

Effectiveness of Outward Bound FINS Programs Part I: Program History and Course Description

The idea that time in the wilderness can have a therapeutic effect has a long history. Examples range from Biblical accounts of people entering the wilderness to Plato's emphasis on the moral benefits gained through nature to the rituals of tribes sending youth into the woods as a rite of passage. In the past 40 years the benefits of wilderness expeditions have been cultivated by a new field called wilderness therapy. Wilderness therapy has been defined as, "the use of traditional therapy techniques, especially group therapy techniques, in a wilderness setting, when the wilderness is approached with therapeutic intent."¹

The scope of wilderness therapy includes both expedition and camp based programs. Typically, these courses last between 20 and 60 days in length. The client base served through these programs includes delinquent youth, drug and alcohol abusers, and those with psychosis. These programs have developed from wilderness experiential learning programs. Most of these programs focus on developing leadership, self-reliance, teamwork, and improved self-concept.

Outward Bound is one of the most famous wilderness programs. Currently Outward Bound runs courses in 20 different countries, serving approximately 200,000 clients a year. While Outward Bound runs the majority of its programs as experiential learning experiences for 'normal' populations, they also run courses for delinquent youth.

¹ Keith Russell. "Exploring How the Wilderness Therapy Process Relates to Outcomes." *The Journal of Experiential Education* (2000): 170.

Courses focused exclusively on delinquent youth began in 1975 in Jacksonville, Florida in conjunction with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Education (DOE).

This program was designed for adjudicated youth and called STEP or Short Term Expedition Program. Later Outward Bound began running programs as a part of Florida's DJJ FINS program or Families in Need of Services. FINS courses make up one of several prevention programs run in Florida.

Minimal research has been done to look at the long-term effectiveness of these programs. The Department of Juvenile Justice lists in its yearly reports the percentage of recidivism from participants of the program. Students complete a pre and post Social Skills questionnaire as a part of their course. These results, while individually showing a positive improvement by course participants, have not been collected and reported consistently in a form to be analyzed. The purpose of this project is to give a thorough overview of the Outward Bound program and the therapy methods used during course, and to show the effectiveness of the program through the results gathered from pre and post Social Skills questionnaires from 200 participants in 2008-09.

Students come to an Outward Bound FINS program lacking skills needed to make positive decisions. This can be attributed to the lack of family involvement, trauma from their childhood, drug and alcohol abuse, or other negative factors. These can all be classified as disabilities to leading a 'normal' life in society. As Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, expressed from his own experience, "Your disability is your

opportunity.”² The philosophy and goals emphasized through Outward Bound make it a great platform for a wilderness therapy program.

The philosophy of Outward Bound, from its beginnings, has centered on improving the level of compassion in youth. Currently, Outward Bound USA schools teach four core values, which include diversity and inclusion, compassion, integrity, and excellence. An older set of values, called the four pillars, includes craftsmanship, physical fitness, community service, self-reliance and compassion. Compassion has always been the core value from which all the other values find their purpose.

Kurt Hahn believed that there were definite declines among the youth of the world. He wrote what he believed to be the six declines of modern youth.

1. Decline of fitness due to modern methods of locomotion;
2. Decline of initiative and enterprise due to the widespread disease of spectatoritis;
3. Decline of memory and imagination due to the confused restlessness of modern life;
4. Decline of skill and care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship;
5. Decline of self-discipline due to the ever-present availability of stimulants and tranquilizers;
6. Decline of compassion due to the unseemly haste with which modern life is conducted or what William Temple called “spiritual death.”³

When Josh Miner brought the ideas of Kurt Hahn to the United States, he made a point to follow the example from the schools run by Hahn in Europe to reverse these declines. To this end, delinquent youth were sought out to be included in the rosters of the first courses run by Outward Bound USA. During the first Outward Bound USA

² Josh Miner, *Crew Not Passengers* (Seattle: The Mountaineers Books, 2002), 30.

³ Outdoor Education Research & Evaluation Center, “Six Declines of Modern Youth,” <http://wilderdom.com/sixdeclinesofmodernyouth.html> (accessed November 5, 2009).

courses run for the general public in 1962 there were one hundred enrolled students.⁴

Just over half of those students were on scholarship and four of the students were from the jurisdiction of Denver Juvenile Court.⁵ It was decided very early on that at least one half of the enrollment should be on scholarship.⁶

Having a large social-economic mix on course allowed for a great learning experience about compassion for both the students and staff. Students interacted with other people they might have never interacted with before because of different economic circles. They were able to confront and rethink any prejudices they may have had about those with more, or less, than themselves. In the beginning the results of such a mix created amazement from the staff. According to Miner, “We used to say that if you had an Ivy Leaguer belaying an Urban Leaguer on a rock face in the morning, and in the afternoon the Urban Leaguer belayed the Ivy Leaguer in turn, and that night they shared a polyethylene tarp for shelter, something happened!”⁷ They both had much to learn about the other’s life. These experiences disproved prejudices, and showed how we are all called to show compassion towards others.⁸

The inclusion of delinquent youth in Outward Bound USA programs did not always have a positive outcome. Much of this rested in the inexperience of the staff to deal with the behaviors that arose from those students. At one point even members of the

⁴ The first courses run by Outward Bound USA were training programs for the Peace Corps.

⁵ Miner, 104.

⁶ Miner, 148.

⁷ Miner, 151.

⁸ Kurt Hahn’s first school opened in Germany and was named The Salem School. He developed the Seven Laws of Salem. These included: “1) give children the opportunity for self-discovery, 2) make the children meet with triumph and defeat, 3) give the children the opportunity of self-effacement in the common cause, 4) provide periods of silence, 5) train the imagination, 6) make games important but no predominant, and 7) free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege.” <http://wilderdom.com/sevenlawsofsalem.html>

board of trustees questioned their inclusion of at-risk youth. Bill Coors rebutted this sentiment. He explained during one meeting, “Listen, helping kids like this who have socially negative attitudes is part of what Outward Bound is all about.”⁹ His commitment to reaching that section of the population helped solidify Outward Bound’s policy on including delinquent youth and providing them with an experience that could help them change their choices and become leaders.

The first study concerning recidivism rates between youth who participated in an Outward Bound course and those who were enrolled in a traditional state run program was published in 1968.¹⁰ The results of this study showed a statistical difference in the first year in favor of the Outward Bound participants. The study’s authors, Francis Kelly and Daniel Baer, noted that youth who had offenses against another person or property had more success than those who were sent with status offenses.¹¹

The first Outward Bound program directed solely at delinquent youth in Florida was the STEP program. STEP originally stood for “Short Term Exit Program” and began in 1975 as the exit program for youth in a juvenile detention program. The program ran 30 days, with a follow-up component, and upon successful completion the youth was directly released from the juvenile justice system. Currently the STEP program is a 30-day program, but students may or may not be on direct release from the program. There is no longer a follow-up component.

In 1983, legislation was passed in the Florida Legislature to open an Outward Bound office in Tallahassee and begin funding for the FINS program. Research at the

⁹ Miner, 151.

¹⁰ For more information on the study: Francis J. Kelly and Daniel J. Baer, *Outward Bound Schools as an Alternative to Institutionalization for Adolescent Delinquent Boys* (Boston, Mass.: Fandel Press, Inc. 1968).

¹¹ Miner, 263.

time showed promise in wilderness programs as a component in an overall strategy for prevention of delinquent behavior. The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) oversaw the program. It gave social workers another option instead of putting a student into a detention program; they could send students who were classified as status offenders to FINS. Status offenses include activities for which, as adults, they could not be charged, such as truancy, runaways, and being ungovernable. Referrals to the program were given by HRS and guardian ad litem. Guardian ad litem stands for a guardian appointed by the court over a minor. In 2001 the youth accepted in the program expanded from status offenders to include youth with substance abuse and youth from high crime areas.¹²

The structure and philosophy of the program was modeled after another Outward Bound program called Intercept. Intercept began in 1980. It is an open enrollment course designed to help teenagers and young adults who have “started down a self-destructive path, but who have not yet burned any vital bridges.”¹³

Intercept was developed as the first Outward Bound program focused entirely on delinquent youth. It took the structure and philosophy of general population courses and added stricter boundaries needed for the delinquent population. The instructors were also trained specifically on therapy methods and behavioral management skills.

