool to continue to solicit participants' perceptions related to their one-day challenge course program. With the exception of one participant who had returned to school, all participants who completed the initial interviews volunteered to complete the six-week interview. To accommodate their schedules, employees were given an interview sign up sheet

where they could identify the day and time which would best fit their schedule. Participants engaged in the six-week interview to offer additional information related to experiences during the challenge course program and offer insights into developing themes. These final interviews focused on participants' perceptions of the challenge course program but had the added dimension of the passage of time. During these interviews I asked questions related to lessons learned on the challenge course and any potential applications of those lessons. Issues related to communication and cooperation were also discussed. Notes from initial interviews, participant observations (written and pictorial), and the focus group, as well as developed themes, were presented to participants in an effort to solicit their perception six weeks removed from the challenge course program. Following each interview, audio tapes were sent to a professional transcription service. As transcriptions were returned, I analyzed the data using suggestions from Wolcott (1994), Emerson et al. (1995), Silverman (2000), and DeWalt and DeWalt (2002).

Data Transformation

According to Wolcott (1994) there are three primary methods for transforming qualitative data (e.g., participant observation notes, focus groups, and interview transcripts): (a) description, (b) analysis, and (c) interpretation. For the purposes of this project only two of these methods (analysis and interpretation) were used. Wolcott (1994) defined analysis as “the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them—in short, how things work” (p. 12). This process of analysis builds on the descriptions created and is concrete and factual in nature. To accomplish this task, Wolcott suggested that the researcher (a) display his/her findings, (b) identify regularities, (c) compare with other cases, and (d) critique the process. Engaging in these strategies allowed for both effective data management and clear, systematic techniques for understanding meaning of the collected data.

Initially, the analysis process was aided by displaying findings. With this process, Wolcott (1994) suggested that charts, figures, diagrams, photographs, and film may all be acceptable methods for displaying data. In this particular study, I displayed data via figures and diagrams that explored interactions among and between participants as well as conversation patterns as observed and described by participants. Data were also displayed through videos created for each participant. For this study, all data displayed moved the analysis process toward understanding participants' perceptions of a one-day challenge course program.

Relationships identified via figures, diagrams, and videos led to the next suggestion offered by Wolcott (1994) when analyzing data—identifying regularities. With this process of identifying regularities, I attempted to avoid stereotyping or making overgeneralizations by understanding what was occurring consistently within the challenge course program. In an effort to identify regularities within the data, I attempted to recognize certain words or phrases used by members of the group. I also attempted to notice similar manners that participants described a specific challenge course element. Presenting these regularities aided in data analysis process, but they were not viewed individually without consideration of other cases. As suggested by Wolcott (1994) comparing regularities with other cases may lead to alternate interpretations of the data. Recognizing a phenomenon in one setting or with one group did not provide me with the ability to generalize to all similar groups. By comparing statements and thought patterns presented by one participant with statements or thought patterns from others within the study, I examined the data as a whole rather than make interpretations based on individual cases.

Data analysis was also enhanced by constantly critiquing the process. Wolcott (1994) emphasized that the critique process is two-pronged—focusing both on the methods used and the results themselves. By critiquing the methods and results, I provided readers with an additional

lens through which to judge the trustworthiness of the study. This study concluded with a section dedicated to critiquing the work. Presenting these critiques not only added to the overall value of the work, but also provided suggestions on how to improve methods used to examine participants' perceptions of challenge course programs.

The data analysis processes of displaying data, identifying regularities, comparing cases, and critiquing the process, was aided by coding the data. Coding was defined by Straus and Corbin (1990), as “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered” (p.101). Ryan and Bernard (2000) stated that “coding is the heart and soul of whole-text analysis” (p. 780). To identify features and interrelationships within the entire text, I coded both participant observation notes and all interview transcripts. This coding process allowed me to determine which data to display, regularities in the data, and which cases to compare. Toward this end, I read through my transcripts and participant observation notes searching for words or concepts that repeated themselves noticeably. When I felt I had discovered such words, I made a notation on small pieces of paper and conducted a word find within my word processing program to identify times participants used that word. I attempted to use in vivo codes (e.g., words, ideas, concepts used by participants) that allowed participant's words to be presented directly (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). While this was not possible in all cases, it was one goal of the analysis. In sections where I identified repetitive words or concepts, I completed a line-by-line coding. This line-by-line coding allowed for an in-depth development of concepts (Charmaz, 2000) and similar concepts were grouped together as themes. By first examining individual words to generate codes and then completing a line-by-line coding of data chunks (e.g., paragraphs surrounding repeated words), I generated themes based on participants' transcripts and observation notes. Codes and themes were displayed graphically, examined for

regularities, and compared with one another (For examples of coding, see Appendix J). After generating several themes and reducing the data set, I employed Wolcott's (1994) final method of data transformation (interpretation) where I returned to the literature to search for similar themes as those discovered within the transcripts.

During the interpretation process I attempted to make cautious connections and address questions such as "what does it all mean?" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). In this stage of data transformation, descriptions and analysis, combined with existing literature, directed me as I attempted to coalesce all of the data and explain it within the larger picture of previous research on challenge course programs and teams. Wolcott suggested that interpretation is aided by extending the analysis (pose questions for future researchers), making connections to personal experiences, and constantly analyzing the process of interpretation. I attempted to interpret the data by posing questions for future researchers, making connections to past personal experiences and examples within the literature, and analyzing the process by attempting to identify what components may be missing that would help explain these participants' perceptions of a challenge course program.

In this current project I transformed the data to understand what factors were at work during the program. Above suggestions related to analysis (e.g., displaying findings, identifying regularities, comparing cases, critiquing the process, and coding the data) were followed. Finally, I interpreted the data by addressing the question of meaning. When attempting to make sense of the transformed data I used Silverman's (2000) model of creating an analytic story. The model was followed by (a) exploring the concepts which drove the research (e.g., communication, cooperation), (b) discussing how my findings addressed those key concepts of my research, and (c) examining how my findings addressed the particular research questions. The resulting

description from the transformed data provided readers with a composite story of one group's experience in a challenge course program and answers to the established research questions. By analyzing and interpreting the data, I attempted to present participants' perspectives of a one-day challenge course program.

Concerns in Capturing Participants' Perspectives

Within the context of my research on challenge courses it was important that I remain cautious when describing my participants' perspectives relating to their experience. While it has been many years since I participated in a challenge course program, I have facilitated hundreds of such programs. These experiences have offered me a certain level of insight into what it is like to experience a program as a participant. As a result of my previous challenge course experiences, my difficulties presenting participants' perspectives were two-fold. First, there was always the possibility that I might replace my participants' perspectives with my own. The temptation to attribute personal meaning to a situation was especially difficult. For example, when I saw a participant express a desire not to attempt an activity, I was tempted to think that that individual did not try his/her hardest and decided to quit. For me as a person, I hate to quite or give up and so I try not to do so, but my participants are different than I am and may have done all they could do. Therefore, during data collection and analysis, I continuously reminded myself not to attribute personal meanings to my participants' actions and used individual interviews to clarify individual perspectives.

Secondly, since I have seen hundreds of participants on challenge courses, there was temptation to think that I understood their actions or comments without exploring concepts more deeply. For instance, when I heard a participant say, "I have a bad knee so I can't climb the Pamper Pole," I may have interpreted this as an excuse to avoid climbing the ladder. While other

participants have used this strategy, I tried to avoid using past participants' history to interpret current participants' statements. Specifically, I used interviews to explore participants' meanings behind their actions while participating in the challenge course program.

While my experience with challenge courses increased the likelihood that I might superimpose my experiences over the participants and think that I understand them without exploring their meaning, there were four specific factors suggested by Emerson, et al. (1995), that presented complications associated with the task of presenting others' perspectives of events or experiences: (a) misattribution of categories, (b) misunderstanding of cultures, (c) dealing with personal understandings related to challenge courses, and (d) creating theoretical categories.

First, according to Emerson, et al. (1995), when presenting my participants' perspectives, I might have identified a category presented or described by one culture and attributed it to similar occurrences in another culture. For instance, having worked with numerous college-aged groups, the potential existed to use categories identified by these students with participants in this study. Similarly, having conducted past research with challenge course facilitators, temptations existed to use verbiage and categories presented by the facilitators when referring to participants in this study. To limit this barrier, I attempted to use participants' words to describe and present their perspective on the experience.

Not only were Emerson et al. (1995) cautioning against interpreting meanings across *studied* cultures, but also from my personal culture (biases, beliefs, and background) to the culture I was studying. For instance, through studying organizations and teams, I have an understanding of how I feel a group of employees should interact; however, this may not coincide with the culture within ADC. Therefore, I attempted to understand the participants' culture and learn what was acceptable to them rather than impose my personal concepts of

acceptable and unacceptable behavior upon them. This process of understanding occurred during the interview process when I had opportunity to explore participants' perceptions and culture in greater detail.

Second, another similar issue that might have arisen when working with participants was the desire to use terms understood by one group within the specific culture to another group within the same culture. While teams within an organization may have similar "corporate cultures," using themes or categories derived from one team and attempting to apply them to another team would limit my ability to present all participants' perspectives. For example, sub-groups or cliques existed within the group that participated in the challenge course program. These groups had different shared histories and different perceptions of the challenge course program. Attempting to present one sub-group's perspective as the "true" perspective would have negated perceptions of another other sub-group. Therefore, I attempted to specify different group's behaviors and perceptions rather than overgeneralize and present a "common" set of behaviors or perceptions.

The third issue of complexity on presenting others' perspectives was the temptation to dismiss or ignore participants' thoughts or ideas because I felt I possessed a personal understanding that eclipsed the participant's understanding. Specifically, during this study I engaged in participant observation. Having an intimate knowledge of the elements and the activities (and succumbing to the human nature to get distracted), I tuned out at times and missed an interaction, series of instructions, or verbal exchange. At the point when I "tuned back in" I made efforts not to attribute current comments to past personal experiences with the specific element. Having an in-depth understanding of the activities had the potential to lead me to assume and assign meaning to participants' comments. In doing this, I did not represent my

participants' experiences, but my experiences in similar situations. To minimize this possibility, I provided participants with opportunities (via follow-up interviews) to address specific interactions, behaviors, or verbal exchanges that occurred during the challenge course program and videotaped the experience for analysis.

From working with challenge courses for numerous years comes an idea of the way things are "supposed to" work and the way participants are "supposed to" behave. Even though the program only lasted for one day, I needed to allow for the possibility that participant reactions and perceptions could change from the first time I saw them. For instance, several participants arrived and verbalized that they were very tired and not excited about coming to the challenge course. As the day progressed, these participants' feelings and emotions changed and evolved. Without allowing individual participants to define their emotions attached to the day and specific activities, I would only suggest *my* perception of what I thought they were feeling. Participants' perceptions were fluid and changed over time and I attempted to present those perceptions as they evolved. An initial impression was not a final impression. As mentioned previously, follow-up interviews were used to confirm issues observed during the program. As the interview process progressed and themes developed, participants were also given opportunity to express their thoughts related to the thematic developments.

The final complexity dealing with presenting participants' perceptions related to development of theoretical categories and included two potential difficulties: (a) a priori theoretical categories, and (b) personal categories. First, it seems that rather than allow participants' to speak for themselves, much challenge course research has attempted to fit its findings into the preconceived theoretical notion that challenge courses are beneficial and that taking risks leads to positive outcomes. Whether participants have been asked to describe

benefits they feel they gained as a result of participation (e.g., Goldenberg, Klenosky, O’Leary, & Templin, 2000) or whether they have been encouraged to take risks because the benefits outweigh the potential dangers (e.g., Priest, 1992), researchers have traditionally approached challenge course programs with a priori categories related to potential benefits. In an effort to address the potential pitfalls with a priori categories, I strove to approach the data without preconceived themes or categories in which I would have liked the data to fit.

While I have spent time examining assumptions related to challenge courses, I was still at risk of imposing personal themes to interactions and activities occurring during programs. For instance, I observed several individuals encouraging others in the group and thought to label that person as a “cheerleader.” The label made sense to me, but did it reflect my participants’ perceptions? Did others in the group use the term “cheerleader?” Did others in the group even recognize this individual’s attempts to encourage? By imposing personal categories on the findings, I would limit my participants’ perspectives. When developing themes, I used participants’ language and confirmed themes with participants during follow-up interviews and member checks.

According to Emerson et al. (1995), the aforementioned factors might have prevented me from presenting others’ experiences; however, Silverman (2000) offered the following suggestions for addressing these complexities within my research: (a) refutability principle, (b) constant comparison, (c) comprehensive data treatment, and (d) deviant case analysis. Along with Silverman’s suggestions, the difficulty of presenting participants’ perceptions was also reduced through two additional techniques: (a) recognition and acknowledgement of personal biases, and (b) member checks. These six suggestions were employed as methods to limit the extent of personal bias while amplifying the voices of my participants.

Silverman (2000) suggested that one critique of qualitative research is that it tends to be anecdotal in that researchers present incomplete stories or clips of conversations which help to bolster their initial hypotheses. The refutability principle suggested that researchers, in addition to attempting to prove their hypotheses, also attempt to disprove or refute their hypotheses. Many times entering into a project with a preconceived notion can lead researchers to believe the data support their thinking, when in reality, the data may refute their thinking. While not all qualitative research begins with a hypothesis, all researchers begin their work with specific experiences and histories that introduce bias into the project. Trying to understand and present participants' perspectives can benefit from the notion of the refutability principle. For example, I have recognized that I view challenge courses in a very positive light and also that several assumptions are present in the literature. Using suggestions from Silverman, I attempted to disprove the assumptions and biases that I presented and I attempted to find instances where participants did not refer to the challenge course program in a positive light. Not only did attempting to refute my hypotheses allow me to better represent my participants' perspectives (because I was forced to examine all facets of the data), but it offered believability to the reader.

Constant comparison involved repeatedly evaluating pieces of data against one another. By initially analyzing data and developing preliminary thematic categories, I compared new data to older data and determine if they matched. By constantly comparing data throughout the project I increased the likelihood that I accurately represented my participants' perspectives because I did not simply gather one or two cases that supported *my* perspective relating to an issue. This method of comparison encouraged examination of themes within the data, and when a discrepancy occurred, I addressed it within the context of all the data as opposed to within the context of one or two cases and my personal reflections or thoughts. This specific technique

related to Emerson et al.'s (1995) concern regarding seeing what is "supposed to be." To engage in constant comparison of the data, I not only examined new pieces of data, but I also compared them with previously collected pieces of data (e.g., I analyzed the first interview and then following the second interview, I analyzed and then compared both interviews). Examining data consistently allowed for participants' thoughts, ideas, and actions to evolve rather than remain static, and was greatly aided by comprehensive treatment of the data.

Again, in an effort to eliminate the critique of "anecdotalism," Silverman (2000) encouraged researchers to use all data at their disposal. Within quantitative research, data that do not fit within an acceptable range are deemed outliers and they may be eliminated from analysis. Qualitative researchers can be guilty of eliminating outliers if they do not use all data and only use that which helps to affirm their hypothesis or fits within their worldview. Specifically, when the researcher selects one or two cases to report and ignores the remaining data, there is risk that the perspectives presented are not participants' but rather the researcher's. Working with the entire data set encourages researchers to present their participants' perspectives. For instance, within my research I observed an instance where a participant elected not to participate in any of the high elements while the rest of the group attempted these elements. By following Silverman's suggestion of comprehensive data treatment, I examined all data to determine that individual's rationale for avoiding the high elements and how this perspective was received by other individuals within the group. This level of examining data and seeking cases which contradicted one another was what Silverman referred to as "deviant case analysis."

All of the participants did not feel the same way all of the time throughout the challenge course program. Researchers who offer statements such as, "all participants expressed excitement when looking at the Pamper Pole," tend to make a critical reader wary of their claims.

While it may be true that *many* participants felt excited prior to climbing the Pamper Pole, some may have been anxious, nervous, or scared. To present each participant's perspective, it was important to identify cases which strayed from ideas presented by a majority of the group (likewise, if participants were in complete agreement on a topic, that information was presented). Presenting deviant cases did not weaken the findings; rather, it provided the reader confidence that the researcher was willing to report these cases. It also offered a more accurate perspective of a participant's thoughts or feelings related to a specific event. Therefore, as deviant cases presented themselves, I identified and discussed them within the results.

While I used suggestions from Silverman (2000) to increase believability and present my participants' perspectives, trying to understand and present another's perspective was also dictated by my personal beliefs and biases. If I did not recognize that these existed and did not present them to the reader, I was less able to portray my participants' perspectives. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), "Our reporting, however, should attempt to make these biases as explicit as possible so that others may use these in judging our work" (p. 81). Recognizing and presenting this bias did not eliminate the difficulty of presenting another's perspective, but it improved the reader's understanding of my perspectives. As has been mentioned, I have biases related to challenge courses. The subjective nature of qualitative research potentially allowed for my biases to override perceptions of my participants. Suggestions offered by Silverman (2000) included techniques that I used to attempt to limit my biases while I presented the subjective reality of my participants. As with the children's game "telephone," when a message is conveyed from one person to another, there is potential for error. By recognizing this potential for error created by my biases, I attempted to limit their effects on my research. Along with recognizing

and addressing personal beliefs and biases, using member checks encouraged accurate reporting of participants' perceptions.

In a continued effort to address the complexities of presenting others' perspectives, I engaged in member checks. This process involved presenting members with findings in an effort to solicit their opinions related to the veracity of my writing. For example, one method of member checking occurred when I asked participants during the interviews to clarify or verify concepts, conversations, or interactions I recorded during my observations. Another example of how member checking assisted in presenting my participants' perspectives was in development of themes. As I analyzed data and developed themes, I scheduled times to present these in written and visual form (e.g., view theme diagrams) to participants for their feedback. This process provided participants with an opportunity to limit encroachment of my biases and replace them with their subjective realities. Member checks occurred after the data collection phases of this study and participants suggested that the themes (and the interactions of the themes) accurately depicted their perceptions of the experience. By presenting participants with an interpretation of their actions and words, group members had opportunity to re-evaluate, clarify, and increase the likelihood that their voices were heard.

Presenting others' perceptions was a daunting task. According to Allison and Pomeroy (2000), "...the individual's experience and interpretation is central" (p. 93). As a researcher I saw that I had a responsibility to both my readers and my participants to represent my participants' perceptions as accurately as possible. Within this process I struggled with controlling my own biases and experiences, but I used suggestions from Silverman (2000) to clarify and illuminate my participants' perceptions rather than my own. The process was complicated by factors including misattribution of categories, misunderstanding of cultures,

dealing with personal understandings related to challenge courses, and creating theoretical categories; however, by acknowledging and presenting my personal biases, engaging in member checks, and following suggestions from Silverman (e.g., refutability principle, constant comparison, comprehensive data treatment, and deviant case analysis), I limited effects of my bias as a researcher and focus on participants' perceptions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions of their experiences in a one-day challenge course program. This process was aided through addressing the following research questions:

Research Question #1: What are participants' perceptions related to a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #2: What are participants' perceptions related to communication during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #3: What are participants' perceptions related to cooperation during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #4: What are participants' perceptions related to team functioning during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Sixteen adults who were members of a team within a dental office participated in a one-day (8.5 hour) challenge course program comprised of one socializing game (Boat/Island), two initiative activities (Warp Speed and Turnstile), two low elements (Islands and TP Shuffle), and three high elements (Catwalk, Pamper Pole, and Zip Line). After finishing each element, two trained facilitators processed ideas of communication, cooperation, team functioning and other general issues which arose during the activities. Upon completion of the program, participants

engaged in one focus group (three days after the program) and two individual interviews (immediately following the focus group and six weeks following individual interviews).

Explanation of Data

In addition to collecting data via a focus group and individual interviews, data were also collected via participant observation that resulted in notes based on in vivo and videotaped observations. The day participants attended the challenge course program I engaged in participant observation of their behaviors and interactions. During the eight and one half hour program I stood apart from the group and took 16 pages of handwritten notes. The day following the program, I expanded these notes into 34 pages of typed text which provided an observational perspective of the participants' experience. These notes served as an additional source of information to gain an understanding of participants' perspectives of their experience during the program and were coded in the same manner as the interview transcripts. In conjunction with conducting participant observation the day of the program, a research assistant also videotaped participants throughout the day. At the completion of the day there were seven and a half hours of recorded video (lunch and times in transition between elements were not recorded). This digitized video was transferred to a laptop computer and observed in the same fashion as the "live" participant observation. The expanded 17 pages of notes obtained from the digital video included occurrences of interest and times when events occurred.

As mentioned previously, a focus group was conducted three days following the program. While this focus group was audio taped, a research assistant also took extensive notes during the proceeding. Due to audio difficulties, the tape for the focus group was unable to be transcribed and the notes taken by the research assistant became the recorded data for this method. The final and most significant form of data collected was individual interviews. Interviews ranged from

30-60 minutes and transcription length ranged from 20-54 pages. Each individual interview transcription was read numerous times, coded, and relied on for a majority of the data analysis. Other forms of data collected (e.g., participant observation notes, video tapes, focus group notes) were used as secondary sources of information to offer additional depth and a measure of comparison for topics and ideas presented during the individual interviews.

Pre-Challenge Course Environment

Through analysis of the different data sources collected, a supportive and encouraging environment appeared to exist prior to participation in the challenge course program. While this existing environment was not developed as a theme, it offered insight into the present culture within the dental office. This environment appeared to be an outcome of three distinct sources: (a) office environment, (b) personal relationships, and (c) program structure.

Office Environment

Through my observations prior to the program and through participants' description of their workplace, I came to understand the work environment as very busy and hectic; however, in the midst of this busyness there appeared to be a perception among employees that they get along and work in a positive environment. According to Jean⁵ "our group is exceptional...I think everybody should have a positive attitude and I think most of our girls do. So that created a positive support." Jean also continued to say, "But if you are negative you don't stay here in this office because you're not going to make it." Other participants echoed these thoughts (albeit not as vociferously) when referring to their experiences in the workplace when discussing times they had gone out to lunch with other employees or just their general positive feelings relating to their

⁵ All participants have been provided with pseudonyms.

work environment. The pre-existing supportive and encouraging environment was also the product of close relationships present within the work place.

Personal Relationships

Family Dental Center (FDC) employs many relatives including cousins, sisters (twins), and brothers. Similarly, there were other participants who were not a part of a biological family but they identified as a family member. For instance, Renee identified Brad, an older group member, as a “father-like figure” and referenced him as someone she had known for a long period of time and as an individual with whom she felt comfortable. As evidence for existing relationships within the group, Renee stated that Becky, Clark, and Blake had all been together the night prior to the program. The existing biological family relationships as well as the pseudo-family relationships present within ADC also suggested the presence of a supportive and encouraging environment existing prior to the challenge course.

Program Structure

Finally, a supportive and encouraging environment was enhanced by design of the challenge course program. The challenge course program was structured in a two-fold manner including: (a) element selection and (b) facilitators’ words. Elements selected for this program were chosen partially because of their ability to promote interaction among group members. Participants were placed in situations which encouraged them to reach out to others for physical and emotional assistance. Within this environment, support and encouragement became necessary tools for attempting and completing different activities; however, achievement of the program’s goals was also aided by the facilitators. Facilitators were trained to promote an encouraging and supportive environment throughout the course of the day. This was conducted during the processing sessions where facilitators addressed particular positive or negative

instances of support and encouragement. For instance, during “the Islands” Becky arrived at the third island and began using phrases like “hold on to each other so nobody loses their balance” and was exhorting her teammates who were on the other platforms. As these behaviors exhibited support and encouragement, the facilitators provided opportunity for praise and discussion when processing this activity. While no questions were presented to participants about why they felt the group was supportive and encouraging, they presented evidence throughout the day and their interviews which suggested that the current office environment, pre-existing relationships, and the program structure led to the creation of a supportive and encouraging environment before the group arrived at the challenge course.

Data Transformation

Data were transformed to understand what factors were at work during the program. To present participants’ perspectives, data were coded, findings displayed, regularities identified, cases compared and the process critiqued. Additionally, I interpreted the data by addressing the question of meaning via: (a) exploring the concepts which drove the research (e.g., communication, cooperation), (b) discussing how findings addressed key research concepts, and (c) examining how findings addressed the research questions. The resulting description offered a composite story of one group’s experience in a challenge course program and provides some answers to the research questions. By analyzing and interpreting the data, I attempted to present participants’ perspectives of this particular challenge course program. (For a more complete discussion of data analysis and collection, see chapter three and Appendix K.)

Presentation of Themes

After reading, re-reading, manipulating, and analyzing the data, nine themes emerged: (a) Support and Encouragement, (b) I’ve Gotta Do It, (c) Individual Emphasis, (d) Changes in

Emotion, (e) Effectiveness of Communication, (f) Too Many Chiefs, (g) Cooperation, (h) Camaraderie, and (i) Impact of Program. Of these nine themes, Support and Encouragement appeared to be the central idea which ultimately provided the context for the program. It was from this context that the remaining eight themes emerged and provided answers to the specific research questions. Attempts at Communication, Too Many Chiefs, Cooperation, and Camaraderie all addressed the three research questions exploring participants' perceptions of team functioning, communication, and cooperation, while Changes in Emotion, I've Gotta Do It, and Individual Emphasis provided answers for the first research question related to general perceptions of the challenge course program. Because Attempts at Communication, Too Many Chiefs, Cooperation, and Camaraderie offered insights into the group as a whole, these themes were categorized under the larger umbrella of "We." Similarly, since the themes of Changes in Emotion, I've Gotta Do It, and Individual Emphasis all addressed the individual, these themes were categorized under the larger umbrella of "I." The remaining sections of this chapter address each of these themes in greater detail.

Support and Encouragement

The theme of Support and Encouragement was central to the participants' experience at the challenge course, and as a result, throughout the entire day, the notion of support and encouragement was present. This continual support was emphasized by Jean's thoughts about the support and encouragement that was present during the challenge course program, "Anytime you did an activity it was encouraging." While participants varied in their opinions related to effectiveness of communication and cooperation while at the challenge course, there was consensus that support and encouragement were vital to the group. Whether they were passing a ball around the circle during Warp Speed or sliding down the Zip Line, participants stated that

they felt encouragement and support from the other team members. While support and encouragement were generally observed and exhibited by participants, the specific theme was comprised of five sub-themes including (a) investment, (b) reciprocity, (c) verbal and physical, (d) necessary, and (e) pressure (see Figure 1).

Investment. In providing support and encouragement for other group members, there was a level of investment that was present. In some instances, this investment manifested itself as deep emotions while during other occasions, it was exhibited as more general feelings of caring for other individuals who were present. For example, during her first interview I asked Becky what she liked most about the experience and her response demonstrated this idea of deep emotional investment.

The best part I think was watching people that didn't think they could do it accomplish goals because Renee is my best friend and I would have paid you \$10.00 that she was not going to climb up there. I mean she cries when she gets on top of a ladder. I couldn't believe my eyes. It made me cry when she crossed that Catwalk. I don't know, that was my favorite part.

While not evoking the same emotional response of crying, Jenny addressed the notion of investment when I asked her what her perception was of the group's performance on the high elements.

I thought everybody really supported each other. I felt like everybody really seemed to care about each person up there and also about maybe their feelings and whether or not they were okay or not emotionally. I did feel that way. I felt like at that point I really felt like it was a lot more supporting.

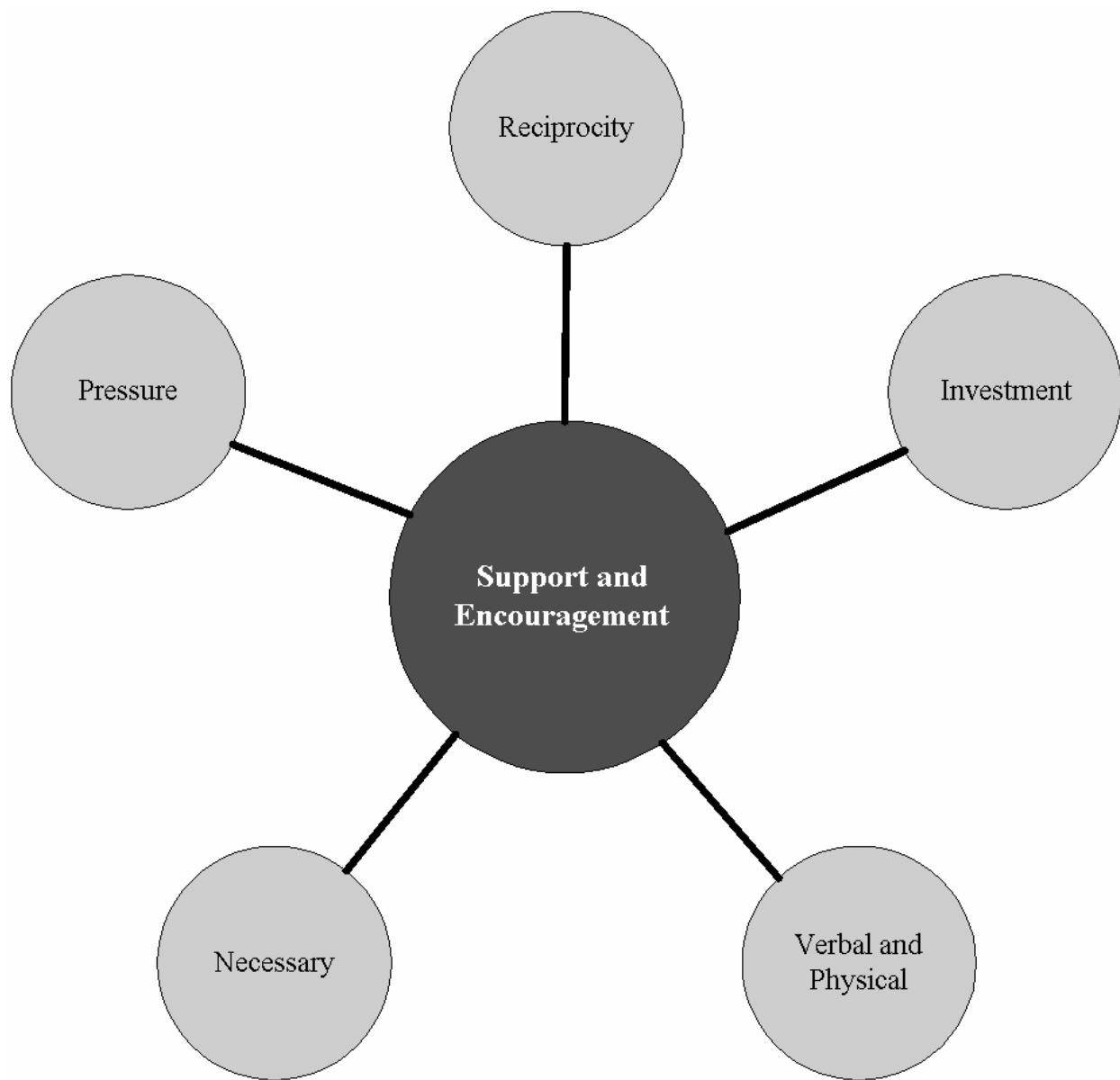


Figure 1 Theme of "Support and Encouragement"

This level of investment was reported by most participants throughout the day. As Michelle stated, we were “genuinely concerned for each other,” and Christy summarized the investment involved in supporting and encouraging one another by saying she supported the group by “just being there.” While a majority of participants did exhibit a level of investment throughout the day, there was one case where one participant did not follow this trend.

To illustrate this case which strays from the norm established by the group (deviant case) two perspectives are presented—participants who discussed a specific behavior in the interviews and my observations while present at the challenge course. First, during the course of the interviews, two participants, Nick and Kim, discussed participants sleeping during the day. When asked about his least favorite part of the day, Nick related a story of when he observed Blake laying on the ground sleeping while others were climbing on the Catwalk.

When Renee was on the Catwalk, somebody just kind of sat back and had fallen asleep against a tree and that kind of bothered me a little bit. She was going through something that was so tough and it was an event that...I don't know if life changing would be, it could very well be life changing, but it was probably one of the tougher things that she had done as far as physically. Seeing a person sitting back asleep, I'm like, 'get up, say something, encourage her,' but, they had encouraged her at times before, but it was kind of one of those things that I personally thought that you needed to stick through and keep on encouraging.

