

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ADVENTURE-BASED THERAPY, WILDERNESS
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING, AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION FOR YOUTH
DEMOGRAPHICS IN NEED

A THESIS

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Education

The Colorado College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

By

Warren Wolter Bunnell

May/2017

Reader: Howard Drossman, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4-5
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5-12
METHODS	13-16
RESULTS.....	16-25
LIMITATIONS.....	26-27
CONCLUSIONS.....	27-30
REFERENCES.....	31-32
APPENDICES.....	33-49

ABSTRACT

Inspired by the work of my grandfather, John Wolter, my thesis examines the ideologies, goals, and strengths of wilderness therapy, adventure therapy, and experiential education programs that serve troubled youth demographics. After a literature review that highlights the sociocultural, humanistic, nature-centered, and experiential elements of such programs, coded qualitative data collected via interviews of five adolescents in one of these programs helped form a theory of how students with behavioral issues are learning and developing during their time engaged with adventure and wilderness centered curriculum. Recommendations for future studies examining the outcomes and strengths of wilderness therapy and adventure therapy programs will serve to guide researchers as they seek to determine the quality of such experientially focused programs.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has been developing since my decision to become an Education Major at Colorado College. During my first education class, I researched the work of my grandfather, John Wolter, who obtained his doctorate in Education from the University of Massachusetts. After serving in the Korean War, he dedicated his life to developing programs that effectively served adolescents with special needs through experiential education in a wilderness setting. The programs have since grown to meet the needs of a variety of troubled youth groups, but are all characterized by an outdoor experiential focus throughout the rehabilitation process.

During the last two summers, I had the opportunity to work with some of these programs, where I developed a deeper passion for learning about outdoor experiential education and wilderness therapy programs. After discovering one of my grandfather's published works (Wolter, 1984), I became interested in many of the questions he posed when he was researching the effectiveness of wilderness therapy and experiential education. Of the many questions he posed, some that I found most interesting include:

- How do children perceive their involvement in wilderness programs? How can this information be used to improve programs?
- What are unifying dimensions of outdoor programs for youth in need?
- What is the range of present-day philosophies and models? Which are most effective in serving specific children's needs?
- To what extent does cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning result from outdoor experiences?
- How can programs ensure that learning 'carries over' into the post-outdoor phase of a student's life? (Wolter, 1984)

These, and many others questions I found throughout my grandfather's work fascinated me because they require constant reassessment. The field of research that covers outdoor experiential education has had to adapt to address the constantly changing needs and issues that

some children face throughout their development. My thesis, which used the first question above as its broad research concern, serves as a continuation of the work my grandfather has initiated, as I examine what makes wilderness therapy, adventure therapy, and outdoor experiential programs effective when dealing with certain troubled youth demographics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescents placed in nature-based experiential learning programs typically suffer from a variety of issues that directly relate to poorly developed self-concepts, including their sense and strength of self-efficacy. A review of the ways in which adventure therapy, wilderness therapy, and experiential education attempt to meet the needs of these youth demographics will clarify and illuminate the ideologies that underlie the academic approaches of these therapeutic programs. Furthermore, exploring the ways these programs are evaluated will show how researchers have come to identify and develop effective strategies for programs to utilize when fostering and cultivating these crucially important self-concepts.

Socio-cultural approaches to learning

One of the most important parts of a teacher's job is ensuring that their students are developing strong, positive beliefs about their abilities as learners. Having a confident and optimistic outlook of one's goals, strengths, and individual abilities instills a mentality in students that supports them regardless of what challenges or demanding tasks they may confront throughout their lives. Research conducted by Carol Dweck and Ellen Leggett (1988) highlights the importance of student-based goals, and the way in which students who focus on the development of their own judgments of competence differ from those who are primarily concerned with simply improving

their competence. When students avoid confronting obstacles that challenge their competence, their self-concepts suffer from a lack of engagement with difficult tasks. Learning how to cope with difficulties leads to an appreciation for the effort that is required when conquering a test of one's abilities, as willingly facing adversity leads to a mastery-oriented mindset that helps the development of more effective problem solving skills.

Albert Bandura (1994) closely examined how an individual's perceived sense of self-efficacy has an impact on personal success, as this self-concept influences the way in which people think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave throughout life. Creating, enhancing and strengthening beliefs in self-efficacy all have long lasting effects on an individual's psyche, compelling them to strive for success even when faced with adversity. A resilient sense of self-efficacy promotes an optimistic outlook on life, for when this self-concept is well developed, individuals feel as though they can conquer any challenge, motivated by a desire to achieve lofty goals that can lead to self-satisfaction, further developing the coping mechanisms needed to deal with stressful situations. Bandura (1994) noted how important stress is during the process of developing self-efficacy, stating:

Stress activated in the process of acquiring coping capabilities may have different effects than stress experienced in aversive situations with no prospect in sight of ever gaining any self-protective efficacy. There are substantial evolutionary benefits to experiencing enhanced immune function during development of coping capabilities vital for effective adaptation. (7)

Bandura made it clear that stress is not something that developing minds must avoid, but rather, it must be appropriately processed to ensure the healthy development of a strong sense of self-efficacy, rather than damaging and weakening personal beliefs in one's capabilities.

Experiential Learning

Scholars of experiential learning argue that learning is a constant process that occurs during every interaction and transaction that an individual has, not just with other humans, but with the natural and physical world as well. Unlike the traditional belief that education takes place when a teacher deposits and provides knowledge to a student, experiential education is based on a belief that learning continuously develops as a person acts and observes the world throughout their lives. Kolb (1984) argued that experiential education:

Seeks to describe the emergence of basic life orientations as a function of dialectic tensions between basic modes of relating to the world. To learn is not the special province of a single specialized realm of human functioning such as cognition or perception. It involves the integrated functioning of the total organism – thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. (31)

Kolb examined how experiential education integrates thought, feeling, and other behaviors that lead to personal development throughout one's life. What he found special about experiential learning is how it combined complex processes, such as reflection and action, without requiring an individual to be actively conscious of which process they are using. Regardless of the setting, experiential learning allows students to construct their own knowledge through reacting and growing from every situation.

Being placed in stressful situations, and achieving a set goal despite the challenges one faces is embedded in the design of adventure therapy programs. Throughout his life, John Dewey was a strong advocate for learning through experience. Ord and Leather (2011) examined how Dewey's beliefs on learning related to experiential learning in the outdoors. His support of experimentation to better understand one's surroundings are rooted in the framework of experiential, and rehabilitative, outdoor education and therapeutic programs. The way in which

an individual is changed by the environment, and the extent to which the environment is changed by the individual, has a strong impact on how much power an experience within nature has on a person's mind. Ord and Leather (2011) stressed how:

For Dewey thought and action are not separate entities but are unified in experience. Human beings are immersed in the world and the thoughts about it are not separate and removed but products of it. The experience of the outdoors cannot be removed from the thoughts, ideas and ultimately the "meanings" we make of it. (19)

Dewey recognized that learning through experience, especially in the outdoors, engages the whole mind, developing meaning from every interaction while in this bountiful setting. Every contact a human has with the outdoors has the potential to provide a fruitful experience that can lead to beneficial results. Directed experiences can be especially powerful for troubled students who are developing important self-concepts. Bruye (2002) examined the power the outdoors to guide self-identity development, theorizing that:

At the least, outdoor programs can facilitate a youth's search for a more defined self-identity, regardless of whether or not it integrates outdoor recreation or conservation, by providing opportunities to reflect about the meaning of one's life and one's values, in a quiet and natural environment (211)

Bruye studied how the physical, emotional and social maturation occurring throughout adolescence can be supplemented through outdoor experiential learning. Nature-based exploration, experiences and learning opportunities allow individuals to strengthen their self-esteem through engaging in physically and mentally demanding activities.

