

Proceedings  
*of the*  
2018 Symposium on Experiential  
Education Research



*presented at the*

**46<sup>th</sup> Annual International  
AEE Conference**



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*Orlando, Florida*  
*November 8-9, 2018*



## Welcome to SEER

Welcome to the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Experiential Education Research (SEER). The purpose of this symposium is to provide a formal setting for the reporting of research in the broad areas of experiential education. Toward that end, all the research presentations submitted to SEER were blind reviewed by a panel of referees, and the scores tabulated by the SEER co-chairs before final decisions were made and themed sessions assembled. Whether accepted or not, the authors who submitted material should be congratulated for their efforts.

As in past years, we are pleased to host oral presentations and poster sessions both providing venues to hear about the many quality papers accepted this year. We also continue to include a summary and discussion of key points by an invited discussant for each of the SEER oral presentation sessions. The poster presenters briefly describe their work during the first session in advance of three designated poster viewing times. We are delighted to open the 18<sup>th</sup> SEER with an address from the recipient of the 2018 Distinguished Researcher in Experiential Education award.

Along with the researchers who submitted their work for review, we also wish to recognize other people for their efforts in making the symposium a reality. First, we would like to thank the AEE staff members, including Dan Miller and the 2018 Conference host team for their support and coordination of SEER, as well as the *Journal of Experiential Education* editorial team for their ongoing support of SEER. The scholars who graciously served as reviewers of the submitted abstracts are Deb Bialeschki, Andrew Bobilya, Clare Dallat, Brad Daniel, Curt Davidson, Amy Diorenzo, Briget Eastep, Brad Faircloth, Ryan Gagnon, Mike Gass, Ken Gilbertson, Marni Goldenberg, Susanna Ho, Garrett Hutson, Betsy Lindley, Pat Maher, Leo McAvoy, Denise Mitten, Christine Norton, Rowena Passy, John Quay, Keith Russell, Paul Shirilla, Paul Stonehouse, Stacy Taniguchi, Frank Vernon, Tiffany Wynn, Karen Warren, and Chris Zajchowski.

We would like to especially thank all of you, attendees of this year's Symposium and those reading these timely abstracts online. It is your interest that ultimately drives the research and practice efforts in the AEE. We prepare and host SEER because of the continued need for us to understand how and why experiential educational practices work to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Thanks to all of you for being a part of this year's SEER.  
Brad Daniel, Andrew J. Bobilya, and Brad Faircloth, SEER Co-Chairs



## A Brief History of the SEER

The Symposium on Experiential Education Research (SEER) provides an outlet and venue for researchers in fields that use experiential education to present, share, dialogue, and further develop their research ideas. The first SEER took place at the Association for Experiential Education's (AEE) 2001 International Conference in Charleston, West Virginia. Fittingly, it was Dr. Alan Ewert of Indiana University who conceived of and led the effort to establish that first SEER. A widely published researcher and author in the field of adventure-based education, Dr. Ewert is also known for his distinguished career in academia, three decades as an Outward Bound instructor, the Patricia and Joel Meier endowed Outdoor Leadership Chair, past editor of the *Journal of Experiential Education* (JEE), and as fellow and past president of the prestigious Academy of Leisure Sciences. In providing the leadership to launch SEER, Dr. Ewert gave back to an area of research he helped develop throughout his academic and professional career.

The symposium occurs concurrently with the International AEE Conference each year and involves the presentation of research papers from international scholars who use and research experiential education practices. The process by which papers are selected for SEER begins in the spring, when a call for papers is released by AEE asking researchers, graduate students, and research/practitioners to submit abstracts to a blind, peer-reviewed process facilitated by the co-chairs of SEER. Abstracts are sent out for blind review to a panel of scholars/researchers. Abstracts are reviewed for relevance to experiential education theory and practice, research methodology, and logic and clarity in writing. The papers are ranked, and the top abstracts are selected for oral or poster presentations at the annual International AEE Conference. In addition to the presentations, the abstracts are published as a proceedings booklet, which is distributed at the conference. Currently, AEE publishes the abstracts online. For about 10 years, the spring edition of the *Journal of Experiential Education* published these abstracts as a way to make them available to a wider readership. Reading these abstracts is a great way to get a glimpse of current research interests and innovative research methodologies used for experiential education research.

In Little Rock, Arkansas (2007), the SEER program was modified to 90-minute, theme-based sessions. Papers were grouped by topic in order to better promote SEER to practitioners and other conference attendees so they could attend sessions of interest. Each presenter was, and continues to be, allotted 20 minutes to present her/his/their research, which typically includes an introduction, a description of the methods employed, and the results and conclusions developed from the research. In addition to the papers presented, discussant remarks have been offered each year by leading scholars and practitioners in experiential education theory and practice. This has provided an opportunity for the initiation of substantive dialogue around current research.

Beginning in 2008, SEER partnered with the Council on Research and Evaluation (CORE) to explore ways to support the needs of AEE members and expand research about experiential education. As the use of experiential education philosophy and methodologies continues to grow and evolve in social, political, and economic contexts, research can play a vital role in helping maintain and further the mission of experiential education in helping children, youth, families, and communities. To this end, research in educational, therapeutic, recreational, and other experiential learning settings are all welcome in SEER.

In 2011, SEER Co-chairs Jayson Seaman and Alan Ewert initiated a research poster session at SEER. At the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual SEER held in Madison, WI, Co-chairs Alan Ewert and Stacy Taniguchi replaced the summary discussant at the end of each session with an open discussion concerning the relative nature of the studies presented and questions for further research. Graduate students were invited to lead these discussions. In 2012, SEER welcomed Dr. Denise Mitten as a Co-chair with Dr. Taniguchi. Dr. Mitten's long dedicated service to AEE and experiential



education research was a valuable asset to increasing the visibility of the SEER call for proposals and the number of submissions.

At the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> SEER, Co-chairs Dr. Mitten and Dr. Taniguchi continued with the SEER format of previous year and re-introduced the SEER poster session. They decided to go totally digital for the *Proceedings of the Symposium of Experiential Education Research* for the SEER and to make past abstracts available online through AEE’s website.

At the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual SEER, Dr. Mitten worked with Dr. Taniguchi to create a method to review proposals that addressed conceptual topics, in order to complement empirical submissions. At the 17<sup>th</sup> SEER, poster presenters were given time in the general sessions to give an overview of their work in preparation for their poster sessions.

Beginning in 2010 the AEE Award Committee named an annual Distinguished Researcher Award Recipient. It is our hope that SEER continues to be one of the many mechanisms to help further AEE’s mission in the years to come.

In the continuation of furthering our understanding of the positive impact of engaging the philosophy of experiential education and many methods that use this philosophy, this year’s 18<sup>th</sup> SEER should be engaging and inspiring for researchers and practitioners alike.

Denise Mitten, Keith Russell, Stacy Taniguchi

**SEER through the Years**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Co-Chairs</b>	<b>Distinguished Researcher Award and location</b>
2001	Alan Ewert	1 <sup>st</sup> SEER @ AEE Charleston, WV.
2002	Alan Ewert	St Paul, MN
2003	Alan Ewert, Jim Sibthorp	Vancouver, BC
2004	Alan Ewert, Jim Sibthorp	Norfolk, VA
2005	Alan Ewert, Jim Sibthorp	Tucson, AZ
2006	Jim Sibthorp, Keith Russell	St Paul, MN
2007	Keith Russell, Cheryl Stevens	Little Rock, AR
2008	Keith Russell, Cheryl Stevens	Vancouver, WA
2009	Cheryl Stevens, Jayson Seaman	Montreal, Canada
2010	Jayson Seaman, Kath Pinch	Keith Russell; Las Vegas, NV
2011	Jayson Seaman, Alan Ewert	Mike Gass; Jacksonville, FL
2012	Stacy Taniguchi, Denise Mitten	Lee Gillis; Madison, WI
2013	Stacy Taniguchi, Denise Mitten	Alan Ewert; Denver, CO
2014	Stacy Taniguchi, Denise Mitten	No award given; Chattanooga, TN
2015	Denise Mitten	Denise Mitten, Portland, OR
2016	Denise Mitten	Anita Tucker; Minneapolis, MN
2017	Denise Mitten, Brad Daniel, Andrew J. Bobilya, Brad Faircloth	Christine Norton & Jim Sibthorp, Montreal, Canada
2018	Brad Daniel, Andrew J. Bobilya, Brad Faircloth	Jayson Seaman, Orlando, FL



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Jayson Seaman, Sean Harrington & Brent Bell, <i>Dartmouth College's Defining Role in the Experiential Education Movement, 1957-1981</i>	12-15
Session 2    Anita Tucker, Bobbi Beale & Christine Lynn Norton, <i>Wood County Adventure Therapy Collaborative: A Pilot Study</i>	16-19
Yun Chang, <i>The Effect of Autonomous Student Experiences on Positive Youth Development</i>	20-23
Session 3    Lorie Ouellet & Suzanne Laberge, <i>Gender and Social Representations of a "Good Outdoor Leader"</i>	24-27
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Kurt Youngberg, Danny Recio & Heather Tracy, <i>Supportive Immersion: The Use of International Gap Experiences as Facilitators of Personal Development and 21st Century Skills</i>	55-58



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**Symposium for Experiential Education Research (SEER)  
2018 Presentation Schedule**

**SESSION 1: Thursday, November 8, 2018 (2:00 PM – 3:50 PM)**

2:00 – 2:15 Welcome to the Symposium on Experiential Education Research (SEER)

2:15 – 2:35 Dr. Jayson Seaman, Recipient of the Distinguished Researcher in Experiential Education Award, *History in vs. History of: Approaching Experiential Education Research with an Historical Sensibility.*

**SEER Session 1 Speakers**

2:35 - Session Introductions – Brad Daniel

- 2:40 – 3:00 Cheryl Bolick, Jocelyn Glazier & Christoph Stutts, *Disruptive Teacher Education: Exploring the Potential of Experiential Education*
- 3:05 – 3:25 Jayson Seaman, Sean Harrington & Brent Bell, *Dartmouth College's Defining Role in the Experiential Education Movement, 1957-1981*
- 3:25 – 3:35 Key Points and Research/Practice Implications, Chaired by Christine Norton

3:35 – 3:50 Introduction of Poster Presenters

- Cheryl Bolick & Ryan Nilsen, *Developing an Internal Compass: Investigating the Links Between Outward Bound and Public Service*
- Samantha Smith, Denise Mitten, Maurie Lung & Nicole Vicinanza, *Education Through the Generations: Engaging Learning*
- Tommy Means, *Meaning and Adventure: Constructive Development Theory and Outdoor Adventure Outcomes*
- Kurt Youngberg, Danny Recio & Heather Tracy, *Supportive Immersion: The Use of International Gap Experiences as Facilitators of Personal Development and 21st Century Skills*
- Jie Gao, Yawei Wang, Todd Kelshaw, Bryan D. Murdock & Krystal Woolston, *Integrating High-Impact Community Engaged Scholarship into a Non-Profit Marketing Class*
- Sharon Tessneer, *Overcoming Challenges: Skilled Facilitation in Outdoor Adventure Programming*

3:50 – 4:05 15-minute intermission and poster viewing

**SESSION 2: Thursday, November 8, 2018 (4:05 PM – 5:00 PM)**

**SEER Session 2 Speakers**

4:05 - Session Introductions – Brad Faircloth

- 4:05 – 4:25 Anita Tucker, Bobbi Beale & Christine Lynn Norton, *Wood County Adventure Therapy Collaborative: A Pilot Study*



- 4:30 – 4:50 Yun Chang, *The Effect of Autonomous Student Experiences on Positive Youth Development*
- 4:50 – 5:00 Key Points and Research/Practice Implications, Chaired by Brent Bell

**SESSION 3: Friday, November 9, 2018 (9:00 AM – 10:30 PM)**

**SEER Session 3 Speakers**

9:00 - Session Introductions – Andrew J. Bobilya

- 9:05 – 9:25 Lorie Ouellet & Suzanne Laberge, *Gender and Social Representations of a "Good outdoor leader"*
- 9:30 – 9:50 Jocelyn Glazier, *Cultivating Paths to Social Justice: The Potential of Experiential Education in Teacher Education*
- 9:55 – 10:05 Key Points and Research/Practice Implications, Chaired by Karen Warren

10:10 – 10:35 25-minute intermission and poster viewing

**SESSION 4: Friday, November 9, 2018 (10:35 AM – 12:05 PM)**

**SEER Session 4 Speakers**

10:35 - Session Introductions

- 10:35 – 10:55 Yevgeniya Zastavker, Adam Coppola, Brooke Hoger, Robert Siegel & Hilary Schuldt, *Reflections on Experiential Learning Through Narratives of Students' Learning Journeys*
- 11:00 – 11:20 Karen Velasquez & Allyson Pacifico, *Understanding the Value and Impact of Experiential Learning (EL): A Qualitative Analysis of Students' Holistic and Integrative EL Reflections*
- 11:25 – 11:45 Peter Nerothin, Denise Mitten, Nevin Harper, & Jess Ponting, *It's More than Just a Wave: The Experiences of Serious Leisure Surfers*
- 11:50 – 12:00 Key Points and Research/Practice Implications, Chaired by Paul Shirilla

12:00 – 12:05 SEER Closing Comments

1:45-2:45pm AEE Research Reception

**ON THE NEXT PAGES, ABSTRACTS IN THE ORDER PRESENTED WITH ORAL PRESENTATIONS FIRST FOLLOWED BY POSTERS PRESENTATIONS**



## **DISRUPTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION**

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*Jocelyn Glazier, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

*Christoph Stutts, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Seeking to disrupt long-lived patterns that too often fail to "fundamentally influence teachers and improve education" (Korthagen, 2001, p. xi), we designed a graduate education course for practicing teachers that embedded experiential education within the course to challenge traditional curricular and pedagogical teacher education models. Since 2012, we have included an intensive experiential education model in the graduate education course. Through partnerships with North Carolina Outward Bound School and a local school district's environmental education 'Hub', our students engage in a week-long residency program, either spending a week immersed in the woods with Outward Bound or a week building infrastructure at the Hub. In this model, our students engage with or, *live* experiential education, rather than simply theorize about it and/or "visit" it. This study builds upon our prior research and examines the experiences of the teachers *while* they were engaged in this work and investigates *how* the experiences disrupted their notions of teaching.