In this instance, Nick did not offer the identity of the person sleeping against the tree; however, my participant observation notes provided additional insight into this situation. While I was observing individuals that day, I was also responsible for handing the research assistant new tapes and batteries for the digital video camera. While the group was participating in the

Catwalk, the research assistant signaled me that he needed a new tape and I walked to the camera bag to retrieve a blank tape. The camera bag was leaning against a tree where one participant, Blake, had fallen asleep and was resting against the bag where the tapes were stored. In the process of getting a blank tape Blake woke up but quickly closed his eyes once I walked away.

Relaying her experience with the Zip Line, Kim suggested that encouragement and participants' level of investment began to fade during this last element. She said, "By the time everybody gets through it you kind of run out of 'yeahs.'" In a similar story as Nick's, although she did not identify this individual, Kim stated, "One person in particular was laying asleep" as others were participating in the Zip Line. These two individuals, Nick and Kim, offered examples that run counter to the theme of Support and Encouragement; however, these examples were not the norm within the group and, because of the additional components which comprise this theme (e.g., reciprocal, verbal/physical, necessary), they do not provide sufficient evidence to eliminate the theme of Support and Encouragement.

Reciprocity. The theme of Support and Encouragement was also supported by the notion of reciprocity. While some participants did receive more encouragement than others, most participants felt that they should both receive and provide support and encouragement. During the second interview, when asked about her thoughts related to support and encouragement at the challenge course, Shelly stated:

The support and encouragement for everyone else and myself I think was great. I think it was genuine. I really was proud of how our whole team pulled together for everyone whether you accomplished or not. So I mean I was just in awe. I saw how a team can work together in situations. You know if we remember in our minds that we are there for not only ourselves but everyone else, that our team can really pull together and do some

amazing things and I think we tend to forget that in the workplace sometimes. That we can accomplish a lot more than just being there. You know that you can support others and get a lot more done in an orderly fashion, more organized and time wise if you support, if you help others in that area. So I was really proud of our team and I think all of the support was genuine. I think it was great that everybody supported everybody and so you know abundantly.

For Shelly, support and encouragement were provided by all participants and she recognized that individuals were not just present at the challenge course to gain something individually but additionally they were involved to support all members of their team. Comments such as what Madison said during her first interview “I was going to encourage everybody” combined with comments similar to Michelle’s during the second interview “lot of times when people were there for me” demonstrated this notion of reciprocity. Group members provided encouragement to and received encouragement from other group members while present at the challenge course; however, this encouragement manifested itself in both verbal and physical forms.

Verbal and physical. The most common form of encouragement identified by participants during their interviews was verbal encouragement—“You can do it!” However, while conducting the participant observations (live and video) I was able to document more in-depth forms of verbal encouragement used during the challenge course program. The following quotes offer a brief sample of supportive and encouraging language used by participants. “Good idea though.” “Ya’ll did good!” “That’s okay.” “That was a good idea.” “Let’s think again.” “Good job Clark.” “There you go!” “Let’s make some noise down here!” “Look at him, he’s a pro!” “She’s just strolling.” “We’re so proud of you!” “You know you can do it!” “That was awesome.” “Sierra’s just shimmying up.” “I’m so proud of her!” While these comments represent specific words

used by participants throughout the day, perhaps the most common form of verbal support and encouragement was general cheering offered at key points during the different elements. For example, during Warp Speed, each time the group reduced the amount of time required for them to complete the task, they cheered. Similarly, when climbing the Pamper Pole, participants would cheer when participants climbed above the ladder, made it to the top of the pole, stood on top of the pole, and jumped off of the pole. Verbal support and encouragement were offered at these key points throughout the entire day; however as mentioned by Kim, “You get tired during the day and then you just say ‘yeah go on.’ So you are tired about that time.” Cheers and forms of verbal support and encouragement were present during the day, but as the day progressed and participants became more tired, the cheers did diminish slightly.

Support and encouragement were also provided through physical means. Consider for example Kim’s story related to Mary’s experience on the Catwalk.

She was really, really scared and I remember you know hollering ‘come on Mary you could do it.’ When she got down she went ‘haah’ and I just gave her a big hug and a pat on the back. After she got down she was just shaking when she got down and I just gave her a hug and patted her on the back, ‘did a good job.’

Kim used the physical acts of hugging and patting Mary on the back to offer her support and encouragement after she completed the Catwalk. Similarly, when discussing completing the Islands, Christy said, “Holding their hands you went right on across.” In this instance she was discussing Bill’s efforts to assist people from one island to another and suggested that holding his hands offered her the support necessary to move across the Islands and complete the element.

The final method of physical support and encouragement was seen through participants’ assisting one another with different equipment needs throughout the day. There were two

primary opportunities for participants to assist with equipment needs: the Pamper Pole and Zip Line. On the Pamper Pole participants had to put on a full body harness in addition to their waist harness which they wore for all the other high elements. Because of the intricacies involved with putting on a full body harness, assistance from another individual expedited the process. When asking participants how they provided support and encouragement to the group, several suggested that helping others into and out of the full body harness was one way that they supported and encouraged other group members. Similarly, on the Zip Line it was necessary for group members to unhook other participants from the Zip Line and assist them down from the element. Christy, who did not attempt any of the high elements, identified this as her way of supporting and encouraging as well as remaining involved with the group.

Like when we did the Zip Line you know we were there supporting the ladder. We were helping them unhook from the harness, helping them down the ladder you know when they call for ‘all clear’ you know you make sure there is no one coming...nobody is in harms way. That it’s clear for them to go. And then there was a few of them that took a little while to get off the platform you know. We was down there encouraging them saying ‘you can do. You’re at the point.’ Just drop down and go you know. That kind of support.

For Christy and others, unhooking carabineers, holding the ladder, and stopping traffic were physical means for them to provide the necessary support and encouragement to other group members as they attempted the different elements.

Necessary. As I had opportunities to observe the support and encouragement that participants provided and received while at the challenge course and listen to them discuss the topic during the interviews, I began to wonder how important receiving support and

encouragement was to the group members. To understand more about this notion, I specifically asked participants what it would have been like without the support and encouragement offered by other group members. While some participants, such as Clark, suggested that it was “good to have people cheering,” other group members such as Renee insinuated that encouragement was more important to her experience.

I don’t really know how I did it the first time besides the encouragement of all my peers... just having everybody standing around me... First of all the encouragement – first and foremost – was what got me over the Catwalk.

For Renee the encouragement of her peers was necessary for her participation on the Catwalk. Renee’s perception was also echoed by Christy’s version of Renee’s experience on the Catwalk.

She kept going until finally she did. She did it all. And she came down to the ground and she was crying and she happy but she’d done it and if it wasn’t for so much encouragement on the ground and give her assurance that she going to be fine, I don’t think she would have done it if she didn’t have that much encouragement from everybody.

According to both Christy and Renee, the group’s support and encouragement was a vital component of Renee’s participation on the Catwalk. This feeling of support and encouragement being necessary to the group was not unique to Renee’s experience. Shelly’s experience on the Pamper Pole helped to emphasize the importance of support and encouragement.

I mean anytime but it really was on top of the Pamper Pole. That was it. I couldn’t get anymore. I couldn’t get another step up. They were like well you’re old but you can do it. I did it. I mean stood up. I wasn’t going to stand up. That was it. I couldn’t...I just kind of hovered over the top and then ...all of a sudden I could tell...hear a few who

recognized about...you just really don't think about it while you are up there. Everybody is cheering you on, you just really don't hear but in that instance I can hear one or two say something that you know and I thought... haa (deep breath) take a breath and get it on up there. So I did.

Shelly continued to say that without the support and encouragement of the group when she reached the difficult moment at the top of the pole, "back down I would have come." Whether it was Michelle saying I "wouldn't have gone up the Pamper Pole" or Madison saying "if you didn't have that encouragement...just say 'well I'll quit here'" there seemed to be a pervading perception that support and encouragement were necessary to the challenge course program; however, there was one instance where Renee identified that she did not want to receive support and encouragement from the group.

During the course of the day, Renee identified a severe fear of ladders and being "terrified" of heights, and when participating in the high elements, she experienced difficulties in completing both the Catwalk and the Zip Line. As mentioned previously, Renee felt that the support and encouragement received on the Catwalk allowed her to participate and complete the activity; however during the Zip Line, Renee was not as excited to receive her group's support.

But when I was on top of the tower there was one point where I was 'oh I wish everybody would shut up. I just can't think.' But it was because of my mind I was just letting that fear was just swimming around in my brain and I had to overcome everything so I didn't want to hear any kind of encouragement. I just wanted to block it out because I didn't think I was going to get off that platform via the Zip Line and I knew I wasn't getting down by the ladder so I was really in a pickle situation in my mind as to how I was thinking the fire department was going to have to come and then I just did it.

At that moment in time, the support and encouragement offered by the group actually served as a constraint to her participation and she expressed a desire for the group to “shut up.” Support and encouragement from the group were not necessary for Renee at this point in the day. It should be noted that Renee felt she was receiving support from one of the facilitators who was with her in the zip tower.

And, Jake really took up the bulk of my fear there because... I mean... he just had to walk me through it... he just had to sit there and be a companion. And, that’s exactly what he did. You know, he just said whatever he could to make me feel comfortable... He’s kind of, you know, he basically took my fear and broke it down and kind of pushed it under the rug slowly. He handled it, and he pushed it under the rug.

While Renee did not want to hear anything from the group, she listened and was appreciative of the words of support and encouragement offered by the facilitator. This instance offered an example where one participant did not feel support and encouragement were necessary, but it did not eliminate perceptions of other participants (including Renee at other points in the day) who felt that support and encouragement were necessary components to their experience.

Pressure. There was only one time throughout the course of the interviews where a participant identified an attempt at support or encouragement as pressure; however, from analysis of the language used by participants and facilitators alike, it appeared that some of the support and encouragement that was offered was perceived as pressure. In an effort to understand if participants perceived support and encouragement as pressure, I directly asked that question during the course of the interviews. While most participants identified that they did not consider the support and encouragement as pressure, both Renee and Shelly relayed two different perspectives of one incident which occurred between them. During Shelly’s interview I asked her

if she could recall an instance where she provided support or encouragement to others in the group, and she offered the following idea:

Yeah like when Renee was up on the Zip Line she had been sitting up there like 15 minutes cause she was actually just horrified to let go and go down and I said ‘okay you have been up there with that man long enough. It’s my turn. Come down.’ You know and she was laughing.

This was a particular instance where Shelly felt she provided support and encouragement to another group member; however, Renee’s version of the story arose from a completely different question during her interview. While talking with Renee during her second interview, I asked her if she ever saw the support that was given as pressure. Below is her version of the same instance Shelly was discussing.

The only time that I felt it was pressure was when I was up on top of the Zip Line, when I was on the platform, after I climbed the ladder and Shelly was the next to go and she only did it as a form of encouragement but at that time like I said I kinda was just swimming with this fear and didn’t want to hear anybody else’s encouragement and then she said something like ‘it’s my turn, come on I want to get my turn too.’ And it was just like that just hit me and I was just like okay that was so negative. It wasn’t that she was negative it was just that I, the only way that I could interpret it was negative because I had so much fear in my heart and in my mind. It was like okay she really wants me to die. She wants me to jump off this thing and die or have a heart attack. So that was the only time I interpreted it as negative.

In this instance, Shelly believed she was supporting Renee while Renee actually felt that she was being pressured to move faster than she was able. While this was the only occurrence where a participant acknowledged the group's support and encouragement as pressure, there appeared to be several other occasions where support and encouragement could have been interpreted as pressure.

During the first group initiative of the day, Warp Speed, the group was encouraging and supporting one another to continually improve the time it took them to complete the task they were attempting. In short, they were exhorting one another to push themselves and achieve more than they initially thought possible. This attitude continued to permeate the group throughout the remainder of the day. On the different low element activities, the group encouraged one another to jump the jump rope and solve the riddle in Turnstile, cross the three Islands while touching the ground as few times as possible, and rearrange their order on the TP Shuffle without stepping off the log. These efforts to support and encourage one another to *meet* and *surpass* their group goals also occurred in the high elements in the form of group pressure.

When conducting the final processing session at the completion of the day, Jake, one of the facilitators stated that he "conned" Madison into attempting the Catwalk. When I asked her what her thoughts were about that situation, this was her response:

Well, it really wasn't a con. He just more gave me encouragement of doing it. Um, you know, I didn't feel like it was a con, that you know, I didn't have to go on and do it. Just him talking to me, you know, telling me the things of, because he sort of told me, you know, what I needed to do to climb the pole. And so, it helped me out just to give me a little thought of what I needed to do to succeed at it.

According to Madison, she did not feel that Jake had conned her into participating, rather she felt that he had “encouraged her” to do what she “needed to do to succeed at it.” While Madison did not identify this particular interaction as pressure under the guise of support or encouragement, it appeared that in this situation, Madison was “pressured” into attempting and completing the Catwalk.

During my second interview with Nick we talked some about his feeling that it was important to encourage the group members to progress past their goals, and he suggested, “I think they set themselves their own limitations. They put their own little block walls and they don’t want to go further than that.” According to Nick, individuals needed to be pushed to go further than they thought they could because “they are able to do a lot more than what [their] minds say.” Support (or pressure) also came when participants were encouraging other participants on the high elements. For instance, when discussing Renee’s climb up the Catwalk, Jean said that she “wanted her to go all the way up.”

I mean if she just went up one step and she just kept going up more and more and more. I said, “That’s great. That’s good for you if you don’t take another step that’s fine but just one more.” Or something like that. She is the one that I really remember the most because she was so terrified.

Through the observations that day and through the course of the interviews it was apparent that group members felt that they were always encouraging one another while at the challenge course. During my first interview with Shelly she briefly mentioned the potential of peer pressure to occur within the group when she stated, “I hope they did this for themselves and not for the peer pressure of being in the group.” While Shelly did not feel that pressure had been exerted on the participants, she did recognize that such an incident could have occurred.

Participants identified occasions where they provided and received support and were reluctant to label a particular interaction as “pressure;” however, in one case Christy related her rationale for not participating in the high elements.

And I felt like I let everybody down for not doing it, but then again, if I would have done it, I don’t know, I would have felt that I would have brought everybody’s expectations down.

While group members did not state that there were particular expectations associated with the different elements, Christy clearly felt that by attempting the high elements and failing at them, she would have let the group down. In this particular challenge course environment there was a clear pressure to succeed that had been fostered throughout the group’s support and encouragement during the day. Even though the group suggested that they were encouraging and supporting and not pressuring other group members, the examples above demonstrate that words used by participants in an attempt to encourage could have been construed as pressure.

I’ve Gotta Do It

As a result of the support and encouragement there appeared to be a feeling among many of the participants that they had to attempt or even complete the different activities presented to them at the ropes course. As Michelle said at the top of the Zip Line:

And I know I was taking deep breaths trying to calm myself down and relax my muscles because it was just so high up there. I was like, this is the only way down so I’ve gotta do it. And I kept telling him to push me and he said, “No ma’am, you have to do it yourself”

These feelings appeared to manifest themselves internally or externally (see Figure 2). While internal motivation to complete the activities placed pressure on the individual from a singular

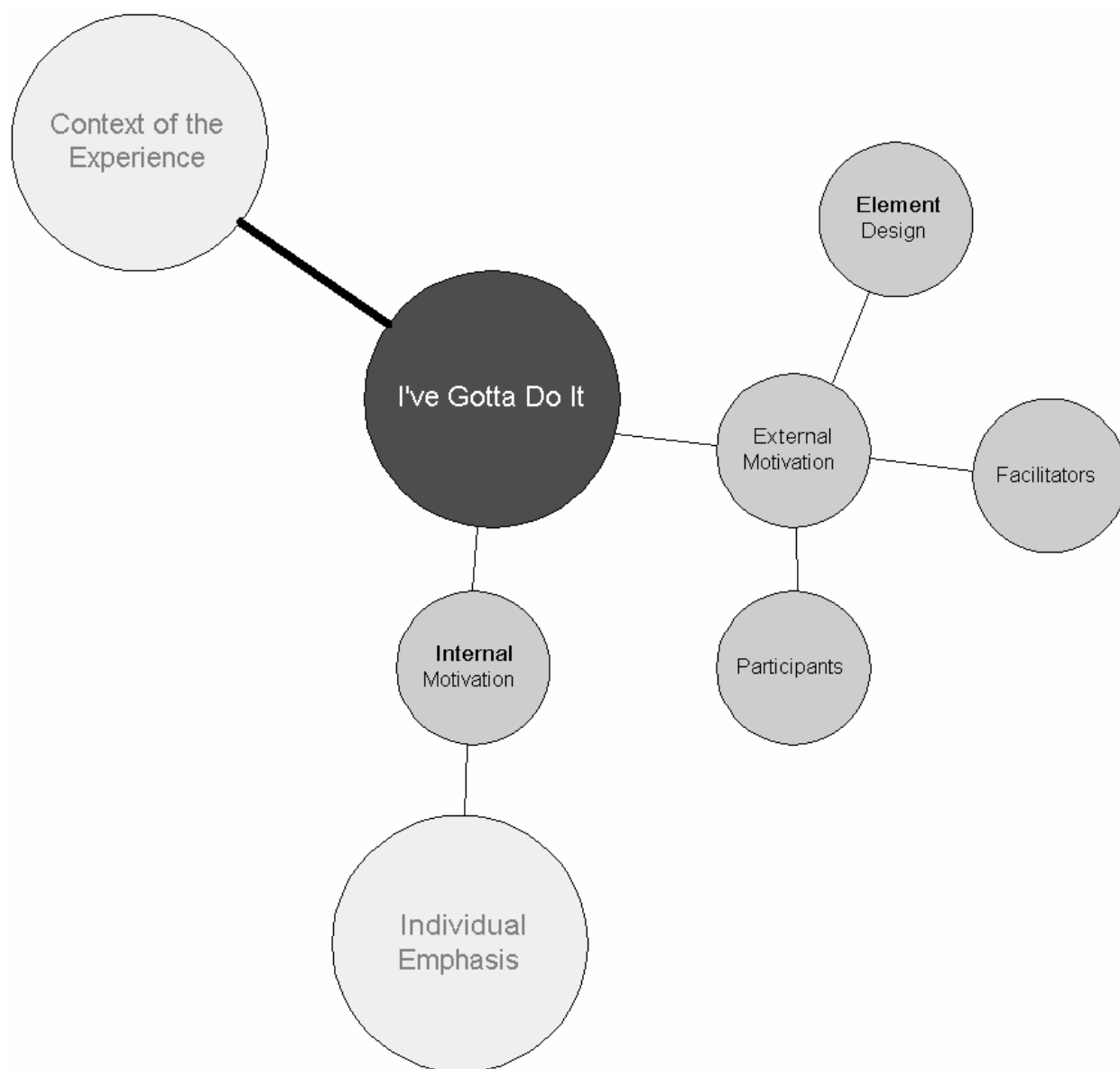


Figure 2 Theme of "I've Gotta Do It"

source, external pressure was a product of other group members, group facilitators, and element design.

External motivation. The external motivation exhibited by other group members appeared as support and encouragement as well as pressure throughout the day. There appeared to be a fine line between encouraging and pressuring a participant into attempting and completing an activity. Participants provided one another with a substantial amount of encouragement throughout the day; however, sometimes the group's encouragement appeared to become a force that was designed to control participants. For instance, when Renee was climbing the Catwalk, one group member asked if she wanted to come down. In response to this, several group members loudly replied, "No!" Renee did not offer a verbal response but stayed on the tree and continued to climb. Numerous times the group continued to "encourage" individual participants to continue with an element even after they indicated they would like to quit.

Consider also the example of Shelly on the Pamper Pole. Shelly ascended the pole and when she reached the top said that is "about as far as I'm gonna make it." When those on the ground told her "No," she responded by saying, "I can't do it." Rather than accept her desire to descend from the pole, group members began to provide her suggestions on where to put her feet and how to stand up on top of the pole. The advice from fellow group members continued until she stood and jumped off the pole. When Shelly came back to the ground, the group applauded her and told her how proud they were of her. It was this form of external pressure that led to development of the theme I've Gotta Do It.

None of the group members identified that they felt pressured into completing or attempting an activity. When I asked them specifically about this, they suggested that they were in control and that the group was instrumental in their ability to complete the particular activity.

Contrary to this feeling that they were in control and that they had a choice, participants did mention numerous times throughout the day that they “had to do it.” It also appeared that group members felt they understood how much they could encourage other participants. For example, Jean suggested that the group encouraged others, but they (the group) did not want to send someone up who was crying. Again, despite assurances during interviews that participants did not feel pressured, after closely reviewing the video tapes and comments by participants during the interviews it appeared that encouragement offered by other group members led participants to feel compelled to participate. Two examples from Madison and Renee, respectively, help emphasize this point. During the first interview, Madison spoke about her feelings when she was putting her harness on before participating in the high elements and she offered the following comments:

Why am I puttin’ this on because I am not going to do it? You know, I’m a cheerleader. But really just trying to think of what we were fixin’ to do, like I said, I wasn’t going to do that. I was going to cheer. I can cheer everybody else on. I was getting that. Really mine was failing, I didn’t want to fail at what I was going to have to try to do.

Madison suggested that she did not want to put the harness on and she was afraid of failing at what she “was going to have to try to do.” Her choice of words suggested that she felt compelled to attempt the high elements. When I asked Madison if she felt she could elect not to participate she stated, “I mean I didn’t feel pressured into doing it, but I didn’t want to let everybody else down or let myself down by not trying to do it.” It appeared that even though Madison said she did not feel pressure from those around her, she was still concerned with letting the group down if she did not participate.

In another example of a participant feeling compelled to participate, Renee conveyed her experience on the Catwalk. During this activity Renee had difficulty ascending the ladder and tree to get to the log to walk across. As she struggled, the group offered their encouragement to her and she offered these thoughts about her experience:

And somebody said, I think it may have been Jean, and she said, ‘you have already done what you said you wanted to do which was get on that ladder and get to the top of the ladder. So now all the rest is golden or all the rest is...’ It’s all accomplishment from here’ and I was like ‘okay you’re right I gotta get out there.’ I guess I have to find a way to get out there.

As with Madison, the choice of words used by Renee was “gotta get out there.” While recognized consciously by the group and by participants as encouragement, it appeared that language used by participants in the midst of activities suggested something more forceful than support and encouragement. In conjunction with participants making each other feel that they had to do it, facilitators also contributed to this idea.

Even though the specific program was created using principles of challenge by choice, participants did not appear to identify that choices existed. While facilitators did not mention the notion of challenge by choice prior to *each* element, it was mentioned frequently throughout the day and facilitators spent approximately 10 minutes presenting the idea to participants before beginning any events. This feeling of “I’ve gotta do it” was not only attached to high elements which participants were asked to complete individually. Several comments were made by participants during low elements demonstrating their feeling that they had to complete the activity even though they did not want to finish it. Jean even referenced the notion of a father-child relationship (the father being the facilitator and child being her) when feeling that she had

to complete a task. Regardless of time spent by facilitators presenting the notion of challenge by choice, participants still felt they had to attempt and/or complete activities presented to them.

Whether facilitators were “encouraging” participants to put on a harness or continue climbing an element, the language of “gotta” was also mimicked by the facilitators. For example, while putting on harnesses, Jake told the group that the course operated under the philosophy of challenge by choice, except in this case—every participant *had* to put on a harness. In another instance, Bill was climbing the Pamper Pole and told that he had to reach the top and jump for safety reasons. This notion of “you gotta” was perpetuated by the facilitators’ language and was reflected in participants’ actions and words.

As evidence for the theme I’ve Gotta Do It perpetuated by facilitators’ language, I spoke with Madison about her experience on the Catwalk. Prior to the Catwalk, Madison exhibited nervousness about attempting this activity and spent some time with Jake talking about her fears. Madison offered these thoughts related to that conversation:

I wasn’t going to do it. If he didn’t, he come over and really talked me into doing it, but I knew if I ever made the step of doing it, that I would do it. Just that first step of getting’ there to do it. Like he said he conned me in to...and he told me, he said, “No, you don’t have to go all the way...” But I knew if I ever made it to the top, I was going to have to come down so why not do the whole thing. So why not do the whole thing?

I explored Jake’s use of the word “conned” with Madison and she felt that:

Well, it really wasn’t a con. He just more gave me encouragement of doing it. I didn’t feel like it was a con. I didn’t have to go on and do it. Just him talking to me, telling me the things, because he sort of told me what I needed to do to climb the pole. And so, it helped me out just to give me a little thought of what I needed to do to succeed at it.

When I asked Nick about the group's experience on the Catwalk he also supported this idea that facilitators provided external pressure to help participants attempt activities when he said, "even Jake saying 'just do this much, just go this far, and we'll see after that.'" When preparing participants to climb the Catwalk, Jake himself said that he wanted to "push [them] further than [they] can go." However, it was not just the words used by facilitators that made participants feel they had to do the activities. The design of the elements also contributed to this theme of "I've Gotta Do It."

Some participants identified that they realized that they had no other way down except for the prescribed method. For instance, during my first interview with Jenny, she offered the following description of her experience on the catwalk:

And I remember thinking I just have to do it. I remember thinking, "Just do it." And I don't remember if somebody else had said something like, "It's the only way down." I remember thinking, "I have to do it." And so that's why I did it, because I didn't want to. Jenny perceived that the only way down was to lean off the log and be lowered as was the prescribed method. Kim offered a similar perception of her experience on the Zip Line when she said:

It is just me being up there that high. That was really hard: the first time when I looked. I was thinking, "Oh gosh, I can't do this." But once I was up there, I couldn't get down so there is only one way to get down, so I had to go across, so I did it.

This idea of element design causing participants to feel like they were required to complete the activity was also reinforced by Madison's comment that "there wasn't no getting' halfway there." Participants felt they had to complete the activities because they were stuck and there was only one way down. Another example of this occurred while Renee was in the zip tower. She

said that she “had to force herself to reconcile” with the fact that “I [couldn’t] get down any other way.” While relaying her experiences, Renee shared these thoughts.

But that was my first and foremost feeling that I had to deal with when I got up there was – I cannot get down. And I just started sobbing. I just sort of cried... uncontrollably crying. I couldn’t control myself. And, I kept telling him, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” And he was great. He was like, “I have all day. I have all night long.” So that, you know, that immediately... he had... I had to sit up there... the whole time in the tower was me just working through my fear... and working through and acknowledging that there was no other way down. It was two-fold, you know. Cause my fear was not going to be overcome until I realized that there was no way out. I had to deal with fear.

This emotional experience for Renee was fueled by the knowledge that she could not come down any other way but the prescribed method of the Zip Line.

During the course of our second interview, Nick raised an interesting point when he was talking about the group trying to push participants past what they could do. When I asked him for an example of this, he provided me with the following thoughts:

As soon as they go on to the pole, you know they were like ...pull the ladder back. So they didn’t want to back down, you know once they saw the ladder was gone...there goes that safety net so I need to keep on going even further.

An explanation of this process will shed light on Nick’s comment. To ascend each high element, facilitators placed an 8-12’ extension ladder against a tree or pole depending on the element. Participants ascend the ladder until they reach “staples” (metal loops hammered into the tree to aid in climbing) in the tree. For safety reasons, staples are only in the trees from approximately ten feet off the ground and above (thus the need for a ladder to reach the first staple). Once

participants are no longer standing on the ladder, it is removed. Removal of the ladder is a safety feature. If a participant were to slip off the lower staples that person could fall and become entangled in the ladder or knock it over on top of another participant before the belay system catches them. Nick suggested that removal of the ladder eliminated participants' thoughts of "backing out" of the activity thus leading them to feel like they "gotta do it."

Internal motivation. While participants were motivated by external forces of other group members, facilitators, and elements' design, they also placed pressure on themselves to complete the activities. It was clear that participants' felt an internal desire to complete the activities. For instance, when Jenny was discussing her time on the Zip Line, she said:

I remember thinking, "Just make sure you get to the end and you just let go when you can go." "You can do this." "You can do this." And that's all I remember thinking.

This personal encouragement in the form of telling oneself "you can do this" helped to provide evidence that participants were motivated internally to complete different elements. Similarly, Shelly related her experiences on the Zip Line when she said:

It was – just do it. Like I said, I trusted the lines, I trusted the guys, I had seen everyone else do it, and if they could do it... here I'd done made it to this point... I was ready to do it.

There appeared to be a sense of preparing herself for the different elements. By watching others and gaining an understanding of what the activity might be like and telling herself that she trusted the equipment and facilitators, Shelly motivated herself. She echoed these same thoughts during our second interview when discussing the emotion of trust:

Well I guess in the very back of my mind it was that it would be okay because the course that we were offered, that you were offering us, I knew that...I really believed the truth

that they had been doing it for a long time and the equipment was safe and you know it was a challenge and I really wanted to try it.

In these cases, Shelly identified that it was important for her to try the activities. By the time the group arrived at the high elements, there was a perception by many participants that they wanted to motivate themselves to attempt and complete activities. While there was a predominant feeling from participants that they had to do the different activities, there were two instances where participants identified that they did not feel that they had to participate.

The Pamper Pole was the second high element attempted by the group. This activity required that participants climb a 20 foot pole, stand on top, and jump for a trapeze swing hanging approximately six feet out and six feet up from the top of the pole. Bill was the first participant who attempted the Pamper Pole and had difficulty with the element. The following excerpt from my participant observation notes highlights his experience:

As Bill progresses, there are some bits of encouragement that are offered. When Phil gets to the top of the pole he appears very nervous. “Wow, it’s a lot different when you get up here. Wow, I don’t even know if I can do this thing.” He appears to be worried about setting a bad example for others who will climb after him. Jake tells him that he needs him to jump for safety reasons. Bill is near the top, but not standing on top, and wants to come back down. He does not want to jump. Bill has stalled at the top and says “I really don’t like this.” He elects to kind of drop off the top without actually jumping.

This experience, combined with the facilitators prefacing the element by saying it would be more physically demanding than the Catwalk, appeared to set the tone for the element. Six of the eleven participants interviewed and eight of the total 16 participants elected not to try the Pamper

Pole. During our first interview I asked Jean about her perception of the Pamper Pole and this was her response:

I think everybody knew that was going to be a little bit hard or physical. Cause he told us it was a lot more physical and that it would get more physical. And so when we saw it...I mean, more people did it than I thought was going to do it. So it really...it surpassed what I thought we were going to be able to do. Especially the girls. I think we had three. Yeah, I think there was three of the girls did it. And, all the guys...at least tried. You know. And I think that was good. So, I wanted to do it. I wasn't afraid to do it but I've got bad knees and I thought if I get up there and...you've got to be able to push up...All your weight. And I just don't think...I can't squat hardly. So I just thought that's just not something that I can do.

For Jean, the physicality of the activity made her avoid participating. On the basis of those who attempted the activity and the facilitators' comments, Jean perceived that the activity would be too difficult for her. Kim offered a similar perspective during her first interview.

I made up my mind that I didn't want to do the other pole thing, where we had to stand up [Pamper Pole]. I didn't want to do that because I watched everybody get up there and the whole pole was wobbling around and I thought I couldn't do that.

Again, for Kim, the fact that the "pole was wobbling around" left her with the impression that she could not succeed at the Pamper Pole. Madison also echoed these thoughts when she said, "After doing the Catwalk, I wasn't going to put myself in that because I just felt like I would fail it." While a common perception throughout the day appeared to be participants feeling that they had to do the activities, these women acted counter to this notion; however, it appeared that the

physical nature of the activity combined with several participants immediately saying they were not going to participate, provided the rationale for this to occur.

There was one participant who elected not to participate in any of the high elements. During the first interview I asked Christy what she remembered about the day and this was a portion of her response:

I was so chicken. I did not do any of the activities in the afternoon, which I know the second one [Pamper Pole], I don't regret not doing it, but I do kind of regret the first one [Catwalk]. Not to the point that if I had to do it over I would do it. I wouldn't do it. But, it was just that when I was sitting there everybody was going and I started thinking, "I can do this. I can climb that ladder." And then I started in my mind just thinking, "I am going to get halfway up there and I'm going to freeze and I'm not going to be able to get down." And I just pictured in my mind somebody climbing up that ladder to get behind me and talk me down and I was to the point, I was almost claustrophobic.