Humanistic Education

Regardless of prior histories, teachers must ensure that they are offering an education that provides every student with a safe environment in which they can develop and grow as individuals. The goal of education should remain rooted in a belief that the development the "whole" person is essential. Carl Rogers was a strong advocate for significant learning that has

an impact on an individual's behavior, attitudes and personality. His works recognized the ways in which humans grow from experience, and how personal responses to different settings and situations had potential for a positive or negative impact on the mindset of an individual. Rogers' texts helped guide educators to a deeper understanding of how to meet the complex needs of some of the most difficult students there are, including those who act spontaneously in an arguably aggressive and anti-social manner.

While the goal of many of experiential outdoor education and therapeutic programs is to address the destructive behaviors that have negatively impact students' lives, these behaviors must be recognized as indicators of areas where students are in need of support. Paulo Freire (1968) believed strongly in a style of education where teachers facilitated student learning rather than directly controlling the information students were receiving. He believed that knowledge could only be obtained through a constant process of inquiry that started from a student's desire to understand the world around them and how they perceive it individually. As students develop a self-motivated passion for learning, they begin to approach challenges differently, and their responses to adversity encourage more trials, driving their independent quest for knowledge. Out of a self-driven search for inquiry, people naturally develop a stronger ability to regulate their emotional responses to certain situations that provoke strong emotional and physical responses.

Nature-centered instruction

Kaplan (1992) believes that many of the issues that humans, and especially adolescents, face throughout their lives are directly linked to trends such as the rapidly increasing world population and continuous technological development which further complicate humans'

understandings of their own existence on Earth. The consequences of these realities can lead individuals to a separation from tolerant social behavior that enhances their worldview and encourages healthy cognitive development. Kaplan believes that while it is imperative for humans to interact and learn collaboratively, the models of the world that guide our behaviors are a direct result of the environments we construct throughout life. He felt the outdoors provides a restorative environment in which humans can expand their understanding of their relation to the environment, and can use the self-concepts that allow us to effectively cope with the complexities of our daily lives that can cause so much stress and confusion in one's mind. Experiential education programs that are rooted in the outdoors use a wilderness setting to bring about enhanced maturity by promoting self-reflection and growth in a natural space that can lead to more rewarding and beneficial outcomes for individuals, especially those with poorly developed self-concepts.

Wilderness therapy program assessment

As adventure therapy and experiential education programs have grown in popularity over the last few decades, researchers have focused on defining, quantifying, and analyzing the effects on participants. Hattie et al. (1997) performed one of the first meta-analyses, by analyzing 96 studies that examined the effectiveness of what they defined as “wilderness therapy programs,” a blanket term that included experiential and adventure-based programs, as well as many other programs that had nature-based components in their design. This article remains groundbreaking, and has served as a guide for almost every study conducted on these programs since it was published in 1997. While Hattie et al. (1997) determined that there were measurable outcomes that positively affected participants in these programs for specific youth groups with effect sizes

varying substantially for the different programs, their work also identified and defined four premises that should be examined when attempting to determine the effects of wilderness therapy on program participants. These included the quality of participants' experiences, specific goals structured for participants that had collaborative, shared components imbedded in their design, a clear focus on quality feedback from participants, and a constant reassessment of coping strategies used by participants when engaged in programming.

Hattie et al. (1997) identified these four components to explain the effects of adventure programs on participants, and encouraged future researchers to examine these four areas more closely to further develop effective program assessment tools. The impact of this meta-analysis was strong, as these areas continue to be the most highly researched in any study pertaining to wilderness therapy, experiential education, or adventure therapy programs. Even twenty years later, studies of such program outcomes continue to cite Hattie et al. (1997). Since 1997, there are more clearly identifiable areas that are being examined when determining student outcomes. However, research continues to focus primarily on short-term outcomes, such as in Bowen and Neill's (2013) meta-analysis of the outcomes of adventure therapy programs, which showed moderate effectiveness in "facilitating positive short-term change in psychological, behavioral, emotional, and interpersonal domains" (42). These researchers still recognized the need for further investigation to understand variability in adventure therapy outcomes.

Bowen, Neill & Crisp (2016) conducted another study examining the pre-program, post-program, and follow-up responses of 36 adolescents' self-report questionnaires exploring the effects of wilderness adventure therapy on the mental health of youth participants to determine

student resilience levels, severity of depressive symptomology, and self-esteem levels after completing their time in these programs. Their research is representative of the continuous work being done to develop reliable tools for identifying the outcomes of wilderness adventure therapy programs through collecting quantitative data. They determined that participants had statistically significant improvement in certain areas of psychosocial functioning, psychological resilience, and social self-esteem, but ended with a recognition that more qualitative and quantitative data, and further evaluation of specific program components would lead to a better understanding of the benefits obtained from participating in these programs (Bowen et al. 2016).

These studies are just a few examples of the type of work that is being done to review the strength of wilderness and adventure therapy programs. What is most important is that researchers are recognizing the importance of following up with more than just one questionnaire to determine the strength of these programs. The data that is currently being collected allows for researchers to track the development and continuous reliance on important self-concepts and personality traits that, when appropriately developed, result in improved quality of life and future potential. Not only are researchers examining the effectiveness of the programs as educational organizations, but they are also able to identify if the program effects are truly impactful. Most importantly, research shows that when the power of adventure therapy, wilderness therapy, and experiential education is correctly utilized, it has immediate and long-lasting effects on the troubled youth demographics it is aimed at serving.

METHODS

Program description

It is important to define the program that I worked for during the summer of 2016, which utilized adventure-based experiential education in a wilderness setting. While some programs choose to call themselves “adventure therapy” and others choose to call themselves “wilderness therapy,” I felt that there were components of both types incorporated into the program where I worked, which allows me to use these terms interchangeably throughout my writing. The definitions of are slightly different, as this has been a widely-debated topic amongst experts who are working in the experiential education field. Generally, “wilderness therapy” programs are often considered to be “wilderness experience programs” (WEPs), which Friese, Hendee, & Kinziger (1998) defined as

Organizations that conduct outdoor programs in wilderness or comparable lands for purposes of personal growth, therapy, rehabilitation, education or leadership/organizational development. (40)

Adventure therapy programs differ slightly, in that they do not necessarily require a “wilderness” setting. Priest and Gass (2005, 23) defined adventure therapy as “programming aimed at changing [specified] dysfunctional behavior patterns, using adventure experiences as forms of habilitation and rehabilitation.” Having felt that the program I spent my time with included components of both adventure therapy and wilderness therapy programs, I use these terms interchangeably.

Participants

Throughout the summer of 2016, I worked with different youth groups run by a non-profit organization that operates multiple youth therapeutic programs in New England. I facilitated the

adventure programming for four of the residential youth programs, including an anxiety treatment program, a program for sexually abused females, a program for sexual deviants, and a program for young males who exhibited oppositional behavior and conduct disorders.