The first FINS programs ran out of Scottsmeer, Florida. They served almost all of central Florida from Brevard to Pinellas counties. The reach of the program shrank

¹² Jon Howard. Interview by author, phone interview. Raleigh, NC., October 22, 2009.

¹³ Outward Bound. “Intercept Program for At-Risk Teens by Outward Bound,” http://www.outwardbound.org/index.cfm/do/are.program_intercept (accessed November 20, 2009).

because of logistical problems regarding follow-up visits by the instructor staff to student homes and schools that were located on the other side of the state.¹⁴

In the late 1990s legislators from south Florida began showing interest for offering the FINS program in their counties. At the time there were few resources allotted for delinquent youth and prevention programs. It was decided to place a base in the Florida Keys, but the program accepted students from the surrounding counties since they would not be able to sustain a program with only youth from the Florida Keys.

At the beginning, the Florida Keys wilderness expeditions included a sailing component. Currently, both Outward Bound FINS course areas use flat water canoeing in their programs. The base in Scottsmoor uses the ICW (Inter Coastal Waterway) and the St. John's river area. The base in the Florida Keys utilizes the Florida Everglades as their course area during the fall and winter. In the summer they use waterways closer to the Scottsmoor base. The reason for this change of location is due to the mosquito and no-see-um populations in the Everglades during the summer months.

The FINS programs are now under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Justice. They are also accountable to the Department of Education. When the program was first introduced in the 1980, there was a larger emphasis on prevention versus detention programs. According to Jon Howard, the Executive Director of Outward Bound At-Risk, the current trend when reviewing the State budget has put less emphasis on prevention programs.¹⁵

The FINS programs begun by Outward Bound were a mix of the philosophy and structure of Outward Bound course mixed with more intentional therapy methods. When

¹⁴ Howard, October 22, 2009.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the program began, the HRS mandated the use of Reality Therapy for use during the wilderness expedition. Reality Therapy stems from a psychological theory developed by William Glasser, called Choice Theory.

According to the Outward Bound USA handbook, “Choice Theory is highly compatible with experiential education and the mission of Outward Bound. Outward Bound is experientially based learning, which in essence means learning by doing, Glasser states that in order for humans to get their needs met, they must ‘do or act.’”¹⁶

Dr. William Glasser developed Choice Theory in order to give a better understanding of human behavior and psychosis. He was trained in the teachings of Sigmund Freud. Glasser, like many others, questioned the explanations given with psychotherapy, and began looking at other reasons for ‘abnormal’ behavior.

His basic premise states that people’s behaviors are internal choices. These choices are motivated not by external elements, but by each person’s genetic disposition to fulfill one of their five basic needs. These needs include survival, love, power, freedom, and fun. When a person behaves, their aim is to fill one of these needs that is lacking. Knowledge of Choice Theory helps us to understand that ultimately we cannot control another’s behavior. Even if you are able to coerce them into action, it will not have long-term effects unless that person sees an internal benefit in the action that fulfills a need.

This model of the five basic needs should not be confused with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow’s theory has these needs building upon on another, with the end result being self-actualization. The theory is generally illustrated in the form of a

¹⁶ Nancy Crane and others. *Outward Bound Staff Manual 2008*. (Seattle: Outward Bound, 2008) 6.30.

pyramid. Instead, think of a car to explain Choice Theory. The engine represents the survival need. If those needs are not being met, then it will be difficult for the rest of the car to move. The four wheels represent the love, fun, freedom, and power needs. When one of these needs is not being met and that tire is deflated, the car would still run, albeit a rough ride.

The survival need seems to be the most basic. It is the need for food, shelter, clothing, and safety. The need for love and belonging includes feeling loved by others, feeling needed, or feeling included into a group. Glasser's original explanations of Choice Theory only listed two needs: the need for love and the need to have the approval of others. He later expanded the list to include five needs adding power, freedom and fun. The need for power includes achievement, influence, and recognition by others. The freedom need deals with the ability to make independent decisions, liberty, acting without coercion, and autonomy. The fifth need is fun. This need includes pleasure, laughter, play, and recreation.¹⁷

These are the five basic needs that all people are trying to fulfill. A problem develops when a person attempts to meet these needs in a negative way. Glasser would argue that no person is bad. Our behavior is merely a biological response to fulfill our basic needs. A behavior becomes negative when it does harm to the individual, or to others. We are set up to fulfill these needs, but it must not interfere with the pursuit of others trying to do the same.

Glasser explained the conflict is that ultimately people have to take their 'quality world' and make it work within 'reality.' The quality world is defined as the world as

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.30.

each person would like it to operate. In this world all our needs are met without factoring in the effects on others. Problems arise because everyone has a different quality world. Each person has a different idea on how the world should operate. Separate from everyone's quality world is the real world. Choice Theory explains that we need to except the real world and learn how to adapt our quality world. If one does not learn how to do this, they will find frustration trying to fulfill their basic needs.

In his book, *Reality Therapy*, Glasser gives an example of this conflict. If a boy decides to fulfill his power need by stealing cars, he will find his quality world (freedom to steal cars) conflicting with the real world (stealing cars is illegal). While he may have successfully fulfilled his power need by stealing cars, when he is arrested he now has to deal with his freedom need being squelched.

Glasser's explanation for this behavior revolves around the concept of reality. "In their unsuccessful effort to fulfill their needs, no matter what behavior they choose, all patients (students) have a common characteristic; they all deny the reality of the real world around them. Therapy will be successful when they are able to give up denying the world and recognize that reality not only exists, but that they must fulfill their needs within its framework."¹⁸ One of the beneficial attributes in all Outward Bound courses is that more often than not, students are faced with the reality of nature. Unlike people, the natural world does not give an option to bend to the will of the participants.

If the quality world of the student involves wasting time in the morning fulfilling their fun need, then it is a natural consequence of the real world that they may be up late setting up camp in the dark and with the bugs. They are faced with a reality that will not

¹⁸ William Glasser. *Reality Therapy*. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965), 6.

argue, or give options. The student must find a way to adapt his/her quality world in order to meet his/her needs in a positive fashion.

“People do not act irresponsibly because they are ‘ill’; they are ‘ill’ because they act irresponsibly.”¹⁹ What does it mean to act irresponsibly? According to Glasser, acting irresponsibly means ignoring the effects your actions may have on yourself or others. This includes any attempt at filling a need in a way that causes harm to oneself or others.

Take this incident as an example. A student decides she is getting cold while paddling. Earlier in the day the student had laid out wet clothes to dry on top of the gear in the canoe. In order to reach them the student decides not to ask the student in the front of the boat to hand her the clothes which are out of reach. Instead the student stands up in an attempt to reach the clothes. The instructors request she sit back down because she may fall out of the canoe. The student ignores the request of the instructors and while reaching for the clothes falls out of the boat.

She successfully gets back into the boat, but now all her clothes are wet. In anger about the situation, she again stands up and begins yelling her frustrations. Again the instructors request she sits down, and again she falls in the water. Her actions were irresponsible because she did not take into consideration the danger she was putting herself, or her boat partner, in when she stood up.

Another aspect of Glasser’s Choice Theory is its use as an anger management tool. A common issue with students attending Outward Bound FINS courses is difficulty with anger management. Again, the car model is used to explain the usefulness of

¹⁹ Glasser, Foreword, XV.

Choice Theory concepts. Because we “hold the keys” to our behavior, we determine how we react to a given situation. Glasser explains there are four steps that each person goes through when a person faces an external conflict. These include doing, thinking, feeling, and physiology.

When something disrupts our quality world we react. We also create a thought about the event. That thought transfers into a feeling. Our body responds physiologically to that feeling. These four components act together, just like the wheels of a car.

Students coming into an Outward Bound FINS course have, in the past, chosen reactions that lead to negative outcomes. One of the goals of FINS is to help them better realize that the actions they are choosing are not getting them the outcomes they desire. In order to accomplish this, the instructors use a therapy directly related to Choice Theory called Reality Therapy.

Reality Therapy takes the ideas of Choice Theory and gives guidance on how to teach students more successful ways to fulfill their basic needs. It is important to remember that according to Glasser’s theory, change can only really occur if the student makes a decision to change. Coercion has only temporary effects on change. Outward Bound does not “fix” students. Only an individual may choose to make a change.