For Christy, the fear of what *could* happen prevented her from participating in the elements. As our first interview progressed, Christy shared some of her thoughts about not participating.

And I felt like I let everybody down for not doing it, but then again, if I would have done it, I don't know, I would have felt that I would have brought everybody's expectations down.

Christy expressed that she was worried about letting others down but this was not a sufficient reason for her to feel that she was required to participate. While present at the Catwalk, other group members continued to ask Christy if she was going to try, and unbeknown to them, their requests placed Christy under pressure.

Well I was kind of freaking out because she was actually the last one to go up and then, I don't know, I guess I had everybody was asking, "Are you going to do it? Are you going to do it?" I didn't say anything. I just shook my head. And I don't know, at this point, I don't know hardly, I think it was just Renee and Becky turned and asked me if I was going to go when we were getting to the last stages. I was just afraid that at the point, what was going through my mind is, "Oh gosh, everybody is going to be turning to me and I'm going to be put in the spot light." And then I'm going to be like, "Well" and then I'm going to do it and then it's going to be... I don't know. If they would have asked me at that point, I think I would have tried it, but I would have freaked out.

Christy did not want people to ask her if she was going to try the Catwalk because she was afraid she would acquiesce and then fail. Christy did provide a rationale for why she did not want to try the Catwalk.

I was just afraid if I did, it would just... You know if somebody, even though they tried it, it would kind of bring everybody's, I don't know, I wouldn't say expectations, but it just seemed like it would bring it down for the rest of the afternoon if one person kind of freaked out and couldn't do it. I don't know. It was just in the back of my mind. And another thing, I just don't like heights. So, I wouldn't like to get up.

Her rationale was two-fold—she did not want to bring the team down and she did not like heights. With the combination of these two forces, Christy did not feel the need to try the high elements. As our discussion continued, Christy became very emotional and began to cry as she tried to explain her feelings surrounding this experience:

I don't know. I guess up here everybody's got this expectation of me and Kim, you know, (voice quavering) because we've been here ten years and (crying) I just didn't

want it to spoil because I've got such a role up here that they said I got it together. I got things that I just, I just couldn't do when I got up there. (Still crying) I just didn't want them to... I don't know. I guess I felt like if I would let them down, that would have just affected their impression of me even though I'm a pair at work. It's totally separate from the job in that. But just that is what it felt like to me. That I would just had that disappointment here and I just couldn't stand to have anybody disappointed in me. (Still crying) Because I felt like, I try to do my best. I mean I've been up here ten years and I've just got that...I just don't want anybody to be disappointed in me. (Sniffling) I guess I had just been thinking about it ever since I had been sitting on that ground and thinking I couldn't do that, go up that tree. And it just...I don't know. I just didn't...The disappointment, I just couldn't stand. I couldn't have anybody feel...Even though they wouldn't be disappointed in me, it would just feel that way to me.

For Christy, she appeared to fear what people might think of her if she failed. While she did recognize that "they wouldn't be disappointed in me," she still felt that personal disappointment would exist. The decision for Christy not to participate was difficult and led to an emotional remembrance of the program.

During the course of this interview I learned more about why Christy felt she had the strength not to participate in the high elements. Christy was one of two sets of twins at the challenge course, and I asked her what it was like to have her twin sister Kim present that day, and this is a portion of her response:

It's kind of funny. In some ways, I'm the stronger one, but then in some ways, it's Kim. And knowing that we was going to have to do the high elements in the afternoon. And knowing that I wouldn't be able to do it, she was kind of like my shield because I said,

“Kim is going to do it, so if I don’t want to do it...” You know, I knew nobody was going to say, “Aw, she ain’t going to do it” or badmouth or anything. But there’s Kim saying, “Well, she’s not going to do it.” That was what she said when we was all sitting around there. They asked me and Kim said, “She’s not doing it.” And that was final. It was like I had Kim as my shield. It was like if Kim says it, that was it. Nobody was going to question it.

Kim’s presence at the challenge course that day provided a protection for Christy preventing others criticizing her actions. Christy did not attempt any of the high elements, but she did participate by encouraging and supporting other group members and caring for equipment. In Christy’s case and in the case of the Pamper Pole, there appear to be examples which ran contrary to the theme of “I’ve Gotta Do It;” however, because of the prevalence of data that supported this theme, it was retained.

Individual Emphasis

It appeared that internal factors influenced participants’ feelings that they had to do the elements and these factors contributed to participants focusing on individual implications of participation. From the emotional intensity identified by participants during high elements and from various comments made throughout the day and in the interviews, it appeared that the experience was more meaningful for the individual than it was for the group. In her discussion of the high elements, Renee stated, “I mean, I was into the teambuilding part of it, but at that time it was personal fear and had nothing to do with the group, I felt it was a personal thing I had to deal with.” The theme, Individual Emphasis, was generated through six different concepts discussed by the participants: (a) focus on high elements, (b) how long changes will last, (c) personal accomplishment, (d) want to do it for me, (e) overcoming, and (g) competition (see Figure 3).

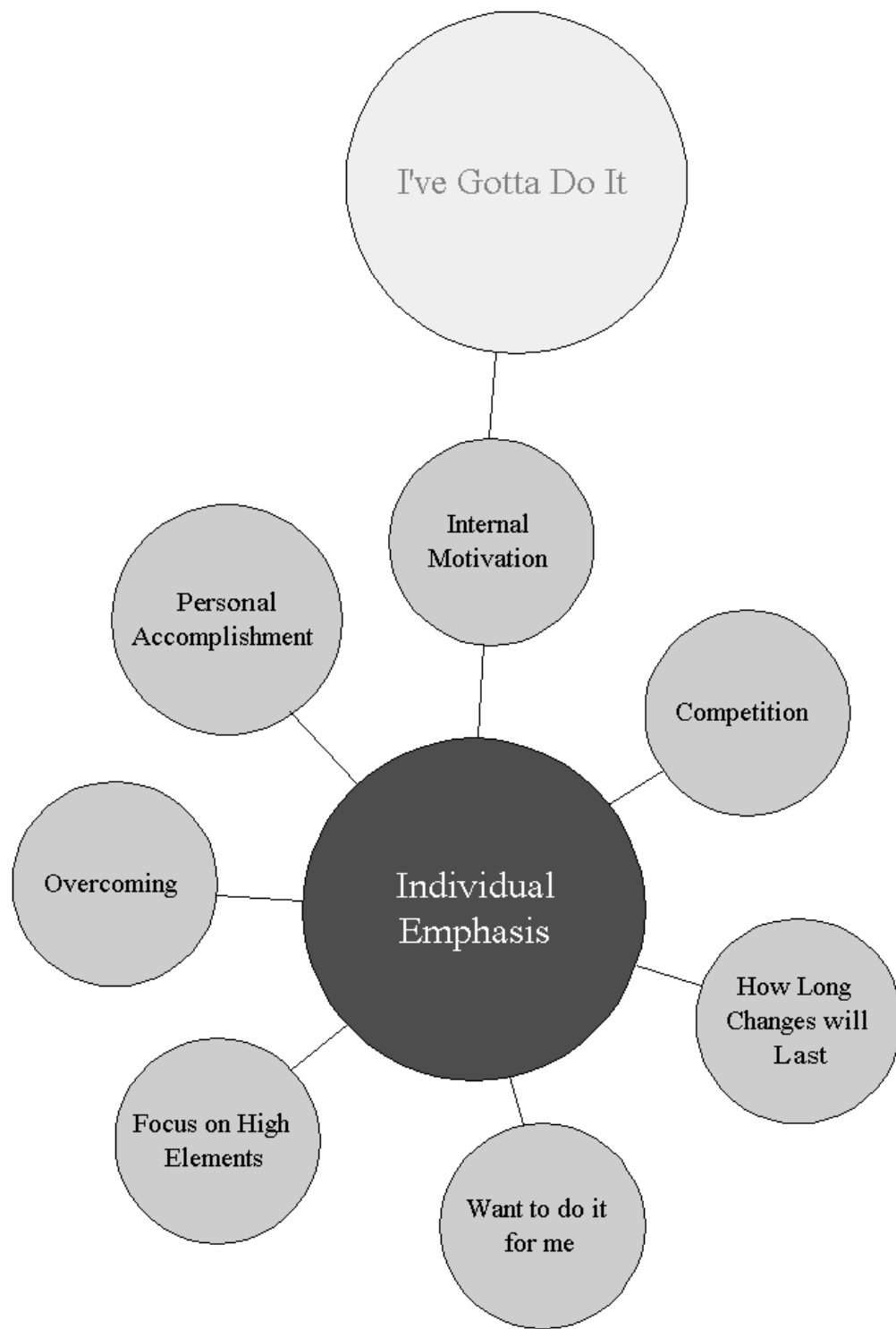


Figure 3 Theme of "Individual Emphasis"

Focus on high elements. During the interviews, the first question I asked participants was, “What do you remember about the ropes course experience?” When I compiled all of the participants’ replies, there were a total of 81 different responses, and of those 81 different responses, 45 (or 56%) I categorized as discussing a particular high element or the high elements in general. While participants’ presentation of high elements does not necessarily preclude a focus on self, there are two components of their responses that led to development of the theme Individual Emphasis. First, in almost every interview I immediately followed the question related to their memorable experience with a question asking participants to identify what “stuck out” to them during the ropes course. The desire was to get a glimpse into what the participant remembered first as that may offer insight into what experience was most salient to participants as a whole. In over 50% of participants’ responses, what they remembered most was attempting (or not attempting) high elements. What participants remembered most about the program, what stuck out most in their mind, was the more individualized aspect of the day.

Secondly, it was not only that a majority of participants remembered the high elements first that led to the creation of this theme, it was also the intensity of the language used by participants as they discussed what they remembered most. For example, Renee stated that what she remembered most about the day was the “sheer terror” she felt as she attempted the Catwalk and Zip Line. Kim stated that jumping off the zip tower was the most memorable act for her, while Michelle suggested that the individual challenges were “extreme” for her. These responses tended to emphasize the focus and impact of the experience on the individual and that is what participants appeared to remember from the program.

In relation to the emphasis placed on high elements, I may have encouraged participants to focus on the high elements during the interviews. After asking participants the first question about what they remembered most, I showed them clips of their experience at the challenge course. There tended to be more clips demonstrating participants' interactions and actions on the high elements than on the initiative activities or low elements. While this may have influenced participants' responses during the remainder of the interview (and thus increased the conversation related to the high elements) these video clips were shown after participants' responses to the question of what "stuck out" most to them.

How long changes will last. The second component of the theme Individual Emphasis was seen in participants' responses to the question exploring how long they felt the lessons learned on the challenge course would last. While participants stated that the length of time the changes might last would vary from person to person and depend on individual attitudes, Kim identified that she would "probably talk about it for the rest of her life." Clark appeared to bolster this argument when he stated that you "would remember fear and fun more than you remember teamwork." While they felt the experience was very personally meaningful, there did not appear to be the same feeling of meaning for the group. As Renee stated, "I don't know that it had a major impact on me *and* my co-workers." She also stated that "it had a major impact on me." The idea that changes occurred, or lessons were learned, was expressed by many participants, but the prevailing feeling appeared to be that those impacts were less about the group and more about the personal accomplishments of each individual that occurred during the day. As will be seen later in this chapter, it appeared that the program most dramatically impacted participants individually outside of the work environment rather than collectively within the workplace.

Personal accomplishment. The notion of personal accomplishments was clearly seen throughout all aspects of the program (initiative activities, low elements, and high elements). I began the second interviews by asking participants what they remembered most about the program. Michelle responded to this inquiry by saying, “What sticks out in my mind? Just the fact that I did it. The fact that I did it...” For Michelle it appeared that her impression six weeks following the program related to her individual accomplishments that day. Madison appeared to echo these thoughts when she responded to the same question.

Really just what I had done. Just the excitement of just doing the things. Climbing the tree and I don’t remember what it’s called now. Doing the zip...

For Madison, as with Michelle, what she remembered most six weeks after the program was the climbing that she had done on the high elements. Kim appeared to crystallize this notion when she said:

And I still talk about it every time in the six weeks if I go somewhere ‘you know I did this?’ It had a really big impact on me that if I set my mind to do something I can do it and finish it till it’s done. That’s what I really remember. I kinda forget about the other stuff. But yeah me personally it had a big impact on me. Big impact.

For Kim, as with others, what she remembered most from the program was her personal accomplishments. She said that she “kinda [forgot] about the other stuff,” but the program had a “big impact” on her as an individual. Jean’s response to this first question during the second interview also emphasized this notion of personal accomplishment.

Probably just dropping off that last Zip Line. I do have flashbacks to that. I did that. I can’t believe I did that. I did that. And I guess I kind of run it over in my mind like a little

video. I mean I'm just there. I can just see myself doing it. I don't know when I think of it. So it's still with me.

Interviewer: What do you see when you see that video in your head?

It's like I still can't believe that I did it. I'm still kind of in awe with myself without trying to make yourself feel like you are big or you are so great and everything. So I think it's still working on that level of accomplishment.

These examples suggest that personal accomplishment was important to participants. Whether they identified that accomplishment the day of the program or six weeks following the program, personal accomplishment appeared to be a sub-theme supporting the theme of Individual Emphasis.

Two other incidents from Clark and Madison help to emphasize this point. During Clark's first interview I asked him if he could tell me about the best moment of the day for him personally and this was what he said, "Let's see, probably after jumping off that Pamper Pole, and Jason told me that I was in the 10th percentile of people. And I was like, "Cool man – that's awesome." For Clark, the feeling of accomplishing more than other group members and 90% of those who have attempted the Pamper Pole was a rewarding experience. (As way of explanation, when Clark jumped off the top of the Pamper Pole he was able to reach the trapeze swing, something a majority of participants do not do.)

I asked Madison what she had told other people about her experience at the challenge course and she expressed similar feelings of accomplishment as Clark:

It's just, you won't believe what I did. It is just like, then I say, "You just can't imagine unless you was there" what I did. Yea, I talk about it a good bit. That's what...with my stepdaughter. This would be something she'd love. And she'll say, "You did what..."

Yea and then she was telling, “Do you know what Madison did?” So, it’s been neat just to hear her tell everybody else what I did.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel when she tells other people what you did?

Oh, it makes me feel good! You know, it’s something to talk about. It really is something to brag about what you did.

The feelings for Madison evolved from her accomplishing the activity and she felt she had something to brag about as a result. Throughout the challenge course program it appeared that one rationale for participation was personal accomplishment; however, this level of individual emphasis was also demonstrated through the notion of participants attempting and completing the activities for themselves.

Want to do it for me. With several participants there appeared to be a desire to use the high elements as opportunities for personal growth. In relationship to the theme of Individual Emphasis and participants’ exhibiting a desire to accomplish the activities for reasons of personal growth, participants related the following comments: “I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it.” “I accepted an impossible task on the Pamper Pole.” “I wanted to do it for myself.” “I learned lessons for myself.” These particular quotes illuminated participants’ feelings that participation (particularly related to the high elements) was based on an internal desire to experience personal growth. While participants did recognize that growth occurred for the group, they did not suggest that the group growth was as memorable as their individual growth.

One dramatic example of a participant wanting to accomplish the activity for herself was the case of Renee climbing the Catwalk. As we explored her perceptions of her experience, she offered the following thoughts:

I'm like...just fighting myself...I mean I'm just fighting that little person that's inside of me, I guess, that says, "You can't do this." Just fighting that fear. That's me just fighting it with everything I had at that point, seriously. My whole body... just making that movement. I remember that movement, and I've done that before when I'm just so scared. It's just like all I can do was just hold on to that.

In an effort to understand her use of the word "fighting" I asked Renee to tell me why it was so important for her to fight the fear she was experiencing on the Catwalk.

Well, I think there's a couple different reasons. I think that I honestly kept thinking back to the fact that...number one – I wanted to do it for myself. That was important to me, but I didn't go into the day thinking that I was going to come out with a lot of lessons for myself which I ended up with. I think that at that time I was really thinking about the fact that if I don't take advantage of this I'm really losing an opportunity that is immense. I knew that there was something there for me...and I couldn't quite get my hands on it yet...and I wanted – I wanted to feel what it felt like to walk across the Catwalk. I wanted to be able to say, "Yeah, I did it. Yes, I did it."

Renee wanted to accomplish the Catwalk for herself. She did not want to miss this particular opportunity. Throughout the course of her two interviews I learned more about Renee and her desire to succeed. Six months prior to the challenge course program Renee decided to make several changes in her life. She quit smoking and started to lose weight. During our talks she said she was "proud of my weight loss" and participating in the challenge course was an opportunity for her to continue on her path of self-improvement. At the conclusion of our first interview, I asked Renee to tell me about some of the lessons she learned as a result of the challenge course program and this is what she said:

I mean, first and foremost, I had to overcome that terror...that debilitating feeling that I had that “You can’t do this.” And that is, um, that is such a major part of my life right now. I mean, I put down cigarettes. And I said, “I could never put down cigarettes.” Nobody ever thought I’d quit smoking. I’d never quit smoking. I never thought I’d lose almost 70 pounds in six months. I never would have ever said that I would have ever even cared. Who cares? You know, and so it was just another example of how I can go out there and get over something. Just get over my terrors. Just get over that feeling that I can’t do this. So, yes, it was a major... a major landmark in my personal growth.

For Renee, lessons learned from the program were very individual and focused on working to accomplish personal goals.

Overcoming. Participants also completed and participated in the different activities because they felt the need to overcome personal fears. Whether they wanted to prove to themselves that they could complete the task or whether they elected to set a goal and then wanted to complete that goal, there appeared to be a sense of overcoming related to participants’ desires to participate in and complete the different activities. While Michelle suggested that she was “trying to challenge [herself] and confront fears,” Nick felt that he wanted to accept an impossible task in attempting to complete the Pamper Pole. Renee identified this feeling as “wanting to conquer.” In relation to the difficult tasks participants were attempting to overcome, Becky stated it “was harder than I anticipated” and Jean said it was the “toughest thing I’ve ever done.” There was a sense among participants that the elements were difficult to accomplish, but they wanted to overcome these difficulties. In almost every case the notion of overcoming was related to fears on the high elements. Participants did not identify a need to “overcome” fears (or

any other emotion) when participating in the different low elements; however there was one instance where a participant exhibited the theme of Individual Emphasis during a low element.

During the first interviews I asked participants to relate their best moment of the day. In response to this request, Renee related her experience on the low element activity called “Islands.” She stated that the best moment of her day came when she crossed from one island to the other without touching the ground like some of her teammates. She identified that not touching the ground was very important to her and this desire was reinforced by her words immediately following arrival at the second island, “Did I violate?” She wanted to know if she had touched the ground as she crossed. Throughout the conversation at the challenge course and the interview she did not verbalize any role the group may have played in her attempt; rather, she identified the experience as one of individual accomplishment for her because she had not touched the ground. Even in the midst of a group activity focusing on working together as a team, Renee still exhibited the theme of Individual Emphasis.

Competition. The final component of the Individual Emphasis theme was seen in competition among different group members. Competition was first seen during the socializing game of Boat/Island. During this game participants competed against one another to try and be “the last one standing.” While they needed to communicate and cooperate with one another to remain in the game as long as possible, the ultimate goal was to win. The second time competition was exhibited was during the initiative activity Warp Speed. During this activity the group was required to pass an object around the circle as quickly as possible and continue to try and reduce their time. After they had reduced their time as much as possible, the group discovered (through the facilitators) that other groups had been able to move the object faster. At this point the group became less focused on processing the activity and more concerned with

how they could have beaten the other group's time. In this second case, the sense of competition was more of a unifying factor rather than a dividing factor as in the Boat/Island game; however, these two initial activities may have contributed to participants feeling that they had to compete against one another during other elements.

When considering his experience on the Catwalk, Clark (the first to attempt the Catwalk) stated that he felt he "set the goal for the other people" by completing the activity. As he discussed his experience, he related a level of frustration with his attempt because he had been told by the group to take his time and be safe (which he felt he had done). As other participants continued to attempt the activity, they moved across the beam faster. According to Clark, "Everybody kept getting faster and faster making me look bad." Even though the notion of competition had never formally been discussed, Clark felt that he had not done as well because other participants moved quicker. In addition, the idea of competition appeared to exist within the challenge course program as reflected by other participants' comments. For example, Madison expressed that completing the activities gave her "something to brag about" and Shelly suggested that she was afraid of "making [herself] look bad in front of [her] co-workers."

While many cases have been presented that support the theme of Individual Emphasis, two examples offer an alternative perspective. First, the theme of Cooperation (which is discussed in detail later in this chapter) generally tended to refute this particular theme; however, because of the prevalence of data that addressed Individual Emphasis *and* Cooperation, both stood independently as themes. The second example was provided by Nick's comments during our interviews. As with all participants, I began Nick's first interview by asking him what he remembered most from the program, and he responded:

Probably when I was just trying to walk away with the biggest lesson that I learned from the day. I've always tried to better myself at just accepting other people's ideas and walking away with the idea that there's several different ways to do something. Just to be more opened minded about different perspectives and angles to look at something and do something and accept those.

These ideas Nick shared were reinforced by his actions during Turnstile. At one point during this activity Michelle started to share an idea with Nick because she was uncomfortable trying to quiet the group (the group had become very loud with multiple people sharing ideas at one time) to share her thoughts. When asking Nick about this experience, he stated:

I guess anybody who knows me knows that I can be pretty opinionated at times. And Michelle, from what from what I've gathered she tends to be pretty quiet. And I'd wanted to be sure that everybody got their got their word heard and what they had to say was heard. Cause sometimes the most quiet person's got the solution and if she had a solution we definitely needed to hear it. Everybody's solution was important.

Nick's statements during our interviews were consistent with his actions while present at the challenge course; he wanted others' ideas to be heard and worked toward this end. When asked about what he learned from the program, Nick suggested that it reinforced the "Christian cliché, taking up other's cross" and that he learned about "sacrifice" and "compromise." These lessons learned by Nick were very different from the individual foci which marked the theme Individual Emphasis.

The specific program designed for this group did not include planned aspects of individual growth. Goals of this program included teaching lessons about communication, cooperation, and team functioning; however, participants appeared to learn personal lessons that

were not intentionally added to the program. The personal effects of the program were seen through participants' comments related to high elements, length of time the changes will remain, personal accomplishments, doing it for me, overcoming fears, and competition. In general, the theme of Individual Emphasis developed because it appeared the program offered significant meaning to participants as individuals.

Changes in Emotion

Throughout the day there appeared to be a plethora of emotions experienced by the participants. One aspect of participants' emotions that was commonly identified was a feeling of incongruity; that is, participants did not feel the same way about the activities and they felt differently at different points within the same activities (see Figure 4). For example, the following quotes represent Becky's self-identified emotions on the Catwalk. "Glad" "relieved" "didn't scare me" "nervous" "good." These words represent a wide range of emotions experienced by one individual on one element. Jean also illustrated this paradox by stating that the Catwalk was the "only time I felt I had fun" and "standing right before I started was the absolute worst."

As participants explored their emotions during the interviews several of them suggested the notion of perspective. Christy stated that there was a different perspective when participants were working on the element in the air rather than on the ground. Interestingly, Christy was the one participant who elected not to attempt any of the high elements, yet through her conversations with other participants she identified that perceptions changed once individuals began an element. In speaking of the Zip Line, Clark suggested that "once you go down it's like a relief of pressure," while Jenny stated that I "felt a lot better when it was over."

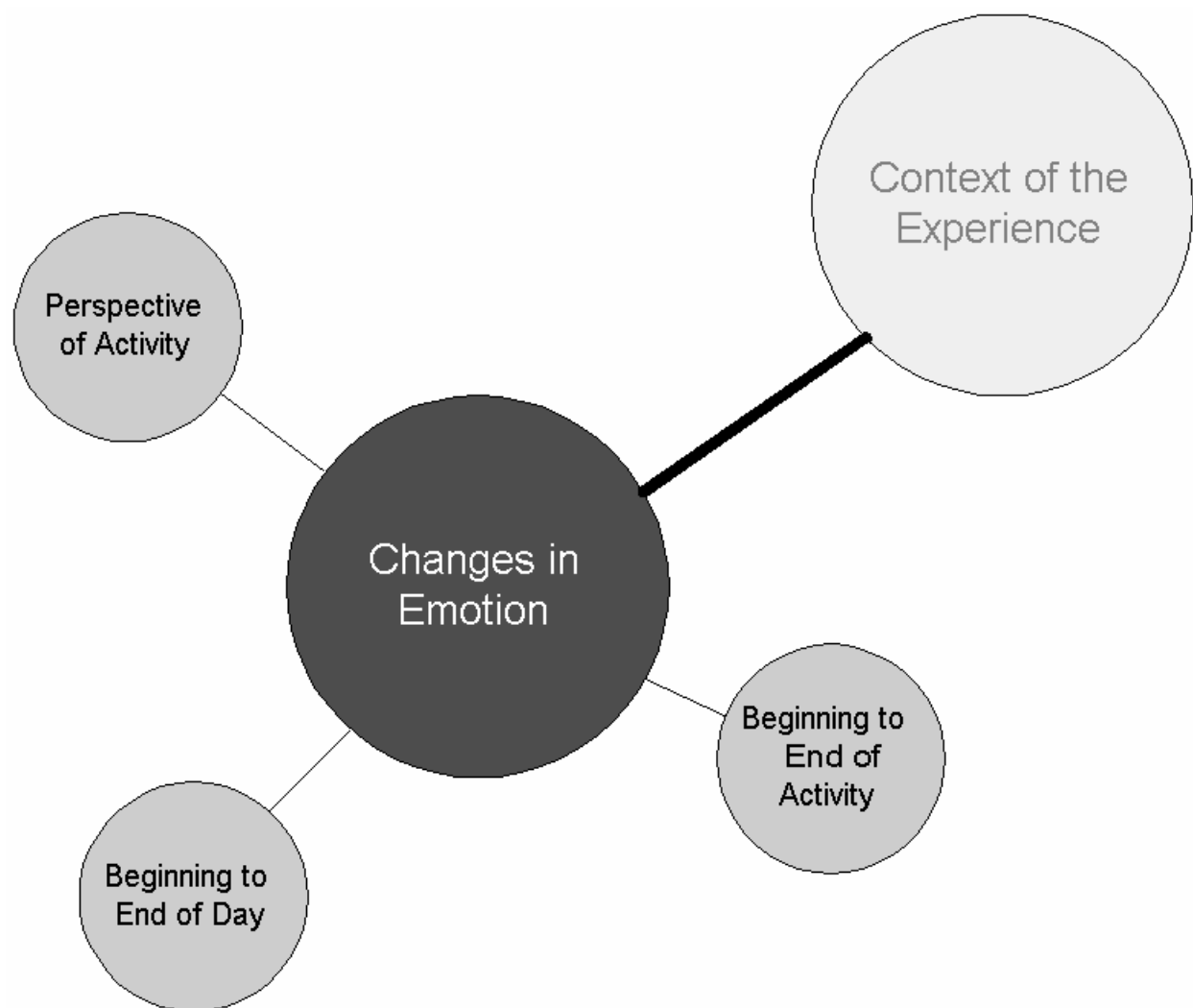


Figure 4 Theme of "Changes in Emotion"

Before participants attempted an activity, they did not have a frame of reference for purposes of comparison. Once the first participant began the element or once the group began the task, a framework for understanding was created. Specifically, on the high elements there was a rush among male participants to see who would go first. On the Pamper Pole, the first participant (Bill) was unsuccessful at standing on top and self-identified that he had set a poor example for the group. Other group members identified that because of this individual's experience, they did not feel that they could complete the task. At this stage (watching the first one or two participants), participants primarily identified that they felt afraid, nervous, or uncomfortable. As they began to ascend the high elements, participants suggested that the fears and nervousness continued and in many cases, those emotions increased in intensity. It was not until they had completed the activity that participants identified feelings of fun, relief, and excitement. As Jenny suggested at the top of the Zip Line, she was 90% scared and 10% excited. When she finished zipping and was climbing down the ladder, she was 100% scared. It wasn't until she was on the ground and had stopped shaking that she identified herself as being 100% excited.

This emotional journey was not unique to the high elements. During the interviews, I asked participants to provide me with their perception of how the group had done as they attempted to complete each activity. While some participants suggested that they enjoyed and had fun during the activity, Warp Speed, others in the group suggested that they were totally confused and it was embarrassing for individuals that dropped the ball. Some participants identified that they were frustrated because no one was listening during Turnstile, while others thought that the group did well listening to everyone's ideas, in the very same activity. While emotions did vary and evolve throughout the low elements, a primary distinction between the emotional journeys related to intensity.

Emotions identified and experienced during high elements were more intense than emotions during initiative activities and low elements. While potential existed for frustration, self-doubt, and fear on the initiatives and low elements, these emotions did not surface to the same degree as was seen during the high elements. During the day, high elements evoked tears from two participants. Renee identified her crying as “uncontrollable sobbing” which was accompanied by “shear terror.” Similarly, during the interviews, five participants either had tears in their eyes or actually cried while discussing the high elements. This level of emotion was not seen with the initiative activities and low elements.

While emotions appeared to change from the beginning of an activity, participants also identified that changes occurred from the beginning to the end of the day. The notion of change occurring from beginning to end of the program was first presented by Jason (one of the facilitators) as he introduced and explained the program first thing in the morning. A brief section from my participant observation notes offers some insight into these comments:

He warned the group of potential dangers (bees, dogs), and explained to the group that they would probably experience a change by the afternoon. He stated that they would probably feel different by the end of the day.

Likewise, during the final processing session, the facilitators asked the group if they felt that they had changed throughout the day. This question was met with head nods and “yeses” from participants. Group members also identified this feeling of change occurring throughout the day. During our first interview I asked Nick to tell me some of his perspectives of the Zip Line and these were some of his thoughts:

At the end of the day that was kind of a big relief it looked like on their faces. Pretty much everybody had done it, and just to see everybody get through. I think the big thing

was not necessarily them goin through the Zip Line. But, their faces when they finally stepped off the ladder knowin that the day was done. It was kind of a tired look, but it was also kinda a smile of their face like, “I got a good bit done. This was a good day.” According to Nick, the group was experiencing relief and feeling that they had “got a good bit done.” Renee appeared to echo these thoughts when she discussed how several participants felt at the end of the day.

I definitely think their perspective changed throughout the day. It became much more fun. It became a lot more fun for me too. A lot more scary but a lot more fun as I accomplished each task. And that will stick with me.

According to Renee, participants’ perspectives changed over the course of the day. Whether emotions changed within an activity due to different perspectives or whether they changed across the entire day, participants suggested that their emotions were not static. Throughout the course of the day, participants experienced paradoxical emotions which were dynamic and ever-changing.

Effectiveness of Communication

One of the research questions for this particular study sought to understand participants’ perceptions of the group’s communication during and after the challenge course program. With this research question in mind, I asked several questions during both interviews which addressed the notion of communication. As a result of participants’ responses and my observations, the theme of Effectiveness of Communication appeared to arise from the data (see Figure 5). This theme was defined by two different sub-themes (a) group size and (b) activity progression and produced two distinct results (a) listening and responding which led to the theme of Cooperation and (b) multiple talkers leading to the theme of Too Many Chiefs.

