

# **Outward Bound and Civic-Minded: The Impact of an Outward Bound Course on Students' Understanding of and Experiences With Public Service**

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## **Abstract**

Research on individuals' experiences engaging in outdoor education programs suggests participants are impacted in a number of ways. This study investigated the impact of participation in a wilderness education course on undergraduates' experiences with public service. This study asked the research question, what is the impact of an Outward Bound course on students' understanding of and experiences with public service? Participants ( $n = 109$ ) were undergraduate students who completed a 28-day Outward Bound course between 2002 and 2017. Qualitative data that informed the study included interviews, impact statements, and survey responses. The findings demonstrate a relationship between an outdoor education experience and public service, which can be understood most clearly through considering the development of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intention associated with the Civic-Minded Graduate.

**KEYWORDS:** outdoor education; civic learning; Civic-Minded Graduate; higher education; public service

## Background

Researchers and practitioners within higher education have become increasingly interested in the learning that comes from experiences that happen outside of the classroom and conventional academic contexts but which often come to define the enduring aspects of students' education and development. A growing body of research has developed around the impact of experiential learning activities such as internships, capstone projects, study abroad experiences, and service-learning experiences within higher education, yet students often define as transformative those educational experiences that do not easily fit into one of these categories. This study investigates a unique opportunity offered through one institution of higher education for students already engaged in some significant way with public service. Since the early 2000s, nearly 200 undergraduate students have been awarded scholarships to participate in 28-day outdoor education courses through the North Carolina Outward Bound School (NCOBS). Eligibility to apply for a scholarship is related to students' engagement in a service-related major (i.e., education) or extracurricular activity (i.e., public service scholars program or student leadership). Undergraduate students consistently describe their outdoor education experiences as some of the most high impact and transformational of their college careers, but the nature of that transformation and its connection to student service engagement has been difficult to measure and articulate.

## Public Service and American Higher Education

The notion that the purpose of education is not limited only to an individual's learning of academic course content but also the way that individual is prepared to contribute to and participate in a democratic society has a deep history in the United States. While the relationship between individualism and public life has and does take on many and diverse forms (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985/1996), ideas about the public purposes of education can be traced back at least to, among other sources, the writings of the Founding Fathers (Harkavy & Hartley, 2008). The establishment of American public higher education itself, particularly land-grant universities explicitly committed to teaching the agricultural and mechanical arts (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, 2012; Boyer, 1994; Usher, 2011), attests to a long tradition of colleges and universities placing an explicit interest in service to the public as a central part of their mission.

A newer, more modern vision for the role that colleges and universities could play in actively cultivating the type of publicly engaged citizens required for a successful democracy emerged in the 1980s in response to a decline in civic participation and engagement that sociologists noted in the culture more broadly, particularly in younger generations (Newman, 1985; Putnam, 1995). This vision was perhaps most clearly pronounced when a group of college and university presidents signed a compact in 1985 to recommit to the public purposes of higher education and began a network called Campus Compact that helps support institutions in fulfilling that commitment, largely through sharing best practices and promoting innovative programming aimed at giving students substantive experiences of service and civic participation as part of their education.

Today, Campus Compact is a coalition of well over 1,000 colleges and universities that explains its purpose as to "build democracy through civic education and community development" (Campus Compact, n.d., para. 1). Colleges promote civic education and community development through activities such as academic service-learning, cocurricular service and volunteerism, voter and election engagement initiatives, and community-based research. Service-learning is defined as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby & Associates, 1996,

p. 5). Service-learning and related community-based learning experiences were together identified as one of 10 high-impact educational practices studied and promoted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Kuh, 2008). Researchers have found positive associations between undergraduate service and service-learning activities and continued alumni involvement with service (Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Keen & Hall, 2008). Mitchell, Battistoni, Keene, and Reiff (2013) found that the development of a civic identity in college can significantly shape alumni civic identities and participation. Further, students' continuous practice of critical reflection can build habits of reflection that play a significant role in their civic and professional identities after graduation (Mitchell et al., 2015).