The role of the instructor when implementing Reality Therapy revolves around three goals. First the instructor needs to build rapport with the students. They need to become involved enough with the student so that the student can begin to face reality. Secondly, the instructor needs to reject the behavior, not the student. Separating the student from the behavior is essential in Reality Therapy. It is the behavior that needs to be corrected, and not the person behind the behavior. The ability of the instructor to

focus on the behavior allows the student to trust that the instructor is not giving up on them. Lastly, the instructor needs to teach better ways for the student to fulfill his/her basic needs.²⁰

Glasser states that, “To practice Reality Therapy takes strength, not only the strength for the [instructor] to lead a responsible life himself, but also the added strength both to stand up steadily to [students] who wish him to accede to their irresponsibility, and to continue to point out reality to them no matter how hard they struggle against it.”²¹

Unlike other forms of therapy, Reality Therapy is not concerned with the past. While Glasser acknowledges that the instructor should not seem disinterested in the students’ pasts, he points out that delving into the ‘why’s’ of past action does little to solve the current situation. Instead of asking why s/he does something, the question needs to be what s/he is doing. Asking a student what s/he is doing gets to the problem quicker and can be approached using Choice Theory. The student needs to change his/her actions, not just figure out the sub-conscious reasons for her/his actions.²²

Reality Therapy consists of eight steps. These steps are 1) develop a relationship with the student, 2) have student identify the current behavior, 3) have the student give a value judgment for the behavior, 4) develop a plan to change the behavior, 5) make a commitment, 6) list excuses and agree not to use them, 7) review consequences, and 8) never give up on the student.

It is important to remember that the student’s behavior is an attempt to fulfill a basic need. If her/his choice of behavior resulted in a negative effect, they need to make

²⁰ Ibid., 21.

²¹ Ibid., 23.

²² Ibid., 33.

a plan to better fulfill that need. The instructor should not put a value judgment on the behavior. The reason for this is that the student needs to make that judgment for himself or herself. “Our goal [instructors] is to face this question, confront them with their total behavior, and get them to judge the quality of what they are doing. We have found that unless they judge their own behavior, they will not change.”²³

The heart of the Outward Bound FINS programs’ effectiveness lies in well-trained wilderness instructors (see table 1 for a hierarchy of staff). They are on the front lines with the students, teaching them new skills, holding them accountable for their goal work, and creating an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety for everyone on course. Becoming a wilderness instructor does not take a background in psychology. It does take a passion for helping students discover their potential.

The hiring process is set up to recruit instructors who have a passion for helping youth and give them the tools to accomplish that goal. Potential instructors first fill out an application and questionnaire. The next step is a phone interview with the Outward Bound Southeast staffing recruiter. If the applicant has a successful interview they will be scheduled for an upcoming New Staff Training. NST is offered several times a year.

NST is run as expedition style training. It is designed both as a training, and final interview. Lasting approximately nine days, the training takes new staff through a condensed course. The trainers teach lessons from how to paddle canoes to anger management. Trainees are broken up into instructional teams and run part of the course as if they were instructing students. During these blocks, the trainers set up behavior simulations. After each instructional team’s block is complete, the whole group gathers

²³ Ibid., 56.

to debrief. This not only helps the team who ran the block, it also helps the other teams prepare for their turn.

If an applicant successfully completes NST, they will be placed into an internship program. The internship stage lasts approximately 90 days. During this time they may work at a base doing support work such as helping with logistics. They will also be scheduled to go on course as a third instructor.

In addition to the new staff training, Outward Bound Southeast conducts yearly training for all staff. The first of these trainings is called All-Staff. It is held every year in mid-December.²⁴ Workshops during this training include reviews of policy, reality therapy techniques, and motivational interviewing. The second training is called Return Staff Training. Return Staff happens the first part of January. This training is meant to get all staff certified in emergency water safety, Protection Action Response (PAR), ropes course facilitation, and additional therapy tools.^{25 26}

These trainings are set up to give the instructors a time to come together as a community and grow in their professional development. They also serve to recharge the instructors for another year of courses. Instructors work STEP, Intercept, and FINS courses. Each of these courses uses the same therapy tools, but has a distinct look to how it is delivered.

Outward Bound FINS acts as a diversionary program for the Department of Juvenile Justice. Originally it was used as an alternative program for the HRS to send

²⁴ All-Staff training occurs a few days after the Everglades training is completed. For those instructors who will be instructing courses in the FL Everglades, there is a training held each year. Due to the specialized skills needed in that course area, they have a separate training.

²⁵ PAR stands for Protection, Action, and Response. It is the approved program through the Department of Juvenile Justice on intervening with a potentially physically violent student, with the inclusion of takedown techniques.

²⁶ Instructors must also have a current Wilderness First Responder certificate.

students who were starting to make negative decisions, but had not been adjudicated. More recently the student recommendations are coming from several different sources. Parents, school guidance counselors, DJJ agencies, and social workers are all sources of recommendations in recent years.

There are certain behaviors that indicate a student may benefit from the Outward Bound FINS program. Students have one or more of the following traits: early experience with drug use, ungovernable with authority, expelled or suspended from school, truancy issues, running away from home, and anger management problems.

There are also factors that will automatically disqualify a student from attending course. These include a pending court date for a felony charge, previously adjudicated, Baker Acted within a year of course date, suicide ideation within six months of course, and release from drug rehab within sixty days of course. Outward Bound runs courses in the wilderness and because of the environment certain medical issues will disqualify a student. Students may be disqualified due to diabetes, epilepsy, bi-polar disorder, or exercise induced asthma. In addition, females must not be pregnant.²⁷

The application process involves a written application and an interview with the base Intake Coordinator. Once the referring guardian or agency fills out the application and the student looks on paper like a good fit for the program, the Intake Coordinator will set up an interview with the student and guardians. Interviews consist of a set of questions for the family as a whole and then a separate interview with just the student.

Students are asked about topics such as drug use, sexual activity, issues at home, and personal harm to themselves in the past such as cutting or anorexia. The Intake

²⁷ On the first day of course, all female students take a pregnancy test.

Coordinator will tell the student about course and answer any questions they may have about the program. Outward Bound FINS is a voluntary program. Students must agree to be a part of the course. After they student agrees to participate, they are shown the Laws of the Land. These are the non-negotiable rules of course. Laws of the Land include things from no climbing trees and wearing shoes to not using drugs and obeying all local laws. Once they have signed the Law of the Land contract they are scheduled for course.²⁸

Each course typically has a team of three instructors. This includes a lead, assistant, and intern. The instructors arrive three days before the students for the course brief. Brief includes meetings with the Course Director, the Education Coordinator, and the Intake Coordinator. Time is also set aside for the instructional team to review base policies, develop consistencies for course, and create a schedule for the first four days of course.

Consistencies are a list of items dealing with different aspects of course. In order for the instructional team to present a united front to the students, they need to have consistent expectations of what course will look like. These range from consequences for negative behavior such as cussing to the way a typical day looks on course. The Course Director will review the consistencies and quiz the instructors on them during course brief.

The instructional staff meets with the Course Director to create development plans for course. These plans are used to continue improving the effectiveness and skill set of the instructors. Instructors set goals for three areas of development. These

²⁸ All information concerning intake was gathered in a phone interview with Lori Boody, the Intake Coordinator at the Key Largo FINS base.
Lori Boody. Interview by author, phone interview, November 17, 2009.

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See diagram 1

typically include education, professional, and behavior management. In each of these areas the Course Director and instructor create three goal steps to be completed before the first visit on the river by support staff. This process will be repeated with new goal steps at each visit by support staff during course.

The meeting with the Education Coordinator may include a review of teaching methods, lesson ideas, review of the education log, how grading on course should look, and development of the education progression for course. Instructors rely on numerous resources to teach communication skills on course. Some lessons are more appropriate during Training, while others are better taught during Main or Final. These are phases of the course that will be described later on in this paper. The education progression allows the instructors to create a logical progression of lessons to be taught throughout the wilderness expedition.

The third person that the instructional team meets with is the Intake Coordinator. From the information gathered in the interview with the student, the Intake Coordinator creates a 'face-sheet.' The face-sheet is a brief overview of the student, including living conditions, previous infractions with the law, major complaint from the guardian, background issues such as suicide attempts, drug use, and sexual activity, and what the student feels they need to improve on. This information is shared with the instructional team in order to help them come up with initial goals for each student. This meeting also helps to plan the education progression for course.