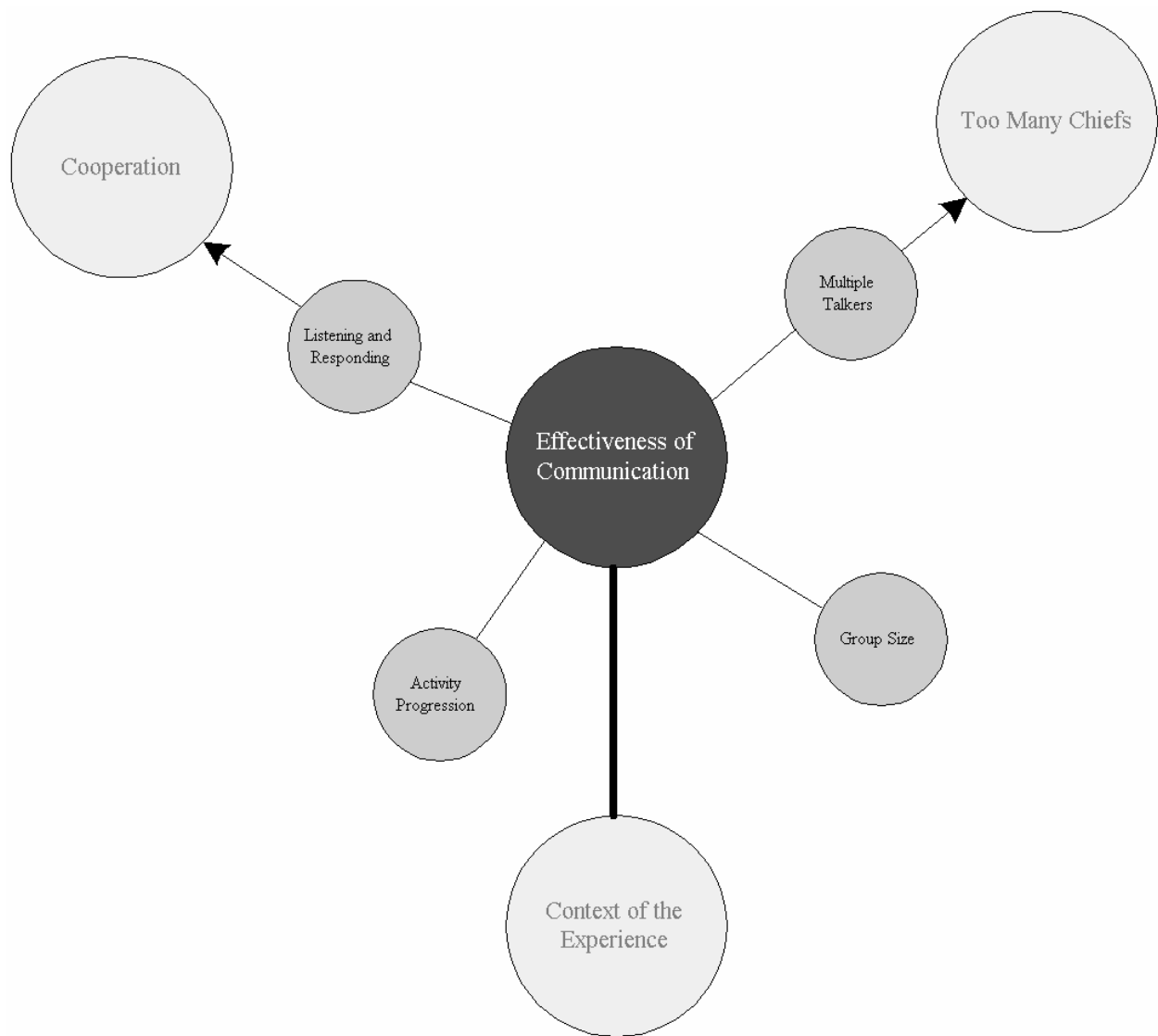


Figure 5 Theme of "Effectiveness of Communication"

Group size. Participants suggested that group size had a direct impact on the effectiveness of their communication. When discussing this point, participants most often compared and contrasted their experiences on the Turnstile and TP Shuffle. During Turnstile participants were asked to work together and spent their time in a huddle-type formation. In contrast to this experience, during the TP Shuffle participants stood in a straight line on a log, primarily interacting with group members immediately to their left and right. For example, when I asked Michelle for an explanation of why she felt the group had communicated well during the TP Shuffle (she had previously identified the TP Shuffle as the element where the group communicated the best) she stated, “it was really good on an individual one-on-one basis” and she referenced the communication she engaged in with those to her immediate left and right. In her explanation of this same point, Jean suggested:

On the pole you probably was like a one-on-one, somebody in front of you and behind you. So that’s communicating that way. But in this [Turnstile] we were all in one big group, and a bunch of people talking at one time.

Shelly also agreed that communication was better when they “didn’t have to deal with as many [people]” and Renee said it “seemed a lot easier when we were in those little small niche groups.”

When discussing how communication occurred in the workplace, Kim appeared to offer support for the notion of communicating better in smaller groups.

I think communication is really good one-on-one, not a whole group. To me, I can work better communicating with just one-on-one than a whole group because when you get a whole group together, they don’t listen. So, I think it works better that way.

For Kim, the addition of more people into a setting had potential to create confusion and difficulties because “they don’t listen.” This idea of communicating best in small groups was also emphasized in the participants identification of elements where communication occurred best.

When asked to identify on which elements they felt the group communicated best, nine out of ten suggested communication occurred best on the TP Shuffle, the one activity which involved communication in small (2-3 person) groups. In direct contrast to this, when asked in which activity the group communicated worst, all ten participants suggested the Turnstile where communication occurred in more of a huddle-type situation. According to these participants, smaller groups were more likely to be associated with effective communication than larger groups.

Activity progression. While group size appeared to play a role in the effectiveness of the group’s communication, participants also suggested that communication improved throughout the course of the day. (It should be noted that participants suggested communication waned during the Zip Line, the final activity of the day. They associated this decline in effective communication with the time of day and participants’ being tired and desiring to complete the program.) One reason that communication improved during the course of the day was the processing sessions that occurred immediately after each activity. According to Michelle:

We had talked about it before we got to this event. We had talked about what we had done wrong in these events you know and we had a chance to evaluate ourselves and the way we were communicating. So by the time we got here we had gone through all these other things you know and established a better you know, better communication. We were more in tuned to each other I guess.

As mentioned previously, it appeared that smaller groups allowed for more effective communication to occur; however, participants also suggested that they learned how to communicate better through the processing sessions. When considering additional reasons (apart from group size) why the group identified the TP Shuffle as where the most effective communication occurred, learning how to communicate through the elements and the processing sessions are possibilities.

These sentiments that communication improved as the day progressed were also echoed by Jenny. During my second interview with Jenny I asked her why she felt the group had communicated so well during the TP Shuffle (she too had identified the TP Shuffle as the element where communication was most effective). Her response is below.

That was brought to everybody's attention kind of after it and it made everybody aware of the fact that nobody was really communicating to each other. And so I felt that as the day went on the different things we did there was more communication and listening being done.

When asked what she meant by "brought to everybody's attention" Jenny stated that during the processing sessions the facilitators addressed occurrences when participants had communicated with one another ineffectively. While both group size and progression through the activities were factors in the group's ability to communicate with one another, two specific outcomes (listening and responding and multiple talkers) were associated with effective and ineffective communication.

Listening and responding. There were several clear examples when the group engaged in effective communication and these examples had one commonality—there were fewer talkers than listeners. In other words, participants were able to listen and respond to information

presented by others in the group. The first example of this idea of listening and responding occurred during the Turnstile. In this case, Michelle had shared an idea with Nick but she was unable to get the group to listen to her suggestion. Nick, who was more comfortable talking loudly than Michelle, quieted the group and provided Michelle with an opportunity to share her idea. Below is her perception of that experience as related to me during our first interview:

Yeah, I had made a suggestion for the entrance to Disney World. And people were listening to what I was saying. They had stopped arguing and given me a chance to speak. They were willing to listen to what I had to say I guess and they were willing to take that suggestion. I thought you know I may have had a good suggestion and I wanted to put it out there.

In this instance, Nick was able to get the group's attention and encouraged Michelle to share her idea. Without Nick quieting the group, there would have been multiple people sharing ideas at the same time and Michelle would not have shared her idea with the group. For effective communication to occur, the group had to be willing to listen and respond to Michelle's suggestion. As a result of Nick's intervention the group heard and attempted the new idea.

In a similar situation early on during the Turnstile, Christy had an opportunity to share an idea with the group. In our first interview I showed Christy a video clip of herself sharing her idea with the other group members who had become quiet and turned to listen to her. Below is Christy's response to viewing the video clip.

Heck, I didn't know everybody was listening... I thought I was just talking to one person. I didn't realize that everybody was listening. No, I did not even pay attention. I did not even pay any attention to that.

In this case the group had, of their own accord, stopped talking to listen to Christy's idea. This type of behavior from the group (stopping conversations to listen to one group member) was not the norm throughout Turnstile; however these two interactions offer an example of the group becoming quiet and listening and responding to the idea(s) presented. In these instances, listening and responding occurred at the micro level where, for a moment in time, group members listened and responded to what an individual was saying. Immediately after and before these instances, multiple individuals were talking; thereby making listening and responding very difficult and almost non-existent. Because the group did not effectively listen and respond during a majority of the Turnstile, all ten interviewees agreed that communication was worst on this element.

The above examples of effective communication (listening and responding) occurred on the low elements and initiative activities. During the interviews participants were reluctant to discuss the high elements in conjunction with the notion of communication. They were comfortable discussing issues of support and encouragement and individual growth in relation to the high elements, but they identified feeling that they (high elements) were more individually focused and therefore did not connect the notion of communication to the high elements.

Multiple talkers. While effective communication did occur during the challenge course program, ineffective communication also existed. According to participants, ineffective communication was primarily caused by multiple people talking at the same time and marked by chaos and disorganization. Just as the Turnstile provided examples for effective communication, several examples of ineffective communication examples via multiple talkers were also present within this initiative activity. In her discussion related to the Turnstile, Michelle described the activity as "people screaming over each other...trying to get their ideas across and some people

had suggestions that were completely ignored.” Others said that during the Turnstile people were “too loud” and that too many people were talking at once.

During her second interview I asked Shelly which element she felt the group communicated on the worst. Below is her description of communication efforts within Turnstile.

It was a bunch of people talking and no one was listening. So we failed on time...eventually I think I would have come clear but we were all too gung-ho. We just jumped in there with all the ‘bla, bla, bla’ it was jumbled. You couldn’t understand one over the other you know and it was just unorganized.

With a similar description of the element, Kim stated that “too many people were talking” and “nobody was really listening.” Even though these examples of ineffective communication were clearly seen during Turnstile, they were also present, but to a lesser degree, during other elements. For instance, Clark suggested his rationale for why the group communicated least effectively during Islands.

Well it was because we had come up with one or two ideas and that’s what we went on the whole time. We didn’t think about anything else because I mean there has got to be way you can do it. There is a way but we just...we had one or two ideas and didn’t brainstorm long enough.

As another example of multiple talkers leading to ineffective communication, I compare an example provided earlier by Christy while on the Turnstile to an interaction she experienced during Islands. During our discussion about the Turnstile, Christy exhibited surprise when she watched a video clip where everyone had stopped talking to listen to her. During our interview I presented her with another clip of her talking during the Islands; however, in this clip Christy

and several others were engaged in different conversations. Below is her comparison of the two video clips.

Hmmm. (long pause) It seems to me that in the first clip, I was actually talking and they were listening. But the second one, it seemed like everybody; at that point, I think everybody was still listening to Bill or was it Jake? I think that is what...in this one, I think I was just...apparently, I wasn't that vocal because I was only around this one little section to see. I think I was communicating with Rachel at that time showing how we was going to get across.

In this example, Christy was trying to share her idea with other group members, but the communication was ineffective because multiple individuals were talking.

Too Many Chiefs

During one of the early processing sessions at the challenge course, Becky stated there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians. This idea seemed to represent the notion that there were too many people trying to lead the group and not enough people willing to follow.

According to Renee:

We just didn't have a lot of coordination and function behind the whole thing. It was like Becky said at the end...I think she said there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

The concept of too many chiefs seemed to follow directly in line with ineffective communication due to multiple talkers; however, within this theme of Too Many Chiefs, there were components of both ineffective *communication* and ineffective *cooperation*. As I attempted to explore communication and cooperation with participants, they appeared to have difficulty separating the two ideas. When I asked for examples of communication they discussed times when they worked

well together and when I asked for examples of cooperation they would reminisce about instances when they communicated particularly well with one another. As a result of the participants melding the two concepts, the theme of Too Many Chiefs also addressed components of both verbal and physical interactions. The theme of Too Many Chiefs is comprised of four sub-themes including: (a) problems with decision making, (b) group confusion, (c) unsure of roles, and (d) failure (see Figure 6).

Problems with decision making. When the idea of too many chiefs was first brought to light by the participants it was in direct reference to the notion of having problems making decisions. During my first interview with Christy I asked her to provide me with her perception about Warp Speed. Her response offered some insight into this idea that the group experienced trouble making decisions.

It didn't seem like they were listening to him, but then again, he didn't actually give a command and say, "I want you to go in the same order you went the first time." And so when the ball was thrown and nobody caught it, there was some people that said, "We're supposed to throw it the same way we did." And there was some of them saying, "Well, he didn't say that." They started a new system. They wanted a new way of... a new person to throw it to.

In this activity, facilitators asked participants to throw a ball around the circle multiple times. There was some confusion among participants as to whether the order they threw the ball needed to remain consistent throughout the activity, and as a result, the group had difficulty making a decision about whether or not to throw the ball in the same order. Similarly, during this

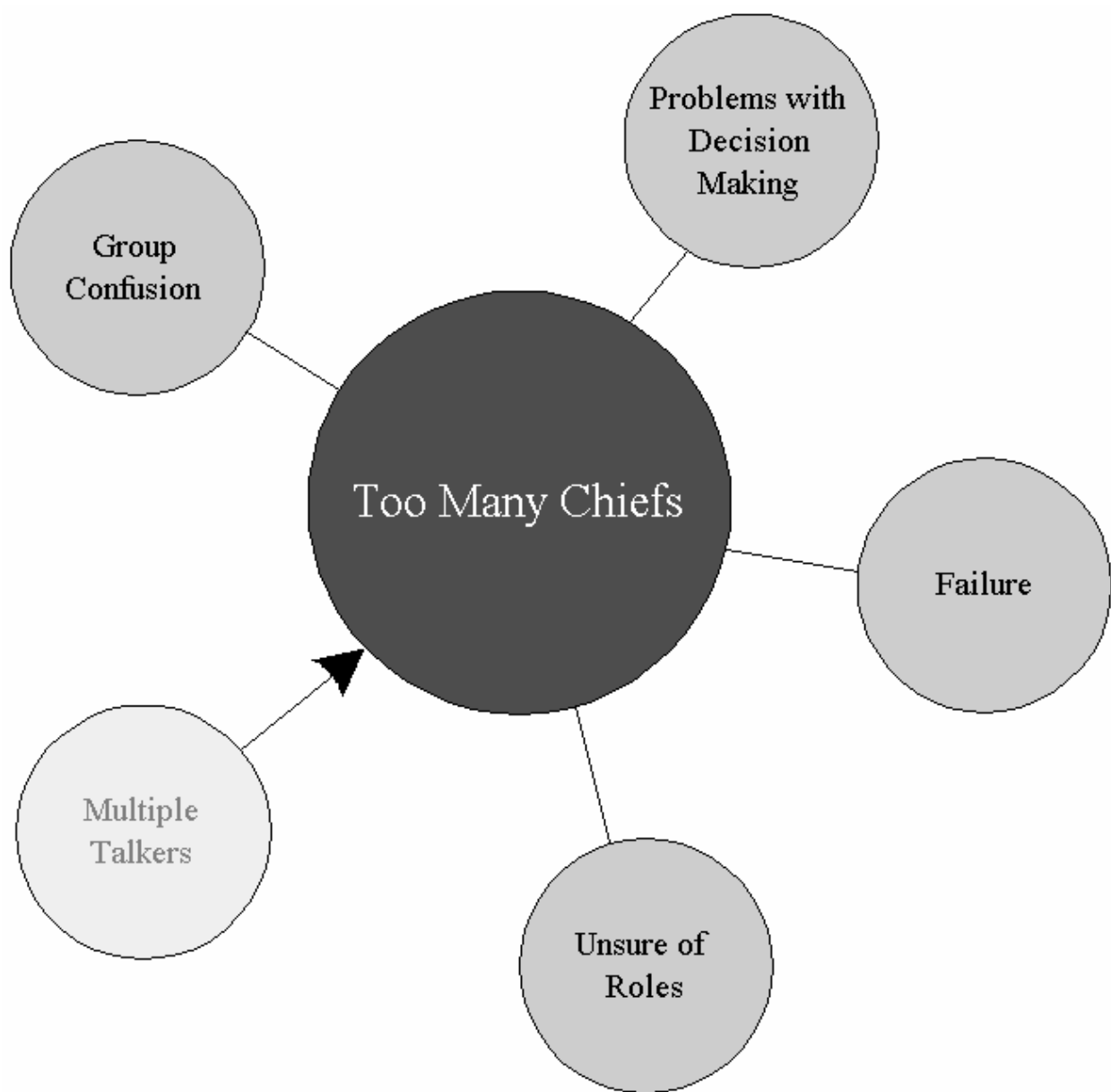


Figure 6 Theme of "Too Many Chiefs"

activity, as mentioned earlier, there was an inability to make a decision regarding whether or not to say another participant's name prior to throwing the ball to them. This indecisiveness led to the group dropping the ball numerous times because they were unsure to whom they were throwing the ball.

The group also experienced difficulties making decisions during Turnstile. Participants described this experience as "everybody had different opinions" and multiple "ideas [were] being thrown out." As a result of the different opinions that were offered at the same time, decisions were very difficult to make. Nick described this problem as "paralysis by analysis." According to Nick's explanation of this idea, the group was spending so much time analyzing the problem, they were unable to make a decision on the best way to accomplish the task. During my second interview with Jenny we discussed this larger notion of Too Many Chiefs and her comment below helped to reinforce the idea that the group experienced difficulties making decisions. "Just too many people are 'it's my way or the highway.' They wanted to get that point across to everybody." While the notion of "it's my way or the highway" could constitute strong leadership (without a value judgment) in this instance, Jenny was clear in her presentation of the qualifier, "too many people" and she emphasized that because of the multiple people talking and trying to promote their idea, stagnation as opposed to movement was achieved. Even though people wanted the group to follow their idea at the expense of other ideas, because there were too many people talking, the group had a difficult time making decisions.

This idea of problems with decision making was also seen during the Islands. At the beginning of this activity, facilitators asked the participants to determine how many faults they felt they would need as they moved across the three Islands (a fault involved either a participant or the board they were using as a bridge touching the ground). Once the facilitators asked the

group this question, multiple members of the group immediately began talking with one another. Some conversations focused on how to actually accomplish the task while other conversations addressed the question posed by the facilitators. When talking with Clark in our first interview, I asked him about his perception of the group's performance on the Islands and his response spoke directly to this notion of problems with decision making.

And, he was saying, "Oh, you gotta tell me how many faults you're going to have." And we were feeling pretty bad so we were like, well "Twenty." I remember somebody said, "Thirty," "Seventy," whatever. And we kind of were like, "Oh well... we touch it once here, touch it once there...that's like so many a person."

Within this quote we see multiple participants suggesting ideas and an ambivalence as to which idea would be the best to follow. During this activity the group experienced difficulties trying to make a decision about how many faults they would allow themselves. A brief section from my participant observation notes help to emphasize this point.

There doesn't appear to be initial consensus on the number of touches. Some ask if they can just lay the board on the ground and have everyone walk across it and have that count as only one touch, while others suggest different numbers, while others don't want to set a number, they just want to start. Comments include: "how many faults are we willing to take?" "we don't need perfection," "how many failures?" and "ya'll need to hurry up and give him an answer."

In the above examples (Warp Speed, Turnstile, and Islands) participants identified too many people offering ideas at the same time (multiple talkers), too many participants attempting to lead the group (too many chiefs) and, as a result, problems with decision making arose.

Group confusion. Closely related to, yet distinct from the notion of problems with decision making, was group confusion that arose when participants identified the idea of too many chiefs. When the group identified a particular situation as being marked by too many chiefs, they also associated the idea of chaos with that moment. This was seen most frequently during Turnstile. Madison and I had a chance to discuss her perception of the group's performance during this activity and a portion of her comments are below.

Hmm. I don't think there was a lot of really working together on that clip because everybody had their own thing and it was just a lot of chaos at that point. Really there didn't nobody know what to do.

In this situation a prevailing perception was that of chaos—there were too many people trying to take charge and lead the group, and as a result, “didn't nobody know what to do.” Renee appeared to echo these thoughts when she discussed what it was that she liked least about the challenge course program during our first interview.

We already talked about how confusing it was when we were in a group and we were doing Disneyland, and also when we were in a group doing the island. That was probably the least favorite part for me. It was all that confusion that we had to deal with, and seeing everybody else get frustrated. I didn't like that...We needed to be more organized in our thought process. And, we had that large of a group and it was absolutely impossible to absorb everyone's ideas at one time. Once we had begun – in that mass of confusion – absorb and try different ideas anyway, then we didn't have anybody help us build off of our mistakes. We didn't have a solid, like concrete, okay – “All right, I took notes, and last time that didn't work. Let's move it like this...” There was just no formal sequence of operations.

In support of this idea related to group confusion on the Turnstile, Jean stated that the experience was “haphazard” and “chaotic,” Clark suggested that “we weren’t organized” and “everybody was doing their own thing,” Kim stated there was “chaos” and the group was “not together,” and Nick said there was “chaos” and “confusion” when the group was trying to accomplish the activity. Two specific quotes help to illustrate this point. When comparing why the group communicated effectively on some elements and less effectively on others, Clark suggested:

It just seems that this is more like one or two people doing all the work and these are kind of like everybody is involved. I don’t know that’s what it seemed like to me. And when everybody was involved it was just like absolute chaos and then we screwed up so bad on this one. It was just like hey here is an idea, it works let’s just do that.

Similarly, when describing ineffective communication on the Turnstile, Kim said:

There was too many people talking at the same time trying to give different ideas and you know some people thought that every idea was heard – not at that point. Because you really didn’t get heard unless you were screaming and that’s what everybody said there was just too many...I think there was too many chiefs. I think at that point there should have been one or two people running ideas by or we should have got together and you know okay...and took the time ‘okay what should I do?’ And try to give different ideas. There was just too much chaos at that point.

In both of these instances, participants discussed multiple talkers leading to chaos within the group. It was this chaotic feel that also led to Shelly describing Turnstile as “just unorganized.” When too many participants were trying to take control and talking over one another, not only

did confusion and chaos result, but group members were also unsure of their roles within the activity.

Unsure of roles. During the course of the activities there were opportunities for different group members to take on leadership roles; however, when multiple group members were talking and trying to wrestle the leadership role, group members became unsure of what their role within the group should be. In one particular case Renee tried to nominate Jean as the leader during Turnstile. When I showed Jean a video clip of this interaction during our first interview, she was shocked that she had been nominated as the chief.

We needed a chief that day. And, I even told you in our conversation that we needed a project manager for that. But I didn't know I was elected. I wouldn't have wanted to be elected. I would have told someone else to do that, like Brad.

Because of the talking and confusion that was present during this activity, Jean did not realize until she watched the video clip that she had been nominated to be the chief for the group on that particular activity. According to Jean, even if she had realized she had been nominated, she would not have wanted to accept that role. The amount of confusion that existed at this particular moment during the day led to Jean's lack of recognition that she had been nominated as chief.

In my second interview with Clark, he and I spent some time discussing what he meant by the term "too many chiefs, not enough Indians." Part of his response directly addressed this notion of participants' lack of clarity of their role within the group.

I was frustrated with everybody because I heard a lot of good ideas and then some of them actually worked and I was like well I didn't want to be another chief but I just wanted to say how I felt and then I was just like well nobody is listening to me so I mean

I was just like I don't know what to do. So I was very frustrated with it and I had a feeling that we weren't going to do it.

Clark exhibited frustration at his lack of understanding about his role within the group and, in this instance, elected not to voice his opinion because he "didn't want to be another chief." However, on the next element, Clark took a very active leadership role within the group and established himself as one of the "chiefs" for the Islands.

While there were cases where individuals felt unsure of their roles during the activities, there were conditions where individuals felt comfortable with and were aware of their roles. In these instances participants identified that they felt comfortable in the role of follower as opposed to leader. When discussing her role within the group, Madison stated, "I just stayed back" and Kim said "I stood in the background." These women identified that they knew, understood, and were comfortable with their roles throughout the different activities (it should be noted that roles were not static and did evolve throughout the day). No individual suggested during the challenge course program or throughout the focus group or interviews that they were comfortable with and embraced the role of chief; however Clark did state that he felt surprise that group members did share their thoughts and opinions.

You know, everybody pulled through and everybody is really strong. And, everybody definitely put in a lot to the group. So, I was surprised like with that. I thought that there was only going to be a couple of leaders in the group and everybody else was just going to follow, but everybody was putting in their input and saying what they think. So, I was really surprised, and I was really happy with that, too. Everybody was kind of all working together. And, you know, a lot of places people don't say anything because – "Oh, they're supposed to be the leader" or "This person is speaking up so I'm not going to say

anything.” And, you know, it was just cool to see that you can get people to do that like our leaders Jason and Jake were helping us do that. You know, they were kind of trying to get everybody to talk and say how they felt.

Within this quote, Clark suggested that role clarity existed in that everyone was encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas.

Some of this lack of comfort or awareness of roles spilled over into the participants’ interactions with one another. I have previously relayed two instances where Kim and Nick expressed their frustrations with another group member who was sleeping and group members who were spending time talking among themselves rather than encouraging the participants on the particular elements. In these cases, Nick and Kim were unsure how to handle the instance because they did not feel comfortable confronting the individual(s) who was (were) engaged in behaviors deemed undesirable.

Failure. A common feeling associated with the theme of Too Many Chiefs was failure. Participants identified that when too many people were talking and trying to take charge, the ultimate outcome was lack of success or failure. For instance, when talking with Christy about the ultimate outcome of the Turnstile she shared the following:

And then when the time run out, it was like, “Okay, we might as well give up. There’s no way. We can’t think of something.” It seemed like he was counting down. It was too nerve-racking. “We can’t do it. We can’t do it.” We just weren’t going to do this one. On that one, I felt like it was a failure.

Toward the end of Turnstile, the group divided itself into three groups each working independently of one another. This was not an intentional process but was caused by individuals gravitating toward a particular chief or group of people. At this point in the activity, the

facilitators brought the group's physical position to their attention and placed a six-minute time limit on the group. In Christy's quote above she referenced her perception of that entire experience and suggested that it felt like failure to her.

As has been previously mentioned, during the Islands, participants were provided with the opportunity to select the number of faults they would have during the activity. This process was not done efficiently and was marked by ineffective communication, and it was this ineffective process, accompanied by a goal identified by the group as "easy," which led to Christy "considering that a failure." During one of our conversations she fluctuated between feeling the group succeeded because they completed the activity and also feeling the group had failed because of the number of faults they had allowed.

But I don't know, it just, I mean even though we succeeded, it still didn't feel like a success to me because of knowing that we could have done it without mistakes and we did have thirteen or fourteen, something like that, and then half of it was moving the board, but it was an idea. We got us from one point to the other, but to me, it wasn't that great of an accomplishment.

While Christy suggested that finishing the Islands "wasn't that great of an accomplishment," Nick appeared to echo her thoughts when he stated that the group's performance on the Islands was marked by "lax goals," "careless mistakes," and "a defeated spirit."

During the course of the interviews several participants recognized that the only activity they had been unable to finish was Turnstile. In the course of the first interview I conducted with Jean, I asked her to recall the worst part of the day.

I just didn't like the rope thing because I was frustrated with the rope. The island thing was much more pleasurable than the spinning rope. I didn't like that because we just

couldn't get across and stuff. So I was very frustrated that we didn't...I guess that was the only thing we didn't finish. Because we didn't...they had to tell us what the answer was. At least on the island...we did do that. And we did...that's really the only thing we didn't accomplish. Cause everything else was just, you know, just who'd won the ship-to-shore or whatever that was...that little thing. And the tossing around, we kind cut our time down to four-point some seconds. You know, we probably could have probably done less than that, but that was still good to us. So that one, I guess, because we didn't finish it...I mean...I hadn't thought about it, but was the only thing we didn't finish.

According to Jean's recollection, the worst part of the day for her was when the group was unable to accomplish the task placed before them. As she mentioned in her quote, the group improved during the course of the other activities; however, Turnstile was marked by multiple talkers, confusion, and problems with decision making. These conditions led to a case of too many chiefs which ultimately led the group to define this experience as failure.

As reported earlier, I asked participants to tell me on which element they felt the group communicated and cooperated best and worst. In the same manner in which there was group consensus about which element the group communicated and cooperated best on, there was consensus on which element they communicated and cooperated worst—Turnstile. All ten participants identified that the group communicated worst on the Turnstile, while eight out of ten identified the Turnstile as the element where the worst cooperation occurred. These results are supported by general comments from different participants when discussing performance on the Turnstile. Clark said that our "performance was crap." Madison suggested, "Don't think we did too good." Shelly stated we "didn't do very well on that." As demonstrated above, the group did not just perceive failure on the Turnstile. Failure was also associated with individual components

of an element (e.g., initially passing the ball around the circle and not saying names, ineffectively establishing the number of faults) and led Renee to use the term “half-way succeeded.” When multiple participants were talking at one time, chaos, disorganization, confusion, problems with decision making, lack of role clarity, and certain levels of failure arose. These conditions, as presented by participants, contributed to the development of the theme Too Many Chiefs; however, just as this theme arose from examining the effectiveness of the group’s communication, so too did the theme of Cooperation.

Cooperation

One of the original emphases of the challenge course program was to provide opportunities to offer lessons about cooperation. This was done intentionally through the selection of activities which promote cooperation and the creation of processing questions to help participants focus on this issue. Similarly, the intent behind two of the research questions was to understand participants’ perceptions related to cooperation and team functioning both during and after the challenge course program. This theme of Cooperation addressed participants’ perception of this notion and was comprised of six sub-themes: (a) working together, (b) leading, (c) following, (d) group size, (e) equipment responsibilities, and (f) accomplishment (see Figure 7).

Working together. The most common reference to the idea of cooperation was participants using the phrase “worked together.” I heard this comment while present at the challenge course and then during the interviews participants continued to refer to times when they worked together on different elements. While examples related to the theme of Too Many Chiefs focused solely on the low elements, when discussing the notion of working together, participants provided examples from all different forms of activities.

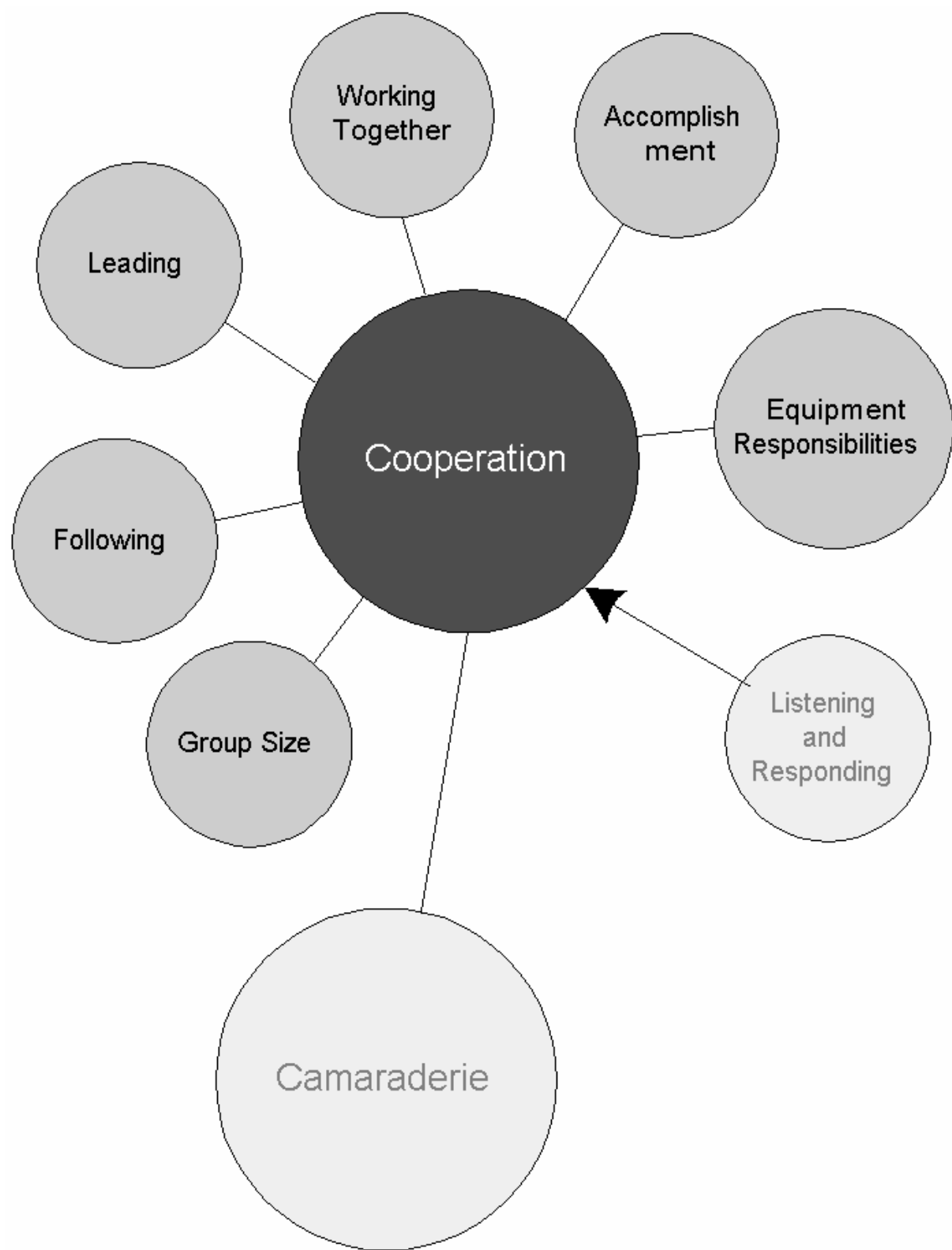


Figure 7 Theme of "Cooperation"

Participants stated that the group worked well together on the Zip Line, the Islands, the TP Shuffle, Warp Speed, and the Pamper Pole. As one example, during Shelly's first interview she and I discussed her perception of the group while participating in the high elements.