One major challenge in the evaluation and research of the long-term impact of undergraduate service and civic engagement programs is that the goal of programs is not often to change specific, relatively easily measurable service or civic behaviors (e.g., volunteering and voting) but instead to develop certain larger learning outcomes that can be harder to quantify and assess. A number of tools have been created to assess civic outcomes in higher education with varying purposes and definitions of *civic engagement* (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2009; Keen, 2009; McTighe Musil, 2009). In 2011, Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle surveyed the field and offered the Civic-Minded Graduate Model as a "north star" for research and practice in the identification and measurement of undergraduate civic learning that would lead to lives of civic-mindedness and engagement. It connected with the Civic-Minded Professional scale (Hatcher, 2008), which was developed to measure how civic-mindedness can be documented in the lives of adults well into their career, and was grounded in their earlier research (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010) on measuring civic growth in students in relation to their experiences in service-learning courses. Since being offered in 2011, the model has been cited in at least 81 other publications and emerged as a leading framework in the field. A "civic-minded graduate" is

a person who has completed a course of study (e.g., bachelor's degree) and has the capacity and desire to work with others to achieve the common good. "Civic-mindedness" refers to a person's inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable and involved in the community, and to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community. (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010, p. 429)

The model takes a holistic view, considering the distinct contributions and also relationships and overlap among the various dimensions of a student's identity, educational experiences, and civic experiences. Steinberg et al. (2011) suggest 10 domains that we should consider and seek to develop in a Civic-Minded Graduate; these can be clustered into knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions. The knowledge required relates to volunteer opportunities, academic knowledge, and contemporary social issues. The skills relate to communication and listening, diversity, and consensus building. The disposition connects with valuing community engagement, self-efficacy, and becoming a social trustee of knowledge. A student graduating with an adequate degree of competency and intention in these domains should be ready to participate fully in civic life.

Steinberg et al. (2011) suggest that the model can be used as a conceptual framework that explains how various parts of a student's educational experiences contribute toward civic-mindedness and thus long-term civic and service engagement. While not our primary lens of analysis, this study explores how the model as a conceptual framework for civic learning in higher education could offer insight into the relationship between outdoor education and students' understanding of and experiences with public service.

## Experiential Education and Outward Bound

Many in higher education often assume that outdoor education programs are described as experiential simply because learners are outside and physically engaging in activities. Itin (1999) refutes that experiential education is a philosophy that frames the learning process, yet Roberts (2012) problematizes the idea of experiential education as a philosophy in his discussion of the “ongoing quest” for experiential education to be defined. Roberts argues that rather than being a philosophy or a methodology, experiential education is a field, which, for the purposes of his analysis, he defines as “common intellectual roots, activities, and a subject of study that holds the disparate, visible curriculum projects together” (p. 7). Outdoor education can be considered one of these curriculum projects and Outward Bound an example of outdoor education.

For over 50 years, Outward Bound has offered experiential outdoor courses for youth and people of all ages in the United States. James (1980b) explains that the first U.S. Outward Bound schools were

not started to teach people how to live in the mountains. The idea was to use the mountains as a classroom to produce better people, to build character, to instill that intensity of individual and collective aspiration on which the entire society depends for its survival. (p. 19)

Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, called for students on a course to be stirred to develop “an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and, above all, compassion” (as cited in North Carolina Outward Bound School [NCOBS], n.d., p. 79).

Outward Bound’s four pillars of craftsmanship, self-reliance, physical fitness, and compassion guide the group and individual challenges on expeditions in the wilderness. Participants receive training in practical skills such as orienteering, trail cooking, rock climbing and rappelling, whitewater canoeing, and wilderness first aid, and are put into situations in which they must together utilize many of these skills to complete course challenges successfully. Throughout these experiences, students are prompted to consider how they might transfer their learning experiences on the course to future situations. Bobilya, Kalisch, Daniel, and Coulson (2015) documented a positive application of learning in individuals’ transfer of experiences from a NCOBS course in the areas of self-confidence, interpersonal relationships, and mental strength. Similarly, research has investigated the connections between outdoor education and campus leadership to better understand how outdoor education contributes to leadership development (Sandberg, Martin, Szolosi, Early, & Casapulla, 2017; Starbuck & Bell, 2017).