Each student has individual goals for course. These are based on the information gathered from the face sheet, as well as the first meeting with the students and guardians

on the first day of course. Another piece of information gained from the face sheet and used to create goals is what stage of change the student is currently in.

Psychologists James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente developed the concept called Stages of Change. These stages include pre-contemplation, contemplation, determination, action, maintenance, and relapse. Knowing which stage a student is in helps to create the most productive goal steps. For example, to give a student steps to improve his/her anger issues, when the student does not believe there is even a problem, would be counterproductive.

Each stage requires a different approach by the instructor. In pre-contemplation the student does not see a problem with their behavior. In pre-contemplation the student needs information and feedback. Offering “prescriptive” advice can be counterproductive at this stage. People do not usually come to therapy except under coercion in pre-contemplation.

Contemplation is characterized by a person going back and forth as to whether there is a problem. The role of the instructor at this stage is to help tip the balance towards change. Motivational interviewing, a concept that will be explained later in this paper, has shown to work successfully at this stage.

The next stage is determination. The student would be said to be in this stage when the scales tip toward being motivated to change. The student can easily slip back into contemplation or move forward into action. The role of the instructor is to now strengthen the commitment for change.

The last three stages are action, maintenance, and relapse. In the action phase a person has moved past determination and has created a plan for changing behavior. This

is followed by the maintenance of this changed behavior and is the final stage in the process. In this stage a person has to work at continuing with their plan for change and try to avoid the possibility of relapse. Relapse is considered a step back in the process of change. Changing behaviors can be difficult and relapse should not be looked at as failure. The person needs to then re-establish their desire to change and create another plan for that change.²⁹

There are two components to course, the wilderness expedition and follow-up (see figure 2). The wilderness portion lasts 20 days. Follow-up can range from 20 to 90 days in length. It is the wilderness component that utilizes the most traditional Outward Bound program structure. The two bases that run FINS programs in Florida are located in Scottsmoor and Key Largo.

Neither of these locations is built for students to stay on base. Once the students say good-byes to their guardians after the introduction circle, they will camp at a location away from base for the first two nights. In fact, the course area during most of the year for the Key Largo base is located in the Florida Everglades, over an hour drive from the base.

Every Outward Bound course in the US has the same structure through which the participants complete. These phases include Training, Main, Final, and Solo. The first three are parts of the expedition that gradually give the students more autonomy and responsibility. Solo usually occurs in the middle of the wilderness expedition and lasts 48 hours for FINS courses.

²⁹ William Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2002) 212-13.

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See diagram 2

Training, Main, and Final are often times explained to the students in conjunction with a lesson called Circles of Responsibility.³⁰ When a person is a child their parent does a lot of things for them. Their own responsibilities are little, but so are their freedoms and expectations. When a person becomes a teenager they are given more responsibilities, and their freedoms and expectations also increase. Finally when they are adults, they gain more freedoms, but they have more responsibilities and expectations placed upon them.

Training is similar to childhood for the students. There are many things the instructors need to teach the students about course. This stage of course is characterized by high instructor involvement in all daily activities. Instructors are running time goals, instilling the idea of craftsmanship with equipment and personal belongings around camp, and teaching interpersonal and technical skills.^{31,32} Once the instructors feel the

³⁰ The Outward Bound Staff Manual lays out the key points of each phase of course. During Training instructors are told to “Create an environment of physical and emotional safety, present a context for success, develop a solid base of technical skills/knowledge, foster relationships within the group, and allow students to develop increased self-esteem.” The role of the instructor during Training is “teacher and guide.”

During the next phase of course, the instructors take on a role of “consultant and coach.” Instructors will “ensure that students are part of a functioning team, allow the group to experience successes and failures, help the students develop the skills to deal with adversity, facilitate effective communication, transfer as much decision-making responsibility to the students as possible, and allow students to consistently look past their own needs and develop compassion and consideration.”

The last phase of course is a chance for the students to exhibit self-reliance with their new skills. The instructor becomes a “coach of student leaders and safety net.” The phase of course should, “offer the group and individuals more responsibility, freedom and self-direction, foster an environment of leadership and understanding, and be designed around student ability and instructor assessment.” (Crane, *Outward Bound Staff Manual*, 2008. Pg 4.8 – 4.10.)

³¹ Students are taught how to use time effectively and set goals in order to accomplish things efficiently. This tool is called GPA. It stands for goal, plan, and action. The goal consists of the big picture concept. The plan involves breaking the big picture into smaller parts and assigning people jobs to help complete the task. And the action is how much time is given to complete the task. A GPA example involves loading the canoes on the trailer. The goal would be “loading the boats.” The plan would give specific students roles, such as who will be in charge of loading which canoes.

³² Interpersonal skills include assertive communication skills. Within the first couple days of course the students are taught a lesson on passive, aggressive, and assertive communication. The students will be

students have been meeting the expectations of training, they will present the students with a checklist that the students need to complete to move on the Main.

Main is the adolescence stage of course. Here the students are given more privileges than they had on training, but they also have more responsibilities. In this stage the instructors give the students more space. Depending on the students and the instructional team, this may look slightly different from course to course. Again, once the instructional team feels the students are ready, they present them with the checklist for Final.

Students must make it to Final in order to graduate. Depending on the student group, Final can last for a few days or down to a few hours. The ideal look of Final includes the instructors stepping back and handing the expedition over to the students. The students must plan their daily flow, navigate, deal with behavior issues using course tools, and meet all course expectations. Because of the nature of FINS programs, instructors must maintain sight and sound of the students even on Final.³³ This means staff must be able to see, or hear the students at all times, even in tents or using the bathroom.

The last course element is Solo. On Outward Bound FINS course Solo lasts 48 hours. It occurs halfway through the wilderness expedition. The students are placed at individual campsites within a safe distance from the instructors' campsite. During Solo the students are checked on by the instructors between five and twenty-five times a day.

introduced to tools to help them practice assertive communication during course. Technical skills include how to use the stove, setting up the tents, or hammocks, paddling, knots, and other skills involving course gear.

³³ Instructors develop strike systems for Main and Final. If the students are not able to maintain expectations of that stage of course, they can be moved back to an earlier stage of course. It would not be unusual for a group to be move back from Main to Training, or from Final to Main. The students are then given the challenge to move back to the higher stage of course. There are no set rules on how this happens, and is up to the creativity of the instructional team at knowing the students' needs.

They are given a small bag of food for the two days and on the first morning they are given their journals to write letters and work on assignments to meet the goals set at the beginning of course.

While the students are on Solo the instructors are meeting with base staff and working on paperwork. Instructors review their own goals for course, have a feedback session for each member of the team, and discuss where each student is on course and where the instructional team thinks they should be by the end of course. The base staff, which includes the Education Coordinator, Course Director, or both, meets with each student during Solo to see how course is going for them.

The base staff also discusses with the instructional team how the parents/guardians are doing. Outward Bound FINS programs require involvement from the parents/guardians. While the students are on course the parents are required to attend two meetings. These meetings are set up to help teach the parents lessons that are being taught on course. For example, if the students are finding the concept of her/his 'piss pot' helpful in talking about their anger or frustration, then it may be helpful to teach that same lesson to the parents.³⁴

Outward Bound uses the philosophy that it teaches through the wilderness, not for it. The hard skills, such as paddling, or making a fire, are not meant to make the students capable of living in the woods. These lessons have a larger purpose. Canoeing for 100

³⁴ 'Piss Pot' is a lesson on anger management. The students are taught that sometimes we become angry not because of one big event, but the compiling of many small events throughout the day. They are taught to recognize how their 'piss pot' gets filled, how big it is, and effective ways to keep their pots from spilling over. They are also taught to understand that other people may have different size 'piss pots.'

plus miles teaches students that they are able to accomplish more than they thought possible.³⁵

Students who attend an Outward Bound FINS course usually need to learn other lessons as well. Students are sent to this program for varying reasons, which include truancy, anger management, absconding, or other behaviors that looks like the student is making negative choices. Because poor communication skills are common issues with students, instructors spend a good deal of time helping teach assertive communication. Instructors are also charged with helping develop goal steps with each student. Students, with the help of the instructional team, come up with three goals for course. The goal areas include: family issues, communication, and school goals. During each stage of course (Training, Main, and Final) students are given goal steps within each of these headings.