I chose to focus my research on the program that enrolled adolescent males with conduct disorders, as this was the group I spent the most time with, which allowed me to develop a strong connection and understanding of the individual students. During the summer, I spent time with students, both at their residential campus as well as in a variety of outdoor settings, while engaged in adventure-based activities. I supervised and led hiking, camping, biking, and paddling trips around the Upper Valley. During these excursions, I developed a professional but personal relationship with many students, which allowed me to relate directly to students while simultaneously remaining a respected teacher. This relationship allowed for many honest, mutually beneficial interactions that stuck with me, even after the work day was over.

Midway through the summer, I successfully developed questions (Appendix I) that I hoped to collect responses to through an interview with as many individual students as possible to use as my research data. I received approval from the Colorado College Institutional Review Board after completing both an IRB approval application, a participant assent form (Appendix II) and a parental consent form (Appendix III), as all the participants in my interviews were younger than 18. One of the most difficult parts of finding participants was that many had limited contact with their parents or parental figures while they were at their residential placement. While many already had complicated relationships with their peers, when they did have contact with their parents, the last thing that was on their mind was my research, and rightfully so. When I chose

the students to whom I provided assent and consent forms, I made sure that they were aware of what they were going to be doing when they took part in my research, and what forms they would need to get filled out in order to be allowed to participate. I did not want to put any student in an awkward or difficult spot, as they already had much expected from them during their time in the program. The students I chose to give forms were those I felt I had developed the strongest relationships with prior to the interviews taking place.

In total, I gave forms to 12 different students; five returned them with the required signatures. While this was less than half of the forms distributed, the five students were the individuals with whom I had developed very strong relationships, and they were all willing and eager to contribute to my research. The students who participated in my interviews ranged from 13 to 17 years of age, and had been in the program anywhere from a month and a half to over a year. Three of the participants identified as white, one identified as Hispanic, and another identified as African-American. All self-identified as males.

Interviews and coding

I conducted the interviews in the campus library where the students attended school, which served as a quiet but controlled, familiar environment. The interviews took approximately 20 minutes, with none exceeding 30 minutes. The anonymity of all participants is protected with the use of pseudonyms, and the recordings of each interview have since been erased.

All interviews were recorded and coded using NVivo coding software (Mac v 11.4). The first stage of coding was open coding (Saldaña 2008, 115) which looked for the root meaning in a

phrase, sentence or sentences. The first stage codes were followed by thematic coding, and through discussion with my research group, we arrived at two explanatory themes for viewing student learning and behaviors.

RESULTS

From coding the interviews, the two major themes that arose became the relative effectiveness and impact of students' individual connections with nature, versus their connections with their fellow students. As my thesis was following a grounded theory approach, the results of this coding led to the exploration and discovery of new literatures that guided the rest of my research work.

As I spent time reviewing the data collected in each interview, I chose to identify the issues that individual students felt they were placed in the program to work on. By identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, these students guided me as I attempted to more closely examine the self-perceptions of the behaviors that led these students to be placed in an adventure and wilderness-based therapeutic program. I compared this information with my own understanding of the strategies and practices these programs utilize to effectively address and alter behaviors that are detrimental to students' well-being and future potential. Furthermore, a close examination of participants' responses allowed me to better understand their connection to nature, and how it changed, if at all, throughout their time in the program. The implications of how nature, both as a living force and as a unique setting, affected these students is explored, with a focus on how each student engaged with their environment. Furthermore, a closer examination of the collaborative element of these programs is examined to show how individuals

both benefit and suffer from being in the outdoors engaged in adventure programming, while surrounded by those with behavioral issues. Finally, students' beliefs about their life potential after leaving the program are examined to determine how individual mindsets have changed during engagement in outdoor and wilderness-based activities to further recognize what lasting impact, if any, adventure-based and experiential education has on students' self-concepts and attitudes.

Power of nature

The effectiveness of pairing students' rehabilitation with the inherent power of nature can be best examined through an understanding of the ways in which nature provides opportunities for self-reflection and deep thought. Kaplan (1995) closely examines how nature allows individuals to engage in directed attention, where distractions and competing thoughts are blocked from an individual's mind. Kaplan (1995) posits that:

Directed attention is necessary for stepping back from the situation one is facing, for pausing to get a larger picture of what is going on. Thus, without the aid of directed attention, it is difficult to deal with situations in which the appropriate action is not immediately obvious. It is also hard to plan and to follow a plan. This leaves the individual caught up in the demands of the immediate situation, unable to transcend momentary pressures and temptations (171).

Many students placed in outdoor experiential therapy programs struggle with appropriately responding to situations that test their ability to self-regulate strong emotions and actions. All the students I interviewed spoke about having problems controlling reckless behaviors, and how these responses negatively impacted their lives. Eric, who had been in the program for only a month and a half at the time of his interview, mentioned how "when I get hyper, I tend to react and do stupid stuff." Nico, a student who was placed in a mental institute for bringing knives to his school, spoke about the incident, recalling "like one day I brought knives to school because I

totally forgot they were in my jacket pocket.” He self-diagnosed his own issues, stating “that is one of my main problems, I don’t think before I act so that’s why I really get in trouble because I’m impulsive when I do stuff.” The students who enter this type of program stand to benefit from pairing their rehabilitation with experiences in the outdoors, as these settings can provide more opportunities to develop the important life skills needed to keep them out of trouble.

Wilderness setting

Experiencing, appreciating, and benefiting from nature’s power does not require an expansive wilderness, or even a complete separation from urban environments. Kaplan (1992, 68-69) posits that there are four components of restorative environments: being away, fascination, extent, and compatibility. There ought to be a sense that one is away from their typical environment, where they can explore the many intricacies of nature that surrounds them. This promotes a sense of being connected to an unknown, enthralling environment that could be no larger than one block in a city, but nonetheless evokes a sense of wonderment while in an unexplored location.

Students who came into the program with little connection to nature could be seen developing a passion for outdoor exploration after a short time. Greg, a student who had been on probation for multiple years before being placed into the program, stated that:

Back at home, I wasn’t really that interested, but now I’m getting a lot more interested in nature. I mean back at home I’d be not even going outside that often. But like, since I’ve been here I’ve been wanting to go outside a lot and going on small hikes and small little walks.

These “small hikes and small little walks” are exactly the types of experiences in nature that Kaplan (1995) claims are so powerful for sparking students’ curiosity in the outdoors, and have the power to be transformative regardless of their brevity.

Student engagement

Regardless of the length of exposure students have in a nature setting, self-driven interest is crucial to driving rehabilitation while in nature-based experiential learning programs. Providing an alternate opportunity for students who often spend their time engaged in illicit activities is one of the most important parts of these experiences. Greg recalls how “I wasn’t focusing in school and that’s mainly the reason why I left school because I wanted to go out and smoke pot and stuff and then come back because mainly it was an escape.” Another student, Matt, mentioned how “usually when I get wicked mad or really aggressive I’m usually on something... Like I’m usually drunk or high on something that’s like pretty bad.” Nature can provide safer and more wholesome experiences for these students, who stand to benefit greatly from the vitalizing effects that result from thinking and interacting with others in the outdoors. Ryan et al. (2010, 159) examine these effects in a study that highlights how:

Subjective vitality has been linked with specific configurations of brain activation and positive stress response mechanisms. Subjective vitality has also been directly linked with behavioral outcomes in ego-depletion paradigms, mediating changes in behavioral measures of self-control performance. Moreover, in vital states people demonstrate better coping and report greater health and wellness. Evidence also suggests that it is specifically the activated forms of positive affect associated with vitality that can leave people more resilient to physical and viral stressors.