I think the group really functioned well together, as far as on the high elements... about telling...you know, right there at your knee...put your foot right there...reach your hand here...hug the tree. You know, gave you things that your mind is so racing at times like that about "What do I do, what do I do, what do I do? I got to come down, I got to come down." And then you hear somebody say something and it's like, "Oh yeah, oh yeah, okay, put..." You know, like I said, they said, "Put your hand on top and push up." So I think we all functioned really well and teaming together and helping each other to accomplish the goals that we were trying to do.

In this quote, not only does Shelly state that she felt the group "functioned really well," but she also provided an example of the difficulty that participants had distinguishing between communication and cooperation. The two ideas were deeply intertwined and almost inseparable for the participants.

Providing another example of working together, Renee reminisced about the group's experiences during the TP Shuffle:

Being able to communicate with that person who is not only physically further away than you would normally talk to someone and try to you know confer instruction or communicate instructions rather but also just having them physically be able to understand what you are trying to say like 'put your foot right here and hold down really heavy and make sure you are holding their arm.' And that was just the best example that I can think of that we did on the tepee shuffle.

Within this situation Renee identifies that the group worked together by communicating instructions to one another while standing on the log. An additional piece of cooperation which was involved in this particular activity included physical contact. In Renee's example above she referenced telling other group members where to place their feet. Referring back to the observations that I conducted, I was able to observe participants physically placing feet where they needed to go on the log so no participant was injured. In my conversation with Nick, he raised another component which involved participants working together and making physical contact.

I think we cooperated the best on tepee shuffle because there was a lot of personal space violated on that one and me personally I'm kind of a person you know I like my 3 feet of personal space. But you know we were face to face you know just within inches and crawling over people and crawling under people and not your typical work situation you know that we experienced.

For Nick, the TP Shuffle involved a violation of personal space, and he identified his (and others') willingness to acquiesce to this violation as a method to work together with other group members.

Christy offered another way in which participants worked together while completing the TP Shuffle. As a part of this activity, participants had to rearrange their order on a log without stepping off. During our second interview Christy identified this element as one where the group demonstrated cooperation the best. When asked to provide an example of cooperation, Christy stated the following:

Not everybody was moving at the same time you know. If you got into a shuffle here in the middle to where everybody needed to move that's in the middle, not everybody tried

to move at one time, because you needed support of the two on either side of you and even the ones that was going even further out.

With her example, Christy felt that working together was a function of everyone not moving at the same time and physically supporting individuals on either side. The above examples of working together were also made possible because some individuals assumed a leadership role.

Leading. As has been previously discussed, the group identified several times when they believed there were too many leaders attempting to direct the group; however, two different instances where leadership was exhibited in a manner which assisted the group were discussed during the challenge course program and subsequent interviews. First, while speaking with Jenny in the first interview, I asked her to provide me with her perception of the group during Warp Speed. Her initial response led me to believe that a transition occurred within the activity.

They seemed to have done better. I mean... At first I know it was very... Like when we were trying to come up with the ideas how to get it to go faster when he said he would make it go faster, how could we do that as a group. I remember at that point it was the same thing with the rope. Everybody was talking and throwing out ideas and stuff and it didn't seem like anybody was really listening.

In her response Jenny said that "everybody was talking and throwing out ideas," but she began her statement by saying that "they seemed to have done better." As I attempted to explore this issue with her she offered the following rationale for the group's improvement during Warp Speed.

I remember something about Jean saying...Somebody said something about listening.

And then I remember Jean offered an idea and everybody wanted to listen to Jean. That's why, I guess, it seemed like it got a little more organized.

In this instance, Jenny suggested that the group informally nominated Jean as the leader and “it seemed like it got a little more organized” when this occurred.

A second instance of leadership occurred when the group was participating on the Pamper Pole. For this activity Bill was the first person to climb. Bill’s tasks were to climb to the top of a 20 foot telephone pole, stand on top of it, and jump for a trapeze swing hanging in front of him. The following section from my participant observation notes described his climb.

When Bill gets to the top of the pole he appears very nervous. “Wow, it’s a lot different when you get up here. Wow, I don’t even know if I can do this thing.” He appears to be worried about setting a bad example for others who will climb after him. Jake tells him that he needs him to jump for safety reasons. Bill is near the top, but not standing on top, and wants to come back down. He does not want to jump. Bill has stalled at the top and says “I really don’t like this.” He elects to kind of drop off the top without actually jumping.

While this instance in and of itself did not necessarily demonstrate leadership, how Bill chose to handle the situation when he came back down to the ground provided an example of leadership. As the next climbers began their ascent, Bill elected to provide them with suggestions on how to progress and overcome the different obstacles that existed. When talking with Becky during our first interview she described Bill’s actions and how they impacted her.

He was being really good. He was saying like, the fall wasn’t that bad. He made me feel better even though he could have taken a different approach to it because he could have been mad or frustrated.

During the processing for this activity the group discussed the leadership demonstrated by Bill and how his experience enabled other group members to accomplish parts of the activity.

Through his willingness to assume a leadership role upon his return to the ground, the group worked together and cooperated to accomplish their goals involved with the Pamper Pole.

Following. As was discussed in the theme Too Many Chiefs, having a leader or leaders did not guarantee successful completion of a task. In the discussion of the Too Many Chiefs theme, participants also suggested that there were not enough Indians. According to this group's perceptions, it was not enough to have leadership within the group, there also needed to be individuals who were willing to follow that leadership. While participating in the Islands, Madison suggested that she and others simply followed what the group was suggesting in relation to the number of faults they would allow themselves. "And then there were some like they were more 'let's do it this, let's do it that' and others just followed which I followed doing that." Jean echoed Madison's sentiments of members of the group following the current leaders during Islands when she stated:

So, but everybody cooperated and they said, you know, "We got to get everybody here on this small island. You all get off on the edges as much as you can." And we stood real quietly and, you know, we just did our little part. We just did what we were told. And we was happy.

According to Madison and Jean's perception, group members followed the suggestions of the "chiefs" on the Islands and that led to the group cooperating better which subsequently led to the group's eventual completion of the task.

When comparing these explanations of the group's experience on the Islands with other comments made about this same element, it does appear that a disjuncture exists. When discussing the sub-theme of failure within the theme of Too Many Chiefs, Renee suggested that the group considered the Islands a half-success and other group members agreed when they said

that they felt like it wasn't a great accomplishment. Examining these responses it is important to consider both the macro and micro levels upon which participants base their perceptions. It was possible for participants to remember a specific moment in time when they felt they were following the group which in turn allowed the group to complete and accomplish the activity. Similarly, it was also possible for participants to remember the element as a whole and feel that overall the group was not successful when completing the task. As has already been identified by the participants, the notions of succeeding and accomplishing could be different for different people and that led some individuals to suggest the group accomplished (finished) the activity while others said they did not succeed at the activity or the activity was only a "half-success."

Another component of cooperation identified by participants was remaining quiet and electing to briefly remove themselves from an activity so as not to add to the confusion or chaos that currently existed. In this manner, individual group members remained silent and followed suggestions of other group members until they developed a plan they could share with the group. The first example of this occurred during Warp Speed when the group was trying to realign themselves.

I was just being the observer and trying to absorb what I was...I mean I was listening. It wasn't that I stepped back to not pay attention. I stepped back because I honestly didn't feel like I was contributing anything to the group at the time. And, I felt like maybe if I just stood back and listened for a minute and tried to understand...that maybe I could then jump back in and try to help organize everybody. Like, that was kind of my intention. I was just kind of – at that point – I think I was just kind of befuddled.

In this situation, Renee felt that she could assist the group better by removing herself and continuing to listen and think about how to solve the problem than if she remained directly

involved with the brainstorming process. In a similar occurrence, Shelly spent some time separated from the group while they were attempting to complete the Turnstile. During her first interview I showed Shelly a video clip of her standing apart from the group and she offered her rationale for her actions.

It was just so... so many were giving their input, and I had not a clue because I figure... okay I'm going to be quiet because it was just a mass of people talking all at one time and, so until I could think about what was the answer or trial and error was even done, you know, it wasn't any use to me putting in any input if I didn't have a clue.

As Shelly remained quiet apart from the group, she stated that she continued to think about how to solve the riddle involved with Turnstile. One component of the riddle which the group was unable to solve was the fact that they did not need to jump the rope every time. In another video clip I showed to Shelly she asked the group, "Who said we had to jump?" In the course of our interview, she tied these two instances together.

Who said we had to jump? Yeah, that was me saying, "Who said we have to jump?"

Well, um, like I said...that's why I stand off and I watch and I listen to...you know, why jump on in there if everybody is just so gung ho...at first they were geared to getting it, going to do it...and everybody had an opinion. And, there's no way you could have even... without studying it a little bit.

In these two cases, Renee and Shelly cooperated with the group by removing themselves physically from the action, following suggestions as they were provided (even while removed), and continuing to think about the best method to solve the particular problems.

Group size. As previously presented in the discussion around the theme Effectiveness of Communication, group size impacted the ability of the group to effectively communicate.

Participants also identified group size as an important variable when discussing how they cooperated with one another. According to Kim, the group functioned better when they didn't have to interact with the entire group at the same time. In the second interview I asked Kim if she could tell me in which activity she felt the group *communicated* best. While her response suggested components of *communication* it also provided insight into the notion of *cooperation* and group size.

We were closer together and you can communicate and plus it's kinda divided like in different groups. You know there was more to this end than at this end. They were having to work with their own little...and the group I was in, you would have to ...lot of people trying to talk at the same time and you could just communicate better on that one. While she clearly stated that the group communicated better due to smaller group size, Kim also suggested that individuals needed to work together within their smaller groups. The group perception appeared to be that when fewer participants had to talk with one another, the likelihood of communication *and* cooperation was increased. Shelly supported this idea when she stated that the cooperation process was made easier because there were "not as many mouths that you had to listen to." While attempting an activity with a smaller group (as was necessary in TP Shuffle) allowed the group to cooperate with one another, participants also identified cooperation occurring as they completed different tasks with the equipment associated with the high elements.

Equipment responsibilities. Even though the high elements were identified by participants as individual activities, there were still opportunities for group members to cooperate

with one another⁶. The primary example of this was different equipment responsibilities associated with different elements. For instance, on all three high elements, at least two participants needed to hold the ladder as one participant ascended the element. On the Pamper Pole, in addition to their regular waist harness, participants were required to wear a full body harness. The donning of this harness was aided by the assistance of another participant. Finally, on the Zip Line, participants made sure the road was clear of joggers, held a ladder for participants to descend from the element, and ran the rope back across the road to the zip tower.

During our second interview, I asked Michelle if she could tell me about an instance where she recalled the group cooperating with one another and she responded:

I'm thinking about this one [Zip Line] I guess because you know when we were down at the bottom we had the responsibility of catching them when they come down and bringing the pulley back up and stuff like that. Down there you know everybody was willing to help and then watching and making sure that the people on the road stopped. So I think that one was very good as far as cooperation.

Michelle's perception of the group while participating in the Zip Line was that group members were cooperating with one another by taking care of different equipment needs. In her response to the same question, Kim offered an example of cooperation occurring at the Pamper Pole.

That was cooperation, helping people get in the harness. You know they had to have somebody else helping with the harness to make sure it's secure because they would be jumping off. So I think that's a lot of support and cooperation. Nobody had to ask anybody to take the initiative and jump up and help somebody in their harness.

⁶ Participants also identified assuming equipment responsibilities as a method of supporting and encouraging the participants. By addressing the context within which participants referenced the notion of equipment responsibilities, the two distinct rationales for this notion could be presented.

In her example Kim not only stated that helping participants into their harness was a form of cooperation, but it was also a form of support. In addition to cooperating via taking care of the different equipment responsibilities, the theme of Cooperation was partially defined by accomplishment.

Accomplishment. The final component to the theme Cooperation was accomplishment. As has been previously noted, participants identified accomplishment and success on both macro and micro levels of an activity. Participants suggested they could experience success even in the midst of an activity they identified as a failure. For instance, during our first interview, Christy offered these thoughts about the Turnstile.

On that one, I felt like it was a failure. But it was a success because even though it was kind of everybody throwing this, throwing ideas around, we still, everybody did share in ideas, so if it got heard, then we done it.

Christy's thoughts provide an example of success or accomplishment on the micro level but when participants addressed the notion of accomplishment in relation to the theme Cooperation, they referred to success on the macro level. For example, the most positive comments associated with accomplishment were related to the TP Shuffle (the element a majority of group members suggested where they communicated and cooperated best). Comments such as we "performed great" or we "performed very well" were associated with this activity. While the theme of Too Many Chiefs was associated with the idea of failure, the theme of Cooperation was associated with the idea of accomplishment.

Camaraderie

From talking with the participants it appeared that cooperating with one another led to the theme of Camaraderie. This theme of Camaraderie was defined by four individual sub-themes:

(a) togetherness, (b) seeing others, (c) getting to know others, and (d) bonding (see Figure 8).

While these ideas may appear similar, there were distinct differences in the way participants presented them. The idea of togetherness was defined simply as being in a shared location.

Within that shared location, participants had the chance to observe one another as they participated in the same activities. Getting to know one another was possible because of sharing a location, participating in the same activities, and watching others participate; this process allowed participants to learn more about each other. Finally, when participants used the term “bonded” it suggested that they had become closer as a result of sharing space, seeing others, and getting to know group members. Each of these sub-themes is discussed in more detail below.

Togetherness. During the first interview, I had opportunity to discuss with participants what they enjoyed about the challenge course program. Several individuals suggested that they simply enjoyed being with other employees outside of the work environment. For instance, Michelle provided the following answer to what she liked best about the program

Being with everybody here in a different environment, that was probably the best thing.

You know because we all see each other with this one set of problems and this one atmosphere and we really don't get to know each other any other way. When you are here you talk about work.

For Michelle, the act of being with other employees outside of the workplace was important and others appeared to feel similarly. According to Clark, interactions among group members outside of work were what he remembered most.

It was fun to really just interact and not have to really worry about anything – not worry about work. I guess it would be maybe at the end with the Zip Line, um, Christy and Kim were helping me with the ladder and helping me unhook people – and I had done that

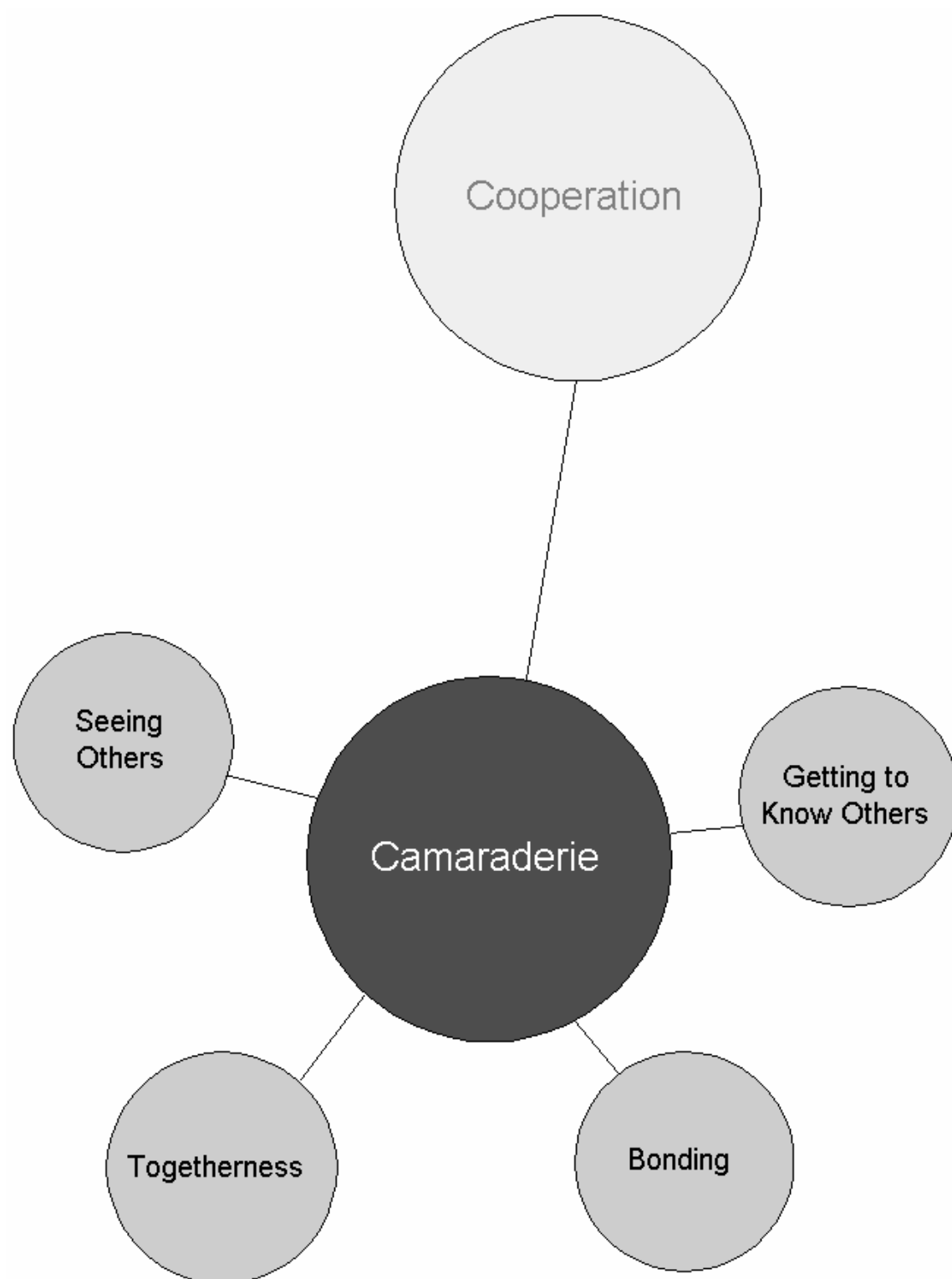


Figure 8 Theme of "Camaraderie"

kind of stuff before. Sierra was helping me with the ladder. Becky, she was running the rope up. Nick was running the rope up a lot. It was just cool to be interacting with the folks there, and I guess that's what I really remember the most.

The opportunity to be together with other employees was one of the aspects of the program that participants appeared to enjoy. When asked to comment on one of the first activities in which the group participated, Kim suggested "I think everybody had a good time and was just enjoying being there together as a group." Even six weeks after the challenge course program when I asked Shelly what it was that she remembered most about the experience, she stated "It was fun and I enjoyed being together as a team." This notion of togetherness appeared to be an important component of the program, but it alone was not sufficient to develop the theme of camaraderie. In addition to being together with other group members, participants identified that they got to know one another better as a result of the program.

Getting to know others. During the second interview I had an opportunity to talk with Madison about some comments she had made during our first interview. We were talking about some of the relationships that were formed and below are some of her thoughts:

Really just you know there were some here that I don't work with one on one each day and you know I got closer to them doing those activities, talking with them, you know just learning I guess personally getting to know them a little bit better.

For Madison, physically being together with other participants was a precursor to getting to know them better. I next asked Madison what those relationships were like then, six weeks after the challenge course program.

I feel like they are still the same. You know we don't really talk about things that happened that day or anything now but you know just talking to them in general I feel like you can talk to them more now than before.

While she did emphasize that the group has not discussed the challenge course on a regular basis, she suggested that she feels like she can talk to them more now than before. A change has occurred and she has gotten to know her fellow employees better. This sentiment was also voiced by Christy when she said "We got to know each other a little bit better than we had." Christy also provided an example of this occurring in the workplace in the days immediately following the challenge course program

Like the other day, we asked Renee about her birthday, asked how her birthday party went, asked how she enjoyed her night and that kind of thing. I don't know if I would have asked her before because she...I don't know, because she is...I wouldn't say she was unapproachable, but it's just the way her mannerism and the way she is she seems more outgoing than me.

Christy got to know Renee better during the challenge course and as a result she felt more comfortable talking about non-work related topics.

Similarly, Clark discussed some of his feelings related to life in the workplace immediately following the program.

And it just seems more like we know each other a little bit better and we can work together and get stuff resolved. So, it's cool...I mean...it feels a little...it feels different.

It feels different. So, I'm enjoying that.

Again, this idea of getting to know other employees better comes to light. In these cases, participants who felt they did not know some of the other group members' very well,

experienced an opportunity to get to know them better during the challenge course program.

Perhaps this idea was best summarized by Michelle who, during our second interview stated:

That gave me a chance to get to know them you know kind of in a different way you know because I was relying on them for some of the activities. I had more of an opportunity to get to know people.

While at the challenge course, participants interacted with one another in a very different manner than they typically did in the workplace. This opportunity to be with one another and get to know each other better was “different” than how group members saw one another and interacted with each other while in the workplace. One of the manners in which group members got to know one another better while at the challenge course was through observing each other attempt the different elements.

Seeing others. Participants mentioned that having the opportunity to see one another in situations that were different from the work place was beneficial in developing a sense of camaraderie. For example, when I asked Becky what she enjoyed most about the challenge course program, she answered:

The best part I think was watching people that didn’t think they could do it accomplish goals because Renee is my best friend and I would have paid you \$10.00 that she was not going to climb up there.

While Becky stated that she already had a close relationship with Renee, it was still important to her to be able to watch her friend participate in the activities. Renee herself suggested that watching Madison climb the Catwalk was particularly beneficial to her.

Seeing other people go before me. Madison, I think, went before me, and she and I are the same size and that – really the size thing – was weighing on my mind. It was heavy

on my heart. Seeing her do it made me feel very confident being able to see someone who is physically, I felt, where I was. And knowing that she could do it made me feel more confident.

Having the opportunity to watch Madison climb the Catwalk allowed Renee to feel more confident when she attempted the same activity, and it was this type of experience that helped group members to get to know one another better.

In the context of my first interview with Shelly, I also asked her what she felt was the best part of the day, and she replied:

I think everybody enjoyed it and it seemed like they were having a great time at it. And that's what I like to see. Even the ones that didn't do it enjoyed seeing the others participate and accomplish, you know. I was really proud that Renee got up there. We knew that was going to be a little bit of a stickler with her, and everybody is so proud that she did it. It's not for us, she didn't do it for us, she did it for herself. I hope that's what she did it for. I think that was the best.

Renee's experience on the challenge course that day appeared to be the most emotional individual experience, and other group members seemed to appreciate the fact that they were present to observe her experience. The interactions between Renee and the group did not appear to be simply the group observing Renee; Renee appeared to appreciate and desire their presence during her experiences. During her time in the zip tower, Renee said that she was in a state of "primal fear," and as a result, she had a very difficult time jumping off the tower. Because of the design of this particular ropes course, a dirt road used by joggers and walkers runs underneath the Zip Line. Out of consideration for those using the dirt road, group members were asked to stop any joggers or walkers from walking under the Zip Line when someone was getting ready to

jump. Shortly before she jumped a group of individuals were walking along the dirt road and Renee shared her thoughts about this experience with me.

Oh, gosh. It was, I mean, it was like who are these people? I'm up here crying. Personal embarrassment – not wanting them to see me – someone that I don't know seeing me in such a primal fear...in such a state of mind. I couldn't really control my emotions. I didn't feel like...I was just...I didn't have much to give. And, I didn't want anybody that didn't know me seeing that. That was...I just didn't want it to be seen. I felt that was more personal and the group deserved to see it because we had all been through it. You know. I didn't mind them seeing it. It didn't bother me not one little bit that everybody down there knew I was squalling. I didn't...It didn't bother me.

In this situation Renee felt a connection with the group and was comfortable that they were observing her in this particular state because they “deserved to see it.” Many of the group members felt a strong connection to Renee because of the emotions that she experienced during the challenge course and because they had been present for this particular experience.

Bonding. During the challenge course program, group members were present in the same physical location, participated in activities which encouraged them to get to know one another better, and saw group members attempt difficult tasks. These different experiences led participants to suggest that, as a result of their total experience, the group had bonded with one another. During my first interview with Madison I asked her how she thought lessons learned at the ropes course might transfer into the workplace. Below is a portion of her response.

I think you can more, the ones that were there together, can talk to ‘em better now. I think you can probably communicate, sort of just tell them how you feel maybe now. Now without, “Well, maybe you won’t like this, but...” You know, I think it brought a

stronger bond with all of us being there together and we can talk a little bit more personal with each other.

For Madison, being out at the challenge course allowed a stronger bond to develop which she suggested would let group members “talk a little bit more personal with each other.” These sentiments were echoed by Clark when he suggested:

I think one thing that I said yesterday was that everyone feels, to me, more approachable. You know, if there is any kind of problems...anything like advice...anything like that...I'd feel more apt to give it to somebody or, you know, take it from somebody that we were with at the ropes course because it feels like we're tightly bonded as a team now. That's what it feels like to me.

Nick also agreed that he felt the group was “tighter knit” as a result of their experiences on the challenge course. The bonding that occurred while present at the challenge course was another component of the theme Camaraderie. For participants, this notion was created by being together in a shared space, getting to know one another, seeing one another attempting tasks, and bonding with other group members. While this sense of camaraderie was suggested by many of the group members, Christy offered a different version of her experience.

Many group members felt participation, specifically in the high elements, allowed them to become closer to one another and made them feel more united; however, Christy elected not to participate in any of the high elements and as a result did not feel the same closeness other participants felt. During the course of our first interview, I asked Christy what it was that she enjoyed least about the day, what was the worst part for her. Her response offered insight into an individual who did not feel like part of the group.

I didn't feel any disappointment. But everybody come up and hugged me and said, "Well, that's alright, you did good." We're still together even though I didn't. I still cheered. I still showed my teamwork to everybody to give everybody their boost up and everything like that, but, I don't know...because I wasn't involved in doing that, I did feel like I was an outsider. It didn't seem like I was part of the group then even at that point.

As a result of not participating in the different high elements, Christy did not feel like a part of the group, she felt like an outsider. It appeared that the high elements were a powerful tool in creating bonds between participants and if a participant (as in Christy's case) elected not to participate in the high elements, she did not experience that closeness with other group members.

As Christy and I continued to talk about her experiences with not completing the high elements, we talked some about the final processing session that occurred at the end of the day.

Below are some of her thoughts related to that final conversation.

I was the only one that didn't do it, and when we finally finished and Jake came down and did the Zip Line and we was all sitting there talking and he was asking questions and how everybody felt for the day and the first thing that popped in my mind was, he said something like, "Your personal thing about what you accomplished here" and everybody was saying, "Oh, I did something I didn't think I was going to do." And the first thing that popped in my mind was, "Well, we were all fighting our little demons. I mean I'm like, "Well, I didn't even do anything." And I don't even know if that comment, that is the comment I made, was "everybody was fighting their demons as far as fear and height." And I was like, "Well, I didn't do anything." And then, even though I made that comment. I still was like, "Well, he wasn't talking to me because I didn't do anything."

Even though Christy was an active participant throughout the day and even though she participated in the high elements by holding ladders, unhooking carabineers, and watching the road, she still made the statement, “I didn’t do anything.” Because the topic of the final processing session addressed primarily accomplishments, Christy stated, “It don’t pertain to me.” Christy’s experience was different from a majority of the group members, in that she did not feel closer to the group as a result of participation in the high elements. It is important to note that Christy stated that she enjoyed working with the group during the morning activities but she felt the afternoon activities (high elements) were just more individualized.

Summary

This chapter began with a review of the purpose of the research and four research questions. Throughout this chapter evidence has been provided to offer answers to each of those four questions. The first research question sought to understand participant’s general perceptions related to a one-day challenge course program. Generally, the earlier presented notion of “I” provided an answer to this question (see Figure 9). Specifically, the themes of I’ve Gotta Do It, Personal Emphasis, and Changes in Emotion provided answers to participants’ general perceptions of the challenge course program. The final three research questions addressed specific lessons taught during the program and generally were answered by the aforementioned notion of “We” (see Figure 9). More specifically, the research question which sought to understand participants’ perceptions related to communication was answered within the themes of Effectiveness of Communication and Too Many Chiefs. The final two research questions sought to understand perceptions related to cooperation and team functioning were answered within the themes of Cooperation and Camaraderie. Portions of participants’ perceptions of team function, cooperation, and communication were found across the different themes; however, the

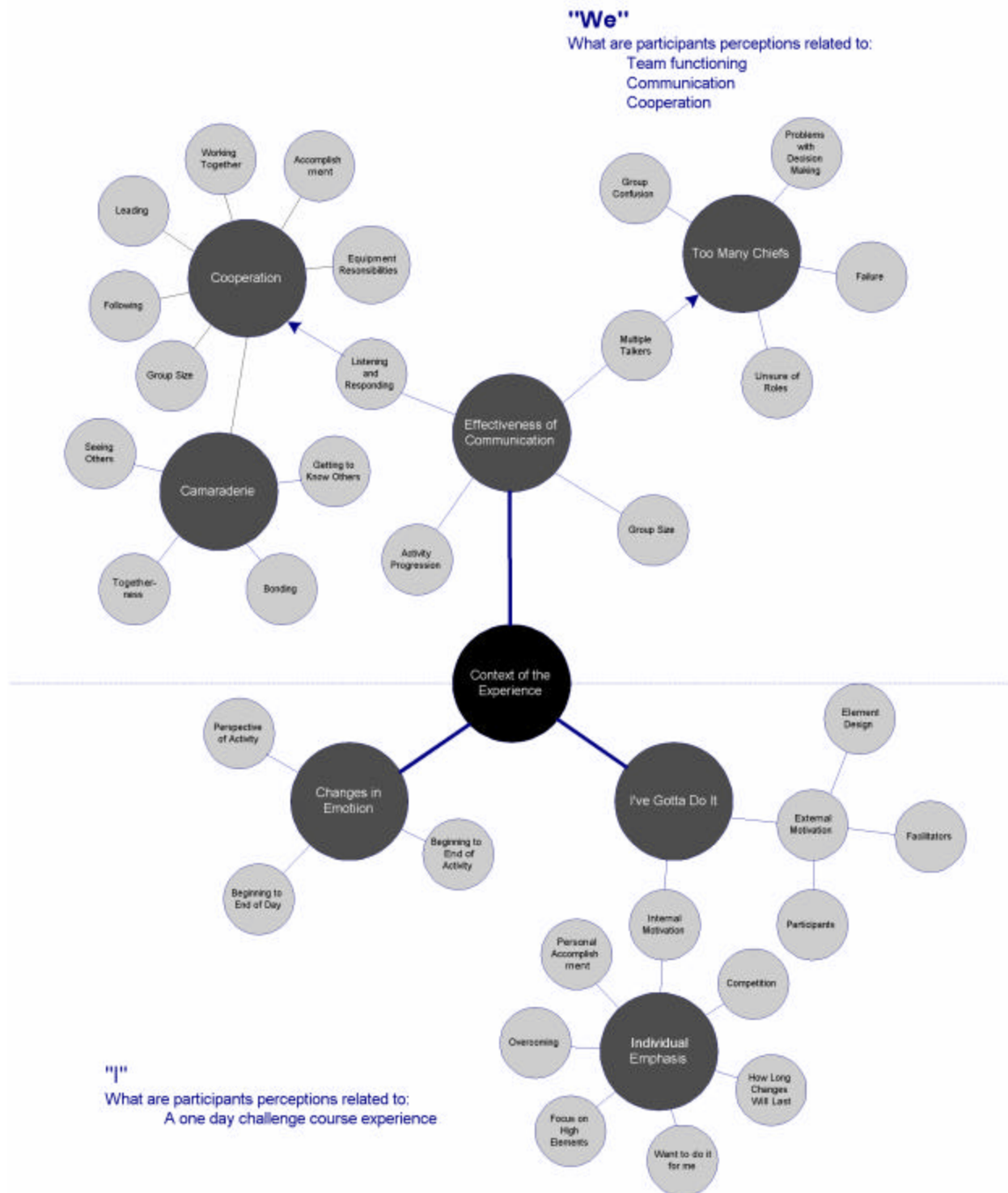


Figure 9 Interaction of Themes

above identified themes provided a majority of the evidence to answer the specified research question.