When the Outward Bound FINS programs first started in Florida one of the mandated therapy methods was reality therapy. As discussed earlier, this therapy comes from William Glasser's Choice Theory. This therapy can be summed up by the following questions, What are you doing? Is it getting you what you want? Is there a better way to meet your needs?

Written contracts are ideal since they give a written record of progress. If the student fails a contract, the instructor will follow the eighth step of Reality Therapy, which states that the instructor never give up, and re-contract the student. Written

³⁵ One time a student asked, "Why do we paddle?" She was not the first student to wonder this, nor will she be the last. The instructor stoically replied, "Because the river has many lessons." They proceeded to discuss what those lessons included. Among them the river teaches the students about being prepared for 'the storm', to have an idea of where you are headed, and how to work with others to accomplish a goal.

contracts also help give the student and instructor a clear reminder of the terms of the contract and the behavior they are working on changing.

Contracts may also be used to build up positive behaviors. These are referred to as positive contracts. Examples of positive contracts include positive leadership and buddy contracts. Positive leadership contracts may have the student teach a lesson or help call out behaviors within the group. A buddy contract may be used to pair up a student who is struggling in an area of course with a student who is excelling in the same area.

Along with contracts, instructors also teach assertive communication tools during course. Two of the main tools are CFR and WOMP. CFR stands for concern, feeling, and request. WOMP stands for ‘what’s up,’ ownership, moccasins, and plan. Both of these tools may be taught with slight variations on the wording, but the concepts behind them are the same.³⁶ They are used to teach conflict resolution and assertive communication. With each tool the students are taught to talk in first person. They are to talk directly to the other student and not through the instructors or peers. An essential component to both is helping the students learn to transfer these techniques to their life outside of course.

A CFR is used when a student has a concern about another student’s behavior. A common incident during course would surround paddling. For example, a student was splashed by their boat partner while paddling. They may state that they have a CFR. Their concern may be that they were splashed. Their feeling may involve frustration, or

³⁶ For instance, some instructors add an ownership component to a CFR.

anger. Their request would be that their boat partner not splashes them again. If the other person agrees to the request then the issue is considered resolved.

A WOMP is used when two students are having a disagreement with each other. Each student takes a turn to respond to each part of the process. The first part allows each student to explain the issue from his or her viewpoint. They are instructed to just state the facts and address one issue at a time. Then the students take ownership for something they did to contribute to the situation. After that they supposed to put themselves in the other person's shoes and explain how they would feel.³⁷ The final part involves the students coming up with a plan to prevent this same incident in the future. If they agree on a plan then the issue is considered resolved and should not be talked about further.

Another tool that students are encouraged to use and practice on course is called a Step Back. Essentially it consists of stepping back from a situation where the student feels their anger or frustration growing to a point where they may make a negative decision. Students are encouraged to take some time away from the group to calm down. After a set amount of time an instructor will check-in with the student and use Reality Therapy to find out what need was not being met and coming up with a plan to meet that need in a positive way.³⁸

Reality Therapy was mandated as the official therapy tool for Outward Bound FINS courses by HRS when the program began in 1982. In the past three years, the FINS

³⁷ In my experience on courses, this third step is the hardest for students to understand. It is not unusual in my experience for a student to respond with, "I'd feel stupid" or "I wouldn't have done something so dumb."

³⁸ A step back is different from a separation. Separations occur when a student is acting out and they are told to leave the group by an instructor. Students placed on a separation will be brought back into the group after a contract has been written concerning the behavior issue.

programs have begun introducing motivational interviewing as another therapy technique. Wilderness instructors attend workshops during yearly staff training on how to use this technique with their students. Outward Bound also offers discounts for instructors who want to attend a longer workshop on motivational interviewing.

Motivational interviewing is founded on theories presented by Carl Rogers.³⁹ It has its roots in the idea that people must make an intrinsic decision to change. The help of a therapist using active listening techniques that create an environment where the client states the solution can help bring about change. While there are few studies looking at the effects of motivational interviewing with adolescents already involved in risky behavior, the results are promising that motivational interviewing contributes to a lower rate of returning to the behavior.⁴⁰

After the students complete the wilderness expedition portion of course, they begin follow-up. Students and guardians are required to attend home and school visits during follow-up. In both the home and school visits, the instructor acts as a mediator between the student and the guardian and/or school personnel.

Follow-up can last from 20 to 90 days in length. This discrepancy in length is due to commitment of the individual student to complete their follow-up goal work. Completion of goal work may include writing a letter to a parent or practicing communication tools at home a set number of times. Goal work always comes with deadlines for completion. Just as they had goals during course, they also have goals for follow-up. The initial follow-up goals are created during the first home visit.

³⁹ Miller and Rollnick, 25.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 321.

There are a total of four home visits during follow-up. The first home visit occurs on the last day of the wilderness expedition when the guardians pick up their student. One member of the instructional team meets with the guardian and student. With input from all people present, they come up with three goals and goal steps for each one. The goal areas are similar to the ones the student had during the wilderness portion. They include family, communication, and education goals.

Along with setting up goals, the instructor will also explain the components of follow-up. These include daily phone calls that are made by the students to their instructors for twelve days. The students also have to write a summary of what they learned on course to be read at their school visit.

During each home visit the instructors will either teach a new lesson, or review a lesson taught during the wilderness expedition. These lessons are picked to fit each individual student and their communication issues with their family. Lessons usually concentrate on communications skills, trust, and privileges/freedoms.

The last home visit occurs at the Final Gathering. Final Gathering is the closing ceremony for course. While there are still a couple days left of phone calls to be made to base by the students, they should have completed all their goal work. If goal work is missing or they need to make up a home visit then the base staff makes arrangements with the student to complete the unfinished components. After all the follow-up components are complete the student will receive their Outward Bound diploma.

In addition to the home visits, follow-up also includes a school visit. The Education Coordinator schedules school visits. The student, guardians, school counselor, and a course instructor attend school visits. Additional attendees may include the

student's teachers and the Education Coordinator. This visit gives the student a chance to share with their counselor and teachers about what they learned on course. The instructor also speaks for the student and shares all the accomplishments they had on course. They may discuss with the counselor and teachers what techniques helped the student during course, and brainstorm ways the school can transfer those techniques into the school environment.

Outward Bound FINS courses are under the supervision of the Department of Education. During the time students are enrolled in a FINS course they are no longer enrolled in their traditional school. High school students graduating from the FINS program can earn a grade and credit for Life Management. Middle school students also earn a grade during course. When they re-enroll in their previous school this grade is given to the guidance counselor and their teachers to be applied as they deem appropriate.⁴¹

The instructional team uses follow-up to write up a Progress Summary, referred to as a PS, for each student on course. The PS is a formal document that details the progress made by the student. It gives a summary of the student during course, highlighting major accomplishments and areas of continual struggle. There is a section that summarizes all the goal work completed by the student during the wilderness expedition. All home visits and school visits are summarized as well. Finally, at the end of the PS, the instructor makes recommendations to further help the student.

⁴¹ Since middle schools do not have credit courses, the students do not earn a life management credit. The students are un-enrolled in their traditional school for approximately three weeks. Some teachers apply the grade the student made on course to the student's overall grade in the class. It is up to the individual teacher, or school, to decide how the grade is applied to the student's records.

Outward Bound FINS provides a solid structure for wilderness therapy and prevention program. The instructors go through intense training before the begin working with the youth and receive yearly training and professional development. The core values held by Outward Bound plus the therapy tools of Reality Therapy and motivational interviewing create a strong foundation to help students make more positive decisions.

When looking at the effectiveness of this program from a data standpoint, the numbers presented by the Department of Juvenile Justice only report recidivism. While these are important numbers, it is also important to look at other measures to see the overall effectiveness of the program. Outward Bound is a non-profit and relies on State funds and other grant monies to provide the FINS program at no cost to the families. Budget limitations prevent time and resources to be used to research other measurements.

There are other numbers besides recidivism that are collected by Outward Bound. Students complete a pre and post Social Skills questionnaire. The next section of this paper will focus on those results and what they mean in terms of effectiveness of the program in regards to social skills.