Increasing the motivation of students who display oppositional behavior is crucial, as their improved emotional and mental state drives them to engage in beneficial activities that do not typically lead to further trouble with law enforcement or school officials. Increased vitality, the physical and mental energy one has, can lead students to more productive uses of their free, unsupervised time. Inherently tied to these sources of energy is a student’s motivational level.

Vitality, motivation, and self-control are all linked to the behaviors students engage in, and the choices they make that can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. Muraven et al. (2008, 3) examine the connection between subjective vitality and intrinsic motivation, noting how vitality increases when people engage in self-driven behaviors. Independently regulating emotions and impulses is a positive, energizing experience when it is self-driven; the autonomous action of using self-control in certain scenarios can enhance one's vitality and motivational levels. As nature-focused therapy programs seek to improve upon students' ability to control their own emotions, improving upon their motivation and subjective vitality becomes linked towards this common goal. One student, Ethan, stated simply that "With me there is no motivation." Eric, one of the younger students in the program, mentioned that "There's been a couple times where I like barely get out of the house, but since I'm at [this program] and they do a lot of camping hiking, outdoors stuff, I got used to it and I love doing it." This student did not come into the program with a passion for the outdoors, but developed this appetite after being presented with the opportunity to become more active and engage with nature-centered activities. Matt reiterated how in the past,

I didn't have the energy to do anything. I didn't even want to go to school. I'd just sit and sleep all day, until after school and then I could get what I needed or whatever. And then since I've been locked back up, after like three weeks I started feeling so much better. Like I have so much more energy now compared to like four or five months ago when I couldn't do anything.

A personal sense of an increase in Matt's motivational levels shows that he is replenishing the resources needed to effectively and appropriately respond when in situations like those that led him to trouble in the past. As Muraven et al. (2008, 15) found, a lowered level of vitality can decrease the amount of self-control strength available to individuals. But as positive experiences

replenish strength to perform self-control tasks, one has more motivational energy to exert self-control when required to do so.

Outdoor group programming

Nature-focused therapy programs seek to improve upon students' motivational energy, strength of self-control, and ability to regulate emotional responses through exposure to a variety of outdoor and often unfamiliar settings. However, it is important to recognize that students are placed in these settings with other individuals who all suffer from very similar issues. Many of the students stated that constantly being with other students presented some of the most difficult situations they faced throughout their time in the programs. While participating in an element on a high-ropes course during outdoor programming, Eric stated:

The people that were holding my ropes the first time, they would shake it and I wouldn't move, because I didn't feel comfortable. Because the first time I got there on the edge of it, I almost fell because it was shaking and they were being jerks.

Nico told the stories of how, on the way to a kayaking trip, "these kids kept on pushing me and stuff like hitting me on the head. So, they wouldn't stop even though I told them to stop." He felt that the most difficult part of the program was specifically "having all the other kids around me, because usually my house is calm for the most part, especially now because everyone's at school. But when everyone comes back it's wicked hectic." Greg felt similarly, stating that the toughest part for him was that most kids loved "picking on people and stuff, they'll pick on anyone here." He referred to this behavior as a type of sabotage, as some students are "scared that they're [other students] gonna be leaving before them, and so they want those people to stay longer." While these programs are designed to help participants develop skills that will keep them out of trouble in the future, there is a purposefully designed collaborative element to every

activity planned for students during time in placement. Regardless of whether students felt a deeper connection to the other individuals in the groups they were placed with, they were still pushed to engage in activities that tested their abilities to work with others while in stressful, unfamiliar settings.

Eatough, Chang, and Hall (2015) examined whether an experience on an adventure-focused ropes course improved group cohesion, group members' trust in each other, as well as self- and group-efficacy. One of their most interesting findings was that, contrary to their original hypothesis, it was individuals who do not normally turn to others when confronted with stressful situations that stand to learn the most when prompted to rely upon a group in order to successfully complete a challenge. Nature-based therapy programs are geared towards helping individuals who struggle with trusting others, as well as themselves. Many of the adolescents in these programs have faced abuse from peers, or have grown up feeling as though they cannot trust those whom they ought to be able to trust the most. These trust issues further complicate the relationships they develop throughout their lives, and include the relationships with fellow group members, whom they feel are not there to help them, but are rather just another participant who is as flawed as they are. Greg stated that "when it comes to groups of kids and stuff, I'm mainly that person that sticks to themselves- like what me and my cousin call a lone wolf... like we don't hang out with anybody." Greg chooses not to work with others, even when he is not engaged in activities that require him to do so. Helping students recognize that the other participants are people whom they can turn to for support is a crucial step in their rehabilitation process.

Eric spoke about how having support from fellow students is very helpful when he is having a tough time controlling his emotions. He explained how...

When I first got here, he didn't know me, and when I got angry he'd just like say oh, fuck this kid and leave him. And then he started knowing and realizing that I have a hard time a lot, and most of the time he brings me off to the side and talks to me and asks me what's happening and stuff like that. And he just says, if it's another kid pissing me off, he says just ignore him, like, just stay away from them.

This friendship was particularly surprising and interesting to me, because only a few weeks before I recorded this interview, these two students were close to fighting each other while on a kayaking trip during their adventure programming. It was a particularly windy day, and Eric was having a difficult time paddling against the strong winds that were pushing him back. The other student was teasing him, which led to a lot of screaming and threats, and frustrated Eric even further. I talked with both students, reassuring Eric that he was doing a fine job, and that he should not have to worry about holding up the group, as we were all moving at our own pace. I asked the other student to be supportive, rather than critical towards Eric, as we all just wanted to enjoy our time in the outdoors on what was a beautiful day regardless of the windy conditions. I was very pleased to see that a few weeks later, these students had developed a friendship that was mutually beneficial; not only were they turning to each other for support, but their bond showed that each had made steps towards developing the skills needed to respond appropriately to situations where complex emotions can take control. Most importantly, this relationship benefited both students in various outdoor settings, where interventions are common as students react differently to the stressful activities they are faced with.

Future

Witnessing positive progress in a student's rehabilitation process in outdoor, adventure-based therapy programs provides both staff and students with a mutual feeling of optimism. However,

as is expected from students who struggle with controlling complex emotions, there are good days and bad days for everyone. Unfortunately, when students are not in placement, bad days can result in violations of probation, or injurious actions that can render the hard work and positive steps towards recovery and self-development that had been achieved in a therapeutic program irrelevant in the eyes of the law, their caretakers, or both. Therefore, it is crucial that the students identify and apply the skills gained from lessons they are being taught, regardless of what setting they are in, to ensure they continue to have a positive influence on their quality of life. Matt showed that he recognized this, stating

I'm not trying to stay in here... it's probably just because I've been dealing with this stuff for a while, so I'm just tired of it. And dealing with this for a while teaches you that you're just gonna get in more trouble and it keeps you in here longer, so you just kinda gotta get out of the cycle. And you'll have to use some of these things when you get older too, like you get a job and your boss says something to you, you're not gonna just punch your boss in the face.

