

THE EFFECTS OF THE OUTWARD BOUND ASCENT PROGRAM ON  
ADOLESCENT SELF-CONCEPT

By

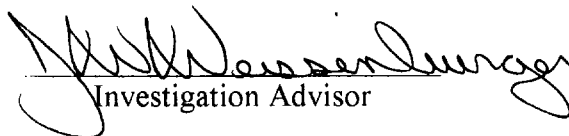
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**ABSTRACT**

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The Effects of an Outward Bound Ascent Program on Adolescent Self-Concept			
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This study examined the impact of an Outward Bound Ascent course on the self-concept of at-risk adolescents. A twenty-item survey was developed to assess whether participants believed a significant change had taken place in their self-concept as a result of participating in the course. Out of the 65 Outward Bound program participants who were surveyed throughout the United States, 24 responded. Participant responses indicate that a number of self-concept domains were positively affected through participation in the Outward Bound Ascent Program. In addition, participant responses identified a number of beneficial course components.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Many agree that the overall quality of our society's condition is declining. Crime rates and acts of violence are increasing, family structures are disintegrating, drug and alcohol abuse are rising, and people are detaching from each other as the electronic age takes center stage in our day to day lives. In essence, it appears we are headed toward a relatively bleak future. Our current path appears ineffective and societal changes seem to have taken a major toll on the lives of the youth in our country, and a search for positive change is necessary. This search needs to begin with an evaluation of interventions that result in successful outcomes and improve the condition of our nation's youth.

Many of the problems that currently exist in our society are the result of a cycle of negative behavior that permeates the lives of children. From the time they are born, many children are surrounded by, and faced with, insurmountable obstacles that can negatively impact their lives. Some of the most severe and influential of these obstacles present themselves in the form of poverty, crime, violence, and substance abuse. These are often compounded by peer pressure and various social deficiencies. Exposure to these circumstances decreases the chances for these individuals to experience a fulfilling and satisfying life, and increases the likelihood that the lives of others will be negatively affected by these "dysfunctional" or "antisocial" individuals. When issues are not effectively dealt with, the result can be the promotion and continuation of the negative cycle of behavior that forces children into a position extremely difficult to overcome.

In assessing possible interventions for working with children at risk, educators and human service professionals are required to open their minds to the numerous

methods of treatment and education available. One of the goals of traditional educational instruction is to equip individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to become positive, contributing members of society. It is hoped that the educational system will allow them to avoid the pitfalls of negative social behavior and disregarding societal norms. However, as time progresses, we are confronted with an increasing number of juveniles unable to overcome the negative influences that permeate their environment. For a large portion of these individuals, incarceration becomes the only solution.

Despite the frequent failure of traditional approaches to positively affect these individuals and their life circumstances, a few successful alternatives have been developed. One of the most promising alternatives is outdoor education. Outdoor education is an approach that actively engages students in challenging outdoor activities and pushes them toward realizing profound conclusions and insights (Chapman, McPhee & Proudman, 1992). Commonly termed "adventure education" or "experiential education," the ultimate goal of this pedagogical practice is to utilize challenging outdoor activities to help foster personal growth, self-discovery and understanding, while improving an individual's overall attitude and outlook on life. Outdoor education experiences require an individual to combine a number of physical, emotional and mental talents. Through a process of synthesizing these talents, students have the potential to become more aware of themselves and their surroundings (Ewert, 1989). A number of studies have confirmed that the combination of these various talents and outdoor adventures can provide positive experiences which have the potential to transform an individual's personal and social growth. One positive change commonly associated with



outdoor education experiences is an improved participant self-concept, an attribute proven to be lacking in a number of delinquent adolescents (Ewert, 1989).

Low self-concept is a psychological attribute defined generally as the perception an individual has of himself (Hazelworth & Wilson, 1988). Outdoor education has been utilized for the past thirty years in working with troubled youth, and the improvement of the self-concept of these individuals has emerged as one of its major goals. The outdoor educational model is regarded by many as effective in improving the self-concept of troubled adolescents because it provides an uncommon learning scenario that incorporates a unique and unfamiliar rehabilitative atmosphere, along with experiential and concrete problem-solving activities that require students to depend on themselves for success (Ewert, 1989).

Frequently, young people attempt to rectify poor self-concepts by engaging in delinquent behaviors. Because of the focus on self-reliance in outdoor education, individuals are presented with opportunities to experience feelings of personal worth and ownership for their actions, which theoretically will assist in increasing their overall self-identity (Ewert, 1989). Essentially, students have the potential to improve his or her self-concept through the interactive and hands-on approach of the outdoor education model. Because they are required to learn how to depend on themselves to negotiate their way through intense situations, they are exposed to their true potential and realize their capability to be self-reliant. This can be a critical step in improving their destructive behavior patterns and overall functioning.

Enhancing self-concept is viewed as a desirable goal for all people, and it has been suggested that changes in this domain may lead to changes in other outcomes. One

of the most important outcomes is enabling an individual to realize he or she is a capable individual who can effectively utilize self-reliance in an effort to live a successful and productive life. Improving self-concept is central to rehabilitating at-risk youths, and it may have potentially profound effects on their cycle of delinquency. Due to this fact, and because of the general consensus supporting the use of outdoor education in improving the self-concept of at risk youths, it appears that outdoor education interventions have the potential to result in an improved self-concept. An improved self-concept can then improve additional facets of an individual's life critical to their chances for success.

A number of studies have been designed to measure adolescent self-concept change in relation to participation in outdoor adventure/education courses. In many cases, positive findings have indicated a direct relationship between these two variables. The present study is aimed to further our understanding and to support the position that outdoor education experiences can positively influence the self-concept of at-risk adolescents. This study is unique and important because it not only attempts to provide empirical support to determine whether self-concept is positively affected by outdoor learning programs, but also to what extent different dimensions of self-concept are affected. In addition, this study is distinctive in its attempt to understand how males and females differ in their perceptions related to their participation in the course.

### Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to describe student perceptions of selected aspects of self-concept change as a result of participating in an Outward Bound Ascent course designed for troubled teens. This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To determine which aspects of self-concept are most positively affected by Outward Bound Ascent Program participation.
2. To determine the three most common benefits of participating in an Outward Bound course as identified by the program participants.
3. To determine what, if any, gender differences exist regarding Ascent Program participant perceptions of self-concept change and program benefits.

### Definition of Terms

To enable understanding, the following terms will be defined:

Ascent Program--A 28-day Outward Bound adventure course designed to facilitate change in at-risk program participants.

At-Risk Adolescents--Troubled young people who have a high potential for failure in a number of societal settings as a result dysfunctional and/or antisocial behavior (Ewert, 1989).

Experiential Education--An educational approach in which students are actively engaged in direct experience as a means of gaining knowledge, skill and value (Chapman, 1992).

Self-Concept--A psychological attribute referring to an individual's self-perception (Ewert, 1989).

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

The review of literature will detail the characteristics of at-risk adolescents and self-concept. The relationship between outdoor education and self-concept will then be discussed. The discussion will include specific information about the influence of outdoor education on the self-concept of at-risk students participating in outdoor education programs.

#### At-Risk Adolescents and Self-Concept

At-risk adolescents represent a diverse population with a number of unique characteristics. The variety of attributes presented by these individuals complicates the process of classification, but multi-instrument assessment approaches have uncovered a number of traits commonly associated with this population. According to Moote and Wodarski (1997), children labeled at-risk are often uncooperative, unwilling and/or unable to interact normally within society, resulting in asocial and dysfunctional behaviors which alienate them from society and potentially lead to incarceration. These behaviors can be the result of a number of factors, including heredity, learning and physiological malfunctions and environmental factors (e.g., an exposure to divorce, domestic violence, parental drug and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse, and ineffective parenting).

According to Moote and Wodarski (1997), the combination of these various stress factors often result in an individual who lacks social skills and the ability to effectively interact in society. Without these skills, at-risk adolescents often become disenfranchised and alienated from society at a crucial period in their lives. Early adolescence is a time in

which children must negotiate their way through a series of developmental milestones, including physical maturation, the cognitive shift from concrete to operational thought, emotional intensity and becoming involved in a peer group. Children who do not experience normal interaction with peers are subject to feelings of isolation and insignificance. According to Moote and Wodarski (1997), this negatively impacts their self-concept, resulting in poor decision-making, often typical of the at-risk adolescent.

The self-concept of normally functioning adolescents plays an important part in the "ego strength" of an individual, and it provides a tolerance for frustration and guards against inclinations toward delinquency (Levy, 1997). According to Levy (1997), the at-risk adolescent lacks this "ego strength," which results in aggravation and dysfunctional and ineffective behavior.

Self-concept is a multidimensional construct. Much of the interest pertaining to it involves changing it, because self-concept is considered a necessary quality for happiness, success and satisfaction in life (Marsh, Barnes, & Richards, 1986). Ewert (1989) defines self-concept as, "The way in which a person views or perceives himself, his attitude, beliefs, feelings and personal expectations" (p. 49). Self-concept can also be described as an individual's understanding of himself and the way he feels and experiences his existence.

Self-concept is often broken into different dimensions. Some are specific, and others are more global or composite in nature. From a broad perspective, self-concept can include a number of attributes, traits or skills possessed by an individual, but these characteristics usually reflect relevance to school, family and peers (Levy, 1997). Levy (1997) suggests the most significant attributes of self-concept include intelligence,

competence, physical attractiveness, physical skills, social attractiveness, sex-typing identification, leadership qualities, moral qualities and sense of humor. These characteristics relate closely to the different dimensions of self-concept frequently measured by self-concept inventories.

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale: Second Edition (TSCS: 2) and Hartner's Self-Concept Profile for Children are assessment measures that reinforce the multidimensional nature of self-concept (Tomchin & Callahan, 1996). The TSCS: 2 provides a Total Self-Concept score which reflects an individual's overall self-concept and level of self-esteem. In addition, a number of scales divide the construct into physical, moral, personal, family, social and academic/work self-concept domains (Fitts & Warren, 1996). Hartner's Self-Concept Profile for Children considers global self-worth, and specific scales of scholastic competence, social acceptance, physical competence and appearance, and behavior (Tomchin & Callahan, 1996). The dimensions these assessment tools measure exemplify the multifaceted nature of self-concept, and clarify its complexity and magnitude.

Debate about how the components of self-concept should be conceptualized continues, but regardless of its definition, research indicates it is a crucial characteristic for humans to possess, but an extremely difficult attribute to change (Marsh et al., 1986). The power and influence of self-concept is emphasized by Fitts and Hamner (1969), who believe the way an individual views and interacts with the world is partially a function of the way he sees himself. To them, an individual's behavior and self-concept are constantly interacting and influencing each other, and dictate the decisions all people make.

Many research studies are committed to assessing the effectiveness of different interventions and programs that claim to improve the self-concept of at-risk adolescents. Kaplan (cited in Levy, 1997) suggests that a negative self-concept underpins delinquency, and engaging in dysfunctional behavior is a response that attempts to improve the low self-concept of young people. An at-risk individual's low self-concept may deteriorate even further when they are institutionalized, as the effect of incarceration reemphasizes the acceptance of their status as a delinquent or a failure.

Fitts and Hamner (1969) utilized the findings of multiple studies on the self-concept of 492 adjudicated adolescents to summarize the self-concept of typical incarcerated juvenile delinquents. "They see themselves as undesirable people; they do not like, value or respect themselves. In addition, their self-concepts are confused, conflictual, contradictory, uncertain and variable" (Fitts & Hamner, 1969, p.1). This observation clearly identifies the existence of self-concept deficiencies in at-risk adolescents.