Effectiveness of Outward Bound FINS Programs

Part II: Pre/Post Social Skills Questionnaires Results and Their Implications

***Abstract.** Outward Bound runs two bases in Florida that conduct FINS courses under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Education. These are 20 day canoe wilderness courses with a 20 day follow-up component. Each year they are under contract to run 25 courses between the two bases. This study set out to show the effectiveness of Outward Bound's at-risk FINS courses on improving student social skills based on results of pre/post Social Skills questionnaires taken by participants in courses during 2008-09.*

Introduction

The first part of this project gave a historical look at Outward Bound in view of its connection to wilderness therapy and delinquent youth. It also gave an in depth review of the Outward Bound At-Risk program in regards to hiring of instructors and the FINS (Families in Need of Services) program run in Florida. The second part of this project is a research study looking at the effectiveness of the FINS programs with respect to the gains/loss indicated by the pre/post Social Skills questionnaires given to the participants.

Kurt Hahn founded Outward Bound in the 1940s in England. He ran courses for young men teaching them skills necessary to face adversity through sail training. His purpose was to teach through the sea, not just about the sea. Through those courses he applied the principles and lessons he taught at his schools. He based his programs on four pillars. These pillars, according to Hahn, were responsible for holding up the most important attribute: compassion. The four pillars include physical fitness, community service, craftsmanship, and self-reliance.

Josh Miner, the founder of Outward Bound USA, brought over the teachings of Kurt Hahn and began running courses in the US in 1961. Juvenile delinquents were included

in the course rosters from the beginning. There were no courses specifically designed for issues these delinquents were dealing with during the first decade of OB USA. During the 1970s, when more studies were being done showing the effectiveness of wilderness therapy on juvenile delinquents, Outward Bound began courses specifically targeting that population.

In 1982, the State of Florida began contracting Outward Bound to run FINS courses. They had already been running STEP (Short Term Exit Program) courses in Jacksonville, Florida. STEP courses were designed as an early exit program for adjudicated youth. These courses are still running, but do not always include direct release students. The FINS program is a part of a larger prevention program run by the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Outward Bound Southeast operates FINS out of two bases in Florida, one in Scottsmeer and the other in Key Largo. Together these bases are contracted to run 25 courses a year for the State. The funding comes from general revenue in the state budget. Every year DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice) puts out a report indicating the success rates of these programs. They view success as not having “been adjudicated or convicted for an offense occurring within 6 months of completion.”⁴² According to the most recent Accountability Report (2007-08), Key Largo and Scottsmeer had success rates of 86% and 93% respectfully in regards to non-recidivism. The total youth served in that fiscal year was 151.

According to research done by Keith C. Russell, the majority of research on Wilderness Therapy programs is based upon personal narratives instead of statistical

⁴² Florida Department Of Juvenile Justice. “2007-08 Comprehensive Accountability Report” 42. http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Research/CAR/CAR_2008/CAR_2008.html

data.⁴³ More research needs to be conducted that relies on statistical data. Part of that includes the need for better surveys and questionnaires given to participants. This information needs to be collected in a manner that can be analyzed even within programs with budgets that have limited resources to conduct continual data analysis.

Due to the budgetary and staffing limitations encountered at the Outward Bound FINS bases in Florida, analysis of data is not a priority. The purpose of this study was to take data already collected at the bases and produce statistical results that would be helpful in reviewing the effectiveness of the Outward Bound FINS courses. The hope is that these results will help the board of directors for the Outward Bound at-risk programs secure more funding to offer an even better product and program to the families it serves.

This study set out to analyze the pre and post Social Skills questionnaire results from the two Outward Bound FINS bases in Florida within different categories. Is there a statistical significant difference in improvement from pre to post questionnaire results? Are gains from pre to post questionnaire results by males statistically significantly different from gains made by females? Is there a statistically significant difference between gains from pre to post questionnaire results among the three age groups of 12-14, 15-16, and 17+? Is there a statistically significant difference between gains from pre and post questionnaire results among black, white, and Hispanic students? Is there a statistically significant difference in gains between pre and post questionnaire results at the two FINS bases in Florida?

⁴³ Keith Russell and John Hendee. "Wilderness Therapy as an Intervention and Treatment for Adolescents with Behavioral Problems", In: McCool, Stephen F.; Cole, David N.; Borrie, William T.; O Loughlin, Jennifer, comps. 2000. *Wilderness science in a time of change conference Volume 3: Wilderness as a place for scientific inquiry*; 1999 May 23-27; Missoula, MT. Proceedings RMRS-P-15-VOL-3. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. (2000), 136.

This study has several limitations. It should be noted that data was collected from Outward Bound FINS programs and the results should only be applied to them. The results should only be applied to improving and analyzing the effectiveness of the prevention programs run by Outward Bound. In addition, the results of this study looked just at those students who completed the Wilderness portion of the program. The study did not compare results from students who graduated from the Wilderness and follow-up portions of the program versus those students who did not complete the follow-up segment. The study did not include students who failed to complete the Wilderness component of the program. Additional research should be done to look at those students and reasons they left the program early.

Previous Studies

Recent studies looking specifically at Outward Bound USA programs aimed at juvenile delinquents is limited. The first study aimed at the effectiveness of Outward Bound programs on delinquents was published in 1968. Another study was conducted in 1998 looking at the effect of the family component on the Florida FINS programs. Beyond those two studies, most studies are focused on wilderness therapy programs that operate similar to Outward Bound, but do not specifically include Outward Bound. Talking with current staff at Outward Bound in Florida indicates that papers have been written over the past few years for post-graduate work, but locating those papers has been difficult. Due to this difficulty, previous studies reviewed will be limited in their specific mention of the Florida Outward Bound program.

Keith Russell has published two different papers that analyze wilderness therapy programs. The first one is a meta-analysis of 38 programs around the country and their effectiveness towards changing the behavior of juvenile delinquents. The second study looks at five of those programs and shows the effectiveness of such programs in comparison to traditional therapy options.

According to Russell's study, "four million of the 26 million adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 have emotional problems severe enough to require treatment."⁴⁴ An overwhelming majority of these adolescents are not receiving treatment for their emotional problems.⁴⁵ The appeal of wilderness therapy consists partially in its ability to help bridge the gap between inpatient programs and no intervention at all. Wilderness therapy programs are able to provide effective treatment options for a cheaper price than traditional inpatient centers. Russell does caution that wilderness therapy is not a stand-alone cure. Outpatient counseling is recommended in almost all the post-treatment plans.⁴⁶

Lisa Kaplan published an article about the role of the social worker in the treatment of delinquent participants in Outward Bound programs in 1979. Her conclusion coincides with the insights given in the Russell study. Outward Bound programs are effective treatment options, but not an isolated treatment. To provide the best treatment and to insure longer lasting effectiveness, support should be provided after the wilderness course is finished.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid.,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁷ Lisa Kaplan. "Outward Bound: A Treatment Modality Unexplored by the Social Work Profession." *Child Welfare* (1979), 43.

The first study to evaluate the effectiveness of Outward Bound on juvenile delinquents was conducted by Francis Kelly and Daniel Baer. Kelly and Baer compared the recidivism rates from a group of Outward Bound participants and a control group that were in a traditional treatment program. The study followed the boys for two years following the end of their programs. After the first year the recidivism rate was 20% for the Outward Bound participants and 42% for the control group.⁴⁸

Kelly and Baer concluded that Outward Bound was more effective than traditional programs on certain types of adolescents. The factors that influenced success, positively or negatively, included “presence of parents in the home, previous institutionalization, age at first court appearance, and type of delinquency.”⁴⁹

Adolescents had more success when their first court appearance was after puberty. They also fared better if their aggressions were outside the home. According to Kelly and Baer, “boys committed as ‘runaway’ or ‘stubborn’ did the poorest.”⁵⁰

After the first year the Outward Bound participants recidivism rates increased and were no long significantly different from the control group. Kaplan contends that results from Kelly’s study suggest that community based programs focused on reinforcing the lessons learned during the program could keep the recidivism close to their original 20%.⁵¹

In 1995 a study was conducted looking specifically at the Outward Bound FINS program in Florida. This study looked at the effects of the family component on students’ success rates. All the FINS programs run by Outward Bound require

⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 44.

participation from the parents. While the students are on course, parents and/or guardians participate in workshops. After the wilderness component of course is completed, the parents and/or guardians are required to attend home visits with the student and instructors. Due to restrictions from the FINS program, the study was not able to have a control group that participated in the program without the family component. They did have a control group of students not involved in an Outward Bound course. The control group was selected by the Florida Health Rehabilitation Services department and Outward Bound staff. The control group was picked to reflect the demographics of the Outward Bound group and were non-randomly selected.