### **Background: Review of the Literature**

Research leads to conclusions about the limited role that schools of education play in teacher attitude and practice (Cochran-Smith et al, 2015; Daniel, 2016). Brouwer & Korthagen (2005) assert that "teacher education provides a stressful, ineffective interlude in the shift from being a moderately successful and generally conformist student to being a pedagogically conservative teacher" (p. 156). This stance is echoed in research that schools of education have a middling effect on the tendency towards pedagogical conservatism among teacher candidates (Allen, 2009; Wideen et al, 1998; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981; Barton & Levstik, 2004). Often, teacher education fails to shift the problematic conceptions about school, teaching and children that our students enter our courses with (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005), leaving graduates with limited concrete images of how to change the nature and structure of schools and teaching so as to positively transform the lives of all children. Essentially, we have continued to do the same old, same old.

Dewey (1938) holds up experience, authenticity, and experiment as central elements of education in which educators: "engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities" (AEE, 2013). The work of doing experiential education is complex and challenging. Further, experiential work engages the learner "intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually and physically" (Itin, 1999, p. 93). It is through the complex and messy challenges that students can be 'disrupted' to think in new ways. Roberts (2016) advocates experiential education is more than experiential learning, "It is not simply about how we learn experientially but rather how we create such moments *through the systemic process of experiential education*" (p. 25). Further, Roth (2014) calls upon higher education to, "teach students to liberate, animate, cooperate, and investigate". It is in these challenges or spaces of disequilibrium that learners take risks and grow. Thus, experiential education was a tool in our effort to disrupt and support teacher learning.

### Methods

The guiding questions for this study were: *How do teachers experience an experiential education residency week? Does this experience impact teachers' concepts of teaching? If so, in what ways?* Participants in the study are the 128 teachers who have matriculated through the experiential education residency and course since its inception. Throughout the course and experiential fieldwork, the research team documented the experiential education initiatives and impact through observational field notes, interviews, course documents, student written narratives and researcher journals. This approach to data collection allowed us to understand the impact of experiential education on teachers' own experiences and their subsequent narratives throughout the course and after course completion. At completion of data collection, we employed two levels of analysis. First, we analyzed the ways participants described their experiential residencies across the data to inform our understanding of how they experienced the residency. Second, we conducted thematic analysis of the data to determine how participants framed concepts such as school, teaching and learning within and then across their multiple data points.

### Results

Data analysis presented snapshots that bring to life experiential education theory in the field of teacher education. The snapshots reveal the complex, messy, and impactful experiences these teachers had during their residency week. What became evident through the analysis were the ways that the challenges the teachers' experienced during the residency week overlapped to lead ultimately to a disruption of participants' notions related to teachers, students, and schools. Qualitative analysis of the data revealed themes that exposed the intense learning experiences the students had *doing* experiential education. The students were challenged in ways atypical to teacher education courses: they were challenged intellectually, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, all elements highlighted in the definition of experiential education expressed by Itin (1993).

### Discussion

In this study, we extend our prior research and present data that provide insight into the experiences of teachers during an intense week of experiential education activities. Itin's (1993) challenges provided an initial framework for examining the data. However, in describing their residency work (in course artifacts and interviews in particular), the participants did not separate these domains from one another. Instead, participants eloquently reflected on the interaction *across* the domains. Participants saw the whole, rather than the parts: it was in the overlaps where revelation happened. Real shifts were made when participants experienced the social, emotional, and physical challenges at once and reflected on them as a whole. It is at that intersection that they found a sense of disequilibrium that problematized for them their past teacher selves. These were the moments when notions of teacher, teaching, student, school, and learning were disrupted. The results contribute to the field by not only providing insight into ways experiential education might provide a powerful lever in teacher education but also how those working in the field of experiential education more broadly might consider the ways multiple elements of experiential education intersect to influence participant learning in powerful ways.

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## **DARTMOUTH COLLEGE'S DEFINING ROLE IN THE EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT, 1957-1981**

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*Brent J. Bell, University of New Hampshire*

Outward Bound's formation in the United States in 1962 (OB USA) was a pivotal moment in establishing experiential education as a social and educational reform modeled after the ideas of German Educator, Kurt Hahn (Miner & Boldt, 2002). As Miner and Boldt describe, Hahn's ideas first took root in the U.S. at Phillips Andover Academy, where Miner was a teacher and champion for Hahn's pedagogical aims and approach. Granted a leave from Andover, Miner focused full time on OB and by 1964 its methods had become embedded in Peace Corps training in Puerto Rico and it had opened three sites in Colorado, Maine, and Minnesota<sup>i</sup>. The subsequent "mainstreaming" effort starting in 1968 expanded OB considerably, embedding it in schools and mental health agencies, drawing acclaim from humanistic psychologists (e.g., Katz & Kolb, 1968), and underwriting experiential education conferences starting in 1971.

One part of the origin story that is not well known is the defining role that Dartmouth College played both in establishing OB in the U.S. and generating innovative practices that would become central to the nascent experiential education movement. Dartmouth appears late in Miner and Boldt's (2002) book as OB's one successful college initiative. This presentation gives the impression that OB's Dartmouth chapter both comes after the organization's initial founding and chiefly involved implementing ideas and practices already established within the organization. In reality, Dartmouth played a pivotal role in bringing Hahn's ideas to the U.S. before OB USA was even founded, and later would be the site of highly experimental practices that circulated through the OB network to influence what became recognizable as experiential education. While Dartmouth's role adds necessary historical depth to the project of understanding OB history, the details of its evolution also provide further evidence of how experiential education simultaneously expanded and underwent an ideological shift from "character training" to "personal growth" in the 1960s and 1970s (Freeman, 2011). Although this shift from muscular Christianity to humanistic psychology marked a departure from early Hahnian ideals, studying the Outward Bound Center at Dartmouth (DOBC) enables understanding of how it also helped OB, and experiential education more broadly, to gain acceptance within mainstream institutions.

The present study examines DOBC as a case example of experiential education's establishment in the United States and its evolution through the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from informing DOBC's story, archival records help to understand how Kurt Hahn's ideas were viewed by contemporaries in the 1950s, including reasons why fellow members of the educational and political elite were so urgently attracted to them. DOBC's story also reveals differing visions for what Outward Bound USA would become, suggesting divergent perspectives in the organization as it sought mainstream incorporation. These different visions persist today as "currents" (Roberts, 2011) defining contemporary experiential education.

### **A Cosmopolitan Education**

The initial platform for Outward Bound in the U.S. was the American-British Foundation for European Education, later named the Atlantic Foundation for the Education of the Free (hereafter "the Foundation"; Miner & Boldt, 2002).<sup>ii</sup> The Foundation's aim was not to launch Outward Bound as such, however, but to establish several two-year international colleges as part of a diplomatic strategy at the dawn of the cold war led by a group of high-level public figures

including signatories to the Atlantic Unity effort (see Strait Council, 1954). A secondary goal was to open “short schools,” but even these were to serve the goal of advancing western political aims as modeled in organizations such as NATO, the United Nations, and the Peace Corps, which some Foundation members and Dartmouth principals also helped to create.<sup>iii iv</sup>

In some ways, the idea of DOBC predates Outward Bound itself. Dartmouth Professor of Sociology H. Wentworth Eldridge, who described himself as a “minor disciple” of Kurt Hahn,<sup>v</sup> was involved in bringing Hahn’s ideas to the U.S. from Europe via the Foundation starting around 1957 (see also Hahn, n.d.).<sup>vi</sup> Eldridge was guided by a vision to realize a cosmopolitan ethic among a future aristocratic elite who would govern Western powers (see Eldridge, 1964). The vision for the triumph of cosmopolitan Western values was shared by Dartmouth president John Sloan Dickey and Andover headmaster John Kemper (see Dickey, 1955). When Josh Miner joined the board of the Foundation in 1958, he received its endorsement and its financial support for developing the short schools – what became Outward Bound. Eldridge and other Dartmouth personnel petitioned Miner through the early 1960s to use Dartmouth’s resources, including its venerable Outing Club and its vast landholdings in New Hampshire, to prepare OB leaders.<sup>vii viii</sup>

### **DOBC’S Evolution**

Finally, in 1968, DOBC officially opened under the leadership of Willem Lange.<sup>ix</sup> Its evolution from that point onward illustrates how Outward Bound principals and other key stakeholders struggled to stay true to the Foundation’s vision and core values, while also harnessing the momentum of Outward Bound’s newfound identity as a wilderness school that increasingly incorporated ideas and practices from the human potential movement. Efforts at Dartmouth College were central to this evolution. Through the 1970s, DOBC ran outdoor leadership programs for the public, but many of its innovations were conducted with its undergraduates. The human potential movement supplied an ideological justification – personal growth and group functioning – and a language – experiential learning – that facilitated Outward Bound’s incorporation into the august classrooms of Dartmouth.

Wilderness programs initially run under Lange’s direction failed to persuade administrators and faculty that the initiative was worthy of Dartmouth’s sponsorship.<sup>x</sup> Only when inroads were made into classes, and programs were tied to other initiatives such as residential communities housing minority students, did the Center win administrative support.<sup>xi</sup> Lange’s successor, Robert MacArthur, was instrumental in these changes, arguing that DOBC should move “away from the image of a rigorous outdoor program,” maintaining “that the experiential process embodied in OB can use different media to achieve similar learning.”<sup>xii</sup> The ideological and pedagogical flexibility required for these adaptations was provided in part by the language of human potential.

Examples of DOBC successes during this shift include the “laboratory” programs run in conjunction with courses in psychology, sociology, geography, and business (see e.g., Lewicki, 1975). Experiential learning was a centerpiece in these efforts, particularly the new “learning cycle” constituted by the stepwise progression involving “concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.”<sup>xiii</sup> Lab programs following this model included new kinds of challenging experiences such as sequestering students in a bomb shelter to induce sensory deprivation and jailing students temporarily to provide firsthand experiences with criminal justice. As evidenced in student journals, syllabi, and course evaluations, themes developed during lab programs included personal growth and group functioning, in addition to disciplinary principles germane to the parent courses. As well, a 1973 national conference on “Urban and wilderness activity as experiential learning” – the precursor to the Association for Experiential Education – was co-sponsored by DOBC and included keynote addresses and workshops by prominent human relations figures Jack Gibb and Richard Katz,

pioneers in and advocates of group encounter methods that were central to the human potential movement at the time.<sup>xiv</sup>

The change from cosmopolitan virtues in service of larger political aims among members of an aristocratic ruling class to an emphasis on personal growth and human potential as a mass movement was not embraced by everyone, however. Wentworth Eldridge lamented on several occasions that Outward Bound had departed too severely from its early focus on developing a cadre of committed global elite. He reacted critically to a mission statement drafted by Willi Unsoeld in 1968 on OB's purpose, sent to him by OB board chair John Kemper,<sup>xv</sup> and in a candid letter to Kemper one year later, wrote:

Quite frankly, OB is continuing its concern with the lower part of the ability/performance curve (which is understandable in the egalitarian mood of the contemporary U.S.A – and the world). But the original idea still sticks in my craw to develop the middle bracket and especially the top who willy nilly are going to run the world under any system – abiet [*sic*] it would seem with increasing difficulty.<sup>xvi</sup>

“Pursuit of excellence is the crux of the whole matter,” Eldridge concluded to Kemper. Thus, developments at DOBC track the shift within the larger OB movement from character training in the Hahnian mold to personal growth in the fashion of humanistic psychology (Freeman, 2011).

### Conclusion

On the one hand, DOBC's story illustrates how experiential education was defined and became incorporated into mainstream educational institutions from the mid-1960s into the 1970s especially as an outgrowth of Outward Bound's expansion. On the other hand, it also illustrates how experiential education in the Hahnian mold evolved during that period, from first being driven by a political and cultural struggle against communism in the 1950s, to promoting the ideology of personal growth and group functioning in the 1960s and 1970s, which reflected the rise of encounter workshops and sensitivity trainings in the wider culture. These changes represent a radical shift in purpose, but they also were central to achieving expansion as Outward Bound sought incorporation into mainstream institutions. Today these different emphases echo in themes of social justice, interpersonal relations, and experiential learning in the interest of self-expression, which still sit uneasily together in justifications for experiential education.

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## **OHIO ADVENTURE THERAPY COLLABORATIVE: A PILOT STUDY**

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Children who live in poverty as well as those involved in the child welfare system often have high prevalence rates of recurrent interpersonal and environmental trauma, referred to as complex trauma. According to a comprehensive study by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 82.1% of youth in foster care report complex trauma (Greeson et al., 2011). The effects of complex trauma include significantly higher rates of internalizing problems, posttraumatic stress, and other clinical diagnoses (Greeson et al., 2011). Addressing trauma is particularly important given the impact it can have on future functioning. The CDC's Adverse Child Experiences Study (Felitti et al., 1998) found a clear positive relationship between increased stress in childhood and increased risk for adult health problems including alcoholism and alcohol abuse, depression, and suicide.

Research shows that outdoor adventure experiences contribute to positive intrapersonal and interpersonal growth and improve psychosocial functioning (Norton et al., 2014). Also known as adventure therapy, this type of group intervention involves the physical engagement of participants and the intentional use of cooperative games, problem solving initiatives, challenge and adventure activities, often in an outdoor setting (Newes & Bandoroff, 2004; Tucker, 2009). In general, adventure therapy has been used to promote social skills (Tucker, 2009), enhance self-concept and perception of competence in major life skills, as well as foster group cohesion (Norton & Tucker, 2010). Prior research has documented the need for experiential interventions for trauma survivors (Gleiser, Ford, & Fosha, 2008) and adventure therapy fits this area of need. Group psychotherapy literature has highlighted the efficacy of adventure-based group work and the experiential process of engaging clients kinesthetically on affective, cognitive and behavioral levels (Tucker, 2009). Though research has shown adventure therapy to be an effective treatment with youth (Norton et al., 2014), the use of adventure therapy with current and former foster care youth is only somewhat documented in the literature (Fischer & Attah, 2001). In addition, limited research has looked at the impact of adventure therapy on youth in poverty and community settings (Tucker, Javorski, Tracy & Beale, 2012). This project aimed to fill this void in the research.