Conclusion

While this chapter has explored themes that arose from participants' perceptions during the challenge course program, the purpose of the research was also to explore participants' perceptions *after* the program. By presenting participants' perceptions both during and after the challenge course program, it is hoped that their version of the experience would be portrayed and understanding of challenge course programs improved. The next chapter explains participants' perceptions as they related to their current experience in the workplace and suggest how participants felt the program has impacted them since they returned to the dental office.

CHAPTER V

IMPACT OF PROGRAM

Six weeks following initial interviews, I interviewed participants for a second time. During this interview, I was not only interested in continuing to understand their perception of the experience in general, but I was also interested in understanding what life was like in the workplace six weeks after they completed the challenge course program. Toward that end, I asked participants to compare the work environment before and after the challenge course program so I could understand if participants perceived any impacts from the program. As a result of our conversations, it appeared that two primary impacts were present: (a) group growth and (b) personal growth (see Figure 10). Each of these two sub-themes was also marked by examples and suggestions offered from the participants.

Group Growth

During the second interview, it appeared that there were three primary components of group growth identified by participants: (a) generally better, (b) rubbed off, and (c) camaraderie. Accompanying these cases which supported the notion that growth had occurred within the workplace, were two notions suggesting growth had not occurred or had occurred, but was not lasting: (a) no change and (b) fading away.

Generally Better

As I spoke with participants about their perception of the current work environment, they suggested that things were generally better. For instance, Jean said that people are “probably communicating better,” and Renee said a “better line of communication” existed

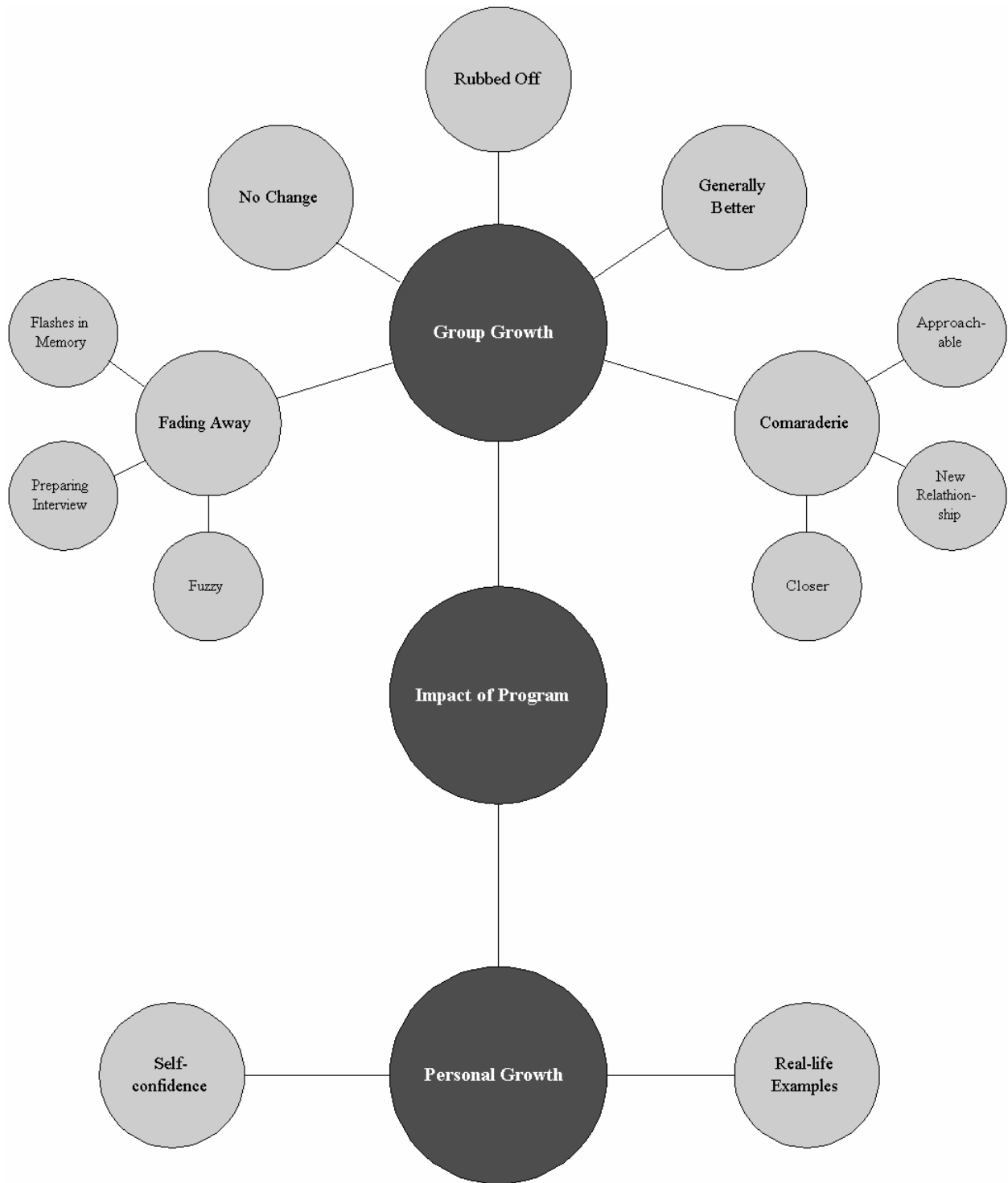


Figure 10 Theme of “Impact of Program”

among those employees who attended the course. Jenny offered this explanation as to how the group was working better together.

But I mean I always know when I see everybody I mean I feel like everything is fine or I'm saying "hey" and all. Well I look at everything as just I like everything just smooth and everybody just get along you know and everybody happy and so that's kind of how I try to be. You know how I am as a person. And I guess that's...everybody seems fine to me.

Christy seemed to agree with this assessment when she stated:

I want to say the communication is better. I don't know if it's just set in everybody's mind from the ropes course 'communicate, communicate.' And then building the team...building up the teamwork. Everybody is helping out which everybody did that before but it was more laid back.

Participants offered these feelings related to the current work environment; however, when I requested examples related to communication or cooperation, only Renee provided me with an example where she felt she communicated better with other group members.

As a part of Renee's work responsibilities she is required to make a determination on which dentist would be best suited to address a patient's particular complaint. Because of a new-found confidence related to communicating with other employees, Renee suggested that she now makes a greater effort to defend her selections to other employees. According to Renee:

I feel like my ideas are well accepted or least my ideas are thought about. They may not be the right ones but now I just feel more comfortable saying "well the reason I did it was because I kind of felt like she may not think she needs it, but from what she is saying she only had third of a tooth left and it's probably just going to have to be pulled."

In other conversations contrasting life in the workplace before and after the challenge course program, participants spoke in generalities about how they communicate or cooperate better. As rationale for their inability to cite specific examples several participants referred to how crazy life had been at work over the past several weeks. Jenny said “the past three weeks have been really rough downstairs. So it’s been really rough. It’s been very, very stressful.” Other participants also suggested that work had been particularly stressful in recent weeks and as a result they were unable to develop examples of communication and cooperation; however, the general perception among the group was that they communicated and cooperated better after the challenge course program.

Rubbed Off

Along with a generally better work environment, participants who attended the challenge course program suggested their behaviors related to communication and cooperation were rubbing off on employees who did not attend the program. When asking Clark what he thought about the current workplace environment he suggested the following:

Even the people that didn’t go are just right there along with us. Well I think that they didn’t go and they know that it was like a team building thing and I think that they see us you know working as a team and they want to be a part of it and they want to be up there with us.

Nick agreed that behaviors of those who attended the course “kind of rubbed off” on those who did not attend. According to participants, as they work and put lessons related to communication and cooperation into effect in the workplace, other employees who did not attend the program are following their examples.

Kim also provided an example of how she felt lessons learned by the group that attended the program had influenced those who had not gone.

A lot of people that didn't go to the course and we've talked about it...I'm noticing a lot people you know helping other people out without being asked. So them not being there and us talking about it, it may have rubbed off on them, get them thinking.

Kim followed these thoughts with an example from the workplace where things had been slow one particular day and they were going to close one hallway.

We were like real slow and we had shut one hall down and I told Cassidy, "tell them just because we're shutting our hall down, we're not going to leave them."

What is interesting about the example provided was that it did not support Kim's argument that behaviors had influenced those who did not attend the program. She was the one taking the initiative to volunteer to stay with other employees when she could have gone home, not vice versa; however, Kim's perception that the group who attended the challenge course impacted those who did not attend the challenge course was common among participants.

When talking with Christy about teamwork impacting others in the workplace since the challenge course program, she offered the follow ideas.

I mean the ones that go to our course are doing it but the ones that didn't go are right in there doing it too. I would say before the course you know there was still certain people who didn't go still were not involved, did not take the initiative to do something or help out somebody else. But I think when we got back from the course that was just so verbal from everybody of the time we had together and the communications we had...And I guess just excitement about that from the ones who went. The ones that didn't go they are

just as excited to do it. You know everybody is chipping in not just the ones that went to the course.

Christy perceived that the excitement exuded by those who participated in the challenge course program positively influenced those who did not attend the program; however, as when discussing the general benefits gained from the program, Christy was unable to offer specific details about how other employees worked together in a manner different than before the challenge course program. It should be noted at this point that participants initially offered examples of how they and the other employees communicated and cooperated better, but when I asked them if those actions were different than how they behaved prior to the challenge course program, participants suggested that the examples provided *post*-challenge course program were not different than how the group behaved *pre*-challenge course program.

Camaraderie

A third component of group growth related to camaraderie. In these cases, participants identified continued closeness and new relationships as a result of their experiences together at the challenge course. This notion of camaraderie differed from the earlier presented theme of Camaraderie due to the passage of time. For evidence to support the theme Camaraderie it had to address feelings demonstrated and experienced while present at the challenge course. For evidence to support camaraderie as a component of group growth it had to address continued relationships and experiences within the workplace.

Approachable. With comments ranging from Jenny saying she now feels a “little more of a connection” with employees who attended the challenge course program, to Jean saying that now there is “more fellowship or togetherness,” participants perceived that relationships formed during the program have continued into the workplace. Even Christy who felt like an “outsider”

during portions of the program now feels like she has “got closer” to those who went and can communicate with them better as a result. Some of her thoughts about her fellow group members are below.

They are more approachable you know. You can tell if they are kidding or if they are mad or if they are upset ...you kinda think in your mind of the best approach, how to say what you got to say without you know making them angry or cry or anything like that.

By getting to know one another during the challenge course program, participants appeared to perceive they knew how to approach one another better in the workplace. Renee provided some support to this notion of increased approachability when she stated:

I feel like for me personally I just feel more comfortable talking to them. I just feel much more comfortable talking to them. I’ve been here for maybe 3 or 4 months when we did that, when we did the ropes course I guess. So for me it was kinda cool to just get out there and really see everybody in a different light outside their scrubs and you know in a relaxed environment.

Being able to comfortably communicate and approach those who went to the challenge course was one of the outcomes participants identified; however, they also suggested that a level of closeness among group members resulted from their interactions at the challenge course.

Closer. At the end of her interview, I asked Kim if she could tell me a little about what she felt the group got out of the experience. Some of her comments are below.

This ropes course it kinda brings people together because you talk about it with each other and then you start talking about different stuff. You start getting closer. And getting more of a bond and I think the name of our office suits...Family Dental Center

because we all are a family. That's what we are. I think that people who didn't really know each other before, they do now.

This idea that group members became closer was also suggested by Clark when he discussed the current work environment.

Before we went it was kinda like we know everybody but not anything else. And it was cool because we got to know each other better and know kinda personal stuff about each other and you know we're a little bit more social with each other I think now, you know. It seems to have worked pretty well with us going to the ropes course. And I think it's much better now. I like it. It's good. Need to do more, another one.

The notion that individuals were emotionally closer as a result of participating in the challenge course program was identified by the group as one of the impacts of the program which had remained with them for six weeks. It was this closeness that Renee described as "get to know you in a day, feel like I've known you for a year" which led to the development of new relationships among group members.

New relationships. For Madison, while she felt that she knew people prior to the challenge course program, attending the program allowed her to get to know people a little bit better.

Well the ones that I didn't know quite as well before, which I knew everyone there but it's like I don't work with just certain ones so you know I can talk...I guess I can talk better to them now... Really just the personal experience of you know being with the other employees here not in the work environment being somewhere else.

Perhaps the most dramatic new relationship developed between Renee and Michelle. Because of their different tasks within the group, Michelle and Renee had never really interacted with one

another prior to the challenge course program; however, as a result of the program, the two women are now friends. Below is Michelle's version of her relationship with Renee and others at the office.

But since the ropes course it's like I have kind of made some friends like Renee, I didn't know her and then after that I went to her birthday party and all that stuff and those were things I hadn't done before and was never invited to do or anything like that. And now I go to lunch with everybody even when I'm not working...on the days I'm not working during the week. You know they will call me or I'll call them and we'll meet or something like that. So I feel closer to the people here and I feel like maybe I think those people...I feel like people are closer to each other since then too. Not just me to them but I think them to each other also in terms of working together and doing things together and stuff like that.

During my conversation with Renee I also had the opportunity to explore her perception of her relationship with Michelle both before and after the challenge course program.

I just knew I had seen her in the office I didn't even know her name and now I know her name. I have her number. You know when I see her we hug each other. I mean I would never have imagined that we would have a huggy relationship, you know. And now we have a huggy relationship because we shared something really special and she has made an effort to be my friend. She came to my birthday party, you know she has just done things to show me that she cares about the relationship she wants to develop with me and vice versa and we just have had a lot of fun together.

For these two women, a "huggy" relationship evolved from their experience on the challenge course. While not necessarily describing a new relationship formed, Nick suggested that as a

result of the challenge course program, “You know more of your colleagues.” From their interactions during the program, participants learned more about one another, discovered commonalities, and developed new relationships.

While group growth such as general improvements in the work place, rubbing off on employees who did not attend, and camaraderie as defined by approachability, closeness, and new relationships were perceived by participants as elements of group growth, several participants also suggested that the group had not changed and that changes that initially were seen had started to fade.

No Change

Several participants suggested that they have not seen an overall change within the workplace since returning from the challenge course program. When I first asked Madison to contrast the office before the challenge course and after the challenge course, she offered the following explanation

It’s really probably to be about the same. I don’t think anything major has really changed, maybe just personally from everyone else. They may have a different aspect on things or thinking on things but I don’t think anything in general with the office has changed. I think everybody is just set in their ways. I feel everybody gets into a routine and it’s harder to break that routine and start something new. I think you just probably just always go back to that same old routine.

For Madison, she did not only feel that behaviors in the office were different since participating in the challenge course program, but she also stated “I don’t feel like I act any differently.” One question I used to understand the challenge course’s prevalence within the workplace related to

how often the group discussed the program in the workplace. Jenny's response to that question offered some insight into the perception that the course did not have an impact in the workplace.

I mean the first week we all talked about it when we got back. But not really. I haven't really heard anybody else talk about it since then. I mean I haven't talked about it to anybody here. I talk about it to my family and stuff for quite a while and my friends and stuff but not here.

The idea that a change did not occur was also established through Christy's insinuation that they have "always worked as a group" and it has "always been about teamwork."

I guess we have always from the time I have been here that's one thing that obvious we always worked as a group. You know if it got to the point that we wasn't working as a group, we had a meeting, where we would say you know you've got to take the initiative.

While many group members suggested that positive changes had occurred within the workplace, several participants (some of the same ones) stated that they had not seen any changes. While these concepts may appear to contradict one another, they offer a picture of the participants' subjective reality.

Fading Away

While some participants perceived positive changes occurred and other participants did not perceive any changes occurred, still more group members suggested that changes initially occurred, but over time they have faded. As mentioned previously, I asked participants for examples of times when they discussed the challenge course program while at work. A common answer I received related to preparing for an upcoming interview with me. For example, during my discussion with Renee about conversations in the workplace, she offered the following response:

I think that mostly it was when people would talk about you know they had been in an interview with Brent and you know they would just talk about how much fun it was. And it's cool reminiscing and then we would get on the topic of it. Other than that not a whole lot.

It appeared that preparing for an interview was the major trigger to conversation about the challenge course. In a similar conversation, Madison offered the following:

Well I guess when we talk about doing another interview. You know it just triggers memories about what we did and things like that within the last week. I thought about it, not really talked about it. Thought about what we did.

According to these perceptions, talking about the challenge course was triggered by preparing for another interview and these conversations were fading away.

Participants also suggested the experience in general was becoming more difficult to remember as time passed. For instance, when Michelle and I were discussing support and encouragement provided by the group members, she stated that the support and encouragement improved throughout the day because it was brought to the group's attention. When I asked her what she meant by that statement, she had a difficult time remembering and said "It's kind of fuzzy. The further away it gets, the fuzzier it gets." In a similar situation, Jenny experienced difficulties remembering times she encouraged other group members and attributed this to "short term memory loss." Jean also echoed these sentiments when I was asking her how often she recalled thinking about the challenge course program in the workplace.

A little less frequent now. But I just can't give you an example but I'm sure it's kinda come up not as much lately as it did in the beginning. But I'm sure it kinda flashes in your memory.

According to these thoughts there appeared to be a sense that the experience as a whole was fading from the participants minds. After six weeks it was more difficult to remember specific instances which occurred on the challenge course and it was difficult to recall specific impacts of the program on the workplace environment. It appeared participants' perceptions about the program were that the group experienced general growth (more specific as it related to the notion of camaraderie) but that the experience itself was fading from their memories. The more generic thoughts related to group growth appeared in direct distinction to participants' specific thoughts related to personal growth.

Personal Growth

As a result of participating in the challenge course program, participants identified one general benefit—self-confidence—which manifested itself in different forms. While Madison suggested that what she derived from the experience was the “excitement of doing that for myself,” both Renee and Shelly said that they were specifically more confident now as a result of their experiences. Renee provided the following assessment of her personal experience.

I got an amazing amount of self-confidence that was due to me. I was due that self-confidence and I needed that. I mean I've been working really hard to get myself where I needed to be physically and it was like...at first I thought I was going to walk out of there without any self-confidence because I didn't think I was going to be able to do it. But I walked away with my shoulders a little higher, my nose up in the air a little more and just feeling good.

Similarly, Nick felt that he learned to be “a more trusting person.” As previously discussed, when asked to elaborate on specific examples of group growth, participants had difficulties providing these; however, when asked for specific examples of what they learned from the

program, or how the program impacted them, several participants provided concrete examples from their lives.

During my interview with Shelly I asked her what she had thought about the program during the past six weeks. She proceeded to tell me a story about riding her motorcycle.

I mean I rode it around the yard and stuff you know and I joked with him and told him I was going to ride it up there that day. Ah ah. I was too chicken. I mean I really had not ridden that much at all. After the ropes course though I started riding because I said if I could climb a dang telephone pole, get on top of it with nothing around me, I can ride that motorcycle. So really I do. I mean really it did help me on seeing that and everybody encourages me too but to physically feel like you can do it made me you know more aware that I could do it. So I gave it a good shot instead of a half hearted shot – now I ride it.

For her, remembering the experience of climbing the Pamper Pole gave her the strength and encouragement to ride her motorcycle to work. When contrasting lessons learned in her personal life versus what she learned related to the workplace, Shelly offered this comment “it may not help me in the workplace but it help me outside.” Shelly took what she learned during the challenge course program and made a direct application to her personal life, but according to her last statement, that did not translate into the work environment.

Renee was also able to translate a lesson learned on the challenge course into her personal life. Renee had a tremendous fear of ladders from a bad experience she had had when climbing a ladder to ascend to the top of a roof to watch a sunset. This fear of ladders made climbing the high elements extremely difficult for her and it was a battle she had to continuously

face throughout the day; however, as a result of climbing the ladders at the challenge course, Renee said that she is now, “ladder crazy.”

You get on ladders a lot in the things that I do outside. You get on ladders like to get up on a roof and hang out and watch the sunset. You know and just being able to do fun stuff and getting on a ladder. It’s different now. I just feel more confident. I feel more confident because I did it and I was okay and I didn’t die and I also feel more confident because I have continued to prove myself physically where I feel more confident about my leg holding me up and my arms holding me up and I feel just more comfortable in my skin.

At the beginning of our second interview together, I asked Renee what it was that she remembered most from the challenge course after six weeks, and she answered:

Being able to climb up ladders now. I climbed up a ladder last night with no problem. Anytime I see a ladder and I have to climb it for any reason I immediately think of the experience out there and just kinda overcoming my fear of getting on a ladder, climbing up something.

For Renee, as with Shelly, participation in the challenge course program, translated into a dramatic change in her personal life. Where she was once completely petrified of ladders, Renee suggested that she now has the ability to climb ladders to participate in the activities she enjoys.

In another non-work related example of personal growth occurring from lessons learned on the challenge course, Jean offered a brief story at the conclusion of our second interview. At the close of all the interviews, I provided participants with an opportunity to share thoughts that they had not had a chance to share to that point. I wanted to provide participants an opportunity to add any additional information they thought relevant but they had not felt would have been an

appropriate response to one of the questions I asked. When I asked Jean if she had anything else to add, she told me that she had joined a book club since the challenge course program. She even said, “Normally, I wouldn’t have done that.” She continued to explain how she thought she would have responded before participating in the challenge course.

And I don’t think I would have normally done it without a little anxiety. I would have said you need to go. I would have had to talk myself into it. You need to do that. That would be fun. I would have to justify it to myself.

Jean translated the confidence she gained at the challenge course into action by joining a book club, something she did not feel she would have done prior to participating in the challenge course program.

While the previous three examples have involved personal growth that occurred outside of the work environment, this final example demonstrated personal growth that manifested itself within the workplace. When I asked Kim about her experiences within the workplace since the challenge course, she began to tell me a story about covering for another dental assistant.

Mary was going on vacation. My doctor, Dr. Paul was off Monday and Tuesday and she’s like “oh gosh I’m getting to take off” Kim. “I’m going on vacation, could you work Monday, Tuesday for me?” And I’m not going to lie to you I did hesitate there because I’m sitting there thinking “oh gosh I was looking forward to being off.” Then I got to thinking teamwork. That teamwork stuck in my head.

Kim said that normally she would have taken off because she really didn’t want to work and she did not have to cover for Mary, but because of the topic of teamwork discussed at the challenge course she elected to work for Mary. In a similar situation, Kim was working on a project for her daughter when she noticed that one doctor’s 1:00 patients had arrived for their appointments, but

that doctor's assistants were still not back from lunch. Kim said that even though she did not want to, "I got up and I seated her patients for them and helped them." In response to both of these instances, Kim said "that teamwork thing is really coming back to bite me in the butt." For Kim, the lessons she learned at the challenge course program translated into different personal behaviors within the workplace.

Summary

From discussions with the participants and observations of their experiences, it appeared that the challenge course program impacted those who attended. Participants' identified growing as a group and growing personally. As a group, participants felt they generally communicated and cooperated better in the workplace, felt their positive behaviors rubbed off and influenced employees who did not attend the course, and that they had developed a sense of camaraderie among those who attended. In contrast to these instances of positive growth, participants also suggested that changes had not occurred and that some of the changes that did occur were beginning to fade. In conjunction with personal growth, participants felt that in general they were more confident in their personal lives. While participants were unable to offer specific examples of improvements in the workplace, they offered several specific examples of improvements in their personal lives. From riding motorcycles, to climbing ladders, to joining book clubs, to personal sacrifice within the office, there appeared to be more examples of personal impact than of group impact.

Conclusion

When considering the impact of the program within the context of the research questions, it appeared that perceptions related to communication, cooperation, and team functioning revolved around the notion of "generally better." Participants perceived these qualities as

improved; however, only Renee suggested a specific example of how communication had improved. In contrast to this notion of “generally better,” participants perceived the program to have direct, concrete impacts on individuals. These ideas follow the “I” and “We” dichotomy mentioned in chapter four and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions of their experiences in a one-day challenge course program. This process was aided through addressing the following research questions:

Research Question #1: What are participants' perceptions related to a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #2: What are participants' perceptions related to communication during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #3: What are participants' perceptions related to cooperation during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Research Question #4: What are participants' perceptions related to team functioning during and after their involvement in a one-day challenge course program?

Through qualitative data collection methods of participant observation (in vivo and video observations), a focus group, and qualitative individual interviews, seven and one half hours of video, 658 pages of transcriptions, and 51 pages of field notes were generated. To present participants' perspectives these forms of data were transformed via coding data, displaying findings, identifying regularities, comparing all cases, and critiquing processes. Additionally, data were interpreted by addressing the question of meaning by: (a) exploring concepts associated with the research questions (e.g., communication, cooperation), (b) discussing how findings addressed key research concepts, and (c) examining how findings addressed the

research questions. This chapter briefly reviews the findings detailed in chapter four and provides answers to each of the four research questions. Additionally, connections between themes identified within this study and current literature related to both teams in the workplace and challenge courses are presented. On the basis of connections with the literature, implications for future research and practice are also offered. Finally, the chapter concludes by critiquing the process by which this particular research project was conducted.

What are Participants' Perceptions Related to a One-day Challenge Course Program?

During interviews, participants' suggested that internal and external motivation existed while participating in the challenge course program. Externally, they perceived their motivation came from the elements' design, facilitators, and other participants. Group members also perceived that external motivation (in the form of support and encouragement from the group and facilitators) allowed them to accomplish tasks they would not have tried without the presence of the group. While it was rare that participants identified encouragement as pressure within the context of our interviews, it did appear that encouragement offered during the program served to push individuals further than they may have desired to progress on a particular element. The entire theme of I've Gotta Do It arose from participants using words such as "have to" and "got to." While evidence to support this particular theme appeared to exist, participants were reluctant to identify external pressures from others and suggested that they were in control of their actions during each particular element; however, the group's desire to see everyone complete each activity became the individual's desire to complete each activity. As has been mentioned, group members wanted to support one another by trying to complete the tasks they were assigned.

Participants also reported that, even though designed for group growth, the challenge course program was meaningful on an individual level. Participants suggested that any changes that occurred as a result of the program would last longer for individuals than for the group as a whole. (Data from the six-week interviews appeared to support this notion.) Similarly, participants described the high elements (the most individual component) to have the largest impact on them, as many examples were provided from participants' experiences on the high elements. While it has been mentioned that participants perceived external motivation related to participation, they also suggested they participated for personal reasons of overcoming fears and accomplishing challenges.

Finally, when considering the entirety of the challenge course program participants suggested their emotions changed throughout the day. They reported they did not feel their emotions remained static; rather, as their perspectives changed (e.g., in the midst of an element), their emotions became fluid and dynamic. Participants also indicated that their emotions fluctuated from beginning to middle to end of different elements and the day. Based on what participants were doing at a particular moment during an activity, they experienced a variety of emotions. While not always able to articulate specifics, participants suggested that changes in emotions occurred throughout the course of the program. Overall, participants perceived the one-day challenge course program as an event marked by support and encouragement, something they had to do, something they wanted to do, something that was individually meaningful, and something that allowed them to experience a variety of emotions.

What are Participants' Perceptions Related to Communication During and After Their Involvement in a One-day Challenge Course Program?

Without the presence of a supportive and encouraging environment, participants did not perceive they would have communicated effectively during the program. Participants suggested their effectiveness of communication also depended on group size and progression through the activities. According to group members, the smaller the group, the better they communicated and vice versa—the larger the group, the worse they communicated. Another factor participants identified as having an impact on their communication was the progression through the activities. They suggested that as the day progressed and they spent more time processing the idea of communication and discussing how it could be improved, they communicated better with one another. This idea was supported by participants' perceptions of their performance on activities which occurred later in the day. While instances of effective communication were identified, participants also suggested that multiple people talking at one time led to ineffective communication. When, as participants suggested, there were too many chiefs, individuals perceived the group as chaotic and confused. Similarly, when there were too many people talking at once, participants felt unsure of their roles and suggested that failure was the ultimate result.

When considering participants' perceptions related to communication *after* the challenge course program, there were mixed feelings. While some participants viewed the group's communication as improved, others suggested it remained the same or changes that had occurred were fading. When discussing their perceptions of communication in the workplace, participants had difficulties providing specific examples of how they felt they communicated better than before attending the challenge course program. Those who felt communication had improved primarily suggested that they just talked better with each other better than before. Overall,

participants appeared to perceive communication *during* the challenge course program as dependent on a supportive and encouraging environment, group size, time during the program, and number of people talking at one time. They also offered mixed perceptions related to their communication in the workplace following the program.

What are Participants' Perceptions Related to Cooperation During and After Their Involvement in a One-day Challenge Course Program?

Participants perceived that when they listened and responded without multiple people talking at once, they were able to cooperate effectively. In order for the group to cooperate, participants suggested they had to work together to solve problems presented to them. By working together, participants perceived there were leaders and followers. As opposed to times when the group had difficulties knowing and understanding roles, when they were cooperating group members knew, understood, and accepted their roles. Similar to the notion of effectiveness of communication, group members suggested that when they were accomplishing tasks in smaller groups they were more effective. Also, when the group was asked to complete a task where sub-groups were not involved, difficulties in cooperation arose. One concrete method in which participants suggested they cooperated was in equipment responsibilities. Group members perceived that their attempts to harness, spot, and care for other participants were an example of cooperation. Ultimately, participants perceived that cooperation during the challenge course program was marked by successful completion of a particular element.

Just as participants perceived communication to have improved in their workplace following the challenge course program, they also suggested cooperation was improved. Participants generally felt they worked better with employees who did and did not attend the challenge course program. While no specific examples of how the group cooperated better were

offered, participants felt that participating in the challenge course led to improved cooperation among all employees. Many participants agreed that cooperation had improved, and several group members also perceived that the program had little or no impact on their ability to work together or that benefits experienced initially were fading (similar to communication). While opinions related to cooperation in general were mixed, participants suggested that a related component, improved camaraderie in the workplace, was a direct result of the program. All participants interviewed agreed that they felt closer to those who had attended the program and new relationships had formed while existing relationships were strengthened.

What are Participants' Perceptions Related to Team Functioning During and After Their Involvement in a One-day Challenge Course Program?

Participants perceived their team functioned efficiently and effectively during a majority of the program. While they did suggest there were times when they did not perform at an optimal level, they were reluctant to suggest they had functioned inefficiently. Participants elected to describe their experience related to team functioning as occasionally unsuccessful on the micro level (times within an element), but generally successful on the macro level (considering the entire day). In relation to individual perceptions of team functioning, it did not appear that individuals wanted to speak poorly of other team members. Their desire to speak positively of others led to a positive general perception of how the team functioned throughout the day. While most participants did not offer specifics of poor team functioning during the challenge course program, two participants offered one example of poor team functioning (see chapter four).