John Pommier and Peter Witt evaluated participants of the Outward Bound FINS program in Scottsmeer, Florida. Their research looked at self-perception results instead of recidivism. Students were surveyed before the program, and twice after the program was concluded. The reason this study looked at self-concept instead of recidivism is the apparent correlation between delinquent behavior and self-concept. “When adolescents lack self-esteem they will look for acceptance by peers who reinforce or encourage antisocial behavior, thus leading to “delinquent drift.”⁵²

The results from this study indicated that the FINS program has a positive effect on self-concept. These improvements showed declines after the first three months. Pommier and Witt suggest the improvements made during participation in the FINS program may be completely lost after six months. The study reiterated the conclusion

⁵² John Pommier and Peter Witt. “Evaluation of an Outward Bound School Plus Family Training Program for the Juvenile Status Offender.” *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, vol. 29 no 2 (1995). 91.

made by Kaplan that long-term support and services need to be available to help families maintain the gains in self-concept.⁵³

Keith Russell conducted a case study of four wilderness therapy participants in four different programs. All four students reported desires to change negative behaviors when they return home after completing their respective programs. The students identified three factors that contributed to a desire for positive change. These included “alone time providing an opportunity for clients to reflect on their lives, a non-confrontive and caring approach by program and staff, and the role of wilderness in providing physical exercise, time alone, and scenic beauty.”⁵⁴

This case study again confirmed the need for long-term follow-up with students in order to maintain the positive effects gained during the program. Each student was interviewed four months after completing their program to see how they were doing on their goals for change. All four students had listed a desire to stop using drugs and alcohol. After four months three of the students had reported using drugs or alcohol.⁵⁵

Albert Roberts, in his book the *Juvenile Justice Sourcebook*, evaluated the results of wilderness programs. He came to several conclusions about the effectiveness of these programs. He found that even with the few studies looking at the longitudinal effects of wilderness therapy programs, they all conclude either that the programs are equal to, or more effective than traditional institutional programs. Wilderness therapy programs have also shown to be more cost effective than traditional institutions.⁵⁶ Roberts found after

⁵³ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁴ Keith Russell. “Exploring How the Wilderness Therapy Process Relates to Outcomes.” *The Journal of Experiential Education*, no 23 (2000). 175.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 170.

⁵⁶ Albert Roberts. *Juvenile Justice Sourcebook: Past, Present, and Future*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 419.

reviewing the Associated Marine Institutes, Inc 2001 and 2002 Recidivism studies that the results implied it to “be beneficial to intervene early with runaways, truants, reckless drivers, and vandals before these youths escalate to committing chronic felony offenses.” The Associated Marine Institutes studies also found that the Florida based programs working with status offenders had the best results.⁵⁷

An important aspect of wilderness therapy revolves around the physical activity during the program. These include activities such as hiking, climbing, and canoeing. In 1996 a study in New Zealand looked at the influence of physical activity, apart from wilderness therapy, on reducing recidivism. This study concluded that physical activity alone had no positive effect on recidivism rates. On the contrary, high levels of sport involvement showed an increase in delinquent behavior.⁵⁸ This study suggests that just involving students in sporting activities is not enough to positively affect student behavior. Wilderness therapy programs include a high level of physically challenging aspects that are reinforced with therapy techniques. The combination of these two components in the Wilderness Therapy studies has been shown to produce more positive effects on student behavior.

The ability of wilderness therapy to improve self-concept, thus leading to reduced delinquent behavior, also makes it a preferred alternative to traditional institutions. According to one study on self-concept, the traditional institution works against the development of a positive self-concept. Self-concept is “negatively influenced during

⁵⁷ Ibid., 416.

⁵⁸ Stephanie West and John Crompton. “Programs That Work: A Review of the Impact of Adventure Programs on At-Risk Youth.” *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* (Summer 2001), 123.

traditional institutionalization, it is directly related to successful rehabilitation, as measured by recidivism rates, and it affects a person's ability to function in society.”⁵⁹

Sandra Wilson and Mark Lipsey conducted a meta-analysis of the success rates of wilderness programs in 2000. The study concluded that programs lasting up to six weeks showed no statistical difference in their outcomes. Programs lasting longer than six weeks were, overall, less effective than the shorter courses. The key element in reducing delinquent behavior was a combination of intense physical activity and a therapeutic component.⁶⁰

The studies mentioned here support several conclusions about effective wilderness therapy. There are behavior indicators that are common among students with the most positive outcomes. Additional research could help to identify and recruit those individuals for wilderness therapy programs. Wilderness therapy is more cost effective than traditional institutions and has a more positive effect on self-concept. Follow-up care increases the longitudinal effects of the program and should be increased.

Background Steps for Research

Because the participants in this study were minors when they took the questionnaires, approval had to be granted from the DJJ's internal review board to use the data. The review board consists of “Florida Department of Juvenile Justice staff members, including staff from the Office of Research and Planning, staff from each program area (Prevention, Probation, Detention, and Residential), and staff from the Offices of Health

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Sandra Wilson and Mark Lipsey. “Wilderness challenge programs for delinquent youth: a meta-analysis of outcome evaluations.” *Evaluation and Program Planning*, no 23 (2000), 1.

Services, General Counsel, and Inspector General.”⁶¹ Among the mandatory items listed in the DJJ IRB handbook for completion of the proposal, was completing an online course called Protecting Human Research Participants.

All the paperwork for the study proposal was approved by Jon Howard. Jon Howard is the executive director of Outward Bound Southeast. This portion of OB is responsible for the at-risk programs. Mr. Howard gave consent for the students’ pre/post Social Skills questionnaire results to be used for this study. He also turned in the proposal for this study to the DJJ IRB on behalf of Outward Bound and the principal investigator.

Other staff members who were consulted for this study include Katie Dalbey, Staff Scheduler; Katie Cariter, Staff Recruiter; Sue Bragg, Education Coordinator; Lori Boody, Intake Coordinator; and Kathryn Modecki, research advisor on the OB Board of Directors. These staffers were used to verify facts concerning course protocol and procedures. Beyond the general OB USA handbook, written resources were limited concerning course details and therapy implementation. Both Jon Howard and Lori Boody were interviewed about OB FINS history and intake procedures respectfully.

Pre/Post Questionnaire Importance

Education Coordinators created the pre/post Social Skills questionnaires at the STEP base in Jacksonville, Florida. The questions were based on Peer Counseling/Life Management Skills and were intended as a pre-post measurement for what students learned on course. The areas of improvement are centered on six healthy behaviors.

⁶¹ Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. “Department of Juvenile Justice Internal Review Board Handbook,” Feb 2009, 1.
<http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Research/IRB/index.html>

These include “ask for help,” “take time to think it out,” “talk it out with a friend, peer or adult,” “count to 10,” “take deep breaths,” “draw, write, paint or create stuff.” A copy of the questionnaires can be found in the appendix.

These six healthy behaviors are addressed during the Wilderness phase, either through natural consequences or direct lessons by the instructors. During course the instructors are responsible for teaching communication and anger management skills. Within the first few days of course, instructors begin presenting lessons on assertive communication skills. Learning this type of communication helps students deal with frustrations and anger towards others during the course. If a student is unable to speak and act assertively, their other choices become passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive communication.

Students complete the pre/post Social Skills questionnaires as a normal aspect of course. The questionnaires consist of 25 questions that gauge how well students’ social skills are before and after course. The pre and post questionnaires contain the same questions. This study took the results from those questionnaires from data already collected and stored on a spreadsheet at the base. Visits were planned with the base staff to arrange appropriate times to go through the files with minimal disruption to the daily activities on base. Informed assent/consent and debriefing of subjects was not necessary since this study used archival data representing little/no risk to the youth.

This study presented minimal risk to the youth because 1) the youth have already completed the questionnaires and experienced minimal risk doing so, 2) the information is of a positive nature – recording gains to social skills, 3) data records will be completely anonymous with no identifying information to link youth to responses and 4) only the

principal investigator had direct access to files and information normally seen during her work as a wilderness instructor with Outward Bound.

There was no apparent conflict of interest with this project. There were no benefits to the principal investigator beyond the professional benefit from academic publication or presentation of the results. The principal investigator is a seasonal employee with the Outward Bound at-risk program. She has been an intern instructor on two FINS courses.