Grounded in the pillar of compassion, service to others has been an emphasis of the Outward Bound movement since its founding (James, 1980b; MacArthur, 1982). Out on the open seas, Hahn and those first Outward Bound students faced situations that involved saving their crew members’ lives as the ultimate form of self-denial and service (MacArthur, 1982). Outward Bound courses today do not typically afford students the same lifesaving opportunities found in the initial Outward Bound school. Yet outdoor experiences such as Outward Bound have the propensity to encourage students to support one another in unique ways that contribute to a strong and particular sense of community (Asfeldt, Purc-Stephenson, & Hvenegaard, 2017; Breunig et al., 2008).

Today, students on an Outward Bound course typically engage in some sort of service, such as trail maintenance in the mountains or working with people who are homeless in urban areas. They may also practice elements of Leave No Trace camping as a way of taking care of the land and environment. Limited research has investigated the links between an Outward Bound course and service. However, Fouhey and Saltmarsh (1996) found that when an Outward Bound course is coupled with community service-learning, participants have increased cognitive and moral development. Their findings suggest that the confluence of Outward Bound and

service-learning can extend outdoor learning to a “wider community framework in a common context for education” (Fouhey & Saltmarsh, 1996, p. 88). James (1980a) examined the relationship between Outward Bound and service through a historical lens, positing that service and the Outward Bound experience can be examined through a traditionalist or pluralist lens. Through the traditionalist view, instructors might seek to build character around traditional values and use service activities to explicitly teach responsible participation in social life. The pluralistic view of service in a field-based course is driven instead by goals of self-development through group experiences. He writes,

... students are in a position to learn a great deal about compassion and service by virtue of their group experience. The group lives together in such constant intimacy, under stress and also in moments of play and repose, that members are bound to face consternation and more if they are not serving their companions. Automatically, because of the journey format in remote wilderness, the patrol is in its own world for a while, all of a piece, and its experience is fluid and integral. Students have the opportunity to learn, and staff to teach, the rudimentary connections of social life, the need for agreeing to participate in a community, to acquire skills, to marshal their efforts, to labor, to agree upon and attain objectives in pursuit of a worthy goal. Students learn to serve out of sheer necessity. (James, 1980a, pp. 7–8)

Educational experiences like that which James describe certainly can help contribute to a range of educational goals in a wide variety of educational settings, not least those associated with service and civic education programs within higher education. This notion of the pluralistic view of service, along with anecdotes from students, inspired this investigation of the relationship between an outdoor education experience and public service in higher education.

## Method

This qualitative case study investigates an outdoor education experience and its impact on undergraduate students’ experiences and dispositions related to public service. The question that guided this study was, what is the impact of an Outward Bound course on students’ understanding of and experience with public service? We collected and analyzed several data sources to triangulate the data. The data points provided stories and accounts that helped inform our understanding of the relationship between public service and an outdoor education experience.

## Context and Study Design

Study participants were undergraduate students at a large public university in North Carolina who engaged in a 28-day NCOBS course in the mountains or along the coast of North Carolina between 2002 and 2017. The students were awarded full scholarships to participate on the course. Eligibility for the scholarships was based on the students’ engagement in public service on campus. That all of the students were engaged in some form of public service may be seen as a limitation to the study because it may be assumed that participants have a predisposition of engagement with public service. However, through this study we wanted to better understand the relationship between outdoor education and participants’ understanding of and experiences with public service rather than to determine whether participants would be engaged in public service after the course. The course offers opportunities for individuals to engage in outdoor expeditions that typically involve hiking, backpacking, whitewater rafting, rock climbing, and sea kayaking. The courses also include a service project, time of solitude, and a personal challenge such as a long-distance run. One hundred fifty-five data points informed the study, and they can be divided into three categories: impact statements, survey data, and interviews.

Each student who participated in an NCOBS course since 2002 wrote an impact or reflection statement when they returned from their course. We had access to 103 impact statements

for the purpose of this research. The impact statement prompt asked participants to reflect upon and consider what they learned on the course and what it means to their future lives on campus and beyond. The impact statements were preexisting data that had been collected and stored for program evaluation and reporting measures. The statements varied in that the prompt was slightly different some years and the length of the responses varied by year. The statements were a valuable data point because they captured students' reflection upon their experience soon after their 28-day course.