### Outdoor Education

Many professionals in the field of education suggest there is a direct correlation between low self-concept and dysfunctional behavior. Ewert (1989) supports this commonly accepted relation by describing the traits of delinquents, who are frequently identified as lacking self-confidence and self-concept. These deficiencies can be augmented by defensive behavior and resistance to learn anything from anybody (Ewert, 1989). Outdoor education experiences provide an unconventional and apparently successful approach to positively change the self-concept of its participants. Outdoor educators began to implement programs designed specifically for at-risk youth in the

mid-1900s. These programs incorporated the perception of danger and immediate natural consequences to assist in the rehabilitation of emotionally troubled children. It was believed that the confrontation of danger built self-esteem, and suffering natural consequences taught the real need for cooperation (Berman & Davis-Berman, 1995). In the 1940's, Kurt Hahn founded Outward Bound in Wales to train British seamen to improve their chances for survival in naval warfare. The original program was designed to enable young men to realize their potential, develop a stronger character, and develop a will to survive (Marsh et al., 1986). His program has flourished and progressed. Today, Outward Bound schools operate in 13 countries, and they offer a variety of unique programs that emphasize physical training, teamwork and the successful completion of difficult and challenging wilderness activities (Gibson, 1979). Outward Bound was instrumental in utilizing outdoor education to help improve the condition of troubled youth with a firm belief that such experiences could bridge the gap between society and young people who did not behave according to society's norms and values (Kennedy, Austin, & Smith, 1987).

The effects of some adventure programs on self-esteem and self-concept are capable of exceeding those of other educational programs (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). Durkin (cited in Sveen, 1993) reinforced this belief by stressing that children must interact with the physical and social environment to develop adequately: "There is no better way to build confidence and self-esteem than by successful experience--a merely cognitive based approach to education is as limited as the sex education book that seeks to explain an orgasm to pre-pubescent children by comparing it to a sneeze" (Durkin, cited in Sveen, 1993, p.3). This vivid example illustrates the



benefit and potential of experiential education. Because the focus is on a stimulating environment that requires self-reliance for success, participants in an outdoor education program are able to focus on their strengths and look to themselves for learning, decision-making and self-discovery; elements often difficult to experience in traditional settings.

Outward Bound typifies many wilderness adventure/outdoor education programs with its use of wilderness and backcountry settings, small groups, a variety of challenging objectives, frequent and intense interactions that require group problem solving and decision making, a trained leader and a duration of 2-4 weeks. (Hattie et al., 1997) These components are used to improve the overall condition of the program's participants by inspiring trust, risk-taking, compassion for others and personal growth. Ewert (1989) also identifies the following characteristics as typical in the outdoor education process: the importance of an atmosphere for rehabilitation and behavioral change, an allowance of behavior experimentation, an unfamiliar environment, concrete problems, progressively difficult problem/situation presentation and the realism that participants are required to devote themselves to successfully overcoming the challenges presented. The components of the programs are taught to challenge participants and encourage them to apply effort, determination, cooperation and self-reliance.

Today's goals of outdoor education include behavior change, increased emotional adjustment, enhancement of self-concept and improved relationships with others (Gibson, 1979). Professionals firmly believe outdoor education works in building these skills, and offer many reasons for its effectiveness (Schlein, McAvoy, Lais & Rynders, 1993). Gibson (1979) believes the wilderness setting itself benefits the at-risk individual, because they are removed from the environment where their dysfunctional patterns of

behavior occur. The success of outdoor education has also been attributed to a more stimulating learning environment, which enables educators to be more aware of individual needs not detectable in traditional settings (Schlein et al., 1993).

A number of studies have confirmed that participation in Outward Bound programs has a positive influence on self-concept. Marsh, et al. (1986) structured a study to examine the change and stability in multiple dimensions of self-concept and to test the hypothesized effects of participating in an Outward Bound program. They discovered increases in multiple dimensions of self-concept over the 26-day duration of a variety of programs, proving the program's ability to improve self-concept.

Hattie et al. (1997) performed a comprehensive meta-analysis of 96 studies that examined the effects of outdoor education on a variety of outcomes, including self-concept, locus of control and leadership. This study concluded that adventure programs can obtain notable outcomes that have potentially long-lasting effects, a result contrary to the majority of current educational research on self-concept and outdoor education (Hattie et al., 1997). Hattie's study found the greatest effects on the self-concept domain to be in the areas of independence, confidence, self-efficacy and self-understanding. In addition, this same study compared a synthesis of over 300 traditional education meta-analyses on these same outcomes and determined the overall effects of adventure programs on self-concept were greater than those in the classroom.

Cason and Gillis (1994) also performed a meta-analysis on the outcomes of adventure programs. They found significant effects for most outcomes, including self-concept. This analysis recognized that longer programs had greater effects, and that

different types of participants (e.g., at-risk, "normal", and physically challenged) displayed no obvious differences in outcomes.

The conclusions derived from these studies suggest that outdoor education programs can have a positive overall effect on a number of outcomes, including leadership, self-concept, academic performance, personality, interpersonal skills and "adventuresomeness" (Hattie et al., 1997). These research findings support the potential of utilizing outdoor educational programming with at-risk youth.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### Participants

Twenty-four at-risk and/or troubled adolescents 14-17 years old who participated in a 28-day Outward Bound Ascent Program made up the specific target group for this study. This particular target group consists of 17 male and 7 female participants from a variety of backgrounds. The potential was high for these adolescents to display low self-esteem, poor self-image, poor decision making, susceptibility to negative peer pressure, low motivation/lack of confidence, poor communication, and lack of respect for authority. In addition, many likely had a history of displaying negative behavior patterns in various settings, including school, family and general social environments. The participants either referred themselves to this program, or were referred by their parents or social service agencies.

#### Instrumentation

A questionnaire measuring student perceptions and attitudes related to self-concept change through participation in the Ascent Program was used. This questionnaire was developed by the researcher and included Likert-type statements assessing student perceptions of the program's influence on their self-concept. Twenty questions were used to assess participant perspectives regarding various domains of self-concept impacted by the program. These questions were derived from the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, which traditionally measures nine aspects of self-concept: physical, moral-ethical, personal, family, social, identity, self-satisfaction, behavior and self-criticism. In addition, participants rank ordered course components which they perceived

to be most beneficial. These components were: Outdoor Experience, Teamwork, Friendships, Leadership Development, and Adventure/Excitement. Additionally, open-ended questions pertaining to participant opinions regarding the benefits and drawbacks of participating in the Ascent program were included. The questionnaire was estimated to take an average of ten minutes to complete. Additionally, students provided demographic information such as age, gender and ethnic background.