### **Methodology**

This current project aimed to increase psychological functioning and reduce trauma symptoms (emotional and behavioral dysregulation) in youth identified for behavioral health services in 13 different counties across Ohio specifically targeting youth involved with child protection. During this project, current clinicians were trained on adventure therapy including an initial three-day training focused on outcome driven clinical work, to help set the groundwork for the importance of evidenced supported practice. Clinicians were responsible for running weekly adventure therapy groups for youth in their organizations. During year one of the project, a pilot study was conducted to look at the preliminary impact of incorporating adventure therapy groups into the treatment of the youth in addition to traditional clinical services (case management, and individual, group and family treatment). Youth participants engaged in weekly adventure therapy groups which lasted between 90 to 120 minutes and were facilitated on site at various behavioral health centers across Ohio.

Methods for this study included the collection of data at intake and every three months until discharge, from youth and one significant adult in their life who could accurately report on the youth's functioning. Data collected included standardized measures looking at youth's psychological functioning and symptomology as measured by the Youth Outcomes Questionnaire. The 64 question Y-OQ comes in one form for youth self-report and another for parents/guardians to report on their perceptions of their youth's functioning. Youth and parents/guardians are asked to complete this at intake and every 90 days while attending adventure therapy groups. These instruments are used to measure adolescents' psychological symptoms, behavioral symptoms, and social functioning. Higher scores indicate more severe symptoms. The Y-OQ has excellent psychometric qualities and estimates of internal consistency range from .74 to .93 with a total scale estimate of .96 (Wells, Burlingame, Lambert, Hoag, Y Hope, 1996). The Y-OQ has a Total Score which measures overall functioning as well as six subscales: Intrapersonal Distress, Somatic Issues, Interpersonal Relations, Behavior Disorders, Social Problems and Critical Items. The Y-OQ has been used previously with youth in community-based systems of care that use adventure therapy and shown to be sensitive to change over time (VanKanegan, Tucker, McMillion, Gass & Spencer, 2018).

In order to monitor the program's progress and be available to troubleshoot potential barriers, weekly consultations via webinar format with the providers and their supervisors were given. Research has demonstrated that external support after training, including specific feedback in a timely manner, predicts therapist fidelity (Beidas, Edmunds, Marcus & Kendall, 2012). We also provided ongoing quarterly training on site. Quarterly booster training (1 day per quarter) allowed the providers ample time to try out their newly acquired skills and specific adventure activities between training sessions. The training sessions encouraged the development of clinical adventure teams, included instructional training on data collection and management, and provided updated curriculum with new ideas and activities each quarter to keep the program fresh and engaging. In addition, booster trainings allowed us to assess the growing skills of trained providers and to intervene, as needed, with specific individuals to improve their skills at adventure therapy facilitation.

## Results

Over the course of 18 months, 122 youth were referred for adventure therapy groups. Of these youth, 45.1% ( $n = 55$ ) were female, 54.9% ( $n = 67$ ) were male. Most of the youth self-identified as Caucasian (76.0%), with 10 Hispanic youth (7.0%), four African American youth (4.0%), and 10 youth (10.0%) who were of Mixed race. At intake youth ages ranged from 8 to 18 with a mean of 14.00 years ( $sd = 2.2$ ) with most youth between 13-18 years of age (75.0%).

Youth at intake self-reported a mean Total Y-OQ score of 64.1 ( $sd = 34.7$ ,  $n = 114$ ) and their Total Y-OQ score at intake according to their parents was 79.99 ( $sd = 35.5$ ,  $n = 102$ ), both well above the clinical cut off of 47, suggesting on average youth were functioning in the clinically acute range when beginning their adventure therapy groups. To see changes in Y-OQ as reported by youth and parents, paired sample t-tests were run between intake Y-OQ scores (Total Score and subscales) and 90 days and intake and 180 days. For youth data, these analyses found no significant decreases between intake and 90 days ( $n = 59$ ) or intake and 180 days ( $n = 20$ ) for the Total Score or on any of the six subscales.

For the parents however, there were multiple significant improvements. Parents reported youth Total Y-OQ mean scores at intake at 73.3 ( $sd = 28.6$ ) which decreased to 62.8 ( $sd = 34.5$ ) at 90 days,  $t(34) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .023$ . In addition, parents reported mean level of Behavior Disorders for youth at intake at 19.0 ( $sd = 7.5$ ) which decreased to 16.9 ( $sd = 7.9$ ) at 90 days,  $t(34) = 2.10$ ,  $p =$

.049. Also, there were three significant improvement reported by parents from intake to 180 days into treatment. Parents reported youth 180 day Y-OQ mean scores at 53.7 ( $sd = 36.3$ ),  $t(11) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .012$ . In addition, parents reported mean level of Intrapersonal Distress for youth at intake at 26.1 ( $sd = 5.9$ ) which decreased to 17.4 ( $sd = 11.9$ ) at 180 days,  $t(11) = 2.82$ ,  $p = .017$ , as well as mean levels of Somatic Distress at intake at 7.7 ( $sd = 4.7$ ) which significantly decreased to 4.8 ( $sd = 4.2$ ) at 180 days,  $t(11) = 3.18$ ,  $p = .009$ .

### **Discussion, Limitations and Implications**

This study builds upon previous research on the use of adventure therapy in community-based settings (Tucker, Paul, Hobson, Karoff, & Gass, 2016; VanKanegan et al., 2018) including the use of the Y-OQ as a measure to look at clinical change across time. Youth participants reported no significant improvements in their self-reports at either 90 or 180 days and in fact, they reported themselves to still be functioning within an acute range above the clinical cut off of 47 measure. Youth functioning however, was reported differently by their parents. Parents reported both at 90 and 180 days statistically significant improvements in functioning as shown by significant decreased in the Y-OQ total score. In fact, at 180 days parent report almost a 20-point improvement for their youth participating in the adventure therapy program. In addition, there were several subscale changes in Behavior Disorders, Somatic Issues and Intrapersonal Distress, suggesting that according to parents, their youth were having less issues with their behaviors, less physical complaints and less issues with anxiety, depression and internal issues, as measured by the Intrapersonal Distress subscale. It is unclear why there are such large differences between parent and youth perceptions of functioning; however, previous research adventure interventions has shown parent and youth perceptions to be quite different, with parents usually reported youth more acute at intake than their children and then less acute than their children report at follow up, similar to this study (Tucker et al., 2016). Future research is clearly to unpack this phenomenon.

There are several limitations however to this study. First of all, this study did not use a comparison group like previous research (Tucker et al., 2013), so it is unclear if changes are due to the intervention or to other factors that may threaten the internal validity of the study. Second, the attrition rate for follow up data is troubling. For youth data, there was 50% attrition at 90 days and 73% attrition at 180 days. For parent data there was 66% attrition at 90 days and 88% attrition at 180 days. With so much missing data, it is hard to say with any confidence that these changes would be seen across all the youth.

Despite these limitations, this study was a pilot project of a new intervention model which aims to implement adventure therapy groups at community-based programs across the state of Ohio. Setting up such a widespread initiative is challenging both in the level of training and support needed to help clinicians not only effectively implement adventure therapy groups but also provide clear direction in how to collect data on a consistent and timely manner. Moving forward into the last 9 months of data collection, this study has integrated into the model, a local research director who will be able to look at collected data once submitted to ensure accuracy and completion of the measures, as well as provide an ongoing level of personal support for the research side of the project. We believe this will increase both the quality and the quantity of the data moving forward to address some of the current limitations with this study.

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## **EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF AUTONOMOUS STUDENT EXPERIENCES ON POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

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The Autonomous Student Experiences (ASE), has long been an important element and memorable experience in outdoor education program design (Gassner & Russell, 2008; Sibthorp, Paisley, Gookin, & Furman, 2008). Defined as an experience where “participants have a greater measure of choice and control over the planning, execution, and outcomes of their learning” (Daniel, Bobilya, Kalisch, & McAvoy, 2014, p. 4), in many outdoor education institutions, the ASE is carried out as a final expedition where a group of students travel alone without their instructors’ presence (Bobilya, Kalisch, & Daniel, 2014). As the benefits of ASE have not been researched in depth, scholars and practitioners have called for further investigation on ASE impacts on youth developmental outcomes (Daniel et al., 2014; Sibthorp et al., 2008). This study, which sets out to explore the effect of the ASE on promoting positive youth development (PYD) outcomes in outdoor education programming, measures participants’ PYD levels in relation to their ASE at three times throughout their long-term expedition of 22-33 days: the first day, right before the ASE near the end of their experience, and right after finishing the ASE. Also measured in this study were the differences for three instructor supervision positions in relation to student participant PYD levels, as well as the effects of gender, prior experience, and roles participants played. Answers to the three research questions may shed light on the underlying mechanisms for linking ASE with youth developmental outcomes for lengthy expeditions: (a) What is the effect of the ASE course component on PYD?; (b) What is the effect of certain participant antecedents of ASE (i.e. gender, roles played by participants, and instructor’s position) on PYD?; and (c) What are the underlying mechanisms of ASE and PYD?

### **Methods**

#### **Selected Outdoor Programs and Participants**

Ten outdoor courses offered by Outward Bound School are used for the study. The ASE component took place at the end of the course, the “Final Expedition,” where students travel as a group with different levels of instructor supervision (e.g. shadow or travel with). Subjects include 53 males and 19 females ranging in age from 16 to 20 years old.

#### **Instrument and Data Collection Procedure**

The study uses a mixed-method research design based on Lerner and his colleagues’ (2005) Positive Youth Development-Short Form (PYD-SF) Instrument. The PYD-SF has 34 items that conceptualize youth developmental outcomes as “Five C’s” (e.g. competence, character, confidence, connection, and caring). The PYD-SF is administered at the designated three times throughout the outdoor course; the first day (T<sub>1</sub>), right before the ASE (T<sub>2</sub>), and immediately after finishing the ASE (T<sub>3</sub>), followed by a semi-structured interview. During the interview, adolescents are asked to reflect on various aspects of their individual experiences during ASE, which further aids our understanding of how ASE works as a critical element in facilitating positive youth developmental outcomes. All interviews are recorded and transcribed to verbatim transcription, then imported to the analysis software program, Dedoose, for further coding and categorization of themes.

### **Results**

### Effect of ASE on PYD levels

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA shows students' PYD levels were significantly different at the three time points, with a moderate effect size ( $F(2.685, 41.559) = 4.587, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .061$ ) (Table 1). Post-hoc analysis with a Bonferroni adjustment reveals students' PYD levels significantly increased from T<sub>1</sub> ( $M = 8.73, SD = 1.34$ ) to T<sub>3</sub> ( $M = 8.99, SD = 1.40$ ), T<sub>2</sub> ( $M = 8.79, SD = 1.50$ ) to T<sub>3</sub> ( $M = 8.99, SD = 1.40$ ), but not from T<sub>1</sub> to T<sub>2</sub>. This result indicates that student gains in PYD levels reached statistical significance during the later ASE period.

Table 1. Summary of one-way repeated ANOVA measures of PYD levels

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between groups	2.685	1.807	1.486	4.587	.015*
Within groups					
Between Subjects	383.644	71	5.403		
Error	41.559	128.29	.324		
		8			
Total	427.888	201.10			
		5			

### Effects of Participants' Antecedents on PYD levels

Results of the two-way mixed ANOVA show a significant difference in mean PYD levels between three *instructor supervision positions*, that of shadow within sight or sound, shadow within sight and sound, and travel with group ( $F(2,65) = 3.331, p = .042$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .093$ ) (Table 2). The results of post-hoc analysis with a Bonferroni adjustment indicate that for groups whose instructors *shadowed within sight and sound* during ASE, participant PYD levels were significantly higher than groups whose instructors *shadowed within sight or sound*. Analysis of participants' antecedents of *gender, prior experience of being away from home, prior outdoor program participation, and roles played during the Final Expedition* (leader versus follower) reveal no significant differences in mean PYD levels (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of two-way mixed ANOVA measures of PYD levels

Factors	Groups (Sample Sizes)	Time 1 Mean SD	Time 2 Mean SD	Time 3 Mean SD	Main effect of Group (F, df, p)	Main effect of Time (F, df, p)
a. Instructor Supervisory Position	Shadow within sight and sound (n = 19)	9.0 1.0 8	9.2 1.3 4	9.5 1.2 3	3.331, 2, .042*	5.383, 1.756, .008*
	Shadow within sight or sound (n = 21)	8.2 1.4 0	8.1 1.5 9	8.3 1.5 7		
	Travel with the group (n = 28)	8.9 1.3 5	8.8 1.5 3	9.1 1.2 2		
b. Gender	Female (n = 23)	8.8 1.3 9	8.9 1.5 4	9.3 1.3 0	.772, 1, .383	5.396, 1.794, .007*

	Male ( $n = 49$ )	8.6 6	1.3 3	8.7 2	1.5 1	8.8 5	1.4 0		
c. Prior Away from home experience	Yes ( $n = 58$ )	8.7 8	1.3 7	8.8 0	1.5 5	9.0 1	1.4 4	.112, 1, .739	3.618, 1.811, .034*
	No ( $n = 14$ )	8.5 3	1.2 1	8.7 6	1.2 9	8.9 1	1.2 8		
d. Prior Outdoor Program experience	Yes ( $n = 19$ )	9.1 6	1.5 6	9.0 9	1.8 1	9.3 0	1.5 3	1.677, 1, .200	2.864, 1.812, .066
	No ( $n = 53$ )	8.5 8	1.2 3	8.6 9	1.3 7	8.8 9	1.3 5		
e. Role in Final Expedition	Follower ( $n = 16$ )	8.8 2	0.9 8	9.0 6	1.2 8	9.4 1	1.1 1	.737, 1, .393	6.431, 1.811, .003*
	Leader ( $n = 56$ )	8.7 1	1.4 3	8.7 2	1.5 5	8.8 8	1.4 6		

### Mechanisms Underlying ASE and PYD

In conceptualizing the student participants' qualitative data factors of competence, confidence, caring, connection, and character (Lerner et al., 2005) in relation to the Final Expedition as revealed in the semi-structured interviews, results show their senses of *competence* and *confidence* were developed through heightened awareness of themselves, such as being conscious of their own potential and outdoor skill sets and being self-assured in their ability to perform specific tasks:

*I feel like it was a nice way to prove to myself that yes, everything that I learned in terms of leadership, in terms of confidence, in terms of um, for like cooking, putting up tarps, like packing bags, everything all put together like, "Yes, we can go on an expedition or I can go on this expedition by myself," um, which is huge and it's also very nice a recap the whole Outward Bound experience (Clark).*

Their senses of *caring* and *connection* were found to be developed through heightened awareness of others, such as taking care of one another and positive bonding between group members when not in the presence of instructors:

*The first day of the Final one of us got really sick. And between looking out for her, making sure she was healthy as possible that we weren't over working her. By Final, we were each other's family at that point. And we had that argument, but overall, we had to finish this goal, and...we finished stronger than we started from my opinion (Michael).*

### Discussion

The results confirm students' PYD levels significantly increased during the ASE in the last two phases measured ( $T_2$  to  $T_3$ ). Due to the lack of significance in the change result between  $T_1$  to  $T_2$ , this suggests ASEs play a crucial role in boosting youth developmental outcomes during long-term outdoor programs and afford opportunities for "learning reinforcement" of developmental outcomes that evolve over the course as measured in this study. This finding supports Sibthorp et al.'s (2008) proposal that creating meaningful involvement opportunities and fostering

participants' perceptions of taking ownership and responsibility in outdoor adventure education programs can enhance their positive youth development.