When considering team functioning in the workplace, unlike the mostly positive responses about team functioning during the challenge course program, participants appeared more willing to suggest that team functioning was not as optimal as it could be. Participants

generally perceived the work environment as hectic and appeared to offer this as a rationale for why the team did not function at an optimal level. When they had opportunity to explain poor work performance because of their hectic work environment, participants appeared more willing to suggest poor team functioning than when they would have had to “blame” themselves or another group member. It should be noted that participants also suggested that team functioning after the challenge course program was not affected; however, several participants still suggested that team functioning had improved since returning from the challenge course program.

Connections to the Literature

This study exposed several themes and ideas which find support within the literature related to teams in the workplace and challenge courses. First, as identified in chapter two, communication (cf., Bandow, 2001; Griffiths, 1997) and cooperation (cf., Henry, 2000; Molyneux, 2001) were two components authors suggested as factors which accompanied the successful implementation of teams. Second, the themes of Camaraderie (cf., Cross, 2002; Glass & Benshoff, 2002; Hayllar, 2000), I’ve Gotta Do It (cf., Constantine, 1993; Finkenberg, et al., 1994; Neulinger, 1981; Priest, 1996b), and Individual Emphasis (cf., Hayllar, 2000; Neulinger, 1981) find support within the current literature on teams and challenge courses. Finally, a discussion related to the findings of this study and challenge by choice is presented. The above topics are presented here because of their importance within the current study (e.g., development as themes related to participants’ perceptions) and their connection to concepts previously presented in the literature. Within the five themes presented here, only the theme of Changes in Emotion is not represented. These topics with relevance to the current study and the literature related to teams and challenge courses are presented below.

Communication

As suggested by Bandow (2001), communication contributes to the success of a team, and without this, a team may have difficulty performing assigned tasks. In relation to communication, participants identified instances during the challenge course program when they communicated both effectively and ineffectively. Ingram and Desombre (1999) found that when participants were ineffective in their communication, their abilities to function as a team were hindered. Within the context of the current study, participants identified this inability to work together as having “too many chiefs.” For these participants, too many individuals talking resulted in confusion and chaos, problems with decision making, ambiguity of roles, and ultimately failure. Similarly, participants in Ingram and Desombre’s study identified that their lack of communication not only led to a decrease in their ability to function as a team, but they also referenced how their lack of communication with one another could lead to a diminished experience of guests within the hotel where they were employed. Participants in the current study recognized that difficulties communicating led to difficulties working with one another; however, they did not suggest that an inability to communicate could lead to a diminished experience for patients within their dental office.

In Griffiths’ (1997) study, two teams of mental health professionals were interviewed and observed, and findings suggested that one team communicated more effectively. This led to efficient handling of assigned tasks as opposed to delays and difficulties making decisions within the other group. In the current research, ineffective communication was also associated with decision-making difficulties. While not a result of too many people talking at one time, Griffiths’ work suggested the importance of effective communication within a team. Participants at the challenge course also recognized the importance of effective communication and, through

processing sessions after each element, began to see instances where communication had broken down and how they could improve their communication as a group. Ingram and Desombre (1999) and Griffiths identified the importance of effective communication as a function of teamwork. Similarly, within the current research, participants identified their need to communicate effectively if they desired to function as a cohesive unit as they attempted the tasks on the challenge course. A primary distinction between the work of Ingram and Desombre as well as Griffiths and this research done on the challenge course lies in the focus of the communication that occurred.

The research completed by the aforementioned authors, observations and interviews were completed within the workplace with the goal of quality improvement; the presence of an additional teaching tool (e.g., challenge course) was not utilized. In the current research, the challenge course was used as a tool to teach lessons related to communication, and facilitators were instructed to encourage participants to generalize lessons learned to their workplace. While participants within this study identified that changes occurred within the work environment, few conversations during the challenge course program actually focused on generalization. The primary focus of conversations related to communication was on how the group could communicate better *while at the challenge course*, not how they could communicate better once they returned to their office. Placing more emphasis on generalization of communication skills learned at the challenge course may have led participants to offer more specific examples of improvements in communication within the workplace.

Participants did not articulate improvements related to communication after completing the program. Contrary to results from previous literature related to challenge courses, participants did not provide examples of increased communication upon returning to their

workplace. Findings from this study suggest that lessons related to communication were not reported by participants as being retained even in the midst of a program specifically designed to increase this concept.

Cooperation

Just as communication was identified as a factor which increased the likelihood of a team's success, cooperation also has been identified in the literature as an important component. Molyneux (2001) reported that communication was enhanced when smaller groups of individuals interacted and this led to an increase in team members' cooperation. Findings from the current research appeared to support these ideas. During the challenge course program, participants identified large group size as a barrier to effective communication. When the entire group was asked to complete a task (e.g., Turnstile) participants identified difficulties communicating *and* cooperating with one another; however, when the group worked on tasks in smaller groups (e.g., TP Shuffle) participants identified that they successfully communicated *and* cooperated. Similar to work done by Molyneux, participants within the current study suggested that smaller groups appeared to be more conducive for effective communication and cooperation.

Molyneux also found that communication functioned as the catalyst for cooperation. Similarly, participants in the current study stated that cooperation could not exist without effective communication occurring among group members. Findings from Molyneux suggested that cooperation led to a level of comfort when understanding personal roles within the team. Participants at the challenge course identified a similar idea when they discussed the notion of cooperation. When the group cooperated, they appeared to be sure of their roles—specifically, there were leaders and followers. In contrast to this, when communication was ineffective participants cooperated ineffectively, and this was marked by participants not feeling sure of

their roles within the group. It appeared that participants' perceptions from the challenge course program support work done by Molyneux as it relates to the importance of cooperation within the group.

Henry (2000) found that cooperation among participants increased as they worked together over the course of a seven-week program. While Henry was interested in understanding differences between computer mediated and face-to-face interactions, he ultimately found that both methods were equally effective at improving cooperation among group members. Within the current challenge course program, participants identified that cooperation improved over the course of the one-day program. They suggested that improvements were associated with processing sessions where facilitators asked participants to discuss specific issues related to cooperation as they occurred during the day. It appeared from work done by Henry and participants' perceptions in the current study, that cooperation is a skill which can be taught and improved over time. Similar to Molyneux's findings, it appeared that cooperation is a skill which improved a group's ability to function effectively as a team.

Participants did not articulate techniques or examples of cooperation within their work environment. This lack of reported transference, after participants completed lessons specifically designed to enhance cooperation, suggests that participants reported that they did not retain lessons learned during the challenge course program. While participants did not provide examples related to communication and cooperation following the challenge course program, they offered concrete information related to camaraderie and individual lessons learned.

Camaraderie

As a result of the challenge course program, participants suggested that they had an opportunity to be together, see one another in different (e.g., non-dental office) situations, get to

know one another, and bond with one another. Other researchers have examined this notion in a slightly different form identified as “group cohesion.” For instance, Glass and Benshoff (2002) asked participants to complete a pre- and post-test of the researcher-created Group Cohesion Evaluation Questionnaire. At the completion of the one-day low element challenge course, authors found statistically significant differences from pre- to post-test scores on group cohesion. Participants’ perceptions of the current challenge course program appeared to support this notion that group cohesion can be improved over the course of a one-day program; however, within the current study, participants’ perceptions during a six-week follow-up interview also suggested the notion of camaraderie remained with them after completion of the program. Another difference between work done by Glass and Benshoff and the current study was the specific definitions of cohesion and camaraderie. Cohesion was determined by participants providing responses to statements such as “we get along well together” and “we help each other on challenges.” (p. 275). The concept of camaraderie as described by participants from the dental office appeared to be a concept which went deeper than “getting along” and “helping out.” For participants in the current work, there appeared to be a sense of bonding that occurred as a result of sharing an experience and the emotions that existed within that experience.

When looking at the inverse concept of cohesion and camaraderie, alienation, Cross (2002) found that after a five-day climbing program, participants felt less alienated than those in the control group. While this study explored a rock climbing program as opposed to a challenge course program, similarities exist between reports by participants in Cross’ study and participants in this research. For instance, within the current work, participants identified that new relationships were created, and they felt closer to other participants as a result of their participation in the challenge course program. Similar to both the current research and work

conducted by Cross (2002), Hayllar (2000) found that participants experienced relationship building and *communitas* (relationship between individuals and the group and a sense of belonging within the group) during their OMD program. Similar to findings in the current study, Cross (2002) and Hayllar (2000) identified participants reporting that alienation was reduced and a sense of camaraderie and new relationships were developed after participating in a challenge course program.

Camaraderie was also the outcome typically identified by participants upon their return to the workplace. Participants identified feeling others were more approachable, new relationships had developed, and closer to those who attended the program. While not identified by participants, these elements of camaraderie have the potential to influence team members' communication with one another. In discussions of how communication had improved since returning from the challenge course program, several participants referenced not feeling afraid of how another person would respond to them. While this was also a component of self-confidence gained during the program, it also appeared that aspects of camaraderie had potential to increase communication within the workplace.

With three of the themes that arose from the data, I've Gotta Do It, Individual Emphasis, and Changes in Emotion, an individualized perspective was provided by participants. It should be noted that the individual perspective found within this study is similar to intended outcomes when working with at-risk youth (cf. Green, et al., 2000; Robitschek, 1996). These perspectives developed even though the designed program was created to teach lessons about team functioning, communication, and cooperation. This development of the individual was also supported by Hayllar (2000) who interviewed 12 challenge course facilitators (in addition to challenge course participants). The facilitators suggested personal reflection and individual

testing of concepts learned during such programs was necessary for transference to the workplace. Similarly, when examining teams of nurses in a hospital setting, Gibson (2001) found significant increases in individual effectiveness and non-significant results related to team effectiveness. No efforts were made in this study to provide opportunities for personal growth; however, as Hayllar (2000) and Gibson (2001) found, individual benefits arose from the program. Connections between two of these themes (I've Gotta Do It and Individual Emphasis) and related literature are discussed below.

I've Gotta Do It

While authors have conducted studies examining effects of challenge courses on participants' sense of self (cf. Constantine, 1993; Finkenberg, et al., 1994; Priest, 1996b) the motivation of participants to complete challenge course activities has received little empirical attention. In relation to this idea (and as will be discussed later in this chapter), authors have discussed the notion of challenge by choice, but I was unable to find any empirical data supporting or contradicting this concept. Within the current research, participants exhibited feelings of having to attempt and complete different elements. Whether these feelings evolved from elements' design, participants' comments, facilitators' comments, and/or from within participants themselves, participants exhibited and discussed the theme of I've Gotta Do It. One connection with the literature appeared between participants' perceptions of "having to do it" and the theory of perceived freedom as presented by Neulinger (1981).

This theory suggests that as perceived freedom increases, so does the likelihood that a participant will identify an activity as leisure. Conversely, as perceived freedom decreases (perceived constraint increases), so does the likelihood that a participant will identify an activity as work. Individuals within the current study were hesitant to suggest that their perceived

freedom was limited by other participants, facilitators, or the elements' designs. During the challenge course program and throughout many of the interviews, participants suggested that they perceived a high level of freedom within the program; however, while conducting member checks, there was support for the notion that perceived freedom may not have been as high as was initially suggested by participants. Working together, these factors created a situation where participants may have lacked freedom of choice (a necessary component for an activity to be considered leisure). While participants suggested they were free to choose to participate or not participate in the assigned elements, as suggested by the theme I've Gotta Do It and language used by participants during the program and subsequent interviews, participants did not appear to operate under a condition of complete perceived freedom; however, Neulinger's (1981) paradigm allowed for the concept of perceived freedom to be considered as a continuum.

Referring to Neulinger's continuum (see chapter two for a more detailed review), it appeared that both perceived freedom and perceived constraints existed for participants within this challenge course program. Similarly, from conversations with participants, it appeared that both intrinsic and extrinsic sources influenced their motivation to participate. As evidenced by participants' comments, there were occasions when they perceived constraints to participation while they were being motivated from within themselves and from the encouragement of others in the group. Participants in this condition would be identified under Neulinger's "work-job" portion of the continuum. Likewise, participants experienced perceived freedom (choice to come to the program or not) and motivation from internal and external sources during the program. These individuals would be operating in the "leisure-work" portion of Neulinger's continuum. Based on analysis of observations during the challenge course program and throughout the focus

group and interviews, it appeared that participants' motivation was influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Individual Emphasis

Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested motivation could be understood on a continuum ranging from amotivation to extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. Specifically, they identified extrinsic motivation as being comprised of four components. First, *external regulation* they defined as having an external locus of causality and styles of regulation included compliance, external rewards, and punishments. With a somewhat external locus of causality, they suggested that *introjected regulation* was marked by internal rewards and punishments and self-control. With *identified regulation*, Deci and Ryan described locus of causality as somewhat internal and issues of personal importance and conscious are the regulatory processes. Finally, *integrated regulation* was defined as having an internal locus of causality and regulatory processes that included congruence, awareness, and synthesis with self (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 72).

When attempting to understand participants rationale for participating in the challenge course program, these factors can be observed. While external regulation appeared to decrease freedom experienced by participants (e.g., feeling they had to participate), introjected and identified regulation also played a role in their experience. For example, participants identified internal rewards and a desire to avoid failure as important factors in their decision to attempt and complete different elements. Similarly, they suggested completing different elements was a matter of personal importance. It was participants' focus on internal rewards and personal importance which led to development of the theme Individual Emphasis. This theme was marked by participants' focus on accomplishing the tasks, overcoming their fears, wanting to do it for "me," focusing on the high elements, and discussing the length of time changes will last. While

primarily extrinsic motivational factors (as described by Deci and Ryan's self-determination continuum) existed during the challenge course program, Deci (1975) suggested a rationale for fostering intrinsically motivating behaviors when he said, "Intrinsically motivated behaviors are behaviors which a person engages in to feel competent and self-determining" (p. 61). As supported by work done by Deci (1971), Lepper, et al. (1973), and Kruglanski, et al. (1972), creating programs which support participants' internal motivation to participate (and thus, encouraging participants to feel competent and self-determined) may offer future directions for programs and avenues of research related to challenge courses.

Challenge by Choice

As presented by Carlson and Evans (2001), there are three components necessary for the implementation of challenge by choice. First, participants must have opportunity to establish their own goals for the program and only attempt challenges (e.g. initiative activities, low elements, high elements, and their components) which they feel are appropriate. The second component focuses on participants determining how much of an element they will attempt. With this idea, participants choose how far they would like to progress within a specific element (Carlson & Evans). The final component of challenge by choice deals with the issue of informed decision making. According to Carlson and Evans, individuals must receive appropriate information related to the entire experience as well as specific elements so they are free to choose their level of participation throughout the entire program. The assumption within this concept is that participants ultimately make their own decisions regarding level of participation; however, as was seen during this challenge course program, it did not appear that individual participants were the sole decision makers.

To comply with conditions necessary for challenge by choice, within this challenge course program I provided facilitators with processing cards (see Appendix B) which requested they ask participants to establish a group goal (initiatives and low elements) or an individual goal (high elements) before initiation of each activity. While facilitators allowed participants this opportunity before some elements, this opportunity was not afforded on all elements. Specifically with the high elements, when an individual did not have opportunity to establish a personal goal, the group appeared to construct a goal for that participant. In the different high elements attempted, the group goal was completion of the element according to the prescribed method suggested by the facilitators. When participants were unable to establish an initial goal for themselves, they became susceptible to this form of group-goal setting. It should be noted that this was not the case for all participants on every element. For example, Renee established a goal prior to the Catwalk that she only wanted to get to the top of the ladder. Upon completion of this goal, the group established a new goal for her and encouraged her to move farther into the element. While this program was designed to use principles of challenge by choice, it appeared that they may not have been followed consistently and as a result, participants may have interpreted support and encouragement from other participants as pressure to attempt and complete the different activities.

Critiquing Traditional Challenge Course Research

As a result of conducting this study, there appear to be several implications which suggest alternative methods of understanding challenge courses. As presented in chapter two, current understanding of challenge courses has been primarily limited to efficacy studies; however, findings from this study offer implications for future research which extend beyond understanding effectiveness of challenge course programs. These implications include: (a) “I”

versus “We,” (b) interconnectedness of communication and cooperation, (c) groupthink, (d) understanding particular elements, (e) facilitators’ language, and (f) long-term impacts.

“I” versus “We”

As mentioned previously, themes from this study cluster into one of two categories: (a) themes focusing on the individual (the “I”) and (b) themes focusing on the group (the “We”). While work has been done to examine effects of challenge courses on participants’ sense of self, little work has examined participants’ motivations for attending challenge course programs and for participating in activities once they are present at the course. Within this study, employees of a dental office were provided with a choice to participate in the program; participation was not mandatory. This voluntary participation may have initially created a context for participants that encouraged them to feel internally motivated to participate, but what was not explored within this study was why participants engaged in specific activities or elements once they arrived at the challenge course. Exploring participants’ perceptions of challenge course programs through Deci and Ryan’s (2002) self-determination theory (specifically individuals needs for autonomy and relatedness), might offer greater insights into the individual and collective experiences which occur within challenge course programs.

According to Deci and Ryan (2002) the need for “autonomy” suggests that individuals have the need to act separate from others and develop their own sense of self. In light of self-determination, autonomy relates to the foundation of behavior in that it suggests that individuals want to control their behaviors (Deci & Ryan). Similarly, Deci and Ryan also suggested that individuals have a need for relatedness. The need for “relatedness” addresses individuals’ desire to interact with others in social contexts. This need to be connected to others involves a mutual relationship where an individual can offer support to others and receive support in return;

however, connections with others does not require the loss of self (Deci & Ryan). Both concepts of autonomy and relatedness arose within the current study as the idea of the “I” and the “We.” Using Deci and Ryan’s understandings and explorations regarding individual’s needs for these concepts may provide additional avenues for future research as researchers attempt to explore individual’s perceptions related to themselves (“I”) and members of the group (“We”).

Interconnectedness of Communication and Cooperation

Participants within this study had difficulties differentiating between the concepts of communication and cooperation. For these individuals it appeared they could not cooperate with one another unless they were effectively communicating with one another. Some participants even suggested that cooperation was the act of listening to what others were saying. In research conducted on teams there also appeared to be similar connections between communication and cooperation (cf. Goldenberg, 2000; Molyneux, 2001). While most participants in this study did not address the notion of trust, findings are similar with Goldenberg who stated, “trust and communication were relatively concrete benefits that both led to the benefit of teamwork. Teamwork was subsequently linked to a number of other higher level benefits including building relationships...” (p. 221). Understanding this connection between communication and cooperation might offer insight into how teams interact with one another while attempting to work collaboratively. Future research could begin to examine the link between these concepts. Soliciting participants’ opinions related to how they worked together, how communication played a role in their working together, what defines communication and cooperation, and how these elements interact, may offer greater insights on how groups work together. Similarly, understanding these concepts may offer suggestions on how to train teams for effective

communication and cooperation as they work to solve problems and develop solutions as a cohesive unit.

Groupthink

Within the current work, there was evidence to suggest that cohesion within the group was sought at the expense of exploring alternative solutions, and as a result, some ideas were ignored and participants completed activities they may not have tried had the group not been present. This topic has received little attention within the literature related to challenge courses; however, it has received more attention in team literature under the notion of “groupthink” (Janis, 1982). According to Janis (1982), groupthink is “. . . a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9). In an effort to understand defective decision making within groups (e.g., groupthink), Janis (1982) and Hensley and Griffin (1986) used “retrospective case studies” (Jones & Roelofsma, 2000), to examine decisions related to political events (e.g., Bay of Pigs invasion, construction of buildings in sensitive locations). Their findings led them to suggest the following conditions were indicative of defective decision making: (a) illusion of vulnerability, (b) belief in inherent morality of the group, (c) collective rationalizations, (d) stereotypes of out-groups, (e) self-censorship, (f) illusion of unanimity, (g) direct pressure on dissenters, and (h) self-appointed mind guards (Janis, 1982, p. 244). “In general, groupthink is described by Kleindorfer et al., (1993) as occurring when the desire to be efficient or not to rock the boat becomes more important than the quality of the decision itself” (Jones and Roelofsma, 2000, p. 1141). Jones and Roelofsma (2000) suggested that groups are more likely to experience groupthink if they are

overly concerned with developing consensus rather than understanding how consensus was created.

In the current work, elements of groupthink appeared throughout the day as focus was placed on developing consensus regarding different group goals (e.g., times during “Warp Speed,” number of touches during “Islands”). In these instances, when participants agreed with the group goal to avoid conflict, a criterion necessary for groupthink was fulfilled. While processing elements on the challenge course, one or two participants suggested that everyone’s ideas were heard during the activities, and this thought was echoed during the focus group. However, when I had an opportunity to speak with participants individually, several suggested that they had not felt this way. For some participants, the external pressure from the group was too strong for them to voice their opinions during the challenge course program or the subsequent focus group; however, participants did share their alternative viewpoints during the individual interviews. The emergence of this topic within the current research and the dearth of information relating to groupthink within challenge course literature suggest that future research might benefit from exploring manners in which the group controls, changes, or influences individual group member’s behaviors and actions.

Understanding Particular Elements

While both Priest (1996) and Meyer (2000) have called for an explanation of program components, there is still limited research exploring individual elements which comprise a challenge course program. Studies discussing provision of an intervention designed to improve teamwork typically mention the inclusion of initiative activities, low elements, and/or high elements. While these general categories offer readers a vague notion of what participants engaged in while present at the challenge course, they do not offer specific information to allow

for study replication. This study presented the exact elements used during this program and guidelines (in the form of processing cards) for facilitation of the program; however, this is only an initial step, and further work should be done to understand specific elements which comprise a challenge course. Many questions exist related to efficacy of particular elements, and empirical data do not exist to suggest use of one activity over another in the pursuit of particular goals. Examining outcomes (positive and negative) related to individual elements would offer greater insight into challenge course programs. Within the current work, participants experienced failure and frustration with Turnstile and success and joy with TP Shuffle. Are these experiences similar for other groups? Work needs to be done to begin to understand intricacies of individual elements. Understanding groups' experiences within a particular element may lead to elimination of some elements, addition of other elements, and creation of new elements.

Facilitators' Language

Another area for future research lies in understanding facilitators' language. As evidenced in this study, facilitators had a level of control over the program and, as a result, a level of control over participants. By telling participants they were required to put on a harness, facilitators created a particular experience that could have been detrimental to some participants. Collecting digital video of this program may allow for this research to occur in the form of conversation analysis. Researchers may also design studies to explore participants' reactions to language used by facilitators. During interviews conducted for this study, I spoke to participants about comments made by facilitators. To accomplish this, I attempted to set the stage by reviewing moments with participants without using the facilitators' words. I then asked participants if they could remember what the facilitators had said. If they could not remember or if they had a different recollection than me, I either moved on or allowed them to discuss their

recollection of the experience. Future work in this area could use video or audio tape to present participants with the facilitators' words. Gaining an understanding of the language used by facilitators, and participants' perceptions of this language may encourage changes to the way challenge courses are facilitated.

Long-Term Impacts

Participants were interviewed immediately after the program and again in six weeks. As seen in chapter four, several participants suggested that the experience and lessons learned had begun to fade from their minds. Very few studies exploring challenge courses have engaged in long-term (past six months) data collection (see chapter two for a more complete review of this topic). The absence of adequate research providing data regarding the lasting effects of challenge courses has hindered evaluating these programs. Future research conducted on challenge course programs should examine long-term impacts more closely. As seen in the current work, participants appeared to identify more specific individual impacts than specific group impacts. Similarly, participants suggested that follow-up programs might be a way to promote the retention of lessons learned by participating in the challenge course program. The influence of follow-up interventions in the form of challenge course-like programs (e.g., activities that can be done within the workplace) is another area in need of research. Determination of factors that influence participants six weeks, six months, one year, two years, and even longer post intervention may also offer suggestions related to planning challenge course programs.

Implications for Practice

While themes identified in this study have implications for future research, participants' perceptions also suggested several implications for current practice for challenge course

programs developed to increase a sense of team within employees. These implications include (a) power of language, (b) element design, (c) relationship building, and (d) follow-up.

Power of Language

As suggested above, understanding the power of language used by facilitators is an area for future research; however, on the basis of findings of this study, it was apparent that language used by facilitators directly impacted participants. Whether facilitators told participants “they were required to wear a harness” or “they had to descend a high element using the prescribed method,” facilitators’ language may have decreased participants’ perceptions of freedom. In the same sense, language used by facilitators while participants were particularly frightened on the Zip Line may have provided participants with comfort and may have been instrumental in participants attempting the element. It is recommended that facilitators consider the words they use prior to working with a group during a challenge course program. In this study these words encouraged and comforted participants and led participants into uncomfortable situations. Understanding that participants have different histories and backgrounds, it may be helpful for facilitators to attempt to understand the particular individuals with whom they are working and use language which includes everyone, creates a relaxed and enjoyable context, and helps to create an environment where participants feel comfortable.

Element Design

As explained by Nick during our second interview, removing the ladder once the participant was on the tree or pole partially limited participants’ avenues of element completion (e.g., could not descend via the ladder). Current challenge course programs which employ similar techniques of ladder usage might consider alternatives to removing the ladder once participants have ascended onto individual elements. By removing the ladders, Nick felt that

pressures could have been created when he stated, “So they didn’t want to back down once they saw the ladder was gone . . . there goes that safety net so I need to keep on going even further.” Examining how elements are designed may allow participants to be physically and emotionally safe while still following principles of challenge by choice. Similarly, it appeared that the design of particular elements also led to different outcomes (e.g., huddle-type formation on “Turnstile” led to chaos and confusion while linear formation on “TP Shuffle” led to communication and cooperation). Challenge course facilitators may benefit from considering elements’ designs as they provide challenges for participants. Offering groups opportunity to interact in different formations (e.g., huddle-like, linear) may provide different groups with beneficial experiences.

Relationship Building

One theme participants identified within this study was camaraderie. Both immediately after and six weeks following the program, participants suggested that relationships developed with other participants were an important effect of the program. It also appeared that these new relationships were the only specific example participants provided of transference from the challenge course to the workplace. Facilitators of challenge course programs may benefit from considering implications of the program on building relationships among participants. It appeared that both the interactions that occurred during the low elements and interactions that occurred on the high elements led to the creation of new relationships and deepening of previous relationships. This focus on relationships was also supported by Bandow (2001) who stated, “Perhaps the most fundamental way of improving team performance is to focus on building good working relationships among individuals...” (p. 46). By providing opportunities for participants to interact with one another in these different types of settings and intentionally discussing the

notion of relationships during processing sessions, this component may be brought to the forefront and improve participants' experiences during these programs.

Follow-up

When discussing effects of the program fading over time, several participants suggested that participation in this program should become a yearly activity for their office. They appeared to recognize that lessons learned during programs fade, but they expressed a desire to continue practicing lessons learned at the challenge course. While participants suggested a one-year follow-up (or a yearly program), it appeared that after six weeks, lessons learned were already fading. To reduce the fading of lessons learned during the challenge course program, efforts to include follow-up procedures designed to continue to teach the lessons learned during the program may increase the positive effect of challenge course programs with pre-existing working groups. While additional research should be conducted in this area, follow-up programs that begin at least six weeks following the initial program may be helpful.

Critiquing the Process

When attempting to understand and assess the trustworthiness of this work, it is important to critique the process through which data were gathered. According to Wolcott (1994), this process of critique is vital to the analytic process and should serve to answer the question "What can be learned from this experience?" (p. 35). In an effort to "fully disclose" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 34), the following section provides several critiques of this study which demonstrate limitations of the work as well as new (to challenge course research) data collection techniques. While this study attempted to use methods of collection and analysis established within the literature, five critiques are presented below: (a) participation, (b) interview interruptions, (c) videotaping, (d) participants relationships, and (e) implications of triangulation.

Participation

The current challenge course program was offered to all employees within a dental office; however, only 16 employees elected to participate and of those 16, 14 participated in the focus group and only 11 consented to be interviewed. Not all employees attended the challenge course program, and as a result, there is potential that the experience could have been different had all participants attended. Because not all participants attended the program, an entire, intact work team did not participate in this study, and as such, only perceptions of those who attended the program can be presented. Similarly, because only 11 of the 16 participants who attended the program consented to be interviewed, the five participants who were not interviewed could have presented a different perception of the program than the 11 who were interviewed. Attempts to understand perceptions of those who were not interviewed were accomplished through cautiously interpreting the videotape. However, this study relied heavily on interviews conducted after the challenge course program and as a result findings of this study are primarily based on the perceptions of the 11 participants who elected to participate in the individual interviews.

Interview Interruptions

Another reason for caution when interpreting these results lies in interruptions which occurred during the individual interviews. All interviews were conducted in a conference room located on the second floor of the dental office. Also located in this conference room were lockers used by all employees for storage of personal items including purses, toothbrushes, and non-perishable food items. Since many interviews overlapped with times when employees were leaving or returning from lunch, several interviews were interrupted by employees accessing their lockers. At these moments, participants were provided with the opportunity to continue talking or to temporarily discontinue the interview. While no participant elected to temporarily

discontinue the interview, one or two participants hesitated and appeared to lose their train of thought while other employees were in the room. These interruptions may have influenced what participants said during the course of their interview; however, when comparing information shared across participants and between interviews, it appeared that thoughts and ideas shared remained consistent.

Videotaping

As has been mentioned, the challenge course program was videotaped. The videotaping was done by a research assistant who was trained in use of the camera and prepared for participant interaction during the elements; however, due to a desire to remain unobtrusive, the research assistant was instructed to station himself apart from the group. While this separation did allow for the group to interact without the constant reminder of the video camera, it also prevented quality sound from being recorded. Most participants' and facilitators' words were captured on the tape, but, at times, conversations were inaudible. For instance, during the Catwalk, three or four participants were standing slightly apart from the group and whispering to one another. Their verbalizations were not captured on the tape. Another limitation occurred due to the use of one video camera. On several elements, individuals were spread out. As a result, the camera only captured the participant who was the primary actor at that time. During the high elements, the camera followed the participant who was currently engaged in the element and not other group members. While sound was recorded from those who were near the camera but not in the image, detail was lost because there was only one research assistant to record the program.

Participants' Relationships

As has been presented, some relatives participated in this challenge course program. While this was particularly necessary for this study (e.g., these are members of an intact work

team), these relationships may have added complexity that may not be found in other teams. Some perceptions that arose during this program may have arisen due to familial relationships. Similarly, some perceptions may have been constrained due to those same familial relationships. While the relationships that existed may not function as an actual limitation of this work, recognizing these pre-existing relationships may be helpful when considering these results.

Implications of Triangulation

In this study data were collected via four different approaches including: (a) in vivo observations, (b) videotape observations, (c) a focus group, and (d) two individual interviews per participant. Each of these data collection methods offered different information related to conducting research of this nature and all four methods offered thick, rich descriptions of participants' perception of the program. While videotapes and interviews were immensely helpful, conducting in vivo observations during the program allowed me to experience the day (e.g., heat, sun, interruptions) as participants experienced it. Notes taken during this time provided an initial insight into my thoughts related to participants' experience. While this was an incomplete glimpse, being physically present during the program afforded me a "real-life" overview of the participants' experience; however, because my observations during the program did not encapsulate the participants' perceptions, additional forms of data were needed.

Conducting in vivo participant observation of an intensive eight and one-half hour program such as the challenge course created difficulties when trying to record interactions (e.g., distractions, lack of focus). Capturing the experience on videotape allowed for continued reviewing of the challenge course program. Reviewing the digital video after the challenge course program provided me with opportunities to see and understand nuances that might have been missed during the in vivo observations. The collection of these videos also allowed for a

new technique related to research about challenge courses to be developed. After preparing short (approximately one minute) videos for each participant, I presented these clips to participants to solicit their perceptions of the experience. Presenting these six to ten video segments helped participants to “relive” their experience and was instrumental in understanding participants’ perceptions of the challenge course program. In vivo observations were supported and improved by reviewing the video tapes and presenting participants with video clips of their behaviors and interactions during the program.