### Procedure

The names of the participants were obtained from the Voyageur Outward Bound School in Minneapolis, Minnesota. All individuals who participated in the school's Ascent program during the summer of 1999 were surveyed. The 65 questionnaires were first distributed to the homes of the participants approximately 3 months after they completed the program. Those who failed to respond to the first mailing were surveyed a second time, approximately 2 months later. Both mailings requested that the participants complete the questionnaire and mail it back to the researcher within one week.

## CHAPTER 4

## Results

Outward Bound Ascent Program Demographics

The demographic makeup of the participants in the Ascent Program is presented in Table 1. Out of the 65 participants, 24 returned the surveys. This resulted in a response rate of 36.9%. The majority of respondents reside in the central and upper midwestern United States, with representatives from the East Coast, West Coast and Rocky Mountain states comprising an additional 20.8 percent of the sample.

Table 1

Outward Bound Ascent Program Participant Demographics

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Female	7	29.2
Male	17	70.8
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	22	91.7
Hispanic/Latino	1	4.2
Other	1	4.2
Age		
14	6	25
15	4	16.7

(table continues)

16	9	37.5
17	4	16.7
18	1	4.2

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### Data Analysis

The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Means and standard deviations were computed for each of the twenty item responses. Questionnaire responses were weighted from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each item was placed in a rank order to determine the relative importance of its mean rating in comparison to the other items. To investigate whether there were significant differences between male and female responses to the individual items, a *t* test analysis (independent samples) was conducted between the responses of each gender.

Means and standard deviations were also computed for the five rank ordered items. These items were weighted from 1 (most beneficial) to 5 (least beneficial). A *t* test analysis was again used to determine potentially significant differences between the male and female responses to each rank-ordered survey item.

As shown on Table 2, all twenty self-concept survey items received mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 4.29. Of the twenty items rated by all participants, only five were rated 3.5 or lower. This suggests that the Ascent Program did not substantially benefit them in the following areas: ability to improve friendships, liking themselves more,

feeling more comfortable around strangers, increased positive perceptions of strangers, and feeling better about their ability to succeed in school.

Participant responses to survey questions suggest the Ascent Program was highly beneficial related to fifteen items on the questionnaire. Respondents identified that learning how to count on themselves to solve their own problems (M: 4.29, SD: .95) and realizing that they are in control of their own decisions (M: 4.13, SD: .95) were most significantly impacted by the program. More confidence in athletic ability (M: 4.08, SD: .97) followed, along with overall positive effect on self-esteem (M: 4.04, SD: 1.08), feel I can make a positive difference in society (M: 3.95, SD: .90), and feel more positive about my physical appearance (M: 3.92, SD: .93). The next items rated most positively were: family members view me more positively (M: 3.79, SD: 1.22), want to be a more positive member of society (M: 3.79, SD: 1.14), and overall I feel like I am a better person (M: 3.79, SD: 1.18). Additional items identified as positively affected by participation in the Ascent program include: more willing to help others (M: 3.75, SD: 1.03), better understand myself (M: 3.67, SD: 1.34), relationships with family members have improved (M: 3.63, SD: 1.28), feel like a happier person (M: 3.58, SD: 1.14), more positive about the world in general (M: 3.54, SD: 1.22), and learned how to control anger (M: 3.54, SD: 1.10).



Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Ascent Program Participant Ratings of Twenty Self-Concept Questionnaire Items

Item	M	SD	Rank
<u>Item #1</u> : Feel program had a positive effect on self-esteem	4.04	1.08	4
<u>Item #2</u> : Feel more positive about physical appearance	3.92	.93	6
<u>Item #3</u> : More confident in athletic ability	4.08	.97	3
<u>Item #4</u> : Perceptions of strangers more positive	3.33	1.05	16
<u>Item #5</u> : More comfortable around strangers	3.42	.97	15
<u>Item #6</u> : Feel better about ability to succeed in school	3.33	1.40	16
<u>Item #7</u> : Learn to count on self for own problem solving	4.29	.95	1
<u>Item #8</u> : Realize you control own decisions	4.13	.95	2

(table continues)

<u>Item #9</u> : Feel like a better person	3.79	1.18	7
<u>Item #10</u> : Improved family relationships	3.63	1.28	10
<u>Item #11</u> : Family members view me more positively	3.79	1.22	7
<u>Item #12</u> : Beneficial in helping improve friendships	3.50	1.10	13
<u>Item #13</u> : Like self more because of participating	3.46	1.22	14
<u>Item #14</u> : Made me want to become more positive member of society	3.79	1.14	7
<u>Item #15</u> : More willing to help others	3.75	1.03	8
<u>Item #16</u> : Feel I can make more of a positive difference in society	3.95	.90	5
<u>Item #17</u> : Helped me better understand self	3.67	1.34	9
<u>Item # 18</u> : More positive attitude about world	3.54	1.22	12
<u>Item #19</u> : Feel like happier person	3.58	1.14	11
<u>Item #20</u> : Helped me control anger	3.54	1.10	12

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Any differences between male and female participant responses were analyzed through independent group t-tests on survey items 1-20. The means, standard deviations

and rank for each gender by item are reported in Table 3. T-test results indicate one significant difference between the male and female responses to the survey items. Item #3, which dealt with increased confidence in athletic ability, emerged as statistically significant at the  $< .01$  level. Females were more likely to indicate that participation in the Ascent Program benefited their confidence in their athletic ability.

As shown on Table 3, male responses to the twenty self-concept survey items received mean scores ranging from 3.12 to 4.29. Of the twenty items, only three were rated 3.5 or lower. This indicates that the Ascent Program did not substantially benefit males in the following areas: more positive attitude about the world, more positive perceptions of strangers, and feeling better about their ability to succeed in school.