Another significant finding of this study is that different instructor supervision positions influence participants' PYD levels. Groups who experienced more supervision (shadowed within sight and sound) had higher PYD levels than groups who experienced less supervision (shadowed within sight or sound). This finding supports Bobilya et al.'s study (2014) that for many participants, "shadowed within sight and sound" is the type of supervision that is more effective in enhancing personal and/or group growth. Notably, while participants valued the Final Expedition in developing their sense of confidence and autonomy, they also valued instructors' close supervision and physical presence when being provided with opportunities to practice decision-making and being responsible for their own personal needs.

Furthermore, in analyzing qualitative data on whether ASE can be an effective tool for promoting PYD, heightened awareness of self and others due to the shift of responsibility (from instructor dependence to group reliance) may be a key component of personal and group growth. This result confirms heightened personal awareness indeed is central to facilitating personal growth in wilderness experiences (Hendee & Brown, 1987) as well as relationships with others and team-work played key roles during the Final Expedition in Outward Bound experiences (Goldenberg, McAvoy, and Klenosky, 2005).

Note that the power to interpret results or to establish causation in this study may be limited due to lack of a control group. Future research should consider adding a control group for comparison purposes, which may help us identify whether the increased PYD was a result of ASE. This study should also be replicated by other outdoor institutions to see if the results are generalizable to other programs.

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## **GENDER AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF “GOOD OUTDOOR LEADERS”**

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Women’s experiences in the outdoor sector have been the subject of a fair number of studies in the English-speaking world. One of the general findings reported in the literature is that outdoor pursuits and related skill sets have been culturally ascribed to males (Humberstone, 2000). Some of the research in this area has brought to light the adverse effects that this perception has had on: the learning of technical skills by female trainees (Dingle & Kiewa, 2006; Warren & Loeffler, 2006); women’s participation in outdoor adventure activities; self-assessments of women’s outdoor-related experiences; and women’s self-identification with adventure activities (Little & Wilson, 2005). Media portrayals of outdoor pursuits reinforce this view by presenting men involved in technical and risk-laden activities while depicting women undertaking passive, short-term tasks, often under male supervision (Little & Wilson, 2005). Other studies have revealed the high esteem in which technical and physical skills are held compare to the relatively low value placed on emotional and interpersonal skills in outdoor leadership programs (Lugg, 2003; Mitten, Warren, Lotz & d’Amore, 2012; Spencer, 2004). In these training programs, women are expected to make greater use than men of their emotional and interpersonal skills (Mitten & *al.*, 2012). Social skills are viewed as a component of emotional intelligence and, therefore, key to effective leadership (Hayashi & Ewert, 2013; Goleman, 1998). Consequently, the relatively low value placed on social skills in outdoor training programs may hinder outdoor-education students from developing essential leadership skills. This bias is likely to have significant impacts on the outcomes of outdoor activities. In the light of this, more attention should be placed in gender-based social representations associated with outdoor activities, with a focus on both male and female trainees in this field.

### **Research Objective**

This presentation, which is part of a broader study on outdoor social dynamics, is designed to identify social representations of “good outdoor leaders” in a cohort of students enrolled in an outdoor leadership undergraduate program in Quebec, Canada. More specifically, it examines: (1) the defining characteristics of “good outdoor leaders” that were valued by students; (2) the gender-based differences among these characteristics; and (3) the potential influence of gendered dimensions at play in social representations of “good outdoor leaders” on the social dynamics observed in the course of an educational excursion.

### **Context**

The research was conducted at the end of a six-semester university program designed to provide students with competencies required of outdoor professionals. Over the course of the first three semesters, an experiential approach is used to enable students to acquire outdoor technical skills. Subsequently, courses combining lectures with an experiential component allow students to acquire knowledge and skills in project management, experiential education, adventure-based therapy and leadership. Leadership development is the training program’s core objective: four theoretical and practical semester-long courses are specifically dedicated to leadership development. The concepts taught in the classroom are applied in a real-world setting during wilderness expeditions.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Our study is informed by the theory of social representations developed by Jodelet (1989). In our context, the relevance of the social representations theory lies in the insights it provides on social interactions (Jodelet, 1989) and practices occurring during an educational expedition. Jodelet (2003) defines social representation as a socially constructed and shared form of knowledge with a practical objective that contributes to defining a common sense of reality within a social group. The social representations of a salient “object” in a given situation would operate as an interpretation system that directs and organizes social conduct and communications (Jodelet, 1989). Our hypothesis is that the "object", here "good outdoor leader", is salient during an educational expedition whose objective is to put into practice skills and knowledge of the outdoor leadership program. This useful theory can cast light on the social interactions and practices that took place in the course of an expedition.

### **Methodology**

An ethnographic case study that included participant observation and semi-directed interviews was carried out among a group (n=26) of Quebec university students enrolled in an outdoor leadership program. The observation was conducted by the principal investigator during a 28-day educational canoeing expedition in Northern Quebec. Interviews were held with a sampling of students (seven females and nine males) two months following the expedition. Students were selected in such a manner as to ensure broad profile diversity and group representation (Miles & Huberman, 2003). The observation data were used to create individual participant profiles. In turn, these profiles were assessed in order to select interview candidates and generate personalized interview questions. Observation and interview data were submitted to a content analysis process using open, axial, and selective coding. Data were segmented into units of meaning (codes and categories) relevant to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). The use of several sources of information, including a field log, daily debriefing recordings, excursion photos and videos, and interview transcripts, enabled data triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 2003). Points of agreement and divergence among the data sources were analyzed. In addition, participants were asked to validate a number of interpretations during the interviews or by e-mail in order to ensure internal validity.

### **Results**

The reported results focus on the dominant traits associated with social representations of a “good outdoor leader.” Interpersonal abilities, such as relational ease, attentive listening, and open-mindedness, are viewed by participants both as essential skills and defining traits of “good outdoor leaders.” Communication and teaching skills along with a positive attitude are also highly prized. As for technical skills, they are viewed as essential but also easier to acquire and not particularly defining of “good outdoor leaders.” The participants have clearly asserted that a lack of interpersonal skills is a shortcoming for outdoor leaders; moreover, they often describe this failing as a male characteristic. For instance, when the participants were asked to identify a “model outdoor leader” from among the group, 83% of them selected women. One particular woman was selected by ten of fourteen participants (excluding the woman in question). Field observations also enabled us to note that individuals identified as model leaders put into practice the skills cited by their fellow excursion members. In fact, the participants who were identified as “model outdoor leaders” interfaced actively with various group members and were much sought-after for their guidance, including moral support, decision-making, logistics, and white-water expertise, during

the expedition. In addition, men – like women – seemed to prize interpersonal skills more highly and they recognized women’s skills.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The outdoor-leadership traits prized by the participants, particularly interpersonal skills, suggest a departure from earlier studies in the literature where these skills were relatively undervalued in comparison with technical and physical skills (Mitten & *al.*, 2012; Lugg, 2003; Spencer, 2004). In accordance with Evans & Anderson (2018), the present study casts light on the social representations of men exposed to gender-diverse outdoor experiences. In light of this finding, it would be worthwhile to carry out a study with a larger sample in an effort to determine if, and to what extent, the present study’s results may be generalized or to determine if this is an isolated case.

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## **PLANTING SEEDS FOR DISCUSSIONS OF RACE AND CULTURE: THE POTENTIAL OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

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In 2012, faculty in the School of Education initiated a new experiential education (EE) component within a master's degree program for practicing teachers. As part of a course on supporting teacher learning about new pedagogical approaches, students spend a week on Outward Bound (OB) or work at a local school district's environmental education farm (hub) to be immersed in EE. Our prior research explored the impact of these weeklong outdoor experiential residencies on participants' teaching practices in and beyond the course (see Glazier & Bean, 2017). Like other scholars in EE (e.g. Rose & Paisley, 2012; Warren & Loeffler, 2000; Warren, Roberts, Breunig & Alvarez, 2014), I wondered how these experiential opportunities might open spaces for exploration of—and grappling with—social justice issues in particular. This descriptive study begins to examine the potential EE holds for engaging teachers in the difficult discourse of race.

### **Literature Review: The Silence of Race in Teacher Education**

The teaching population in the US remains majority white, female, and middle class. In contrast, the US PK-12 population is majority students of color (NCES, 2013). It's imperative that Schools of Education prepare teachers to teach in culturally responsive ways to meet the needs of all students. An initial step to this end is to engage teachers in critical self-reflection around issues of culture, race and privilege (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Sleeter et al., 2014). Attempts within teacher education to engage teachers in discussions of race, hegemony and whiteness often fail, though, because teachers don't engage these topics beyond the surface level (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Cook-Sather & Youens, 2007; Mazzei, 2007). However, it is precisely through critical engagement of these topics that teachers may ultimately be able to move past colorblind (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and colormute (Pollock, 2004) perspectives that tend to dominate schools and classrooms, most often to the detriment of students of color (Picower, 2009; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). The question remains how to best cultivate a critical consciousness in our pre-service and in-service teachers to facilitate their learning to teach in culturally responsive ways.

### **Methods**

Two years ago, I sought to examine the question: In what ways does EE in teacher education foster critical discussion of race and culture? Participants were students in the EE infused Master's degree program for practicing teachers. In the two years of this study, the 43 teachers in the program—all participants in the experiential residency--were 50% white, 30% African American, 15% Latina and 5% Asian American. All but three were female. All students took the summer course that included the weeklong experiential residency. At OB, among other things, students were engaged in building campsite, hiking, rock climbing, and navigating a high ropes course. At the hub, students built trails, gates and bridges on site, created signage, and developed curriculum for visiting teachers to use. Following the experiential residency week, the students returned to the classroom at the university for follow-up discussions, readings and activities related to topics of progressive and experiential education, including service learning pedagogy, critical pedagogy and place-community based pedagogy.

Data collected for this descriptive study included a) student developed course artifacts, b) research assistant observation field notes of residency site work, c) instructor field site journal, d)

research assistant field notes of university classroom discussions and e) instructor written course reflections. Thematic analysis of the residency-based data (a, b, & c) surfaced instances of “company keeping” as described below. Line-by-line discourse analysis of fieldnotes of classroom discussions (d) and instructor written reflections (e) revealed discussions of race that moved beyond the silences typically observed in teacher education (Glazier, 2003).

## Findings

### Developing Company

Data analysis revealed the ways the experiences at both residency sites enabled participants to experience “company keeping”:

*Company keeping asks individuals to make, perhaps ultimately and eventually, a commitment to each other and to the task at hand ... Company occurs through opportunities that first bring participants in contact with one another and then ask them to engage with one another for extended periods of time, in activities in which learning about the other and about the self is encouraged and pursued through meaningful and shared experiences (Glazier, 2000).*

Company moves beyond working side-by-side with others to complete a task. Instead, it is an authentic, joint sharing wherein each collaborator recognizes the unique strengths of his/her fellow collaborators. A partnership forms, reflecting a relationship that moves beyond the task itself and into a commitment to each other. This sense of company was evident across the data collected at both field sites through participants’ regular use of discourse that highlighted collaboration and partnership. One African American hub participant shared: “We were forced to rely on each other and to work with individuals we did not know yet. We had to collaborate with each other to form partnerships.” Also evident across the data was participants’ consistent use of terms “we” and “us” when describing the residencies. One Latina OB participant shared: “It took me a few days to open up my walls and let my crew in. We started our journey as strangers and every day our collective experiences and our reflection about them made us feel closer. We opened ourselves, exposed our weakness and let our guard down.” We would hope and expect these outcomes from a meaningful, educative (Dewey, 1938) experiential opportunity. However, what struck me as most critical given literature on silence in teacher education around topics of race and culture was what happened after we returned to our university classroom post residencies.

### Extended Company

The shared experiences at the residency sites influenced a company keeping that moved beyond the experiences themselves. The company keeping on site enabled further risk-taking off site. As one African American participant reflected post residency, “We are now closer and we can have open dialogue with each other comfortably.” A White teacher shared, “After our last day [at the farm], my classmates and I all went to lunch and shared pictures of our pets and kids..., tasted each other’s food, and laughed about our long, hard week.” A Latina teacher, reflected, “Growing up as a second language learner, I’m always self-conscious of my accent and being understood, which is one the reasons I’m not very outspoken in large groups of people ... This is something I don’t like to share with many people but felt a little relieved I could share with the group in our final day at the Hub farm.” This move to a certain intimacy with each other was a critical outcome of the EE work at OB and the Hub. So too were the sorts of conversations that occurred back in the classroom as a result.

### Company in the Classroom

Away from the heat and the physical work of the mountains and farm, conversations around race took a decidedly critical and intimate turn, evidenced not only by topic but also by participation. For example, as we engaged in discussion of critical pedagogy, the students grappled directly with the concept of white privilege (in year one) and immigration (in year two) as they considered what it meant to bring current events into their classrooms. The Black Lives Matter movement emerged in full force in summer one. In our classroom, two African American students shared the difficult conversations they were having with their teen sons about how to act in front of police. The class discussion became a space for grappling with privilege and racialized social structures. Rather than shy away from the topic of race, the students engaged it, considering their shared responsibility as teachers to take on injustices. In year two, as the debate about immigration heated up nationally, one student shared her experience with her peers of crossing the border into the United States when she was a young girl. This was the first time she had ever shared this story—and its inherent risk was palpable given the current context. The class again became a space for deep discussion of race and interrogation of privilege as students then together considered the echoes her story might have for their own students.