A recognition of the future applications of the lessons and coping strategies that students are being taught is reassuring; Matt went on to say how he hopes to “keep away from the drugs that I've done. Because I've done a lot of drugs, and it's just not even worth it... it either kills you or all the money you get from working.” Nico also showed signs of getting back on the right track, saying how...

I never really thought about my future until I got in here, because like I thought I was gonna have a good life. And then I came here, and then that got me thinking about the choices that I made and that I need to start making better choices or else I'm not gonna have a good future... I want to go back to school and do good because now I am going to start caring about school, and I'm gonna try to get good grades in school.

These types of reflective experiences are what Quay (2013) highlights as important when practicing outdoor education, and should be recognized as just as important when using the outdoors in conjunction with therapeutic programs. He examines how reflectivity allows participants and others to better understand our own lives in relation to certain experiences.

Reflecting back upon our past experiences, and how they may relate to the future, helps individuals to, as Quay (2013) writes

be better placed to consider the problems that could emerge and the way in which reflective experiences contributes to the ongoing process of resolution- as changing aesthetic experience- which is at the same time a reorganization of the relations between self, others and nature (154).

Although these are short statements from kids who are in a “positive” mindset when responding to questions, engaging in discussions about past experiences and future goals can have a large impact on students. Leather (2013, 89) discusses the importance of informal talk in residential outdoor education, explaining how experiences in the outdoors can serve as the jumping off point for participants to engage in meaningful, stimulating conversation. He argues that reflections on experiences “provide ideal opportunities to address matters of the socio-cultural and personal contexts” of students’ lives, engaging them in a thought process that expands far beyond the scope of the present. Much of the purpose of these talks is to encourage the type of positivity that is often prevalent after experiences in the outdoors, especially those experiences that test the self-efficacy and resiliency of participants.

The development of resiliency is arguably the foundation of outdoor therapeutic programming. By placing students in unfamiliar, stressful environments, they are pushed to recognize that they must ultimately rely upon themselves in any situation that presents a challenge. While social support is helpful and beneficial during these experiences, there will come a time when participants will not have a group, or peers, to rely upon in a complex, emotionally tasking situation. In outdoor therapeutic programs, the group, and the dynamics amongst its members, are undeniably powerful forces that have much to offer participants throughout their time in the

program. Yet, the focus must remain on the individuals themselves, and on their progress throughout their rehabilitation.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to my research, in addition to the most obvious of a small sample size of only five participants. While I was grateful that I developed a good relationship with the students who took part in my research, I feel as though this could have affected their responses. If an interviewer who had no prior connection to the program had asked the same questions, the answers may have been quite different. The students may have been more hesitant to talk about their personal lives, but they might have been more critical of aspects of the program that they least enjoyed. Furthermore, I never had the chance to follow up with the participants who I interviewed. Almost a year has passed since I had the opportunity to talk with these adolescents, and I have no idea whether they are still in the program. A follow-up interview with any of the five participants would provide me with a better understanding of the impact adventure therapy programs have on participants.

Every adventure therapy or wilderness therapy program uses different strategies when incorporating the outdoors into students' daily curriculum. It would be more effective to determine whether an approach is working by conducting a longitudinal study that utilizes the opinions and beliefs of everyone involved in the program. This includes not only the students, but also the teachers, therapists, and even parents of students, all of whom have unique, important perceptions of the program that ought to be taken into consideration when attempting to improve upon adventure and wilderness therapy programs. This more holistic approach would

have allowed me to better examine the outcomes of these programs on all the people involved in their process of rehabilitation. While the students are obviously the primary focus of these programs, their behaviors have long-term impacts on more than just themselves. The views of parents, teachers, and therapists would provide further evidence of the changes that they see occurring in students' behaviors, attitudes, and mentalities. These people are the ones who should know students the best, and thus, they ought to be considered and interviewed as experts who have valuable contributions to make to future studies.

While collecting data through interviews was a beneficial experience for both myself and the students who participated in my research, I felt as though I could have been collecting data after every trip or adventure-based activity the students did that would have provided valuable information about students' thoughts towards chosen experiences. Even just a simple questionnaire that asked students to rate their level of enjoyment, what they wished had been different, and any thoughts they had after completing an element on the ropes course, or a kayaking trip, would provide employees, whose job it is to plan meaningful and impactful activities, with a host of information about what the students thought about their time in the outdoors. Even though every student already has their own file while in the program, all of the information is written by the employees; having the students' input would provide further information concerning what is working, and what is not, for each individual, and could help employees who are unfamiliar with the personal interests of any student gain a better idea of their strengths, weaknesses, and personal tendencies while they are in a wilderness setting, or while they are participating in adventure-based programming.

CONCLUSIONS

While my research focused on youth groups who face personal issues, and how outdoor experiential education meets their complex needs, this research has convinced me that this form of instruction has the potential to serve more than just a population at risk of emotional responses that make them appear as threats to other adolescents. Experiential education promotes deeper learning that leaves a lasting impact on the whole student, engaging the body and mind in ways that more traditional models of instruction do not, and in a way, cannot. Pairing this form of instruction with the power of the outdoors provides significant and impactful educational opportunities and encourages students to consider their own place in the world and how they fit into their own environment and community. Few, if any other teaching strategies effectively utilize a setting to strengthen students' mental and physical health while pushing them to develop important self-concepts.

My interest in this topic was inspired by the questions my grandfather posed while he was attempting to develop an adventure-based therapeutic program. One of these included "How do children perceive their involvement in wilderness programs? How can this information be used to improve programs?" Though my research provided a limited view of participants' experiences in these programs, I saw that participants identified and explained how five individuals are changing during their time in these programs. Adolescents are clearly cognizant of the ways in which they directly benefit from having their needs supported in a host of settings, especially in the outdoors. Through my coding, I could more clearly identify which elements of the program teach and reinforce new skills that the students could rely upon when in complicated and threatening situations. I recognized the importance of gathering information from participants to

assess and improve these programs. If administrators, teachers, and therapists are not considering the opinions and emotions of their clientele, there is little way to adapt and change a program in a way that is responsive to the needs of the individuals who require directed intervention.

While interviews are an effective way of gathering information, researchers stand to learn more through a longitudinal study of participants in adventure therapy programs to determine the effect of these programs on the long-term potential students. Keeping in touch with participants, and re-examining the questions that they were asked while placed in these programs, would allow researchers to better understand the impact of experiential education in a wilderness setting. The lessons these students learn during their time in adventure therapy programs should guide them throughout their lives for the learning to have been truly beneficial. Researchers should not simply focus on how participants felt during one 30-minute interview. The lessons and skills these adolescents are learning during their time in placement have long-lasting impacts on their future potential, and should be examined over an extended period to gather valuable data that can improve the whole program.

