Group Dynamics In Lord Of The Flies Essay, Research Paper

The story, The Lord of the Flies was one that exemplified many aspects that we have studied in our Group Dynamics class. The Lord of the Flies is a story in which a group of children get stranded on an island by themselves with no supervision and no supplies. The group of children goes through a series of transitions that seem quite natural to the person who has studied groups and know how and why they work and don’t work. Each individual has certain needs that he needs to satisfy. When the children were put under the stress of being isolated on an island, the needs seem to be magnified and transparent for us to see. Most importantly to the story was that these needs caused the groups to be impacted in quite a considerable way. Lord of the Flies is an excellent story to describe the needs of certain types of individuals, how needs can change over time, and also how these inherent needs can effect a group of people.Individual Characters and Their NeedsWhen discussing this topic we must first describe the characters to some extent and also detail the needs of a few of the key roles in the film. There were three main characters to play three very different roles. First there was Ralph, who distinguished himself as the first leader. Ralph became assigned president on basis of rank in the Boy Scout club they were participating in. Ralph handled himself in a very mature manner. He was a leader that took charge immediately. He assigned different people to different teams. There was a team in charge of keeping the fire burning, another team was responsible for obtaining food, and other people contributed in all ways that were necessary. Ralph was in a position where he was given unquestioned respect and allegiance to. By the way he was respected by all members initially leads me to believe that his position with the Scouts previous to the wreck was one of high stature. His personal need was to have unquestioned faith in his decision making and leadership. He did not like to argue his position, and seemed that his feelings were hurt when he was questioned.One group that Ralph had begun was the group responsible for collecting food for all of the children. This group became known as the hunters. Simply out of performance in killing animals, Jack emerged as the leader of this sub-group. From early in the movie the viewer gets the feeling that Jack greatly looks up to Ralph. When the group is deciding on a leader, it is Jack who says first that Ralph is the worthiest person to lead the group. Jack realizes that food is the most important thing for this team of people, and quickly feels in great power as he is the leader of the most important group. Although Ralph is very intelligent and crafty, he does not bring home the food that everyone needs to survive. Jack realizes his power over Ralph and exploits that to its fullest when he becomes angry with Ralph. Jack turned the group of civilized children into savage beasts, which as hunters made them much more successful at what they needed to do.One more important character to the story is Piggy. Aptly named because of his overweight body. Piggy is Ralph’s most loyal supporter through the entire story. Piggy obviously has a high need of acceptance. Ralph was the only person to not make fun of Piggy, and as it turned out Piggy became valuable in the survival of the group. His most valuable possession was that of his glasses. Through magnification of the sun through the lenses a ray of light could be multiplied in power and light sticks on fire. Unfortunately Piggy had to pay the price of this advantage that he and Ralph held over the rest of the group.How the Group Matured To further detail the beginning factors of this paper, it is necessary to know how the group originally began, and eventually split. At first everyone was completely together under Ralph’s Rule. Slowly as I earlier described, Jack began gaining power as his hunters emerged as the most important group. First the original people of the hunters left when an argument between Jack and Ralph led to Jack announcing his departure from Ralph and encouraging those who had fought for food with him to join him. They did so feeling their loyalty to the person Jack who was in essence their team leader. Ralph was a very civilized boy and believed that through a mature way of behaving that all the things that were necessary to survive could get done. However as the people who were loyal to Ralph began to get hungry because they could not hunt for food because none of them were skilled hunters, his followers slowly joined Jack. Eventually all left Ralph except for Piggy and Simon. Jack’s group became consistently more aggressive as time went on. They turned into savage killing beasts. The first boy to die was Simon. When Ralph and Piggy were meeting with the hunters Simon unexpectedly came running across the beach with a light wand, and the hunters mistook him for a monster and brutally killed him. It had become their distinct nature to simply kill anything that stood in their path or anyway threatened them. Ralph possessed the power of fire in Piggy’s glasses, and Jack possessed enough food for everyone. Jack wanted to trade food for fire, but Ralph refused the offer unless Jack could agree to work together with Ralph. Jack having a taste of being the leader did not want to share his power. Jack also proved himself as a more effective leader when striving towards the survival of the group. Although the idea of two children losing their lives because of the carelessness of his team seems appalling to us, and it is, Jack did what was most important for that group. When you are stranded alone on an island with no food, the most important thing you need is food. Jack provided that for his people and trained them to be able to physically take care of themselves.