### Significance/Conclusion

Well-constructed EE can lead to company keeping in the moment and then beyond the experience itself. The shared enterprise at OB and the hub essentially established the groundwork upon which difficult discourses about race and culture could happen. The shared struggles and goals at both sites enabled participants to come to rely on one another in significant ways. This sense of trust and looking out for one another carried into the classroom site, allowing the same to occur when difficult discourses of race and culture came to the fore. Thus, EE may be the way in to these silenced dialogues so oft documented in more traditional practices of teacher education. That is not to say that EE can stand alone, however. It's imperative that we mine these experiences beyond the experience itself. When participants return home from the experiential field, rich opportunities exist for continued, challenging and necessary conversation around and into social justice.

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## LEARNING HAPPENS EVERYWHERE: AN EMERGENT NARRATIVE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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*Whether it is through co-op, co-curricular experiences or the experiential liberal arts, experiential learning in higher education aims to level the walls between the classroom and the rest of life. Learning happens everywhere, so educators must help students grow from their experiences wherever they occur. To that end, we need to consider how students can turn implicit, even unconscious learning opportunities into explicit learning outcomes.*

*-Joseph E. Aoun, Robot-Proof*

The threat of automation and the promise of a global economy demand that university graduates have 21st century skills, such as interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial thinking (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). Recent studies, however, provide conflicting evidence on whether a lack of these skills results in lower employment rates for graduating students (Hora 2018; Koc, 2018; Weaver 2017). Nonetheless, the “skills gap” narrative, among others, puts pressure on higher education institutions to update, or even revolutionize, their pedagogies and curricula (Aoun, 2018; Rainie & Anderson, 2017).

One known model for helping students develop 21st century skills is experiential education, which has a compounding effect: learners gain experience in a workplace or community and then have the opportunity to reflectively link this experience with their coursework and the other way around (Keeton & Tate, 1978; Schenk & Cruickshank, 2015). However, experiential education practices have been criticized for letting workplace demands drive academic curricula and for overlooking the basics of the theory: that learning can happen in all experiences (Seaman, Brown & Quay, 2017; Beard 2010; Chapman, McPhee & Proudman, 1995).

### **Theoretical Framework and Research Questions**

This study explores how students experience and interpret experiential learning. Student narratives provide a way of challenging and validating the academic and industry narratives that dominate experiential education discourses. A set of student narratives, each loaded with unique context and rich descriptions, can collectively reveal patterns in the structures and processes of a learning community (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012). In this paper, we share an account of experiential learning as told by Michael, a pseudonymized first-year college student. In his story, we find a quiet moment which into a learning experience through and upon reflection. Alone, Michael’s story holds no exceptional significance. However, in the context of discussions about the value of experiential education, Michael’s story suggests that a more general perspective on experiential learning can be beneficial to all constituencies affecting, participating in, and being affected by higher education. To this end we ask, *What are the students’ narratives and counter-narratives of experiential learning paradigm? How do these narratives shape and support students’ holistic growth at the post-secondary level?*

## Methods

### Study Site

Northeastern University (NU) was founded in 1898 out of the Huntington Avenue YMCA as an evening commuter school for law and engineering students. In just the past two decades, it has grown into a top-tier research university, from #162 to #40, and has become well-known for its emphasis on experiential education, particularly the cooperative education (co-op) program (US News and World Report, 2018). NU defines experiential learning as the integration of the classroom with professional work (e.g., co-op), research, service-learning, and global experiences (<https://www.northeastern.edu/experiential-learning/>). One of the ways in which NU seeks to support students in defining their own learning and revealing meaning from every experience is the Self-Authored Integrated Learning (SAIL) initiative (<https://sail.northeastern.edu/>; Talgar et al., 2017). The SAIL initiative aims to have learners (1) recognize the potential for learning in every experience; (2) intentionally develop a holistic set of life skills supporting professional and personal success; (3) integrate learning across contexts; and (4) become self-directed learners.

### Study Population

One of the first populations introduced to SAIL were the incoming students joining the Northeastern Explore Program (<https://undergraduate.northeastern.edu/explore/>), which provides opportunities for undeclared or undecided first- and second-year students to explore majors and careers through advising and exploratory events. The program supports approximately 10% of the 2,800 entering first-year NU students. Students who start in the Explore Program are able to declare any of NU's 175 majors and combined major programs across all 7 undergraduate colleges. Because of their initial exposure to the SAIL framework, current first-year Explore Program students were recruited to participate in the study and 11 students were selected using purposive selection (Schutt, 2004).

### Data Sources

Open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol, which was adapted from McAdams' Life Story interview (McAdams & Manczak, 2015), was used to perform one- to three-hour interviews about students' learning journeys. Through this protocol students constructed broad chapters in their learning journey and provided thick descriptions of specific learning moments. Each participant was interviewed twice, before and after initial exposure to SAIL; the latter interview taking place at the end or post- students' first year at NU.

### Narrative Analysis

Data analysis was performed using grounded theory approach which allows for emergence of new constructs and theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Our 6-member research team repeatedly read, memo'ed, and discussed the content and context of the interviews. Qualitative content analysis methods were also used to further hone the emerging constructs and themes (Glaser & Laudel, 2013).

### Results and Discussion: Michael's Narrative

What follows is an analysis of a small portion of Michael's learning journey interview. At the time of the interview, Michael had recently declared a major in the College of Engineering. After discussing this declaration as a turning moment in his learning journey, Michael proceeds to share a seemingly unrelated to NU episode, which had taken place a few days prior to the

interview, while Michael visited his grandmother in the Caribbean. Michael recalls staying in his late grandfather's room (without wi-fi!), which, in the moment, turns into a cradle for reflection. Despite having few experiences with his grandfather, the artifacts surrounding him highlight unique memories and allow Michael to "just think." Looking at the bookshelf, he imagines that his grandfather, a school principal, would be proud of his decision to study engineering. Michael muses about how "other people's lives are really connected... and everything we have and do today comes from so much before us, and will affect so much after us." The desk across the room reminds Michael that his grandfather enjoyed writing just as much as he does. Michael imagines that because of all of their mutual interests, if his grandfather were still alive, they would get along now better than ever. Although learning directly from his grandfather isn't an option anymore, Michael continues to connect with him through memories and conversation with family members.

Within the context of the interview, Michael categorizes this moment in his grandfather's room as *mystical*. Seated in the interview, he revisits the bedroom again, recalling memories that came to him while in that room and new ones that occur to him just then. Since much of this learning moment is about a process rather than action, Michael struggles to remember exactly when it happened – was it at night, in the morning, or in the afternoon? At times during the description, Michael slips into the present tense. For instance, without any bedroom artifact to contextualize the memory, Michael talks about all the times his grandfather visited the United States. In the interview transcript, it is difficult to discern whether these memories came from the bedroom or if they are coming to Michael now to provide the interviewer with additional context. While describing the mystical moment, he returns to themes he had articulated earlier in the interview, such as how he is a social learner who learns from and through others. Placed beside other formal learning moments, such as declaring his major, this mystical moment is now interpreted as a culmination of relationships and decisions. In this way, by re-tracing the moment of contemplation, Michael expands his reflections on his learning and the ways in which he learns.

Michael did not seek out this mystical learning experience, nor did he anticipate it. Instead, as is the case for learning of many other students in this study, particularly in non-traditional environments, it simply happened. Only later, upon reflection, did he label this memory as a learning moment. During both the episode and the interview, the resultant learning was not pre-defined by a curriculum or an instructor; rather Michael uses the artifacts of the room and the interview prompts as a scaffolding to make meaning from his experience. The reflection and the learning through and from reflection are authentic to the extent that Michael chooses the media of exploration, sets his own direction, and shares his findings. In this way, Michael's memory, which is seemingly unrelated to NU's experiential education model, serves as an opportunity for a deep and meaningful experiential learning.

### **Conclusion**

Though only at the end of his first year at NU and without much in a way of traditional experiential education (e.g., no co-op experience), Michael is still able to informally enact experiential learning. Starting with a moment entirely disconnected from co-op, service-learning or research – the traditional ways in which experiential learning is operationalized - he draws insights about himself as a learner, family member, and engineer. His focus and reflections on his learning outside a traditional classroom suggest future exploration of learning moments as powerful counter-narratives to the notion that experiential learning must be scaffolded or

structured. For Michael and other learners, holistic initiatives like SAIL or participation in the Learning Journeys interview complement more traditional discourses on experiential education and raise questions for future studies about students' self-authorship and narration of experiential learning as critical to their holistic development.

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## **UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE AND IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATIVE REFLECTIONS**

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This research explores the ways students connect and integrate skills, realizations, and knowledge gained across multiple different types of experiential learning (EL) activities. Findings are based on an Experiential Learning Lab, a workshop in which 35 students developed integrative and holistic narratives of their EL experiences. Researchers implemented different reflection activities in the EL Lab that included writing, concept mapping, oral presentation, group dialogue, and digital storytelling, and discovered effective strategies for helping students make meaning of their EL journeys. The research also explores common themes in students' reflections and the ways they integrate EL experiences with other personal, academic, and professional experiences and goals. EL Lab participants reported multiple benefits of drawing linkages across their different EL activities and presenting their stories in new ways to different audiences. The study also offers potential models for educators interested in applying an integrative approach to EL reflection.

### **Literature Review**

Reflection, an essential component of experiential learning (EL), enables the transformation of experience into knowledge (Kolb 1984) and allows students to connect their knowledge and experiences to real-world problems and solutions in the social world (Dewey 1933). Indeed, the National Society for Experiential Education includes reflection among its list of eight principles of good practice for all EL activities (NSEE 2013). While high-impact EL activities such as community-engaged learning, research, and internships have become increasingly prevalent and common elements of a quality college education (Kuh, G., O'Donnell, K., & Schneider, C. G. 2017), EL research has often focused on the effects of single experiences on student learning, rather than multiple experiences (Coker 2015, 2017). Few studies have analyzed how students connect and integrate lessons, skills, and knowledge gained across multiple different kinds of EL experiences. In their statement on integrative learning, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) notes, "as learning across boundaries becomes a signature characteristic of a 21<sup>st</sup> century liberal education...there is a growing national emphasis on fostering undergraduate students' integrative learning through multiple forms of engaged educational experiences..." (AACU 2018). Integrative learning is important for fostering students' abilities to synthesize information and develop transferable skills that can be applied to new contexts, such as work and careers after college. Yet, the Education Advisory Board (EAB) notes that graduates often struggle to "articulate the value of their curricular and co-curricular experiences" when explaining their college experience to employers. As a result, the EAB recommends that "integrated reflection and narration techniques" be embedded into EL experiences to help students develop the confidence to effectively communicate the value and impact of their college experiences (Koproske 2017). It is also important to note that the diverse ways students reflect on EL are not simply individual responses to experience; they ways they construct meanings around their experiences are historically and socially situated. This view emphasizes the "inherently socially negotiated character of meaning" (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.50) in which "learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally constructed world" (p.51). Different kinds of reflection activities can encourage students to explore their experiences in different ways, and when reflection takes place in group settings, new



meanings and realizations emerge as a result. Bell (1993) argued “in seeking to expand a theoretical analysis of experience as socially produced for our students, I think we must make spaces to invite and explore different representations of experience” (p.22). This research demonstrates how building communities of practice using an integrative approach to EL reflection can generate these rich spaces of exploration and learning.

### **Methods**

The research is based on a qualitative analysis of 35 students’ reflections produced in a monthly workshop entitled the EL Lab. Between July 2017 and April 2018, the Office of Experiential Learning (OEL) held nine EL Lab workshop sessions, each 3-4 hours long. Participation was voluntary (no academic credit) and each student participated in one EL Lab session. The labs were co-facilitated by the Director of EL and undergraduate student employees in the OEL, including the Research and Development Specialist, Peer Advisor, and Digital Media Producer. Students were recruited for the EL Lab through faculty, staff, and peer nominations. There were 18 males and 17 females; 23 participants were seniors, and the rest included five juniors, two sophomores, four freshmen and one graduate student. Students represented 38 different majors (including double majors); grade point average was not a prerequisite or variable in the research. There were two international students from Oman and China and the rest were domestic students. Collectively, these 35 students had participated in a total of 144 EL activities at the time of the workshop, ranging from community-engaged learning, education abroad, internships, student employment, research, co-ops, leadership activities, faith and campus ministry immersions, and more.

Prior to attending the EL Lab, students filled out a pre-survey intended to help researchers understand their familiarity and definitions of EL. Students rated how confident they felt in their ability to articulate a holistic and integrative story of their EL experiences to outside audiences, such as employers and grad school committees. The survey also asked students about their prior familiarity and disposition towards EL reflection. Surveys helped researchers understand what knowledge of EL students were bringing to the workshop. Participants filled out a post-EL Lab survey which helped researchers identify how reflection activities impacted their ability to integrate their EL experiences and confidently present their EL story to others. During the Lab, students brainstormed and drew out EL connections using notecards, whiteboards, and poster paper. They were then prompted to explore the connections among their EL experiences and asked to write “Integrated Stories of Realizations” (ISORs). Students presented and shared their ISORs with peers in an audio-recorded group conversation, then each individual student participated in a semi-structured, video-recorded interview with the Director of Experiential Learning. During the semi-structured interviews, students were asked to discuss the meaning and value of EL, the connections among EL experiences, the ways in which they felt they have been transformed through EL, and how they planned to apply what they learned through to future contexts. Using the Semi-structured interviews method, all students were asked the same reflection questions but interviewers could introduce new, additional questions depending on each student’s unique responses and narratives. This flexible and personalized approach also allowed researchers to draw comparisons among participants’ responses. Researchers then conducted an in-depth analysis of data generated from the lab including integrated stories of realization, and audio and video transcripts. They coded the data according to recurring keywords and themes and studied similarities and differences in the reflections.

### **Discussion**



Post EL-Lab surveys indicated that nearly all students felt an improvement in their ability to effectively communicate lessons learned from EL to different audiences as a result of the EL Lab. Researchers found that the EL Lab helped students think about their experiences collectively rather than individually. This allowed them to see overarching connections and figure out common interests and strengths developed during each experience. Students identified skills they had developed through different experiences and explained how these skills had grown over time, transferred, or were useful across multiple experiences. Students wrote about transferable skills they developed including teamwork, organization and planning, and communication abilities. When asked to consider connections and integrations, many students responded that their experiences had collectively taught them to be more humble and appreciative, and they expressed an awareness of their privilege and a desire to help others. Students also described connections and integrations among EL experiences by giving examples of how they had experienced personal growth and increased confidence over time. They felt their self-guided learning through EL empowered them to be change agents in the world. Some students struggled a bit more than others with this integrative approach to EL reflection; a few admitted feeling uncertain about what their experiences meant to them or how they interconnected. Most students shared that they had rarely reflected on the holistic lens of EL in the past, and they remarked that they were not often asked to reflect on their EL journey. Rather, they noted that their previous reflection activities were specific to a single experience, not how experiences fit into a bigger picture. Students felt enlightened when they took a step back to connect the skills they had built across past experiences and how they could apply those skills to future experiences. The depth of reflection also enabled students to think analytically about their experiences and how past experiences had impacted, driven, and refined their passions and future goals.