Female responses to the twenty survey items received mean scores ranging from 3.0 to 4.71. Of these items, six were rated 3.5 or lower, suggesting the Ascent Program did not substantially benefit females in the areas of: positive perceptions of strangers, comfort around strangers, improving friendships, liking self more, helping better understand self, and feeling like a happier person.

Table 3

Gender Differences and the Relative Importance of the Twenty Items

Item	Males			Females		
	M	SD	Rank	M	SD	Rank
<u>Item #1</u> : Feel program had a positive effect on self-esteem	4.00	.94	3	4.14	1.46	4
<u>Item #2</u> : Feel more positive about physical appearance	4.00	1.00	3	3.71	.76	7
<u>Item #3</u> : More confident in athletic ability	3.82	1.01	5	4.71	.49	1
<u>Item #4</u> : Perceptions of strangers more positive	3.29	1.10	12	3.43	.98	9
<u>Item #5</u> : More comfortable around strangers	3.53	.94	11	3.14	1.07	11
<u>Item #6</u> : Feel better about ability to succeed in school	3.12	1.36	14	3.86	1.46	6
<u>Item #7</u> : Learn to count on self for own problem solving	4.18	1.07	2	4.57	.53	2
<u>Item #8</u> : Realize you control own decisions	4.29	.92	1	3.71	.95	7

<u>Item #9</u> : Feel like a better person	3.88	1.05	4	3.57	1.51	8
<u>Item #10</u> : Improved family relationships	3.53	1.42	11	3.86	.90	6
<u>Item #11</u> : Family members view me more positively	3.71	1.31	8	4.00	1.00	5
<u>Item #12</u> : Beneficial in helping improve friendships	3.53	1.23	11	3.43	.79	9
<u>Item #13</u> : Like self more because of participating	3.65	1.17	9	3.00	1.29	12
<u>Item #14</u> : Made me want to become more positive member of society	3.76	1.25	7	3.86	.90	6
<u>Item #15</u> : More willing to help others	3.59	1.12	10	4.14	.69	4
<u>Item #16</u> : Feel I can make more of a positive difference in society	3.81	.98	6	4.33	.52	3
<u>Item #17</u> : Helped me better understand self	3.82	1.19	6	3.29	1.70	10
<u>Item # 18</u> : More positive attitude about world	3.35	1.11	13	4.00	1.41	5
<u>Item #19</u> : Feel like happier person	3.71	1.26	8	3.57	1.13	8
<u>Item #20</u> : Helped me control anger	3.53	1.12	11	3.57	1.13	8

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Responses of the Ascent Program participants indicate that certain program components were more beneficial to them than others. The teamwork component (M: 2.74, SD: 1.115) was identified as the most beneficial course component. Other course components identified in descending order of importance were: outdoor experience (M: 2.79, SD: 1.58), leadership development (M: 2.84, SD: 1.38), friendships (M: 3.21, SD: 1.44), and adventure/excitement (M: 3.42, SD: 1.54). These results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and Rank of Program Component Benefits

Component	M	SD	Rank
Outdoor Experience	2.79	1.58	2
Teamwork	2.74	1.115	1
Friendships	3.21	1.44	4
Leadership Development	2.84	1.38	3
Adventure/Excitement	3.42	1.54	5

Differences between male and female participant responses regarding program benefits were analyzed through an independent groups t-test. The means, standard deviations and rank for each gender by item are reported in Table 5. T-test results indicate one significant difference between male and female responses to

program benefit items. Male ratings of outdoor experience emerged as statistically significant from the female ratings at the  $< .05$  level. Males were more likely to indicate that the outdoor experience component of the Ascent Program was beneficial.

As shown on Table 5, male rankings of program component benefits received mean scores ranging from 2.23 to 3.62. Males ranked program components in the following descending order of importance: outdoor experience, teamwork, leadership development, friendships and adventure/excitement.

Female ratings of beneficial program components received mean scores ranging from 2.17 to 4.0. Females ranked program component benefits in the following descending order of importance: leadership development, friendships, teamwork and adventure/excitement (equal), and outdoor experience.

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations and Rank of Gender Difference Regarding Perceptions of  
Program Component Benefits

Component	Males			Females		
	M	SD	Rank	M	SD	Rank
Outdoor Experience	2.23	1.30	1	4.0	1.55	4
Teamwork	2.62	1.26	2	3.0	.89	3
Friendships	3.38	1.45	4	2.83	1.47	2
Leadership Development	3.15	1.21	3	2.17	1.60	1
Adventure/Excitement	3.62	1.61	5	3.0	1.41	3

Note: The lower the mean score, the greater the benefit



## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Discussion, Limitations and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results of this study and to provide discussion and conclusions for future educators. In addition, limitations and recommendations to this study will be discussed.

#### Summary

This study attempted to provide empirical support to determine whether self-concept is positively affected by participation in the Outward Bound Ascent course. To measure self-concept change, an informal survey was created based on items contained on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale: Second Edition (TSCS: 2). In analyzing the responses of course participants, the researcher intended to discover the extent to which different dimensions of self-concept are affected by outdoor learning programs. In analyzing the degree to which different self-concept dimensions were impacted by the program, comparisons between male and female perceptions of self-concept change also were made.

A portion of this study attempted to establish which components of the Outward Bound Ascent Program are believed to be the most beneficial to adolescents who participate in the experience. A segment of this analysis also compared differences between male and female perceptions of program benefits. Finally, Ascent Program participants were presented with an open-ended question that allowed them to share their overall thoughts and feelings about participating in the course.

Overall, Ascent Program participants reported that participating in the Outward Bound course enabled them to experience substantial improvements on the majority (75

percent) of the self-concept items on the survey. Most significantly impacted were the areas of: (a) learning how to depend on themselves to solve their own problems, (b) realizing they are in control of their own decisions and (c) improved confidence in athletic ability. Answers to twelve additional self-concept survey questions suggest improvements in additional areas, including increased overall self-esteem, improved relationships with family members, more self-understanding and increased positive views about the world.