While Hattie et al. (1997) provided researchers with valuable information about how to continue developing the field of research that focuses on these types of programs, it is crucial that more work is done to develop a method that accurately determines the quality of adventure therapy and wilderness therapy programs. Currently, there are some evaluation methods, such as the YARPET (Youth at Risk Program Evaluation Tool) Questionnaire (Appendix IV, V, VI), which was developed to assess the development of participants during their time in experiential and adventure-based programs. This questionnaire includes a participant and observer questionnaire,

for both students and teachers, which allows for researchers to collect valuable data that can assist with determining the progress of students towards personal, social, environmental, and institutional objectives that these programs are attempting to help their clientele reach.

Furthermore, the YARPET is easily adaptable to any program, which makes it a versatile tool that researchers can quickly and easily utilize regardless of the uniqueness of their program.

Although this is just one strategy for determining the quality of adventure and wilderness focused therapy, these are the tools that must be continuously adapted, developed and re-examined to ensure that students are receiving the most appropriate and highest quality treatment during their time in these programs.

While current researchers seem to be primarily focused on studies that produce quantifiable results to judge the strength of adventure therapy, wilderness therapy, and experiential education programs, the information and data that results from interviews, informal talk, and conversation with participants should not be overlooked. I was very surprised by the way in which the qualitative data I collected pushed my research, and led me to sources that I never anticipated reading. Although quantitative research of these programs is extremely useful and helps improve their quality, I do not feel that enough qualitative research is being done, not just by scholars interested in this field of education, but by the administrators and heads of these programs as well. I feel as though in some way, my thesis ought to show why this gap in research ought to be filled.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1994). Self-Efficacy. In V.S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81) New York: Academic Press. (Reprinted in H. Friedman [Ed.], *Encyclopedia of mental health*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998)
- Bowen, D. J., & Neill, J. T. (2013). A meta-analysis of adventure therapy outcomes and moderators. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 6(1), 28-53.
- Bowen, D. J., Neill, J. T., & Crisp, S. J. (2016). Wilderness adventure therapy effects on the mental health of youth participants. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 58, 49-59.
- Bruyere, B. L. (2002). Appropriate benefits for outdoor programs targeting juvenile male offenders. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 25(1), 207-213.
- Eatough, E., Chang, C. H., & Hall, N. (2015). Getting roped in: Group cohesion, trust, and efficacy following a ropes course intervention. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 28(2), 65-89. DOI: [10.1002/piq.21183](https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.21183)
- Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Seabury Press: New York.
- Friese, G., Hendee, J. C., & Kinziger, M. (1998). The wilderness experience program industry in the United States: Characteristics and dynamics. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 21(1), 40-45.
- Hattie, J., Marsh, H. W., Neill, J. T., & Richards, G. E. (1997). Adventure education and Outward Bound: Out-of-class experiences that make a lasting difference. *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 43-87.
- Kaplan, S. (1995). The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15(3), 169-182
- Kaplan, S. (1993). The role of natural environment aesthetic in the restorative experience. In P. H. Gobster, Ed., *Managing Urban and High-use Recreation Settings*. St. Paul, MN: Forest Service, USDA. General Technical Report NC-163.
- Kolb, D.A., (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Leather, M. (2013). 'It's good for their self-esteem': the substance beneath the label. *The importance of 'informal talk' in residential outdoor education: It's more than the activities*, University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth, UK, *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* 13(2), 88-92.
- Muraven, M., Gagné, M., & Rosman, H. (2008). Helpful self-control: Autonomy support, vitality, and depletion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44(3), 573-585.

Neill, J. (2012) *A Measurement Tool for Assessing the Effects of Adventure-based Programs on Outcomes for Youth-at-Risk Participants*. Date last accessed: May16, 2017

Ord, J & Leather, M. (2011) The substance beneath the labels of experiential learning: The importance of John Dewey for outdoor educators. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 15(1), 13-23.

Patterson, C. H. (1997) *Foundations for a Theory of Instruction and Educational Psychology*. Harper & Row. Chapter 5: Carl Rogers and Humanistic Education.

Priest, S., & Gass, M. (2005). *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Quay, J. (2013). More than relations between self, others and nature: Outdoor education and aesthetic experience. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 13(2), 142-157.

Ryan, R. M., Weinstein, N., Bernstein, J., Brown, K. W., Mistretta, L., & Gagne, M. (2010). Vitalizing effects of being outdoors and in nature. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(2), 159-168.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Wolter, J. & Teschner, D. (April, 1984). *Wilderness Challenge: Outdoor Education Alternatives for Youth in Need*. Hadlyme, CT. The Institute of Experiential Studies.

Appendix I

Interview Question

Why are you enrolled in this program?

What do you believe this program is designed to help you learn?

What do you feel are the most challenging aspects of this program?

What is the greatest challenge you have faced thus far in your life?

Have you developed a close friendship with anyone in this program, including both participants and employees?

Does nature play an important role in your life?

Has your connection to nature changed since starting this program?

Do you feel this program has had an impact on your self-control? How?

Do you feel that this program has had an impact on your motivation? How?

Has this program made you more or less optimistic about your future? Why?

What do you hope to do in the future? Was this influenced by the program? How?

What would you change about this program if given the opportunity?

What would you keep the same about this program if given the opportunity?

Do you have anything else you wish to say about this program?

Appendix II

Parental Consent Form

Examining Student Self-Efficacy at Programs for Adolescent Boys Displaying Oppositional Behavior and Conduct Disorders Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

Principal Investigator: Warren Wolter Bunnell
Thesis Advisor: Howard Drossman
Colorado College Department of Education
(719) 389-6146 – Colorado College Department of Education
(617) 584-7283 – Principal Investigator's Number (Warren Bunnell)
warren.bunnell@coloradocollege.edu

Your child is invited to take part in a research study that will examine whether and how the adventure therapy program he has been taking part in may affect his self-esteem and self-efficacy. Through participating in this study, your child will provide valuable insight concerning what makes these programs most successful in their efforts to rehabilitate and further prepare students for success in life.

What the study is about:

This study will examine the elements of adventure therapy programs that might make them successful in engaging students in ways that develop their individual mental and physical strengths.

What your child will be asked to do:

Your child will be asked the following questions in a classroom setting, with the primary researcher (Warren Bunnell) and their lead counselor in the room. The questioning process will last as long as they take to respond, but is not expected to exceed 30 minutes.

The questions would include:

- Why are you enrolled in this program?
- What do you believe this program is designed to help you learn?
- What do you feel are the most challenging aspects of this program?
- What is the greatest challenge you have faced thus far in your life?
- Have you developed a close friendship with anyone in this program, including both participants and employees?
- Does nature play an important role in your life?
- Has your connection to nature changed since starting this program?
- Do you feel this program has had an impact on your self-control? How?
- Do you feel that this program has had an impact on your motivation? How?
- Has this program made you more or less optimistic about your future? Why?
- What do you hope to do in the future? Was this influenced by the program? How?
- What would you change about this program if given the opportunity?
- What would you keep the same about this program if given the opportunity?
- Do you have anything else you wish to say about this program?

Risks and benefits:

There are no anticipated risks to your child if he participates in this study, beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Your child may benefit from taking part in this study by helping develop the knowledge base in the field of adventure therapy programs. This is not a popularly researched educational field, and their participation would serve many researchers in the future who are attempting examine the strengths and weaknesses of similar programs.

Taking part is voluntary:

Your consent and your child’s participation in this study are completely voluntary. Your child can withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind, and you can withdraw your consent at any time without consequences of any kind. Participants are welcome to skip any question that they do not want to answer, and will be made aware of all their rights as a participant before the interview begins. Participating in this study does not mean that you are or your child is giving up any legal rights.