We administered an online survey to all students who participated in an Outward Bound course between 2002 and 2016 for whom we had active e-mail addresses ( $n = 109$ ). The open-response survey questions were designed to capture data focused on the lasting impact of their outdoor education course in their personal and professional lives today. The survey asked specific questions such as "How do you see your NCOBS experience impacting your life today?" and "Did your NCOBS course impact the way you think about public service? If so, in what ways?" The survey also asked specific questions about what stands out from their course experience and how they have been engaged in public service since their graduation from undergraduate studies. The survey design allowed us to gather data from participants years after their NCOBS experience. We received responses from 36 of those students, for a response rate of 33%.

At the end of the survey, we invited participants to participate in an interview. Six individuals agreed to participate in an interview. Interviews lasted between 15 and 60 min. The interview protocol prompted participants to reflect on their experiences in the course; the role public service plays in their life; and what, if any, ways they see their course experiences impacting them today. We also interviewed nine of the 11 students (81.8%) who participated on the summer 2017 course. Interviews were transcribed, resulting in 140 pages of transcriptions. Table 1 illustrates the data sources that informed this study.

**Table 1**  
*Data Sources and Participants*

<b>Data source</b>	<b>Students who participated in NCOBS course from 2002–2016</b>	<b>Students who participated in 2017 NCOBS course</b>
Impact Statement Completed Postcourse	97	6
Online Survey	36	n/a
Interview	7	9

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was an iterative process. We began with initial coding of the impact statements to identify the conceptual essences of each statement (Saldana, 2009). Individually, each of us manually coded the impact statements and generated a list of initial holistic themes. We discussed the themes and collapsed them into themes that were most evident across the impact statements. Descriptors were developed for the additional coding of interviews and survey responses. Throughout the coding process, we discussed the codes to refine and collapse codes. Through our discussions about the themes and self-reflection, reflexivity of the study was established. The three data sources (impact statements, survey responses, interview transcripts) were melded together into an overall compilation of the participants' experiences. Triangulation of the multiple data sources ensures the consistency of the findings. The constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) permitted the revisiting of initial themes that we then used to trace the themes across the entire data set to determine saliency of the data. Thematic

analysis revealed themes that spoke to the participants' overall experiences on the Outward Bound course and their dispositions and practices related specifically to public service. The initial coding of the impact statements primarily provided data that spoke more broadly to the participants' experience on the course. The second level of analysis teased out the themes that had a correlation with participants' experiences related to public service. Through the second level of analysis, findings emerged that informed our understanding of the relationship between an Outward Bound course and public service. The findings illustrate the general themes represented across the data from the participants discussing their experiences and how they related to public service.

## Findings

Analysis of the data brought to the front the nuanced relationship between experiences on an Outward Bound course and public service. The courses provided opportunities for participants to develop their understanding of service in ways that impacted their future service experiences. Across the data, this impact was evident in three interconnected themes: (1) risk-taking enabling opportunity to engage in new experiences, (2) value of community and relationships with others, and (3) self-discovery leading to new clarity about purpose and identity. Taken on their own, these themes are not at all unique within the field of outdoor education. However, the connection of each theme to public service is notably unique to the field.

### Risk-Taking Enabling Opportunity to Engage in New Experiences

Woven throughout the data are instances of participants discussing physical and mental risk-taking they engaged in throughout the Outward Bound course. Consistently, they shared accounts of challenges faced, how they were pushed out of their comfort zone, and how they tried new things. Itin (1999) identified multiple categories of risks individuals may face in experiential learning spaces. He suggested that they "are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually and physically in an uncertain environment where the learner may experience success, failure, adventure and risk-taking" (Itin, 1999, p. 93). Throughout the interviews and survey responses, participants discussed directly the impact of risk-taking on them.

**Risk-taking and public service.** Throughout the data, the participants shared accounts of how moving out of their comfort zone on an Outward Bound course supported their confidence and ability to also take risks and move out of their comfort zones while engaging in service activities after. In an interview, one participant reflected on her learning from the course:

I think that being a public servant requires humility, openness, and strong leadership . . . The backcountry is humbling; learning how to survive and be self-sufficient in that setting reinforces our strength and our vulnerability to so many uncontrollable forces . . . NCOBS pushes you to be open and honest—to tell your story and be the giver and recipient of support, compassion, and encouragement—and those skills are critical in any public leader or servant. Strong leadership—the knowledge of when to stand up and lead and also when to pipe down and allow others the space to lead and grow—is one of my key takeaways from NCOBS . . . I think that has translated directly to how I serve others in my work and volunteer opportunities.