Students also commented on how different types of reflection activities in the lab were particularly beneficial. Some enjoyed handwriting details of their experience on notecards, others preferred the oral presentation in front of the camera, while others enjoyed typing out their Integrative Story of Realizations. It was evident students preferred different methods of storytelling or articulating their personal narratives. Researchers found that experimenting with different activities and allowing students to use different communicative methods and modes of expression, both individually and in groups, was most effective in helping students feel connected to the subject and more likely to engage in deeper reflection. Findings from this research demonstrate the benefits of engaging students in communities of practice that incorporate reflection and dialogue activities to develop integrative narratives based on past EL experiences. The EL Lab gave students an appreciation of themselves and their own experiences by introducing an expanded notion of EL, and it also gave them an appreciation of each other. Sharing stories and opening up about the personal meaning behind different experiences led to a sense of trust and rapport in the group. It was also essential to have student employees of the OEL design and facilitate the EL Lab based on their knowledge and experiences with EL, because it made the workshop more relatable to their peers. Ultimately, the ways we socially organize EL reflection activities can benefit students in many ways and lead to new realizations.

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## **IT'S MORE THAN JUST A WAVE: THE EXPERIENCES OF SERIOUS LEISURE SURFERS**

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Surfing is finding its way in a changing world. Technological advancements and developing economies have created a new landscape for people who wish to participate in this activity (Laderman, 2014; Westwick & Neushul, 2013). Environmental conditions continue to deteriorate in coastal areas across the globe, where demand for clean and surfable waves is outpacing supply (Buckley, 2002). Remote destinations offered by surf tourism operators are threatened by these same negative conditions, which are being augmented by unsustainable business practices (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013).

One possible solution to these issues is the development of artificial waves in commercially operated surf parks. Many experts believe that wave parks represent an opportunity to relieve negative pressure on coastal environments and their surrounding communities (Ponting, 2017). There is a scarcity of research highlighting dimensions of the surfing experience that would be lost in an artificial environment. Understanding the psychological aspects of surfing would be particularly useful in this regard. A small number of studies have explored the psychology of elite-level surfers (Diehm & Armatas, 2004; Partington, et al., 2009; Stranger, 1999; Wiersma, 2014) and at-risk populations (Caddick, Smith, & Phoenix, 2015; Hignett, et al., 2017; Stuhl & Porter, 2015). Just one study was found that explored the psychological benefits of surfers not considered to be elite or at-risk (Levin & Taylor, 2011).

Psychological theories commonly used in adventure education provide possible frameworks for explaining how surfers benefit from ocean surfing experiences. Attention restoration theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and psycho-evolutionary theory (Ulrich, 1983) offer support for increased wellness through interaction with nature, while flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 2008) suggests that positive human development occurs when individuals' skills match challenges posed by their surrounding environment.

### **Methods**

The primary aim of this study was to understand how lifestyle surfers experience the world before, during and after surfing. Secondly, it aimed to identify relationships between emergent dimensions of these experiences. It was anticipated that findings from this study might inform current adventure education research and shed light on possible implications of surf park development.

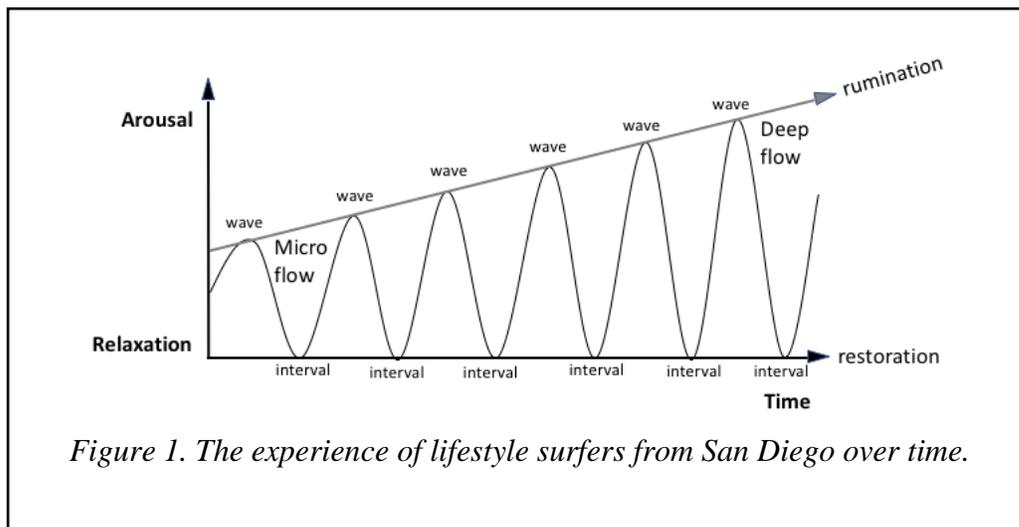
Thirteen individuals were involved in this descriptive study, which was intended to accurately depict their experiences. Each was considered a "lifestyle surfer" according to interpretation of Stebbins' (2007) concept of serious leisure. An adapted version of Moustaka's (1994) phenomenological design was used as a means of capturing the essence of their experiences before, during and after surfing. This involved snowball sampling and semi-structured interviews in an effort to find common meaning throughout their experiences as surfers. Participant interviews accounted for 281 pages of transcription data. In total, 2,669 descriptive words or statements were coded into one of 36 sub-themes. Sub-themes were then combined to form 11 primary themes, which were finally grouped into three phases of the surfing experience: (a) before and after surfing, (b) riding waves, and (c) wave intervals.

## Results

Participant voices, represented in the analyzed data, led to four primary findings concerning the experiences of lifestyle surfers from San Diego. First, time between waves and actively riding waves are categorically different experiences, which share a common attribute of unplugging from life's everyday challenges. Second, surfing is likely to enhance short-term wellness for those who participate in the activity regularly. Third, optimal wave experiences provide vivid and enduring memories that offer sustaining motivation to surf again in the future. Fourth, surfing experiences may be affected by an individual's skill level and demographic representation.

## Discussion

Findings from this study support past restoration and flow research (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 2008; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1983). Restorative aspects of the surfing experience were connected to time spent in the ocean during wave intervals, when participants were not actively surfing. Flow experiences were reported during phases of the surfing experience when participants were actively surfing waves. Descriptions from more skilled participants reflected deeper flow experiences and rumination following surf sessions.



The benefits of surfing thus appear to derive from separate but related contexts. Whereas most restorative benefits are tied to the natural elements of the ocean, many of the possible growth and human development benefits are tied to the act of wave riding itself. The implications of this study highlight the potential for wave parks, with the understanding that some restorative benefits might not be transferable from the ocean to an artificial environment. Additional research has been recommended in this area to inform a sustainable surfing future.

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## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

### DEVELOPING AN INTERNAL COMPASS: INVESTIGATING THE LINKS BETWEEN OUTWARD BOUND AND PUBLIC SERVICE

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Since the early 2000s, over 180 undergraduate students from our institution have been awarded scholarships to participate on 28-day outdoor education courses through the North Carolina Outward Bound School (NCOBS). Eligibility to apply for a scholarship is related to the students' engagement in a service-related major (i.e., education) or extracurricular activity (i.e., public service fellowship or student leadership). Undergraduate students at our institution consistently describe their NCOBS experiences as high-impact and transformational, but the nature of that transformation and its connection to student service engagement and civic outcomes has been difficult to measure. This research presents findings from a study investigating the impact of participation in an NCOBS course on undergraduates' understanding of and experiences with public service.

#### Review of the Literature

Service has been a historic emphasis of the Outward Bound movement since its founding (MacArthur, 1982; James, 1980). A review of the literature takes us back to Kurt Hahn's rescues on the open seas as an essential experience of the first Outward Bound School. Outward Bound has been called the "moving spirit" of experiential education (James, 1980, p. 105). Its roots were firmly planted when Kurt Hahn, in response to sailors dying in lifeboats during World War II, designed preparation for authentic rescues on the open seas as an essential experience for students of the first Outward Bound School. Hahn was guided by a philosophy of experiential education that clearly saw the pedagogical value of the experience required to prepare for and carry out rescue missions. Underlying these experiences were the transfer of learning to other situations. Bobilya, A. J., Kalisch, K., Daniel, B, Coulson, E.R. (2015) have documented a positive transfer of learning in individuals' transfer of experiences from a NCOBS course in the areas of: self-confidence, interpersonal relationships, and mental strength. James (1980) examines the relationship between Outward Bound and service through a historical lens and prompts the reader to consider "taking risks" as we consider the nuances of Outward Bound and public service. His work posits that we can examine service and the Outward Bound experience through the lens of traditionalist ethic or a pluralist ethic.

#### Methods

This study explored the nature of the impact a NCOBS course had on participants' beliefs and practices of public service. The research question guiding this qualitative study is: *What is the impact of a NCOBS course on students' understanding of and experience with public service?*

Participants in the study are current or former undergraduate students from our institution who earned a public service scholarship to participate on a 28-day NCOBS course between the summers of 2002 and 2017. There are three clusters of data that inform our research: impact/reflection statements, one-on-one interviews, and survey data. The table below highlights the sources of data.



Table 1: Data Sources and Participants

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Students Who Participated in NCOBS Course from 2002-2016</b>	<b>Students Who Participated in 2017 NCOBS Course</b>
Impact Statement Completed Post-Course	97	6
Online Survey	36	n/a
Interview	7	9

Each of the 181 students who participated in a NCOBS course since 2002 wrote an impact or reflection statement when they returned from their NCOBS courses. We have conducted in-depth interviews with the students who participated on the summer 2017 course. Next, we conducted interviews with students who participated during the years of 2002 and 2017. We administered program evaluation and an online survey to all students who participated during the years of 2002 and 2017. Data analysis was conducted in two phases. First, we began with initial coding of the impact statements, interviews, and survey responses. Thematic analysis revealed themes that spoke to the participants’ overall experiences on the NCOBS course and their dispositions and practices related to public service. Data was coded individually and then discussed between the researchers for reliability.

### **Findings**

Analysis of the data brought to the front the nuanced relationship between experiences on a NCOBS course and public service. The NCOBS courses clearly provided opportunities for participants to develop their understanding of public service in such a way that impacted their future service experiences. Across the data this impact was evident in three interconnected themes: (1) risk-taking enabling opportunity to engage in new experiences, (2) value of community and relationships with others, and (3) self-discovery leading to new clarity about purpose and identity. Indeed, themes related to other aspects of the NCOBS also emerged. However, to answer the research questions, we focused on data that reveal insights related to public service.

While scholars have studied the impacts broadly of Outward Bound courses and service has been a historic emphasis of the Outward Bound tradition, little direct attention has been paid in the literature to the impact of Outward Bound on participants’ understanding of and experiences with public service. This study contributes a general a thematic analysis and concrete images of how the experience of an NC Outward Bound Course impacts participants’ understanding of and experiences with public service. We found that a relationship clearly does exist between what participants learn through NCOBS and public service, yet it very often does not appear to be as direct as NCOBS explicitly having helped students to develop their definition of public service or increasing or decreasing their commitments to particular activities.



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## **EDUCATION THROUGH THE GENERATIONS: ENGAGING LEARNING**

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This study considered the impact of parental participation on students' academic achievement. It sought to explore how parents' personal K-12 educational experiences influence their self-efficacy (or sense of ability to succeed) in learning and how their self-efficacy in learning impacted their engagement with their children's learning, as well as barriers for parental involvement practices. Substantial research has been conducted on the positive effects of parental engagement, but fewer studies have pursued a better understanding of how parents' efficacy in learning affects their involvement in their children's education (Collom, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) concluded, "Although parental involvement is an important contributor to children[n's] positive school outcomes, much less is known about the factors that motivate parents' involvement practices" (p. 532). When working as a parent coach, the first author found that many parents were motivated to help their children achieve greater academic success than they had achieved themselves. The paradox, however, was that they seemed to believe their non-involvement would lead to more positive results because they did not believe they had been academically successful enough to know how to guide and teach their child(ren). Researchers repeatedly overlooked examining whether parents' personal experiences with education has an effect on their engagement with their children's education (Zimmerman, 2000). There was a need for further research probing what supports and networks could support parents to feel more successful in actively engaging with their children's education. The questions posed were: How do parents' personal educational experiences influence their self-efficacy in learning? How do parents' levels of self-efficacy in learning impact their engagement with helping their children learn in the home? What support do parents want in order to feel more successful when engaging with their children's learning?

### **Review of Literature**

Education is a topic of great consequence and concern to societies (Friedman & Solow, 2013; Kamenetz & Inskeep, 2015; Khrais, 2015). Parents' personal educational experiences have a significant impact on their self-efficacy in learning (Stefi25, 2011, para. 1; Zimmerman, 2000). Parent's self-efficacy in learning impacts their engagement in helping their children learn (Miller, Dilworth-Bart, & Hane, 2011; Raty, 2002; Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). Much research has tried to verify the impact of parental involvement on student achievement and understand the motivations for parental involvement in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). There appears to be a disparity between two areas: 1) parental involvement and the positive influences in increasing parents' self-efficacy and 2) the social support parents want to help boost their efficacy in engaging with their children's learning (Miller, Dilworth-Bart, & Hane, 2011).

### **Methods**

This descriptive research was primarily grounded in self-efficacy theory and constructivist theory and had an active social justice intention. Because of the multi-dimensional aspect of the query, a multi-layered research approach was used. This mixed methods study commenced with quantitative surveys—which informed my questions for the qualitative personal interviews. The personal interviews used appreciative inquiry to discover what was currently working, and then



asked for what parents believed would be helpful to support them in engaging more comfortably and successfully in their children’s learning process and education in order to increase their students’ educational achievements. Thus, this project was geared to hear the voices of parents and work with the school system to respond in a way to assist those who did not feel they had the needed support to help their children succeed in education.