Differences were noted between male and female responses concerning self-concept change. Male participant responses to survey items suggest substantial self-concept improvements on 85 percent of the survey items. Males indicated the following self-concept areas as most significantly impacted: (a) realizing they control their own decisions, (b) learning to count on themselves to solve problems, and (c) feeling more positive about physical appearance and (d) feeling more positive about self-esteem (positive feelings of physical appearance and positive feelings of self-esteem were equal). The self-concept survey items rated as most significantly impacting females include: (a) confidence in athletic ability, (b) learning to count on themselves to solve problems, and (c) feeling like they can make a positive difference in society. Males indicated that the Ascent Program did not substantially benefit them in the following areas: (a) more positive attitude about the world, (b) more positive perceptions of strangers, and (c) feeling better about their ability to succeed in school. In comparison, females did not feel positive changes in: (a) more positive perceptions of strangers, (b) comfort around strangers, (c) improving friendships, (d) liking self more, (e) helping better understand self, and (f) feeling like a happier person. These results suggest that males perceived the

Ascent Program as positively affecting more areas of self-concept than the female participants.

One statistically significant difference emerged between the male and female responses to the survey items. Females indicated that the Ascent Program benefited their confidence in their athletic ability significantly more than males.

Regarding overall program component benefits, Ascent Program participant responses indicate that certain program components were more beneficial to them than others. Participants had five benefit choices to choose from, and they were rated in the following order of importance: (a) teamwork, (b) outdoor experience, (c) leadership development, (d) friendships and (e) adventure/excitement.

One statistically significant difference was noted between male and female ratings of program benefits. Males were significantly more likely to rate outdoor experience as beneficial to them in comparison to the females. Males rated program benefits in the following order of importance: (a) Outdoor Experience, (b) Teamwork, (c) Leadership Development, (d) Friendships, and (e) Adventure/Excitement. Females rated program benefits as: (a) Leadership Development, (b) Friendships, (c) Teamwork and Adventure Excitement (equal), and (d) Outdoor Experience.

### Discussion

It is apparent that the adolescents in this study experienced a positive change in their self-concept as a result of participating in the Voyageur Outward Bound School's Ascent Program. Positive participant responses to the majority of items on the self-concept survey used in this study support this hypothesis. Of the twenty survey items, only five did not suggest self-concept improvement. Upon close examination of these

five items, it becomes clear that none obtained an overall mean score lower than 3.33, suggesting that overall, all items were scored more positively than negatively.

The wide-range of self-concept domains impacted by the Ascent Program indicates its far-reaching impact. Because of the challenging nature of this experience, participants are required to rely on themselves to develop the knowledge and determination necessary to successfully negotiate through a number of formidable tasks. The positive influence that these challenging aspects of the program have on participant self-concept is exemplified by their responses to item #7, “The Ascent Program has helped me learn how to count on myself to solve my own problems.” This item was rated highest overall and demonstrates the power the Ascent Program has in enabling participants to build self-reliance and to learn how to believe in themselves. The self-reliance and improved sense of inner-control (locus of control) aspect of the program is further supported by participant responses to item #8, “The Ascent Program has helped me realize that I am in control of my own decisions.” This item was rated second overall and second for both male and female respondents.

These results relate to Davis-Berman and Berman’s (1994) two-year follow-up report of participants in the Wilderness Therapy Program, a program similar to the Ascent Program. This study determined an increase in participant perceptions of confidence and ability to perform in challenging situations. Additionally, participants in the Davis-Berman and Berman study demonstrated a more internal locus of control two years after participating, suggesting the program components had a significant impact on improving student problem-solving abilities and enabling them to recognize their ability to influence what happens to them. These findings are encouraging and provide

additional support for the positive influence of outdoor education experiences; nevertheless, they are not entirely consistent with the findings of the current study. The measurements of the Davis-Berman and Berman (1994) study were carried out at different time intervals, and the program components were somewhat different from those of the Ascent Program.

In the current study, the participants were required to face physical challenges that not only required them to utilize self-reliance and individual problem-solving abilities, but also demanded that they utilize and further develop their athletic and physical prowess. This likely explains the influence the program had on their increased confidence in athletic ability, which was the third most significantly impacted overall domain. These findings are consistent with the perspectives of Hazelworth and Wilson (1988), who posited that outdoor education experiences result in positive change in participant identity due to the challenges one experiences through adventure. While substantial changes in participant confidence in athletic ability occurred in both male and female participants, females displayed a unique difference in this domain.

When investigating the most negatively scored items of the survey used in this study, it becomes apparent that the Ascent Program was not as influential overall on social and academic/work self-concept domains. This is evidenced by the fact that two of the lowest scored items relate to participant feelings and perceptions of strangers, as well as feelings about the ability to succeed in school. The findings regarding academic self-concept are consistent with those from a meta-analysis of different studies measuring the relationship between Outward Bound course participation and self-concept change conducted by Hattie et al. (1997). These researchers found that overall, participation in

outdoor adventure programs was less influential in improving participant academic self-concept than other self-concept domains. Interestingly, the current study indicates a unique difference between male and female feelings of abilities to succeed in school. Females rated this as the sixth most positively impacted item; males ranked it fourteenth. This suggests that the increase in competencies developed through the Ascent Program can generalize into feelings of competency in other domains; in this case, perceptions of ability to succeed in school.

The current study found additional differences between male and female Ascent Program participants. Especially noteworthy was the statistically significant difference noted between male and female perceptions of confidence in their athletic ability. Females were much more likely to attribute the improvements in this area to the Ascent Program. One possible explanation for this is the difference that can exist between male and female perceptions of athletic competence. Traditionally, males are recognized as possessing more highly refined physical abilities, including strength and coordination, than females. Because of this, males may already have a higher confidence level in relation to these abilities. They may not have the same potential for growth as females when presented with the same physical/athletic challenges.

Research supports differences between male and female athletic/physical self-concept. In a meta-analysis of twenty-two different studies of gender differences in self-concept conducted by Wilgenbusch and Merrell (1999), boys were found to display significantly higher levels of self-concept in athletic and psychomotor coordination than girls. When analyzing these results, the females in the present study might be influenced by the Ascent Program's physical challenges more strongly because there is more room

for them to grow in the first place. Surprisingly, these findings conflict with results discovered by Richards (cited in Hattie et al., 1997), who found that boys who participated in adventure education experiences demonstrated more impressive gains in their physical self-concept than females. The fact that confidence in athletic ability is only one portion of an individual's overall physical sense of self might explain this inconsistency.