Many of the participants recognized they have a new perspective on public service as a result of being pushed out of their comfort zone. They shared accounts of what it felt like to rely on others when they were taking risks such as rock climbing or hiking. One participant reflected in an interview, "I've always thought of service as, 'Let me help you!' and like that is my burden to bear helping you because you are going through things. I never really thought of it from the perspective of the person being helped." This same participant went on to share accounts of how she felt when she repeatedly was challenged by the backcountry. She connected the way she felt



in the wilderness to the service work she does with adolescent girls and shared that she now tries to think about how she can help while also making them feel empowered in themselves. She concluded her reflections by stating, "I do think there is a direct correlation of learning through hardships and then pushing through hardships and getting that perspective to help others."

Similarly, one participant wrote,

I have learned to take many more interpersonal risks with people . . . relating to others and allowing them to relate to you on an even playing field, so that you are as likely to influence as be influenced. But it is scary and fraught with the potential for discomfort and surprises beyond one's control. The idea of being authentic and present in all aspects of life and all encounters is entirely relevant to service.

These examples of risk-taking resonate with research that encourages challenge for learning and growth. Roberts (2005) summarizes this sentiment in stating, "Experiential education done well is *risky*" (p. 14).

### Value of Community and Relationships With Others

A sense of community among group members is often reported by individuals after completing an outdoor education program (Asfeldt et al., 2017; Breunig et al., 2008). Extending the literature, a key finding that emerged from the data was how the value of community on an Outward Bound course related valuing of community generally, outside of the course. Throughout the data, stories emerged about the interpersonal relationships on the course. At times, these relationships were challenging and presented dilemmas. Participants often discussed how conflict would come to a head at a certain point in the group's development over the course, and participants would be forced to communicate and listen to one another on a deeper level than they had in earlier stages. Relationships with other participants also presented great sources of strength and support. Woven throughout all of these accounts were stories of fun and learning with their "crew." One participant wrote, "The trip gave me a sense of interconnectedness with other people and of the vital role of service in a world living amongst others."

The lessons learned from the meaningful community that course participants develop in the wilderness stay with the participants when they are back at home. One participant reflected, "Outward Bound's fostering of team-building and group development skills has encouraged me to approach interpersonal relationships in new and healthier ways and provided me with positive and constructive alternatives to handling conflict resolution with others." Many shared accounts of how the sense of community supported them on the course. One commented, "At Outward Bound, you are a member of a team, and to meet those team goals you sometimes have to keep pushing yourself even when you feel like you don't have it in you to walk one step further."

**Community and public service.** Analysis of the data revealed evidence of ways the value of community relates to participants' dispositions toward public service. They carry the lessons learned with them as they engage in public service after they return from the course. One participant noted, "Outward Bound is connected to public service in more ways than the eight or so hours of trail maintenance we did. I think the point is that we really are indebted to our fellow man in many more ways than are readily apparent."

It is fascinating to note that the participants repeatedly discussed how their Outward Bound community supported them through the many risks and challenges they faced on their expedition. Throughout the data, we found patterns of individuals pushed out of their comfort zone and supported by their crew members in a number of ways to take risks and try new things. One participant shared explicitly how the strong connections she developed with her fellow crew members helped her better understand public service. She shared in her interview,

Being on trail and seeing how, it just took on a different meaning to "serve" others. It wasn't just this act of taking an hour out of my day to go work at a homeless shelter. . . .



Service in that regard is [doing] something else with your time. But service on trail was about choosing to take actions based on you wanting somebody else to succeed. It was not this, "Oh, I need to do service hours!" It was, "I want to do this action because I want to do this for somebody else because I love them and want to support them, and I want them to succeed." Service in itself has a different meaning to me as well. It is, service is love. I like that I can understand that better now . . .

## Self-Discovery Leading to New Clarity About Purpose and Identity

Self-discovery was a consistent theme throughout the data sets as the students shared stories and reflections about the ways they have come to learn new things about themselves. It was evident the participants returned with a purpose. They returned changed. One participant explained that going on the course taught her to trust herself in new ways: "I have greater trust in myself and my strengths. Before NCOBS, I typically looked to trusted others for validation and approval. After NCOBS, I was more willing to trust my own internal compass."