Change of Needs Over Time The most obvious need change that occurred was in Jack’s role. Initially Jack was happy to be a follower of Ralph’s, and actually seemed eager to do so. However as time moved on Jack became to like the fact that everyone in his hunters group that everyone looked up to him as the leader. It eventually got to his head and instead of being able to be rational with Ralph who had the poise to be able to lead the different teams effectively he harshly decided to leave them completely. Conversely Ralph’s needs stayed fairly consistent through the entire story. He emerged as the leader because he wanted to emerge as the leader, but could not shake the desire to stay in that position. He would not sacrifice his integrity. Ralph also had this need to stay civilized among all of the chaos that was happening around him. He did not adjust to the savage conditions around him at all. He turned out to be an inflexible, rigid child who ended up causing more damage than good because of his stubbornness. Piggy similarly had very constant needs throughout the story. Piggy did not mind trying to make a point even though nobody respected him, he was extremely loyal, and had his need to have acceptance. His need of acceptance wasn’t a need that encompassed the entire group, but rather one friend was enough for him. Pinky originally seemed that he had the need to be part of the entire group, but when people left he stuck with his one friend, Ralph, who was the one person who treated Piggy like a useful person. Piggy also trusted in the good nature of people. All of these traits helped lead to his death.Impact of Needs and Need Changes on the Group It is important to not only just talk about how the change in needs of these three key characters effected the group, but also discuss how their constant innate needs also impacted the group members. Jack, as his role changed, probably had the most impact on the group. He most definitely acted as the catalyst in the splitting of the two groups. As Jack became in more and more of a dominating role, he felt more power. He did not want to have to deal with Ralph’s restrictions or rule. Also as jack became more confident in himself as being the leader of his group, the hunters, his group also gained more confidence and loyalty to him, thus beginning the cycle where he feels he can do anything he wants. Eventually this is what ends up getting two of the group members killed. Jack’s superior attitude was passed on to his follower, and they also seemed to feel as if they had no governing body. When Piggy was giving his last speech Jack’s group had no interest in listening to him. Instead of telling Piggy to shut up, like they previously did, they dropped a rock on his head and killed him. Combining Jack’s confidence and superior attitude led to his group disregarding all morals and rationale in that one instance. Ralph’s needs were fairly consistent throughout the story. Ralph had the need to stay in power, but also had good morals and was not willing to fight dirty. In a system where there is no one to answer to, the nice guy often does finish last. Ralph’s inability to be able to change to the changing needs of his group is what eventually led to his fall. Ralph seemed very stubborn to alter his way of wanting to do things. He needed to realize that this is not an environment where you could go to the store and pick up supplies you need. It was going to take a bit of savageness to get things done and get good food for the group. Given Ralph’s personality, it would have been impossible for Ralph to come out as the most effective leader, he simply was too professional. Piggy again had little variance in his change in needs. There was little Piggy could do to control his own fate. He behaved in the manner that he was accustomed to. He probably wasn’t skilled enough in human emotions to realize the consequences of him opening his mouth where it wasn’t welcome. Piggy’s loyalty to Ralph was admirable in every way, but had he left Ralph and went to the hunter’s, Ralph would have been left alone, and would have been forced into the position to give in also. Although this seems unfair to these two group members who were the most personable, and likable children, had they given in it would have been much better for the group as a whole, and especially Piggy.Conclusion The upsetting conclusion to this story is true in life, bad things do happen to good people. In this story, the two most civilized people, Ralph and Piggy end up in a situation where they are forced to compromise. Because they won’t compromise, Piggy and Simon lose their life, and Ralph ends up alone and deserted without any friends. A savage child ,Jack, ends up leading a group of children and trains them to have the mentality and skill of brutal killers. Jack was the most flexible person in his change in needs and his role. Had Jack had more experience as a leader, maybe he would have been more successful and maybe Simon and Piggy would have been killed. But Jack did succeed in creating children that had the ability to fight for themselves and get enough food so that no one would go hungry. The Lord of the Flies shows the changing and rigid needs of important characters and shows how group dynamics play a role in the effectiveness of a group. More specifically the story show how needs of characters can help and hurt a group in many different levels and ways.