Your child’s answers will be kept confidential:

The records of this study will be kept private, and individual data will only be accessible by the primary researchers. All the recordings will be kept on a private computer, with no names or identifying words attached to each file. After the interviews are listened to, transcribed, and coded by the primary researcher, the files will be destroyed and will be unable to be recovered. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your child’s name or any other individual information by which your child could be identified.

If you have questions or want a copy or summary of the study results:

Contact the researcher at the email address or phone number above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. If you have any questions about whether your child has been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact the Colorado College Institutional Research Board chair, Amanda Udis-Kessler at 719-227-8177 or audiskessler@coloradocollege.edu.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions. I consent to allow my child to take part in the research study of adventure therapy programs.

Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature	Child’s Name (Please Print)	Date

Appendix III

Student Assent Form

YOUTH (Ages 13-17) ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Examining Student Self-Efficacy at Programs for Adolescent Boys Displaying Oppositional Behavior and Conduct Disorders

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Warren Bunnell, an undergraduate student enrolled in the Education Department at Colorado College, in Colorado Springs, CO. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently enrolled in one of Becket Family of Services' programs. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of my research is to examine the attitudes of students at therapeutic programs as they relate to a gain or loss of self-efficacy. My research will help to determine whether specific elements, such as outdoor orientation make them more or less successful, and why.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. If you agree that you would like to participate, we will then ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Even if your parents say "yes" you can still decide that you prefer not to participate.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you the following questions:

Why are you in this program?

What do you believe this program is designed to help you learn?

What do you feel are the most challenging aspects of this program?

What is the greatest challenge you have faced thus far in your life?

Have you developed a close friendship with anyone in this program, including both participants and employees?

Has your connection to nature changed since starting this program?

Do you feel this program has had an impact on your self-control? How?

Do you feel that this program has had an impact on your motivation? How?

Has this program made you more or less optimistic about your future? Why?

What would you change about this program if given the opportunity?

Do you have anything else you wish to say about this program?

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in the study will take up to 45 to 60 minutes.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated physical risks from this study. Some participants may find the questions listed above stressful to answer, but you may choose to skip any question or end the interview at any point for any reason.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You may benefit from the study through examining your place in the program, as well as examining your own life in ways that you may have never done before.

The results of the research may lead to a deeper understanding of yourself on a personal level, and will also benefit future participants in the program in which you are currently participating.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that identify you will remain confidential. Your name will not be attached to your interview in any way, and the recordings will be destroyed after we convert the data to written form and learn from it.

- **Withdrawal of participation by the investigator**

The investigator may withdraw you from participating in this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable and do not wish to continue, you may drop out at any point, and any recording that may have been made of the interview will be erased completely.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. You may withdraw your assent or discontinue participation at any time. You are not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can answer questions I might have about this study?

In the event of a research related injury, please immediately contact one of the researchers listed below. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact Warren Bunnell at 617-584-7283 or at warren.bunnell@coloradocollege.edu, or contact the Colorado College Institutional Research Board chair, Amanda Udis-Kessler at 719-227-8177 or audiskessler@coloradocollege.edu.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING ASSENT

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly agreeing to participate in this research study.

Name of Person Obtaining Assent

Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent

Date

Appendix IV

Guidelines for Administering the *YOUR ORGANIZATION* Program Evaluation Tool To Participants

These guidelines are for instructors and coordinators to help make the administration of research questionnaires easier, more effective and standardized across different groups.

The *YOUR ORGANIZATION* Program Evaluation Tool is designed to be largely self-administering –in other words, if an appropriate part of the program is allocated to completing the questionnaire, appropriate conditions created (quiet atmosphere, participants in their own space, etc.), appropriate instructions given and appropriate support provided to those who have difficulties (e.g., answering their questions), then participants can complete the questionnaire on their own.

The quality and completeness of answers will be considerably improved, however, if the following introductory sequence is followed.

1. **FAMILIARITY:** Carefully read the questionnaire and have a go at completing the questionnaire yourself (unless you have already do so as part of staff training). Familiarity with the layout and instructions will help you answer participants' questions better.

2. **TIMING:** Questionnaires at the beginning of a program need to be done before program activities get underway. This is so responses are unaffected by the course.

An introduction might go 'Hi, my name is John Smith, welcome to Program X, I will be your instructor for the program, now before we do anything else could you please get your pens and take a seat...'

3. **SETTING:** Pick a place free of distractions for the participants, away from other groups, noise and activity, and in the shade if hot.

4. **SEATING:** Get the participants to sit apart with some space between themselves. This helps participants to give private answers that are honest and individual. Your participants may be especially sensitive to peer pressure, their friends' views and ideas.

For example: '...when you come back to take your seat please spread out so none of you are sitting together...'

4. **INTRODUCTION:** Give it before handing out the questionnaire. The questionnaire distracts participants from listening to you.

5. **RATIONALE:** Keep reasons for the questionnaire brief, general, and associated directly with the program. This does not create expectations that could affect the participants' answers.

For example, '...We are doing research on our programs to find out about what effects they have on participants. This is helping us develop to design better programs. It is a continuing process and I am asking you for your help and contribution to the future by completing this questionnaire... (hold up). This will take about 15 or 20 minutes.'

Note that participation in any research should be voluntary and that if any participant does wish not to complete the questionnaire then this should be respected.

6. ACCURATE RESPONSES: Encourage the participants to answer honestly, thoughtfully, and *as they feel right now*.

For example, '...when you answer the questionnaire think about your answers carefully and be as honest as you can. There are no right or wrong answers, this is not a test, simply give your answers as you feel right now...'

7. CONFIDENTIALITY: Reassure participants of the confidentiality of their answers. This will give the participants increased confidence to answer honestly.

For example, '...the answers you give are confidential and will be entered, without your name, into a computer confidential – we do not use your responses to evaluate you or write reports on you.'

Note: If asked why names are required, it is to match up each persons' questionnaires over time. If a participant doesn't want to write their name, then ask them to use a code word they can remember and use again at the end of the course when they complete the questionnaire again.

8. TIME LIMIT: Ask participants to take as much time as they properly need. This is so slower participants feel no pressure to hurry and not answer thoughtfully when other participants have already finished. The questionnaire will probably take most participants 15 to 20 minutes, but be aware of whether there are participants who may struggle to complete in this time frame and how they can best be helped earlier on (e.g., having someone read the items to them, or arranging for the person to start earlier than the group, etc.), rather than leaving it to the last minute.

For example, '...Please take as long as you need to give honest and thoughtful answers, there is no time limit.'

9. INSTRUCTIONS: Get participants to read the questionnaire's instructions, first, and to ask you any questions before they start the questionnaire. Otherwise some participants will not read, or not understand the instructions and incorrectly complete the questionnaire.

For example, '...now I will hand the questionnaires out but before you start could you make sure that you carefully read the instructions and ask me any questions that you might have...'

10. DETAILS: Remind the participants to fill in all details, age, male/female, program and name. It is vital that these details are filled in, without them the answers given are useless.

For example, '...has everybody remembered to circle whether you are a male or female, fill in your age, our program which is X, and your name? Please do it now if you have not ...'