This sample was purposeful in the selection of both a charter and public school in the same mountain community in Arizona. It was a convenience sample of the parents, within those schools. Parents were sent a link to a survey (with the option of a paper copy), which included demographic information and utilized verified scales that had been validated in previous studies that sought to capture the multiple facets in this study: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), Parent Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School (Helping My Child Learn) (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992), and Parent Role Construction (Valence Toward School) (Walker et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). For each instrument, the entire questionnaire was administered. An IRB was completed and the distribution required a consideration for access to technology and parent literacy as part of its ethical process.

Of approximately 650 potential sample participants, 63 (9.7%) surveys were returned and usable for the quantitative portion of research. Just over 1% (seven parents) responded to the qualitative portion of the research, which asked if they would consent to an interview. All seven consented and were interviewed. Respondees largely included parents who were highly involved in their children’s education. It may mean that parents self-selected to respond to the study who were engaged in their children’s education and self-selected not to participate in the study if they were not engaged in their children’s education. Thus, future research could reach out to the parents from this sample who did not complete the survey.

### Results & Discussion

When applied to the data, the Chi Square test was the most demonstrative test, and thus used for the pivot tables below. When compared to demographics including level of education, income, gender, age, and number of children, the parental self-efficacy (PSE) showed limited relationships. However, even though the pivot table demonstrates that PSE and level of education do not show much correlation, an interesting pattern emerged: Those with a high school education or less were evenly distributed throughout the quartiles for PSE, while those with some college were polarized on the top of the bottom quartiles of PSE. Those with highest educational achievement were again distributed fairly equally throughout the quartiles of PSE, with higher percentages on the lower quartiles. Therefore, with the reported information from these study participants one might conclude that those with lower levels of education have a higher sense of their efficacy, while those with some higher education felt either successful or unsuccessful, and those who completed higher education became more aware of what they do not know. The pattern that emerged in relationship to education may have meaning, however, a larger participant group is recommended.

Table 1: Parental Self-Efficacy comparison with Level of Education in 2 schools in Arizona.

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>PSE Quartile</u>				Total
	1	2	3	4	
HS diploma or less	6%	3%	5%	5%	19%
Some college, no degree	13%	5%	6%	15%	39%
AA/AS, BA/BS, MA/MS	10%	13%	11%	8%	42%
Total	29%	21%	23%	27%	100%



It was found that parents who were involved in their child's education had a broad spectrum of experiences of their own parents' involvement as youth. One factor did not seem to dominate. Of the parents who reported being highly engaged in their children's learning process, there was a diverse and fairly equally distributed background for their parents (the parents of the parents who were interviewed) to be highly involved, moderately involved, and minimally involved.

The qualitative data revealed that all the parents interviewed reported multiple times that they believed that they were highly involved in their children's education; none of these interviewees self-reported a low-level engagement with their children's education. Their responses seemed split into three groups: Some reported having parents who were 1) highly involved in their education K-12; 2) moderately involved in their education K-12; and 3) minimally involved in their education K-12. Since highly engaged parents had a range of experiences with their own parents' involvement, it is plausible that parents who have low levels of engagement with their children's education may have also had a range of experience with their own parents' involvement when they were in schooling K-12.

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## MEANING AND ADVENTURE: CONSTRUCTIVE-DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURE OUTCOMES

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Meaning-making is a significant component of outcomes in the field of Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) as demonstrated by a variety theories, frameworks, and contemporary research studies. For example, it is within the final section of the Outward Bound process model where the participant “reorganizes the meaning and direction” of the experience (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Walsh & Golins, 1976, p. 21). Nold (1978) examined a series of theories (e.g., Dewey’s experiential education and Piaget’s developmental theory) that relied on the reconstruction of some salient experience and the transference of those outcomes to future learning. In Joplin’s (1981) experiential education model, often cited in OAE, the final stage is where the participant learns from the experience through the sorting and resorting of information. These examples indicate a major component of the OAE experience, and subsequent outcomes, rests within the participant’s ability to construct and reconstruct meaning from the experience.

The intended and measured outcomes of OAE programs have been reported in a variety of works from Kurt Hahn’s ‘character training’ and seamanship courses in 1941 to the contemporary Outward Bound and National Outdoor Leadership School (Ewert and Sibthorp, 2014). These outcomes include, but are not limited to, moral development, leadership skills, self-efficacy, resilience, personal growth, interpersonal skills, motivation, connection to nature, mood states, cognitive skills, and communication skills (Ewert and Garvey, 2007; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014; Ewert & Yoshino, 2011; Freeman, 2011; Llewellyn, Sanchez, Asghar, & Jones, 2008). Contemporary OAE research has answered the call to explore the actual mechanisms driving these particular outcomes; however, the internalized structure mediating a participant’s meaning making capacity as a confounding variable has not been examined.

An OAE program participant’s ability to construct meaning from their experience may be confounded by their cognitive development. Robert Kegan’s (1982) Constructive-Developmental theory (CDT) elucidates how this variable may mediate intended outcomes. Constructive-Developmental theory is a phasic developmental theory that “explores how individuals construct or interpret their life experiences” (Spano, 2015, p. 43). Kegan (1982) claims this framework examines “the evolution of meaning” (p. 15). This evolution, as theorized, progresses through five stages: (1) impulsive, (2) imperial/instrumental mind, (3) interpersonal/socialized mind, (4) institutional/self-authoring mind, and (5) interindividual/self-transforming mind. Each stage consists of five transition stages and is typified by what the individual can hold as object and what cognitive structures they are subject to. For example, an individual in stage 3 will progress through stages 3, 3(4), 3/4, 4/3, and 4(3) before arriving at stage 4 whereas what they were subject to in stage 3 they are now able to hold as object in stage 4. The Subject-Object Interview and subsequent analysis conducted by a trained researcher is conducted to identify what stage the individual is operating in (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988; Villegas-Reimers, 1996).

An individual in Kegan’s 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of development, for example, is subject to the opinions of others in their capacity to make meaning whereas an individual in the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of development is self-transforming and able to concurrently hold and appraise multiple ideologies (Cristina, 2012). This potential difference of how one constructs meaning from participation in an OAE research study could have significant implications on results of measured outcomes. Thus, the purpose of this pilot study is to examine if correlations exist between common OAE outcomes and participant’s stage of development based on Robert Kegan’s (1982) constructive developmental theory.

### Method

A non-experimental quasi- mixed methods design, within a constructivist worldview, was utilized in this pilot study. Students, 18 years of age or older, who registered for a spring break outdoor adventure trip to the Smokey Mountains with a Midwest university outdoor adventure program were recruited to participate in the study (n=11). The trip included two days in the Smoky Mountain National Park, two days kayaking, two days backpacking on the Appalachian Trail, and one day rafting on the Ocoee River. All subjects who agreed to participate completed pre and post trip surveys (n=7). Surveys include a demographic questionnaire, general self-efficacy scale (SES), brief resiliency scale (BRS), and connectedness to nature scale (CNS). Four subjects agreed to participate in the Subject-Object Interview (SOI) after the trip. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and scored by a certified reliable scorer.

The reliability of the SOI has been established within multiple studies as reported by Lahey et al., (1988). Goodman (1983), found interrater reliability after evaluating 27 interviews, from two interrater reliability tests, of 89% complete agreement and agreement within 1/5 stage was 100%. Jacobs (1980) reported 80% agreement among raters on 40 interviews. Dixon (1986) found 100% agreement within 1/5 stage from nine interviews. Lahey (1986) found 80% exact agreement and 100% agreement within 1/5 stage from 22 interviews. The SES has reported Cornbach’s alphas between .76 and .90 (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 2010). The BRS has been demonstrated to have good internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Smith et al., 2008). The CNS has also demonstrated good validity and reliability with alphas between .79 and .84 (Mayer & Frantz, 2004).

### Results

Considering the small sample size of this pilot study, descriptive statistics are presented. Subjects (n=7, 2 male, 5 female) consisted of two graduate and five undergraduate students between the ages 18 and 30. Of the 7 participants, 4 agreed to participate in the Subject-Object Interview. Pre and post trip survey results as well as SOI scores are presented in Table 1. Survey results are varied as some increased and some decreased in each of the three surveys. Subject-Object Interview scores range from 3(2) to 4/5 indicating these subjects are operating in the socialized mind and self-authoring mind stages of CDT.

**Table 1**  
*Results of Surveys and SOI*

Participant	BRS		GSE		CNS		CDT Stage SOI
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
A	3.83	3.83	38	39*	5	4.79**	4/5
B	3.5	4.17*	32	36*	3.43	3.86*	3(2)
C	3.83	3.83	30	29**	2.92	3.86*	3/4
D	4	4	35	33**	4.07	4.36*	3/4
E	3.17	4*	31	34*	3.5	3.29**	-
F	3.67	3.17**	29	29	4.07	4.29*	-
G	4.5	4.33**	35	36*	2.86	2.79**	-
Median	3.83	4.0	32	34	3.5	3.85	-

*Increase\* Decrease\*\**

*SOI- 21 possible scores: 1, 1(2), 1/2, 2/1, 2(1), 2, 2(3), 2/3, 3/2, 3, 3(4), 3/4, 4/3, 4(3), 4, 4(5), 4/5, 5/4, 5(4), 5*

### Discussion

As found in this pilot study, the subjects who completed the SOI are operating at different stages. Subject A, for example, is operating within stage 4/5 which indicates that they are making

meaning between the self-authoring stage and the self-transforming stage (see Table 2 for subject/object relationships between stages). This individual is able to hold abstractions, interpersonalism, self-consciousness, and subjectivity as object while being subject to their own ideology, identity, and self-formation (Lahey et al., 1988). As they move closer to the self-transforming stage (5), they begin to more regularly hold ideology, identity, and self-formation as object. This individual is able to reflect on the trip in an independent manner, holding interpersonal relationships and beginning to hold their own ideology as object in their meaning making. This is significantly different than subject B who is operating in stage 3(2). This individual is operating almost entirely in the interpersonal stage (3) while occasionally demonstrating traits associated with the instrumental stage (2). This individual is able to recognize their own needs and other points of view while being subject to interpersonal relationships and occasionally being subject to their own needs (Lahey et al., 1988). Subject B increased scores in each survey from pre-trip to post trip whereas subject A increased on the GSE, no change on the BRS, and decreased on the CNS. Subjects C and D, both operating within the 3/4 stage, showed similar results in pre/post surveys where they both demonstrated no change on the BRS, decreased scores on the GSE, and increased scores on the CNS.

Table 2  
Stages of development, Kegan (1982)

		Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Underlying Structure	Subject	Reflexes	Impulses, perceptions	Needs, interests, wishes	Interpersonal mutuality	Authorship, identity, ideology	Interindividuality/interpenetrability of self-systems
	Object	None	Reflexes	Impulses, perceptions	Needs, interests, wishes	Interpersonal mutuality	Authorship, identity, ideology

The sample size of this pilot study limits the ability to make conclusions about the correlations among CDT stage of development and common OAE outcome measures; however, the study forms a foundation to explore correlations among the potential confounding variable of stage of development in future studies. Confounding variables may exist in three areas of an adventure experience: precursors, concomitant, and post experience (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009). The way in which an individual is constructing meaning, or their constructive-development stage, is present in each one of these areas. Participants arrive at an experience (precursor) within a particular stage of development. During the experience (concomitant), they may progress from one stage to the next. In post experiences, particularly significant to longitudinal studies, a progression in development could occur and may or may not be the result of the program. Understanding what stage of constructive-development a participant is operating in may allow researchers to better understand the outcomes, or *what* meaning was made, by understanding the structure, or the *how* the meaning is being made.

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## **SUPPORTIVE IMMERSION: THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL GAP EXPERIENCES AS FACILITATORS OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS**

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Social structures around the world are changing rapidly toward network societies (Castells, 2004) and globalized cultures (Pieterse, 2015). This has numerous implications for youth development. Parents (Lythcott-Haims, 2015) and schools (Azzam, 2009) are struggling to keep up with the shifts of the new millennium and to equip youth with the necessary competencies for successful transition into the world of adulthood. Jeffrey Arnett analyzed these shifts and concluded that people in industrialized societies between the ages of 18 and their mid- to late-20s are experiencing a new life stage he termed “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000). Thus, youth need to adapt to the new circumstances by acquiring a number of skills, which have been called *21<sup>st</sup> century skills* (Salas-Pilco, 2013). Some youth choose to acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, such as communication, cultural awareness, and social responsibility, by way of participating in international gap programs (Hoe, 2015).

Evidence is building to demonstrate that such cross-cultural immersions provide opportunities and help people achieve their goals beyond their initial imaginings (Berry, 2005). Studies demonstrated that international immersions can provide participants with numerous benefits, including the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills previously mentioned, as well as increased creativity and a complex mindset (Fee, Gray & Lu, 2013; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Hoe, 2015). Based on this evidence, Recio (2018) proposed the hypothesized theory of an experiential learning approach, called Supportive Immersion (SI), to facilitate cross-cultural experiences that intentionally enhances the benefits exposed above, and use as a strategy toward personal development in populations with mental health issues.

### **Method**

An inductive thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun & Clark (2006), was used to analyze 10 video testimonials recorded by participants of a young adult supportive gap program in Costa Rica. The purpose of the study was to identify themes of self-perceived personal growth by participants of the international gap program. Evidence could then contribute knowledge to how SI is helping to facilitate growth and development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. A bottom-up approach was selected because the third-party primary researcher (PR) wanted to explore the data from a neutral position. Participants of the study were males between the ages of 18 and 22 and participated in the program between 2012 and 2017. Testimonials were guided by an interviewer who used a mix of open-ended questions and prompts to explore what experiences of the gap program were most impactful to the participants and how it related to their personal growth. The open-ended interviews were used to avoid leading participants to comment directly on the philosophical and theoretical basis of the experiential immersion gap program itself, which could impact the research’s reliability and validity of the data.

The PR identified the research question to be: “What impacts do students perceive in themselves after going through experiential immersion in an international supportive gap experience?” This exploratory question was selected because the PR wanted to understand the various ways “impact” could be identified, emphasizing the self-reflexivity of the participant’s

perception. Once the research question was identified the data was then coded. The codes were then categorized into themes

It is important to note how the PR came up with the themes for this study. The administrators of the gap-year program of this study have been developing the hypothesized theoretical framework, Supportive Immersion, which theorizes the underlying factors that help facilitate growth when individuals are supported while immersed in cross-cultural and experiential learning settings (Recio, 2018). Going into the study, the PR had minimal knowledge of SI's theory, but due to dialogue with the administrators after the coding process, the PR ended up becoming more familiarized with the components of SI. It was learned that SI had created terms associated to personal growth describing the qualities of an individual that is interdependent, self-motivated, goal driven and resilient. After reviewing these terms and reviewing the codes, it became very clear that SI's terms could be used as the themes for the codes. Therefore, the PR, who had started the study from a bottom-up inductive method, ended up integrating a top-down deductive thematic analysis to help understand the data that emerged based on the SI theory.