Once again, the purpose of this study was to compare the results of the pre and post Social Skills questionnaire taken by students participating in Outward Bound FINS courses. This study presents the effectiveness of Outward Bound FINS courses as shown through the pre/post Social Skills questionnaires from participants in 2008-09.

Method

Subjects

Outward Bound FINS serves male and female students between the ages of 13 and 17. Although most of the courses are single gender, there are a few courses during the year that end up being co-ed. This study took a random sampling from the students participating in a wilderness course during 2008 and 2009. A total of 257 students' pre/post Social Skills questionnaire results were used to look at the effectiveness of the course on developing six healthy behaviors. They are listed as "ask for help," "take time to think it out," "talk it out with a friend, peer or adult," "count to 10," "take deep breaths," "draw, write, paint or create stuff."

The study set out to look at the difference in improvement in regards to gender, race, and age. Race was broken up into white, black, Hispanic, and other. The age groupings were divided up into three groups, 13-14, 15-16, and 17+.

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice breaks race up into the following categories: Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian, Black, Pacific Islander, and White. Under those categories the breakdown of ethnicities is listed the following: Haitian, Hispanic, Jamaican, and Non-Hispanic. When analyzing the differences in race the three categories used were white, black, and Hispanic/other.

Research Plan

Results from the pre/post Social Skills questionnaires were collected from files kept at both the Scottsmoor and Key Largo bases. Both bases supplied spreadsheets recording data from courses occurring during 2008-09. In order to maintain anonymity, no identifying information was collected that would link the youth to their questionnaire results.

This study used the t-test to look at the differences of the questionnaire results between the males and females, as well as the differences between the two bases. The study utilized an analysis of variance for the differences in race and age. Race was divided into black, white, and Hispanic. Age groups were broken into 12-14, 15-16, and 17+.

Results

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires for students completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound

FINS courses in Key Largo and Scottsmoor during 2008-09. There was a significant difference in the pre Social Skills Questionnaire (M=41.29, SD=10.21) and post Social Skills Questionnaire (M=50.02, SD=13.03) results; $t(256)=11.28$, $p = 0.05$. These results suggest that there is a statistically significant increase in the six healthy behaviors for students completing the wilderness portion of the FINS course.

Social Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Pre	257	41.29	10.21	11.28
Post	257	50.02	13.03	

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires for students completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses in Key Largo during 2008-09. There was a significant difference in the pre Social Skills Questionnaire (M=40.68, SD=9.39) and post Social Skills Questionnaire (M=48.79, SD=12.98) results; $t(163)=8.67$, $p = 0.05$. These results suggest that there is a statistically significant increase in the six healthy behaviors for students completing the wilderness portion of the FINS course in Key Largo.

Key Largo	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Pre SSQ KL	163	40.68	9.39	8.67
Post SSQ KL	163	48.79	12.98	

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires for students completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses in Scottsmoor during 2008-09. There was a significant difference in the pre Social Skills Questionnaire (M=42.34, SD=11.48) and post Social Skills Questionnaire

($M=52.15$, $SD=12.88$) results; $t(93)=7.22$, $p = 0.05$. These results suggest that there is a statistically significant increase in the six healthy behaviors for students completing the wilderness portion of the FINS course in Scottsmoor.

Scottsmoor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Pre SSQ SM	94	42.34	11.48	7.22
Post SSQ SM	94	52.15	12.88	

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare Social Skills Questionnaires results between male and female students completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses in Key Largo and Scottsmoor during 2008-09. There was no significant difference between the difference in the results for males ($M=10.78$, $SD=8.7$) and results for females ($M=13.32$, $SD=10.1$) results; $t(256)=2.11$, $p = 0.05$. These results suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in Social Skills Questionnaire results between males and females.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Male	146	10.78	8.7	2.11
Female	111	13.32	10.1	

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires for females completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses during 2008-09. There was a significant difference in the pre Social Skills Questionnaire ($M=41.92$, $SD=10.97$) and post Social Skills Questionnaire ($M=51.71$, $SD=14.12$) results; $t(110)=7.59$, $p = 0.05$. These results suggest that there is a

statistically significant increase in the six healthy behaviors for females completing the wilderness portion of the FINS course.

Females	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Pre Social Skills	111	41.92	10.97	7.59
Post Social Skills	111	51.71	14.12	

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires for males completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses during 2008-09. There was a significant difference in the pre Social Skills Questionnaire (M=40.82, SD=9.61) and post Social Skills Questionnaire (M=48.74, SD=12.01) results; $t(145)=8.39$, $p = 0.05$. These results suggest that there is a statistically significant increase in the six healthy behaviors for males completing the wilderness portion of the FINS course.

Males	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T
Pre Social Skills	146	40.82	9.61	8.39
Post Social Skills	146	48.74	12.01	

A single factor analysis of variance was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires between white, black, and Hispanic/other participants completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses during 2008-09. There was not a significant difference in the questionnaire results for the three race categories at the $p<.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2, 224) = 2.8$, $p = .06$]. These results suggest here is no significant difference between the three race categories.

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	848.86	2	424.43	2.80	.06	3.031
Within Groups	38443.49	254	151.35			

A single factor analysis of variance was conducted to compare pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires between the following age groups: 12-14, 15-16, 17+ completing the wilderness portion of the Outward Bound FINS courses during 2008-09. There was not a significant difference in the questionnaire results for the three age categories at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2, 224) = 0.81, p = .44$]. These results suggest there is no significant difference between the three age groupings.

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	250.77	2	125.38	0.81	.44	3.03
Within Groups	39107.69	254	153.96			

Discussion

Outward Bound FINS has been operating prevention programs under the supervision of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice since 1982. Questions about the programs' mission and effectiveness are common. The results of this study can be interpreted to, at least partly, answer those questions as they demonstrate a significant difference in the pre and post Social Skills Questionnaires. Results revealed no differences by race, gender, age, or program location suggesting that the program is

effective across the board and shows no particular leaning towards any one type of student.

Additional studies should be done to look at the improvement in Social Skills Questionnaires and recidivism rates as defined by the Department of Juvenile Justice. DJJ's most recent reporting of non-recidivism rates showed a success rate of 86% at the Key Largo base and 93% at the Scottsmoor base. It would be interesting to compare the non-recidivism success rates with Social Skills Questionnaire results to see if there are any significant correlations.

Key indicators used by previous studies to show program effectiveness include non-recidivism rates and self-concept improvements. Another study that would be beneficial in improving the success rates for OB FINS participants would be to look at the impact of long-term follow-up support on non-recidivism rates and social skills improvements. This study would require support from local community resources including the social workers and the student's school guidance counselors.

Funding should be made available to conduct a thorough longitudinal study of Outward Bound FINS participants. This study should look at the retention of social skills and self-concept beyond course. Kelly and Baer's 1968 study would be a good model to follow for future longitudinal studies.

Beyond the Social Skills Questionnaire, it would be helpful for Outward Bound to administer self-esteem assessments as a part of course in order to obtain a fuller idea of the improvements made during course. This may not be financially possible to conduct with all students, but a sampling from the year would be beneficial.

There is at least one study currently being conducted looking at the influence the wilderness instructors have on student improvements. Results from that study would be helpful in gathering an overall picture of what components make the Outward Bound FINS program successful.

Factors that have been shown to be effective in the overall success of most outdoor programs include taking students out of their element, physical challenges, and support by instructors. Stephanie West reviewed several wilderness programs and identified a set of 'protective factors' that contribute to the success of effective wilderness therapy programs.

“Protective factors include such elements as youth knowing there is at least one adult who supports their positive development; the existence of places for youth to spend free time in a positive, productive environment in their home area; opportunities for youth to work together in a group and how to constructively resolve conflicts; and the opportunity to be around other youth consistently who are demonstrating positive conventional behavior.”⁶²

This study shows that Outward Bound FINS not only has a high non-recidivism rate, but also is effective in improving student's social skills. Social skills measured are based on six healthy behaviors. These include: include “ask for help,” “take time to think it out,” “talk it out with a friend, peer or adult,” “count to 10,” “take deep breaths,” “draw, write, paint or create stuff.” Continual funding should be given by the State of Florida to help support the Outward Bound FINS programs.

⁶² West and Crompton, 136.