11. COLLECTION: When you collect each person's questionnaire, check over it to make sure that each question is correctly completed and that participants' details are correctly and fully completed. It is important that you respect participants' privacy and make it obvious that you are only checking by a glance at each page and not studying their answers. Approximately 1 in 3 participants will likely need to be asked to complete blank items or personal details.

Participants who have finished usually need to be encouraged to sit quietly whilst others are still finishing.

For example, '...when you have finished make sure you check your questionnaire so that it is complete, then turn it over and I will come, collect it and double-check that it is complete. If you finish before others, please be quiet while they're finishing.'

12. CLOSURE: When all the questionnaires are collected, thank the group for their participation and remove the questionnaires from participants' sight and attention by placing them into a labeled envelope and forward them to the research coordinator.

13. END OF PROGRAM: Participants will also complete the questionnaire at the end of the program. The briefing should be virtually the same, although shorter, with a particular emphasis on completing the questionnaire as **THEY FEEL NOW**. Timing is important: it should be after all the program activities are complete (i.e. after final debrief), but before participants are in 'going-home-can't-wait-for-MacDonalds' mode. For example, you could do the questionnaire after the final debrief or early on the final morning before departure.

Appendix V

PROGRAM EVALUATION TOOL – Observer Sheet

Program: _____ **Observation Number:** 1st 2nd **Role of Observer:** e.g, Instructor
 3rd 4th
Name of Observer: _____ **Date of Observation:** / / **Day of Program:**
 2004

INSTRUCTIONS: Described below are 17 different aspects of young people’s personal, social and environmental capacities. Please rate YOUR PERCEPTION of the degree to which each individual appears to be effective in each of the areas. Simply rate based on what you’ve observed of each participant - do not discuss with other staff or students. Writing your ratings in the boxes, using a scale from 1 to 8, as follows:

False	More false than true	Neither true or false	More true than false	True
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8		

	Participant Names (one per column - room for 16)															
Youth development areas																
1 Self-Esteem exhibits a high level of self-esteem																
2 Self-Confidence has the self-confidence to manifest what he/she desires in life																
3 Locus of Control believes that his/her actions and efforts determine what happens to him/her																
4 Effective Problem Solving effective at solving problems																
5 Ability to Set & Achieve Goals effective at setting and achieving goals																
6 Reflective Journaling uses journaling to reflect on his/her experiences																

	Participant Names (one per column - room for 16)															
Youth development areas																
7 Creative Self-Expression expresses thoughts and feelings creatively, such as through art, drama or music																
8 Healthy Risk-taking takes healthy risks (not too cautious, not too risky) for the sake of his/her growth and well-being																
9 Seakayaking Competence possesses good sea kayaking skills																
1 Respect/Understand Personal Boundaries appropriately respects personal space, touch, and rules of conduct																
1 Conflict Resolution effectively heads off and resolves interpersonal and group conflicts																
1 Communication Skills communicates effectively with others in interpersonal and group settings																
1 Cooperative Teamwork cooperates well working with other team members																
1 Effective Leadership leads effectively when a task needs to be done																
1 Community Engagement has a positive sense of community																
1 Environmental Stewardship is actively concerned and interested in issues in the ecosystem.																
1 Local Environmental Knowledge has in-depth knowledge about the Casco Bay environment and ecosystem.																

Appendix VI

P.E.T. – A[©]

PLEASE DO NOT TURN OVER YET

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS

This is a chance for you to consider how you think and feel about yourself. **This is NOT a test** - there are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will only be used for evaluating Rippleffect programs– not for evaluating or reporting on you as an individual. Your answers will be kept confidential.

You are asked to respond to a series of statements that are more or less true ('like you') or more or less false ('unlike you'). Use the 8 point scale to indicate how true or false each statement is for you **RIGHT NOW**. Please complete all items -- do not leave any blanks.

FALSE NOT LIKE ME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TRUE LIKE ME
This statement doesn't describe me at all; it isn't like me at all									This statement describes me very well; it is very much like me.
		More false than true			More true than false				

SOME EXAMPLES

A. I am a fast thinker.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(A student who circled 6 believes that "I am a fast thinker" is sometimes true – it is sometimes like him.)

B. I am a good storyteller.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(A student who circled 2 believes that "I am a good storyteller" isn't like her much at all - she doesn't really tell good stories.)

**** ARE YOU SURE WHAT TO DO? ****

If yes, then please turn the page over...

If still unsure about what to do, ASK FOR HELP.

PLEASE GIVE HONEST ANSWERS

NAME: _____ AGE: _____ (years) DATE TODAY: _____ MALE / FEMALE (circle one) PROGRAM: _____
--

Important Instructions:

This is NOT a test – respond to the statements honestly, the way you feel now.
 The results are only used for improving Ripple effect’s programs, not for reporting on you.
 In response to each statement, CIRCLE one number, using this rating scale:

FALSE	TRUE
NOT LIKE ME	LIKE ME

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
More false							More true

STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
	FALSE Not like me				TRUE Like me								
01. Overall most things I do turn out well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
02. I work hard at solving what’s causing my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
03. I write about my thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
04. People understand me when I’m talking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
05. I know I have the ability to do anything I want to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
06. Goals are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
07. I cooperate well when working in team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
08. I have an in-depth knowledge about the local natural environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
09. My own efforts and actions are what will determine my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
10. I respect other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8					
11. I express myself in creative ways.						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

12. I resolve my conflicts with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13. I enjoy living in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
STATEMENT	FALSE				TRUE			
	Not like me				Like me			
14. I am good at deciding whether a risk is worth taking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. I believe humans must live in harmony with nature in order to survive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16. As a leader, I get people working well together.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
17. I am a competent sea kayaker.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18. Overall I have a lot to be proud of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19. I solve problems to the best of my ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
20. I use a journal or diary to record my life experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
21. I communicate effectively with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
22. When I apply myself to something I am confident I will succeed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
23. I have specific goals to aim for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
24. I like cooperating in a team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
25. My life is mostly controlled by external things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
26. I know a lot about Casco Bay's ecosystem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
27. I think carefully about the consequences of my risky actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28. I behave appropriately towards other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
29. I like to use creative ways of exploring my thoughts and feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30. I avoid unnecessary conflicts with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
31. If I have problems, there are people in my community who help me to solve them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

32. I think conserving natural resources is necessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
33. I am a capable leader.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
34. I am confident in my ability to handle waves, high winds, and capsizes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
35. Most things I do I do well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

STATEMENT	FALSE Not like me				TRUE Like me			
36. I am effective at solving the cause of my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
37. I use a journal as a way of dealing with things that are happening to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
38. I understand other people when they are talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
39. I believe I can do it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
40. I prefer to set my own goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
41. I am good at cooperating with team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
42. I understand local environmental issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
43. If I succeed in life it will be because of my efforts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
44. I understand issues of personal space, touch, and appropriate behavior towards other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
45. I explore my thoughts and feelings creatively, such as through art, drama or music.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
46. I can't deal with conflict.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
47. I help people in my community to get along with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
48. I balance my risk-taking behaviors -- I am not too risky or too cautious.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
49. I believe humans have a responsibility to solve environmental problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

50. I am a good leader when things need to get done. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

51. I am capable of completing sea kayaking trip of more than six miles. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

The End – Thank you