### Results

The five themes that both emerged from the coding process and sourced from SI helped contribute to the concept of the “self-generating function,” which “suggests that the energy for problem solving and learning intentionally initiates within the individual” (Recio, 2018, p. 178). Recio (2018) cites this to be a necessary ability for emerging adults to feel a sense of empowerment and agency in driving their own life toward their own goals. The themes are foundational to the SI theory for it features what they hope students will gain through their supportive cultural-learning immersion experience. These themes are:

1. Self-governance: self-regulation, evaluation, monitoring, shifting gears, changing paths, setting goals and following through with a sense of empowerment
2. Open Collaboration: Showing curiosity, wondering and questioning about other perspectives; seeking learning & growth across disciplines, languages, cultures and peoples; reciprocity in giving and receiving in relationships and experiences.
3. Proactive Purposefulness: intentionally seeking and articulating meaningful goals
4. Resilience: sustaining effort and taking accountability in spite of adversity and lack of immediate results.
5. Problem-Solving creativity: takes an active role in finding problems, creatively analyzing problems, considering multiple perspectives, seeking solutions & alternatives with intentional goals in mind.

Two out of the five themes were more represented in the data based on how often the codes emerged in the data, how often codes were identified across multiple data sets and then eventually how many codes were categorized into themes. These were indications of specific themes being more impactful to the participants than others. The theme self-governance received 41.1% of the codes. An example of a code that was categorized into the self-governance theme was: “shift in life direction.” This specific code was found five times in multiple testimonials. Finding this code across data sets emphasizes the importance of how a gap-year experience impacted the participants' perception of being able to change direction of one's life. This ties directly into self-governance as it relates to being able to assess and manage the trajectory of one's life and feel empowered to take control of it. Another example was the code “scheduling,” which showed up seven times and emerged because the participants recognized that learning to maintain a schedule was a beneficial skill required for the challenges of adulthood. Both examples show the self-reflexivity of the

participants and their recognition of how their experiences of the gap-year program impacted their sense of personal growth.

The second highest theme of the study was open collaboration, receiving 27.9% of the codes. This theme showed the importance of the participant's relationships and their communication with others, the community interactions and the need for interpersonal reciprocity. All of these were self-identified to be related to personal growth. These skills are also relevant to the aforementioned 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that the emerging adult needs to have. One code that emerged repeatedly in this theme was, "learning and using Spanish," which showed up ten times, across multiple data sets, clearly demonstrating the impact this aspect of the program had on the participants. But it wasn't just the importance of how often it showed up, it was also how the participants tried to relate the meaningfulness of learning a new language and being able to communicate with others impacted their sense of personal growth. This feat was also accompanied with a sense of deeper connections to those around them. For example, a participant noted: "I didn't learn to speak understandable Spanish for a very long time and I still tried. And I was able to go and make more friends than I can say I have in the States; I was able to become a part of a homestay family, and I was able to make some really great relationships in my internships. And it was because I was out of my comfort zone; I was pushing myself to be uncomfortable and learn and adapt." Learning new languages allowed for greater connectivity, creating deeper and more meaningful relationships and gave participants confidence in facing challenges.

### Discussion

Participants' perceived impact supports the assertion that supportive gap year cross-cultural immersion helps equip emerging adults with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and fosters personal development. Data from this initial research confirms SI's theory of how self-governance, open collaboration, resilience, problem solving, and proactive purposefulness contribute to the attitudes and behaviors of the *self-generating function* in young adults. Future research will continue to enrich this data and will also focus on participants' perceptions of the support they receive from peers, staff, community members, and environments through experiential activities. Through this focus, research will explore the effectiveness of the three pillars of the SI theory: empathic connection, collaborative empowerment, and process-based scaffolding, hypothesized to support the development of the five themes identified in this study.

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## **INTEGRATING HIGH-IMPACT COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP INTO A NON-PROFIT MARKETING CLASS**

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Community engagement is commonly defined as “...the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people...” (CDCP, 1997, p. 9). Evidence has revealed that high-impact practices (HIPs), including out-of-classroom experiences, such as service-learning, community-based learning, internships, study abroad, undergraduate research, and capstone courses and projects, provide distinctive, compelling, and integrative benefits for undergraduate students (e.g., higher rates of student engagement, higher levels of learning and success for students; Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008). As one form of HIPs, community-engaged practices have been suggested to significantly influence students by integrating their learning with critical analysis of public issues, exploring civic identities, and thus bringing reciprocal benefits for students, community, and school partners (Buys & Bursnall, 2007).

However, existing research on the HIPs has the following limitations: (1) Many HIPs have the issues of scalability, cost, time commitment and implementation (Brownell & Swaner, 2010); (2) Most evidence on high-impact practice experiences comes from large-scale surveys, which fails to reflect what the experiences mean to the students (Finley & McNair, 2013); and (3) There has been inadequate attention to the high-impact community engaged scholarship, which can maximize meaningful impacts for students and communities (Brownell & Swaner, 2010). Given the limited evidence on the role of involving in community engagement (e.g., participating in nonprofit organizations) that shapes students’ identities and learning experiences, this study is aimed to examine how high-impact community engaged learning experiences influence students through participating in a community-engaged project at a non-profit marketing class.

### **Methods**

#### **Course Description and Data Collection**

We embedded a four-phase proposal project into the curriculum of a non-profit marketing class ( $n = 38$ ). With class enrollment varying by major, gender, age and academic year, the four phases were: (1) agency review, (2) proposal writing, (3) agency feedback, and (4) self-reflection. First, students conducted an agency review at the beginning of the semester. During the agency review, they were asked to select three non-profit organizations (NPOs) of their interest, and contact these agencies to see whether they were willing and/or interested in supporting their community-engaged projects. Students reported their contact progress on the daily basis to the instructor until they confirmed the participation of their agency. Students were then asked to investigate their selected NPOs on specific information, such as mission, history, programs, organizational structure, etc. Importantly, students were asked to interview with the contact person of their selected NPOs about their current problems/obstacles/needs. Second, after collecting the data, students were guided to address one problem/need of their selected NPOs by writing a proposal. In the proposals, students conducted research and proposed detailed solutions to solve the problem for the agencies. Third, students provided their proposal to the NPOs for review and feedback at the end of the semester. They were also asked to write a page of self-reflection about

what they learned from working on this project. These four phases over the semester provided multiple opportunities for students to: (1) focus on collecting data on their selected agencies and recognizing the problems of their selected agencies; (2) apply their class learning into the real-world situations; (3) select and use what they have learned in class (e.g., concepts, theories) that helped non-profit agencies solve real problems, and (4) build connections and network with NPOs.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, we conducted the qualitative thematic analysis of students' self-reflection. Data analysis was conducted in accordance with procedures suggested by Charmaz (2006). First, we independently open-coded the data into initial themes using in-vivo labeling, and then focused their coding to develop more substantial themes, which involved constantly comparing codes and related quotes until the most significant, meaningful, and frequently cited codes emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The iterative process was continued until no new insights emerged through subsequent coding (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). NVivo 10.2.1 software was used to sort, classify, reduce, alter and enhance the themes and sub-themes identified by the authors during the analysis process. In order to increase the rigor of data analysis, we took notes to track details, use thick descriptions and peer debriefing, and have member to double check.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The iterative data analysis uncovered three key themes: (1) knowledge to practice, (2) challenge, and (3) career development. After completing the project working with NPOs, students wrote in their reflection report that the four-phase proposal project led to a process of applying their knowledge into practice. This community-engaged non-profit project made their learning and the class meaningful, which helps students understand how NPOs operate and what challenges they face. Although students indicated that this project was challenging, they appreciated such an opportunity to "... [pique their] interest and [stimulate their] intrigue for further growth in the nonprofit industry... [This project was the one they] prioritized amongst...many responsibilities... [because of] the challenge...[which] sparked career possibilities they didn't realize are possible." According to one student,

*...I am currently employed with the American Cancer Society as a Fundraising and Participation Specialist; my main event has been Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. I love my job and all aspects of it. As I continue to develop my career in Community Engagement and Development, I refer back to our nonprofit and services marketing course as something that ignited this passion. I have always enjoyed community service and working with others, now I get to apply these interests into events and develop a career that I love!*

This study revealed that the high-impact community engaged learning experiences have significantly influenced students through participating in a community-engaged project at a non-profit marketing class. Such influences were reflected in the three key themes uncovered from this study: (1) knowledge to practice, (2) challenge, and (3) career development. Integrating the community engaged scholarship into a non-profit marketing class may not only be a cost-effective, scalable, feasible to implement, rigorous, innovative high-impact practice, but also may contribute to student academic, personal, professional and career development.



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## **SKILLED FACILITATION: MANAGING STRESS RESPONSES IN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE PROGRAMMING**

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Outdoor adventure programs have often utilized prescribed challenges to push participants towards a state of disequilibrium, motivating them to learn and master new skills (Walsh & Golins, 1976). The dose response curve, which describes when a challenge is stressful enough to promote learning without leading to over arousal and failure and subsequent decrease in skill (Baldi & Bacherelli, 2005), is difficult to gauge. In addition, the group nature of these activities often widens the range of optimal arousal for the group, creating stress that must be managed by the participant and a skilled facilitator. Several components of outdoor adventure programs linked with positive development have been identified (McKenzie, 2000), and the instructors' facilitation skills play a key role in moderating the challenges to maintain optimal levels of arousal and manageable stress. While much experiential and contextual evidence exists to explain the moderating relationship, the purpose of this review is to provide the best available evidence for skilled facilitation during the process of challenge and learning.

### **Outdoor Adventure Program Design**

The components of an outdoor adventure program (OAP) work together to teach an individual's brain how to overcome progressively harder circumstances (Allen, McKenna, & Hind, 2012). Skilled facilitators aim to sequence events so that they are both manageable and consequential for participants, while the process of challenge, stress, and recovery initiates lasting physiological changes (Oken, Chamine, & Wakeland, 2015). While Rutter (2012) hypothesized that small doses of adversity may facilitate resilience, Liu, Reed, and Girard (2017) point out that both too little and too much adversity are disadvantageous. Too much arousal, without buffers to the stress response, may lead to decreased self-regulation, performance, memory, and skill acquisition (Charney, 2004). When the challenges of an OAP are perceived as dangerous or a threat, the body responds with psychophysiological changes apparent in behavior and emotion (Kozłowska, Walker, McLean, & Carrive, 2015). Under these higher threats, individuals aren't capable of processing increasingly difficult challenges (Baldi & Bucherelli, 2005), which may decrease learning (Charney, 2004). If not facilitated safely, this defense cascade may condition participants for future fear responses (Kozłowska et al., 2015).

In the search for evidence-based practices that buffer the stress response, several components of the experience were identified as contributing to well established outcomes (e.g. Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997), including the individual, group, challenges, skilled facilitator, processing, and the physical environment (McKenzie, 2000). As an OAP may be designed around an activity like mountain biking to practice picking oneself up and continuing on the path (Whittington et al., 2016), the value of a friendly counselor has a great deal of contextual meaning.

### **Skilled Facilitation**

An individual's reaction to the challenges often depends on their unique mix of previous experience and genetics (Rutter, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). When stressors are caused by threats they may trigger confrontational or avoidant coping, the intentional challenges of outdoor adventure are likely to trigger positive reappraisal and problem-solving skills (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986). The way individuals assess a situation and their personal skills plays an important role in their response and in coping with stress (Lazarus &

Folkman, 1987). Cognitive Appraisal Theory is focused on the assessments that are made based on emotion and coping potential during challenges. If an assessment is positive, an individual's view of the situation and their skills and abilities to respond increase (Fredrickson, 2001). If processed through emotional regions of the brain it can quickly lead to a stress and fight-or-flight response before a secondary appraisal determines whether skill is matched to the challenge, or if an individual is in control of the situation.

There is an opportunity early on in a stress response for the facilitator to help participants shift into their cerebral cortex or "thinking brain" by getting them excited about a potential opportunity before the anxiety can take hold. This conscious choice towards excitement facilitates a more adaptive physiological response (Brooks, 2014). This shift in mindset is priming the body for active engagement in the challenge with measurable changes as the body utilizes the heart, lungs, and blood vessels to get resources to the brain and muscles (Seery, Weisbuch, Hetenyi, & Blascovich, 2010). The process of cognitive reappraisal lowers the emotional response and increases cortical control (Drabant, McRae, Manuck, Hariri, & Gross, 2009). Taking a positive approach to challenges compounds over time and allows the body to recover more quickly (Fredrickson, 2004). In a secondary appraisal, an individual might find they have no control over the situation, but can control their reactions and response, managing the situation through positive adaptation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

Encouraging a participant to use words to describe their emotions, affective labeling, or focus on internal sensations may also reengage the cortex (Kozłowska et al., 2015; Lieberman et al., 2007). When our pre-frontal cortex is focused on language, it shifts away from emotional responses (Lieberman et al., 2007). In a similar approach, Kozłowska and colleagues (2015) found that activities with a rhythm between two people or shared looks can lead to a feeling of calm and connectedness, downregulating the stress response and helping to bring the "thinking brain" back online. Because emotions are processed faster than cognitive reflections, and participants can't process both, opportunities for reflection and exploration should be interspersed with detailed instructions and learning, giving the brain time to adapt and be emotional (Allan, McKenna, & Hind, 2012).

### Conclusion

Facilitation is a dynamic skill, and framing a state of disequilibrium with a challenge based outlook can have a cascading effect through the group and circumstances, allowing participants to think more clearly and keep their eyes open to solutions. This review has highlighted several practices that facilitators may utilize to moderate the stress responses and arousal of participants, including training to promote accurate and positive assessment of skills and readiness to approach challenges, precede challenges with a positive mindset and excitement for the task, verbalize how we control reactions to a situation that may be or feel out of control, re-engage the thinking brain through affective labeling, rhythm, or shared looks, and allow time for participants to process emotion between cognitive instructions. The strength of the research supporting a skilled facilitator's role in maintaining a productive mindset supports further training to improve existing practices, applying psychological tools in the OAP environment.

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