Another interesting discrepancy between the males and females that emerged from this study agrees with Estes and Ewert's (cited in Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997) claim that males who participate in Outward Bound courses are less group-oriented and place a higher value on autonomy and individual control. In the current study, females rated item # 15, "I am more willing to help others," considerably higher than males, which supports the "group over individual" perspective more typical of females in our society. Female responses to survey item #16, "I feel I can make a more positive difference in society," further supports the significant impact the Ascent Program has on their willingness to contribute their individual efforts toward group success. These findings support the influence of the teamwork component of the Ascent Program on the self-concept of female participants. Because they are required to consistently work together and depend on one another to successfully negotiate their way through the program's numerous challenges, they have an opportunity to enhance their eagerness to assist others.

Another interesting gender difference emerges when considering male perceptions of the Ascent Program's overall effect on physical appearance (item #2), which was ranked as the third most positively affected areas for males and the seventh ranked for

females. Research conducted by Wilgenbusch and Merrell (1999) provides a potential explanation for these differences. Results of their meta-analysis suggest evidence that males typically display significantly higher self-concept with regard to physical appearance than females. Unrealistic social standards, societal expectations and false or misleading advertising can contribute to the increased pressure on females to conform to an ideal body type and appearance (Wilgenbusch & Merrell, 1999). As a result, they may be more rooted in their perceptions of appearance and potentially more resistant to positive change in this domain. Regardless of their lower rating in the area of physical appearance, female respondents in the present study indicated positive change overall ( $M: 3.71$ ,  $SD: .76$ ). This suggests that, while not as impactful to women, self-concept in the area of physical appearance can be positively influenced through participation in the Ascent Program.

#### Gender Differences in Relation to Perceived Program Benefits

Overall, participant ratings of the perceived program benefits also offer interesting discussion. The fact that males were considerably more likely to rate outdoor experience as beneficial to them in comparison to females is especially important, particularly when considering that females rated this dimension as least beneficial. These findings suggest males are more affected by the components of the program that allow them to learn new skills and develop the expertise to effectively function in an outdoor adventure environment.

Another interesting result of this study relates to participant perceptions of program benefits in the area of leadership. Females rated leadership development as the most beneficial program component. This discovery agrees with findings recognized by



Hattie et al. (1997), which conclude that many adventure programs impact leadership competencies. These results are encouraging, because many females who participate in the Ascent Program are perceived as lacking positive leadership skills, and participating in the program may provide them with an opportunity to positively change their capabilities in the leadership domain.

The teamwork component of the Ascent Program was ranked by males, and the friendship component by females, as the second most beneficial elements of the program. These findings are consistent with the perceptions of outdoor education proponents, who credit the small-group format as affecting a number of the positive changes that occur in the overall participant attitudes. Because students are required to work as a cohesive group, participant feelings of community, honest communication and positive action are enhanced (Ewert, 1989). The results of the current study further substantiate research findings which indicate positive benefits in the areas of teamwork and friendship development.

#### Limitations and Recommendations

Although a number of positive results emerged as a result of this study, limitations do exist and must be considered when interpreting and attempting to generalize the findings. The limited sample size is one concern that requires immediate consideration. Only twenty-four out of sixty-seven Ascent Program participants actually responded to the request to complete the survey. In the future, it would be beneficial to include the majority of program participants in order to obtain more accurate and conclusive results. Additionally, future studies should include a more culturally diverse student population in order to more effectively generalize the findings.

This study would also have been more effective if the researcher had personally participated in a portion of the Ascent Program course with students and instructors. This would have provided additional insight and awareness of the influence of the various program elements on participants, and also would have enabled a more thorough understanding of the Ascent Program's structure and uniqueness. As an active participant in the program, the researcher could also conduct personal interviews in addition to having students complete a written survey. This would provide more thorough personal information and additional suggestions regarding the effectiveness of various program components.

Another limitation of this study is the fact that the survey questions were derived informally from the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS: 2). In the future, a norm-referenced, standardized measure of self-concept such as the TSCS: 2 should be used directly to obtain a more accurate picture of individual changes in self-perception. Further, using a pre-test/post-test format would assist in providing more precise measures of self-concept change.

This study examined the impact of an Outward Bound Ascent course on the self-concept of at-risk adolescents. Participant responses to survey items suggest positive changes in a number of self-concept domains as a result of participation in the Ascent Program. In addition, participants identified a number of beneficial course components. These results substantiate previous research supporting the benefits of participation in outdoor education experiences, particularly in the area of self-concept improvement. Although further research is required to support the effectiveness of outdoor education in

other domains, current results suggest it has positive effects on the self-concept of at-risk adolescents.

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## APPENDIX A

### Outward Bound Self-Concept Survey

**Outward Bound Ascent Program Self-Concept Survey**

Please rate the following statements related to your personal experience in the Outward Bound Ascent Program. Circle the number that most closely corresponds to your answer.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Overall, I feel the Ascent Program has had a positive effect on my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel that my participation in the Ascent program has made me feel more positive about my physical appearance.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The Ascent Program has made me more confident in my athletic ability.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My perceptions of strangers have become more positive as a result of the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel more comfortable around strangers as a result of the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel better about my ability to succeed in school as a result of participating in the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The Ascent Program has helped me learn how to count on myself to solve my own problems.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The Ascent Program has helped me realize that I am in control of my own decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Overall, I feel like I am a better person because I participated in the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My relationships with family members have improved because of the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My family members view me more positively as a result of the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The Ascent Program has been beneficial in helping me improve my friendships.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I like myself more because of my participation in the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The Ascent Program has made me want to be a more positive member of society.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am more willing to help others as a result of participating in the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The Ascent Program has made me feel like I can make a positive difference in society.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Participating in the Ascent Program has helped me better understand myself.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Participating in the Ascent Program has given me a more positive attitude about the world in general.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel like a happier person as a result of the Ascent Program.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The Ascent Program has helped me learn to control my anger.	1	2	3	4	5