During the first interviews, participants appeared to group certain elements together according to levels of success or failure. To explore this notion more fully, 8X10 photographs were presented to participants in the second interview, and they were asked to state where they communicated and cooperated best and worst. Offering participants concrete images to point to not only provided them with all potential options from which to choose, but the images also served as reminders of the program; however, one obstacle occurred when reviewing transcripts. Because images were directly in front of participants during the interview, there was a tendency to point and say, “that one.” While attempts were made to verbally clarify which element participants were pointing to, there were times on the tapes when it was difficult to identify the element a participant was discussing.

There was one focus group conducted with this study and it occurred immediately (three days) following the challenge course program. During this focus group, video clips of group behaviors were presented and the group offered their perspective of the clips and the program. The focus group was marked by two difficulties. First, due to technical difficulties undiscovered until after completion of the focus group, the recorded volume was insufficient for transcription. Because of this, a transcript of the focus group was unavailable; however, extensive notes taken

by a research assistant were used as the record. The second difficulty was not known until conducting individual interviews. During these interviews several participants suggested they did not agree with comments made by the group but they did not want to offer a dissenting voice. It became apparent that opinions shared during the focus group did not represent the opinions of all group members, rather the opinions of one or two of the more outspoken group members. While outspoken group members may have been better controlled during the focus group, pre-existing patterns of communication established within the workplace and family relationships of those present, may also have limited the focus group's effectiveness. Because of difficulties associated with the focus group, data for creation of themes included in vivo observations, video observations, and individual interviews; focus group data were excluded.

The three different types of data collected allowed for information to be compared and provided several sources of information contributing to insights about participants' perceptions. By only using notes collected during in vivo observations, I would have only offered my perceptions of the program. Similarly (but even more pronounced), had only videotape observations been analyzed, I would only have offered my perceptions of the images collected from one video camera. Because of the nature of one or two participants to dominate a conversation and other participants' desire to acquiesce to reduce conflict, the focus group did not offer all participants' perspectives. Individually interviewing participants provided the most in-depth picture of participants' perceptions of the challenge course program; however, without support of in vivo and tape recorded observations, this method would also have been incomplete. It was the four sources of data working in conjunction with one another which offered a thick, rich description of participants' perceptions of a one-day challenge course program.

Conclusion

This research sought to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions related to a one-day challenge course program. Research questions addressed perceptions related to the program in general, communication, cooperation, and team functioning. Through the use of qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, nine themes emerged to describe these participants' experience: (a) Support and Encouragement, (b) I've Gotta Do It, (c) Individual Emphasis, (d) Changes in Emotion, (e) Effectiveness of Communication, (f) Too Many Chiefs, (g) Cooperation, (h), Camaraderie, and (i), Impact of the Program.

These nine themes provided answers to the four research questions. According to the participants, their general perceptions of the program were that they were motivated to accomplish the different activities by their peers and by their own desire to personally succeed, they felt that they participated for individual reasons of accomplishment, and they suggested that their emotions changed during the elements and throughout the day. Participants' perceptions related to communication were that their communication improved as the day progressed, group size influenced their effectiveness, and that they communicated negatively when there were too many people talking and they communicated positively when listening and responding occurred. Participants suggested that cooperation occurred when the group was smaller, when group members knew and understood their roles, and when they worked together toward a common goal. Their perception of cooperation was also marked by accomplishment and a sense of camaraderie. Participants perceived that by being together and seeing one another participate, they came to know group members better and bonded with them.

Much research related to challenge courses has focused on quantifying a program's effectiveness. By primarily asking questions of efficacy, participants' voices have been

minimized and their perceptions not adequately addressed. Similarly, typical challenge course research has not concretely defined the exact components involved within the challenge course programs. In addition to answering the four research questions, this research has attempted to provide a concrete, replicable challenge course program and, through the use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, amplify the participants' voices. Hearing these voices via in-depth observations and interviews and telling their stories, challenge courses may be better understood and adapted for more effective use. These perceptions may be used to help understand *how* a challenge course can be perceived by a group of individuals seeking to improve their ability to function as a team.

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APPENDIX A
PRESENTATIONS

APPENDIX A

PRESENTATIONS TO ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYEES, AND FACILITATORS

Presentation to Organization

Explain lessons to be taught during the challenge course program

- Communication
- Cooperation

Explain the specific activities and associated risks and benefits

Explain the research project

- Participate in the program
- Participant observations
- Focus groups
- Interviews

Presentation to Participants

Explain lessons to be taught during the challenge course program

- Communication
- Cooperation

Explain the specific activities and associated risks and benefits

Explain the research project

- Participate in the program
- Participant observations
- Focus groups
- Interviews

Signatures

Presentation to Facilitators

Explain lessons to be taught during the challenge course program

- Communication
- Cooperation

Identify elements

Explain the research project

- Participate in the program
- Participant observations
- Focus groups
- Interviews

Explain processing topics

Provide index cards

- Activity
- Purpose
- Safety
- Task
- Processing Points

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORMS

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF A ONE-DAY CHALLENGE COURSE PROGRAM" conducted by Brent Wolfe, doctoral student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Georgia (706-542-0299) under the direction of Dr. John Dattilo, professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Georgia (706-542-5064). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participation in the study without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to gain an understanding of my perceptions of my experiences in a one-day challenge course program.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Be observed by Brent while participating in the challenge course program.
- 2) Be video taped by a research assistant while participating in the challenge course program.
- 3) Participate in two audio taped one-hour focus groups over the course of two months.
- 4) Participate in two audio taped one-hour interviews over the course of two months.

As a result of participating in this study, I will have the chance to express my perceptions related to a challenge course program during individual and group interviews. My participation may also lead to changes in the future design of challenge course programs.

Because I will be participating in individual and group interviews for this research project, the potential for physical risk is extremely low. While the potential for emotional risk is possible, the interview sessions may provide me with an outlet for cathartic reminiscing of the different experiences and feelings that I have had. I do recognize that if I become uncomfortable at any time during this research project I am free to withdraw at no penalty to myself.

The only people who will know that I am a research subject are Brent and members of his dissertation committee. No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if necessary to protect my rights or welfare (for example, if I am injured and need emergency care), or if required by law. I will select a pseudonym that will be used in all interviews and all transcripts. All audio and video-tapes will be stored in a locked location and will be destroyed one year after data collection is complete.

The investigator, Brent Wolfe, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (706-542-0299).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher: Brent Wolfe

Signature: _____

Date: 03/25/04

Telephone: (706) 542-0299

Email: bwolfe@coe.uga.edu

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

CONSENT FORM

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The investigator, Brent Wolfe, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (706-542-0299).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher: Brent Wolfe

Signature: _____

Date: 06/25/04

Telephone: (706) 542-0299

Email: bwolfe@coe.uga.edu

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D.
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411;
Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

Georgia Outdoor Recreation Program Health History Form

Name: _____ SS#: _____

Today's Date: _____

Please complete all portions of this form.

Do you have or have you ever had any of the following? Please Circle yes or no.

Asthma: yes no

Hepatitis: yes no

Diabetes: yes no

Epilepsy/Convulsions: yes no

Heart Problem: yes no

High Blood Pressure: yes no

Tuberculosis: yes no

Periods of Unconsciousness: yes no

Is there ANY information about your health that we should know about? If so, please explain, or have your physicians advise us regarding your problem(s).

Allergies:

Do you have ANY medicine allergies? (e.g. Penicillin, antibiotics?) yes no

If yes, please list. _____

Do you receive allergy shots? yes no

Do you carry anaphylaxis emergency treatment kit or emergency care medication? yes no

If yes, please list. _____

Do you have ANY food allergies? (e.g. peanuts, seafood?) yes no

If yes, please list. _____

Do you have any food considerations that we need to know about?

(e.g. vegan, vegetarian?) yes no

If yes, please list. _____

Other:

Do you have ANY physical limitations that might limit your participation in physical activities? Yes no

If yes, be specific. _____

Information:

Health Insurance Carrier: _____ Policy #: _____

Name of Policy Holder: _____

Name of Personal Physician: _____

Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone #: _____

Note: It is strongly recommended that all students carry hospitalization insurance. International students are required to have hospitalization insurance the entire length of stay at the University of Georgia.

Release and Assumption of Risk for Participating in Recreational Activities

(Read Before Signing)

Recreational activities including _____ involve inherent risks of bodily injury, including death, property damage, and other dangers normally associated with outdoor adventure and recreational activities. Such dangers include, but are not limited to, travel to and from the activity, practice and training in preparation for the activity, accidents and illness in places distant from medical assistance, foreseen and unforeseen weather conditions, tripping and/or falling, or being thrown from rafts or boats into the water. Each participant should realize that these dangers may result in injuries such as, but not limited to, exposure to hot or cold weather and hypothermia, sprains, strains, broken bones, concussions, drowning, and heart attack. It is the responsibility of each participant to engage only in those activities for which he/she has the prerequisite skills, qualifications, preparation, and training. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia neither warrants nor guarantees in any respect the competency or mental and physical conditioning of any instructor, activity leader, vehicle driver, or individual participant in any recreational activity. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia neither warrants nor guarantees in any respect the physical condition of any of the equipment used in connection with such activity.

The undersigned hereby acknowledges his/her awareness that participation in _____ may expose him/her to risk of property damage and/or bodily personal injury, including death. The undersigned does hereby voluntarily and knowingly assume any and all such risks.

In consideration of The University of Georgia's allowing the undersigned to participate in _____, the undersigned does hereby release and forever discharge The University of Georgia, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, and their members, officers, agents, and employees from any and all claims, demands, rights, and cause of action whatever kind, arising from or by any reason of any personal injury, property damage, or consequences thereof, resulting from or in any way connected with his/her participation in _____.

The undersigned understands that the acceptance of this Release and Assumption of Risk for participation in Recreational Activities by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia shall not constitute a waiver, in whole or in part, or sovereign immunity by said Board or its members, officers, agents, or employees.

I have read and understand the above.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this _____ day of _____, 200____.

X _____
(Signature)

X _____
(Signature of parent if participant is under 18)

X _____
(Print name)

X _____
(Witness)

APPENDIX C

CHALLENGE COURSE PROGRAM

APPENDIX C

CHALLENGE COURSE PROGRAM

Welcome at the gate

- Explain plan for the day is to participate in elements on the challenge course
- Outline goals for the day—teach lessons on cooperation and communication
- Explain challenge by choice

Walk back to open field

Opening comments

- Describe location of comfort facilities
- Explain safety issues

Initiative activities

- Boat/Island
- Warp Speed
- Processing
- Turnstile
- Processing

Low Elements

- Islands
- Processing
- TP Shuffle
- Processing

Lunch

Harnesses

High Elements

- Catwalk
- Processing
- Pamper Pole
- Processing
- Zip Line
- Processing

Final Processing

APPENDIX D
PROCESSING CARDS

APPENDIX D
PROCESSING CARDS

Activity: Boat/Island

Purpose: Follow directions, warm-up, fun

Safety: Running into others, tripping, falling

Task: Be last one standing when game is complete

Processing:

- How did you cooperate with others in the group?
- How did you communicate with others in the group?
- Were cooperation and communication necessary? Why or why not?

Activity: Warp Speed

Purpose: Communication

Safety: Personal space

Task: Move an object around the circle as fast as possible

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for the group to identify their goal.

Processing:

- What were some effective and ineffective methods of communication used?
- Thinking back, how would you have communicated differently during this activity?
- What are some effective and ineffective methods of communication used in your team in the workplace?

Activity: Turnstile

Purpose: Cooperation

Safety: Running into others, tripping on the rope, falling

Task: Move entire group from one side of a spinning rope to the other

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for the group to identify their goal.

Processing:

- When did you acquiesce or comply with the group's plan?
- Why did you do this?
- How did your acquiescence or compliance allow the group to accomplish the task?

Activity: Islands

Purpose: Cooperation

Safety: Personal space, falling off the boards, striking another participant with a board

Task: Move entire group from across three platforms

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for the group to identify their goal.

Processing:

- How did you work together to achieve the common goal?
- Thinking back, what would you have done differently to work together to accomplish the task?
- What are some specific methods that you work together in your team in the workplace?

Activity: TP Shuffle

Purpose: Cooperation

Safety: Personal space, slipping off the log

Task: Alphabetically, by middle name, reorder yourselves without stepping off the log

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for the group to identify their goal.

Processing:

- When did you acquiesce or comply with the group's plan?
- How did that make you feel?
- How do people within the group acquiesce or comply with the team's plan in the workplace?

Activity: Catwalk

Purpose: Communication

Safety: Spotting, ladder, belay system

Task: Move across a pole suspended above the ground

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for individuals to identify a personal goal.

Processing:

- How did group members communicate with one another?
- What obstacles made communicating challenging?
- What obstacles make communicating challenging in the workplace?

Activity: Pamper Pole

Purpose: Cooperation

Safety: Spotting, ladder, belay system

Task: Climb the pole and jump to a hanging trapeze swing

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for individuals to identify a personal goal.

Processing:

- How did your group cooperate on the Pamper Pole?
- How easy was it to use teamwork on the Pamper Pole?
- What instances in the work place might require more or less teamwork?

Activity: Zip Line

Purpose: Communication

Safety: Spotting, ladder, belay system

Task: Climb the pole and zip down the wire

Frontloading:

- State purpose.
- Provide opportunity for individuals to identify a personal goal.

Processing:

- How did you communicate with the group on the Zip Line?
- What barriers existed to hinder your communication process?
- What rewards did you experience as a result of communicating?

- What rewards have you experienced in the work place as a result of complying with others on your team?

APPENDIX E

FINAL PROCESSING QUESTIONS

APPENDIX E

FINAL PROCESSING QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn today?
2. What did you learn about communication today?
3. What did you learn about cooperation today?
4. Specifically, how do you think your actions will change in the workplace as a result of today?

APPENDIX F

TIME LINE

APPENDIX F

TIME LINE

Day 1: Recruitment presentation explaining intent and purpose of research (2.5 hours).

Day 2: Meet with participants at their workplace. Explain the intent and purpose of research, answer any questions, and have them sign the consent form (45 minutes).

Day 10: Engage in participant observation while group participates in the challenge course program (8.5 hours). Type up participant observation notes this evening.

Day 11: Type and analyze participant observation notes.

Day 12: Conduct participant observation on video tape. Type video participant observation notes this evening.

Day 13: Conduct focus group (45 minutes). Send tape to transcription service.

Day 14: Interview six participants (45 minutes per participant).

Day 15: Interview two participants (45 minutes per participant).

Day 16: Interview two participants (45 minutes per participant).

Day 22: Interview one participant (45 minutes per participant). Send all tapes to transcription service.

Day 35-55 Data transformation.

Day 56: Interview two participants (45 minutes per participant).

Day 57: Interview one participant (45 minutes per participant).

Day 58: Interview five participants (45 minutes per participant).

Day 59: Interview two participants (45 minutes per participant). Send all tapes to transcription service

Day 60-Completion: Data transformation

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group #1 (Immediately following challenge course program)

Question:

- What do you remember about the challenge course program?

Probes:

- What were the lessons taught?
- What were the best parts?
- What were the worst parts?

Question:

- How has the program impacted how you work with team members?

Probes:

- What positive impacts of the challenge course program have you noticed?
- What negative impacts of the challenge course program have you noticed?
- What has the impact been on the group's communication?
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - None
- What has the impact been on the group's cooperation?
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - None
- What impacts do you anticipate seeing?

- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Negative
- ☐ None

Question:

- What was your perception of the challenge course program?

Probes:

- Did you like it?
- Did you dislike it?
- Was it beneficial for you?
- Was it beneficial for the team?
- Did it hinder your team?
- Did it hinder you in the workplace?

APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW GUIDE #1

Question:

- What do you remember about the challenge course program?

Probes:

- What lessons did you learn?
- What did you like most about the challenge course program?
- What did you like least about the challenge course program?
- How often have you thought about the program over the past three days?

Question:

- Tell me about your interactions with others during the program.

Probes:

- Tell me more about these interactions.
- Can you think of any positive interactions that occurred during the challenge course program?
- Can you think of any negative interactions that occurred during the challenge course program?

Question:

- How have you put the lessons learned on the challenge course into practice?

Probes:

- How do you communicate differently with others in the workplace?
- How do you cooperate differently with others in the workplace?
- How long do you think these changes will remain?

INTERVIEW GUIDE #2 (1 MONTH FOLLOWING THE FIRST INTERVIEW)

Question:

- Now that it has been one month since you completed the challenge course program, what are your perceptions related to your team's communication with one another?

Probes:

- How do you communicate differently with others in the workplace?
- When do you find yourself remembering communicated related issues from the challenge course program?

Question:

- Now that it has been one month since you completed the challenge course program, what are your perceptions related to your team's cooperation with one another?

Probes:

- How do you cooperate differently with others in the workplace?
- When do you find yourself remembering issues related to cooperation from the challenge course program?

Question:

- Now that it has been one month since you completed the challenge course program, what do you remember most about it?

Probes:

- Do you remember lessons learned?
- Do you remember interactions with others?
- Do you remember positive occurrences?
- Do you remember negative occurrences?

- How often have you thought about the challenge course program in the last month?

Question: What are your overall impressions of the program?

Probes:

- Would you consider participating in this type of program again? Why or why not?
- Would you recommend this program for others?
- For you personally, do you have more positive or more negative memories from the program?
- Would you explain those some?

INTERVIEW GUIDE #2 REVISED QUESTIONS (6 WEEKS FOLLOWING FIRST
INTERVIEW)

Individual Questions

- What pseudonym would you like me to use?
-

Question:

- Now that it has been six weeks since you completed the challenge course program, what do you remember most about it? (*“I” versus “We” notion*)

Probes:

- Tell me about interactions with others.
- Tell me about positive occurrences.
- Tell me about negative occurrences.

Question:

- Talk to me about your thoughts on the support and encouragement during the challenge course. (*Is support the central theme?*)

Probes:

- Do you remember instances where you received support/encouragement?
- Do you remember instances where you provided support/encouragement?
- Will you tell me about those instances?

Question:

- Please select one or two pictures of the element(s) where you feel the group communicated best and explain your rationale.

- Please select one or two pictures of the element(s) where you feel the group communicated worst and explain your rationale.
- Please select one or two pictures of the element(s) where you feel the group cooperated best and explain your rationale.
- Please select one or two pictures of the element(s) where you feel the group cooperated worst and explain your rationale.

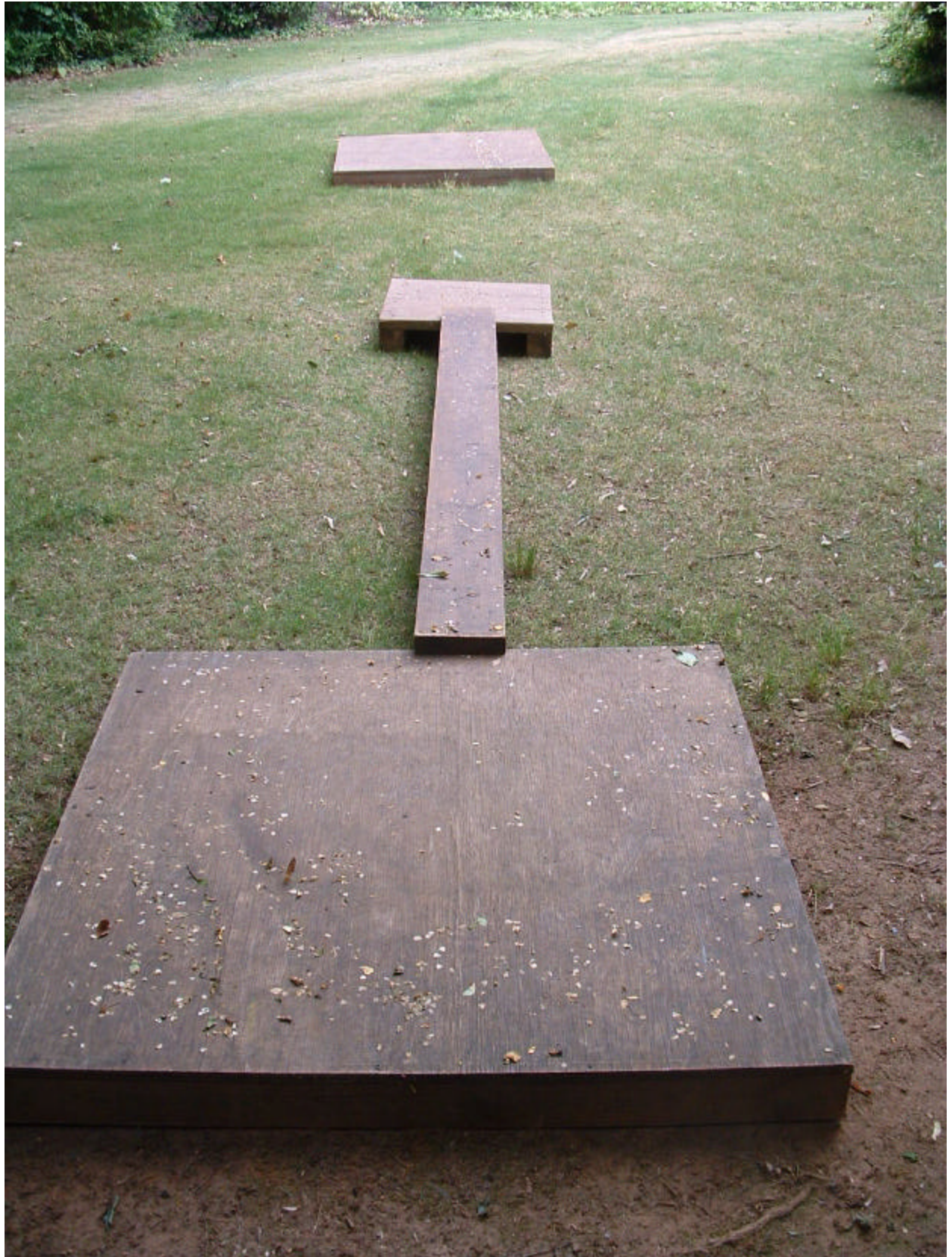
Question:

- Now that it has been six weeks since you completed the challenge course program, will you tell me about your experiences within the workplace?

Probes:

- If you have thought about the course during work, what have you thought about?
- Have you seen any differences?
- Will you describe those differences?
- Talk to me about your communication with others in the workplace.
- Provide me with an example of remembering a challenge course related communication lesson while in the work place.
- Talk to me about your cooperation with others in the workplace.
- Provide me with an example of remembering a challenge course related cooperation lesson while in the work place.

APPENDIX I
ELEMENT PHOTOS











APPENDIX J

EXAMPLE CODING SCHEME

APPENDIX J

EXAMPLE CODING SCHEME

“I’ve Gotta Do It”

Participant Motivated

- 2-Other people were looking (zip)
- 5-Holding everybody up (#6)
- 6-Heard my sister (#7)
- 7-Everybody else had succeeded (#3)
- 7-Everybody else was doing it (#3)
- 7-Didn’t want to be the only one that didn’t go (#3)
- 7-Didn’t want to fail at what I was going to have to try to do (harnesses)
- 10-Didn’t want to waste Barbara and Bob’s investment (#3)
- 10-That weighed heavy on my mind when I thought about not doing it (#3)
- 11-You don’t have time to sit here (#8)
- 10-okay you’re right, I gotta get out there (214)
- 9-definitely went a lot further than what they originally tended to (190)
- 9-set themselves their own limitations (197)
- 9-everything else was just whatever else they wanted to do (215)
- 6- I think everybody felt that they had to do this (612)

Facilitator Motivated

- 3-why do I got to put it on (244)
- 3-everybody needs to be in a harness (259)

Internally Motivated

- 2-I gotta go (zip)
- 3-Then I’m going to do it (#4)
- 5-I just have to do it (#5)
- 5-I didn’t want to come down (#5)
- 5-Needed to go ahead and do it (#6)
- 6-Just held my breath and dropped off (#7)
- 7-Didn’t want to quit right there (#3)
- 7-Stayed there until I could go on (#3)
- 7-I didn’t want to fail (#3)
- 7-I didn’t want to be the first to fail (#3)
- 7-I was going to have to come down (#4)
- 8-Gotta do it (#4)
- 8-Scary at first but need to make an attempt (lessons)
- 10-Forced myself to reconcile with that (zip)
- 10-Wanted to get to the top now (#3)
- 10-Found the courage and I did it (#4-6)
- 10-Had to overcome my fear (#4-6)
- 11-Thinking you got to do this (#8)

11-Just do it (#8)
11-wanted to try (152)
10-I mean you just absolutely had to (331)
9-need to keep on going even further (187)

Element Design

2-Not getting down any other way (zip)
5-Only way down (#5)
10-I can't go back down (zip) 362
10-When fear overrode, I had to think I can't get down any other way (zip)
10-Had to deal with the fact that I cannot get down (#4-6) 490
10-No other way down (#4-6)
10-No way out (#4-6)
10-No other choice (#4-6)
9-pull the ladder back (186)
9-there goes that safety net (187)

Miscellaneous

2-Didn't want to do it (zip)
8-Not going to do it (#4)
8-Wanted to be pushed (#4)

Deviant Cases

3-Didn't do any high elements (stuck out)
3-Don't regret not doing them (stuck out)
3-I wouldn't do it if I had another chance (stuck out)
3-I do regret, I just don't know (stuck out)
3-Don't regret not doing them (high)
7-Wasn't going to push myself because I just felt like I would fail (#4)
10-It was cool if I only made it halfway up there (#2)
10-Elected not to do it (PP)
10-Too soon to be pushing myself (PP)
10-I did the last one I don't have to do this one (PP)
11-You don't have to go (PP)
3-I probably disappointed them for not doing it (71)
3-I still wouldn't do it (73)
3-I did hear all the encouragements...did not influence me that I was going to go up (233)
3-everybody was wonderful you know you had all that support, but no (237)
3-I was secure but I knew then I was not (252)

APPENDIX K
DATA TRANSFORMATION

APPENDIX K

DATA TRANSFORMATION

Upon completion of interviews audio tapes were sent to a professional transcription service where they were transcribed into Microsoft Word and emailed back to me. As I received a transcript, I formatted the text by bolding participants' words and double spacing the entire document. I then printed the transcript and, to promote accuracy of transcription, I listened to the tape as I read the transcribed document. (Any discrepancies between the audio tape and the typed document were corrected at this time.) After this initial reading of the transcript, I re-read the document and conducted a line-by-line coding of all the participant's words. In this line-by-line coding I attempted to identify the crux of what the participant was saying on that one line of the transcript. Due to ideas spreading across lines and participants' responses moving away from any of the research questions, not every line received a code. When words in a line addressed an aspect of the research questions, the particular words of that line were circled and then written in the right hand margin. This process was repeated for all pages of all 11 transcripts.

When all transcripts had received a line-by-line coding, I created a new document for each participant entitled "Participant's Initial Analysis." In these documents I summarized the entire interview for each participant. This was accomplished by identifying the specific interview question and then adding the line-by-line codes that addressed that particular question. For example, the first question I asked each participant was, "What do you remember about the ropes course?" For each participant I added all of the codes that I had identified during the line-by-line coding. While this reduced the data set significantly, it did include the crux of participants' responses and this document was not used independently during data analysis.

The next stage of data transformation involved creating a master interview document. This document summarized all participants' responses for each interview question. Completion of this document occurred by identifying the interview question and then pasting the line-by-line codes from each individual's interview. At the completion of this document, all participants' responses were aggregated under each particular interview question. While not all questions were asked in the same order and the wording to some of the questions varied, the interviews followed a general path that was consistent across participants; however, one variation did occur when exploring participants' perceptions of high elements. Based on the amount of time previously spent discussing high elements (e.g., during video clip observation), I asked participants to either summarize their perceptions for all high elements or we addressed the high elements individually. Creating this document allowed me to gain an understanding of the group's perceptions related to each activity undertaken on the ropes course.

To encourage me to avoid focusing solely on the line-by-line codes (reduced data) I continuously re-read the original transcripts. Every two to four days I completely read each individual transcript and made additional notes or line-by-line codes as necessary. This constant re-reading of the transcripts allowed me to remain immersed in the data and gain a greater understanding of the participants' perspectives related to their experience. As I read the transcripts and created the aforementioned documents I was constantly thinking about and documenting similarities within the interviews. As I began to observe these similarities, I noted them on small pieces of paper. As I continued to read, re-read, and manipulate the data, I searched for participants' words which crystallized a particular concept or similarity that I was beginning to see. When a participant's word(s) crystallized a concept, those word(s) were used to create a theme. For example, as I was reading the transcripts I began to notice that many

participants were expressing that they felt they needed to participate in or complete an activity once they had begun. In describing this feeling, one participant used the phrase, “I gotta do it.” This phrase crystallized the notion of what other participants were discussing and became the name of the theme.

As I was reading, re-reading, manipulating the data, and beginning to identify themes, I constantly filtered my thoughts through my research questions. To aid with this process I typed my research purpose and questions in 18pt font, underlined and bolded the key component of each question (e.g., team functioning, communication, cooperation, perception) and stapled it to the bulletin board above the desk where I work. This provided me with a constant visual reminder of the purpose of my research. While issues that appeared interesting but outside the realm of my research questions were coded during the line-by-line coding process, they were not identified as themes. For example, several participants made references to the notion of gender interactions that occurred while at the ropes course. Because this particular topic was outside the scope of the research questions, issues related to gender have not been explored more deeply.

As participants words began to crystallize into themes, I created an initial electronic list of the themes which I printed and kept beside me as I read and re-read the transcripts. This document was in constant movement and flux during initial stages of data transformation. As participants identified new concepts and ideas, I jotted them next to the initial typed themes. The initial list of themes was created to provide me with an understanding of similarities that I saw across participants and words that participants had used to identify those concepts. As the themes became more firm in my mind (through reading and re-reading the transcripts) I began to look for particular quotes and instances within the transcripts which supported and eroded each particular theme. Toward that end, I created a document for each theme that was comprised of

cases from the transcripts that supported the idea and then cases from the transcripts that deviated from the theme. For example, one theme that I identified was “I gotta do it.” The idea behind this theme was that participants expressed to me that they felt internal or external pressure to participate in and complete activities; however, one participant elected not to participate in any high elements. She was the only participant to make this choice. She presented a case which occurred in opposition of, or deviated from, the theme of “I gotta do it.”

As I added the participants’ words to the particular themes, I also looked for examples that helped to define a particular theme. In essence, I grouped words used by participants within the themes into “like chunks.” For example, one theme I came to identify as “Too many chiefs,” was supported by participants’ comments related to group confusion, problems with decision making, being unsure of roles, and environmental conditions. Each of these “sub-themes” helped to define the theme and was taken directly from participants’ quotes from the transcripts.

As I started to identify themes and sub-themes within the transcripts, I created several diagrams to help explain and understand participants’ perspectives. Initially, each theme was exhibited as a circle with the sub-themes connected via spokes of a wheel. Through working with committee members, we began to recognize that the themes were not independent of one another, but rather interacted together in a dynamic way. Together, we attempted to identify these interactions among the different themes and sub-themes. This evolutionary process led to many editions where we tried to graphically depict interactions that appeared to be occurring among the different themes. These diagrams continued to change and adapt through the entire data transformation stage.

Finally, data were transformed through the use of word searches within Microsoft Word. As I continuously read the transcripts, I identified particular words that appeared to be repeated

across many of the transcripts. For example, many participants described the ropes course as “fun,” and I wanted to search each transcript to see how many participants used this same word. Each time I identified such a word (33 different words), I would enter it into a database. Words searched ranged from “team” to “chaos” and were found from as few as seven total times to as many as 296 total times. In the database I recorded the number of times a particular word was used by each participant and the total number of times a word was used by all participants. Words were grouped together and color coded for ease of reference (e.g., the words “group,” “together,” and “team” were all colored orange and given the title “group”). Searching the number of times participants used a particular word did not allow for collection of phrases representing an idea (e.g., “everyone was in the same place”), but it did allow for a general overview of the participants’ language. (Because of the different phraseology used by participants, individual words rather than complete phrases were searched.) Searching for these words also aided in the continued development and understanding of particular themes. For example, one theme identified related to participants feeling that too much talking was occurring within particular activities. Searching the words “talking” and “listening” I found that participants used the word “talking” almost twice as many times as they used the word “listening” (132:68).