**Background Information**

Gender: ☐ Male  
☐ Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Ethnicity:    ☐ White/Caucasian                      ☐ Black/African American  
                  ☐ Asian American                            ☐ Pacific Islander  
                  ☐ Native American                           ☐ Hispanic/Latino  
                  ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of participation in Outward Bound Ascent Course: \_\_\_\_\_

What part of the program was most beneficial to you (please rank 1-5, 1 most beneficial and 5 least beneficial):

\_\_\_\_\_ Outdoor Experience

\_\_\_\_\_ Teamwork

\_\_\_\_\_ Friendships

\_\_\_\_\_ Leadership Development

\_\_\_\_\_ Adventure/Excitement

List/describe other benefits or any thing else you liked about the program here: \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX B

### Cover Letter and Informed Consent



# University of Wisconsin-Stout

Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751-0790

11/15/99

Dear Parent/Guardian and Outward Bound Ascent Program Participant:

I would like to invite you to take part in a master's thesis research study that examines the benefits of participating in Outward Bound's Ascent Program. This study is being conducted to determine whether teenagers who take part in the Ascent course experience positive change in their self-concept as a result of participating in the program. The study is made up of a two-sided survey that should take no more than ten to fifteen minutes to complete. I have addressed this letter to both of you because I must obtain parent/guardian permission to include the information you provide.

**The following statements pertain to the Ascent Program participant, but I encourage both of you to read them.**

Taking part in this study will allow you to reflect on both the positive and negative aspects of the Outward Bound experience, and give you a chance to determine whether the program influenced how you feel about yourself. Participating in this study will also help educators decide whether outdoor education experiences are effective in producing positive personal growth and an improved self-concept in teenagers.

I do not anticipate that this study will present any medical or social risk to you. The records of the study will be kept private, your name will not be used and any information that is collected will be held completely confidential.

NOTE: The primary researcher conducting this study is John Cavanagh, a graduate student in the school psychology program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to my advisor, Jackie Weissenburger, Assistant Professor, at (715) 232-1326, and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

**Please sign the following consent statement and send it with the survey you complete. Also, please obtain the signature of your parent or guardian. Reminder: The survey has two sides.**

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and I may discontinue my participation at any time. I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the Outward Bound Ascent course on the self-concept of its participants. I further understand that any information about me that is collected during this study will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be part of my permanent record. I understand that at the conclusion of this study all records which identify individual participants will be destroyed.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

After you and your parent/guardian sign this form and you complete both sides of the survey, please send the survey and this form back in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by December 1, 1999.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Cavanagh  
UW-Stout Graduate Student

## APPENDIX C

### Follow-up Letter and Informed Consent



# University of Wisconsin-Stout

Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751-0790

Dear Parent/Guardian and Outward Bound Ascent Program Participant:

Two months ago I wrote asking you to complete a survey that examines the benefits of participating in Outward Bound's Ascent Program. To the best of my knowledge I have not yet received a completed survey from you. I realize that you may not have had time to fill out the survey until now. I would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time today to help me. Your responses are very important; they will help determine whether teenagers who take part in the Ascent course experience positive change in their self-concept as a result of participating in the program. I can only establish this if I get responses from you and other Ascent program participants.

In case you have misplaced your survey, please use the one that is enclosed, along with a postage-paid envelope for returning the survey. Again, your responses will help me obtain more accurate information regarding the positive and negative aspects of the Outward Bound experience, and whether outdoor education experiences are effective in producing positive personal growth and an improved self-concept in teenagers. I am grateful to you for taking 10 minutes to complete and return the survey.

As mentioned in the first mailing, I do not anticipate that this study will present any medical or social risk to you. The records of the study will be kept private, your name will not be used and any information that is collected will be held completely confidential.

NOTE: The primary researcher conducting this study is John Cavanagh, a graduate student in the school psychology program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to my advisor, Jackie Weissenburger, Assistant Professor, at (715) 232-1326, and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

**Please sign the following consent statement and send it with the survey you complete. Also, please obtain the signature of your parent or guardian. Reminder: The survey has two sides.**

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and I may discontinue my participation at any time. I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the Outward Bound Ascent course on the self-concept of its participants. I further understand that any information about me that is collected during this study will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be part of my permanent record. I understand that at the conclusion of this study all records which identify individual participants will be destroyed.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

After you and your parent/guardian sign this form and you complete both sides of the survey, please send the survey and this form back in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by February 25, 2000.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Cavanagh  
UW-Stout Graduate Student

## APPENDIX D

### Participant Comments About the Benefits of Participating in the Outward Bound

#### Ascent Program

- “I really liked Outward Bound. It was a big step and rewarding in the end. I learned a lot about myself and what makes me special.”
- “I really like how it was set up by having to go a certain distance every day.”
- “The instructors were key to the program’s success.”
- “I found the time away from home itself to be helpful. Not being in the situation helped me look at it. My staff and instructors were all really nice and helped me with my parents. Just being able to talk to adults that listened to me and my problems was a big help. They also had valuable advice and things for me to think about. The contracting session with my instructors talking to my parents did help out a lot.”
- “I see more problems with society and the government.”
- “I absolutely hated the program and would rather have gone to sail. I would never recommend this to anyone. It was the most horrible single experience that has ever happened to me.”
- “More food is needed on the course. Also, lighter food to. Peanut butter and jelly in a jar? What the hell is that? That &#! is heavy to haul around. Give people more bug dope.”
- “My grades have improved so much. I had a 1.02 last year first quarter and 2.94 this year first quarter.”
- “The most beneficial thing I got out of the Ascent Program was anger management.”
- “I can put up with situations I don’t like, better.”
- “I liked the girls and the counselors there, and I also liked losing 16 pounds.”
- “It was a good physical work and it developed strength within me.”
- “I got to meet new people.”

- “It made me realize that I don’t have to be liked by everyone. I would rather be liked by my family and myself.”