One participant talked about coming to self-discoveries after being challenged by new things and being supported by his crew members. Participants frequently shared in great detail the challenges they faced, how they overcame them, and how that led to them learning things about themselves that surprised them in powerful ways. They discussed gaining a sense of confidence developed in the outdoors that has transferred to their lives years later. Some of the subthemes that emerged around the nature of this self-discovery related to spirituality, a participant's ability to lead or his or her particular leadership style, an appreciation for simplicity, and at times, a new clarity about values such as for environmental conservation.

**Self-discovery and public service.** When asked about ways Outward Bound made an impact on how they think about public service, a participant who completed the course over 10 years ago shared in his survey response,

One of my favorite quotes from an NCOBS Book of Readings . . . is, "One thing I know [is that] the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve." I think about that quote often as I worked my way through medical school and residency. I'm reminded of it on my challenging days of work, and it helps give me perspective as I sit down to write and craft op-ed pieces . . . or short screenplays and concepts for stories. Even back at Carolina, my goal has not been to lead, but to empower others to work toward common goals by identifying our connections. Outward Bound reinforced that for me, and it's a guiding principle for my life today.

As participants developed new understandings of themselves, they seemed to consider more how their actions impacted others. One participant noted, "Each day it is important to think of how your actions may impact others. Living with 14 other humans brings that very much to life in a way that is impossible to forget." They also developed new ways of thinking about service. One participant reflected, "NCOBS helped me to understand that service does not have to always be direct and in a physical way. You can serve a community just as well as an individual." Similarly, one participant shared, "It helped me to recognize the ways that public service can be enacted on a personal level. On top of giving from your time and physical resources, you can give someone your attention, your exhortation, and your genuine willingness to listen."

These students all started the Outward Bound course with some interest in public service, as reflected in their choice of academic study or cocurricular engagement. After facing challenges on course and growing in community with their crew, it is evident that the students returned with a heightened sense of who they are and how they can engage in public service.

## Discussion

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

The participants in this study were, in general, far more likely to have taken away something related to service through an experience of personal growth or self-discovery. This is consistent with Freeman's (2011) suggestion that Outward Bound shifted its focus from the character training approach of its earlier days to an emphasis on personal growth and self-discovery. More specifically, our data suggest that participants' experiences with risk-taking, value of community, and self-discovery create a particular type of personal growth that also significantly impacts their understanding of and experiences with public service. Utilizing James' (1980a) explanation of two views of the relationship between service and Outward Bound, we find that our data suggest far more evidence for the pluralist view of service, through which students learn about compassion and action in care for others through their group experience and interpersonal interactions on course.

This analysis is consistent with what can be found elsewhere in the literature. Considering how these data connect with the Civic-Minded Graduate Model (Steinberg et al., 2011) allows us to conceptualize how students' learning on course contributes to participants' identity and civic development more generally. The model emerged as a useful framework to us for understanding how the particular risk-taking, value of community, and self-discovery happening through Outward Bound courses might fit into the development of civic-mindedness through an undergraduate education. The Civic-Minded Graduate Model considers the unique contributions and overlap with a student's educational experiences, civic experiences, and identity, and Outward Bound courses offer experiences in each of these realms. This suggests that outdoor education may offer a powerful complement for students who are engaged in rigorous academic coursework (educational experiences) and, due to their service-related majors or extracurricular activities, actively involved in service activities (civic experiences) back on campus but may not otherwise find opportunities for the depth of identity exploration they experienced in the wilderness.

Looking at the Civic-Minded Graduate Model more closely, we see that participants also discussed a number of experiences that relate directly and indirectly to the 10 domains Steinberg et al. (2011) describe in terms of the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions of a Civic-Minded Graduate. All of the domains are present in the data but in varying degrees. The knowledge domain cluster of the model refers to the individual's learning of knowledge that enables that person to be civically engaged or have "the capacity and desire to work with others to achieve the common good" (Steinberg et al., 2011, p. 20). This includes knowledge of volunteer opportunities, academic knowledge, and contemporary social issues. In general, these were the least emphasized domains in our data. With respect to the knowledge of volunteer opportunities, some students perceived their experience on course as helping enable them to see new opportunities to serve, particularly as related to environmental conservation and outdoor education. Academic knowledge was evident in a variety of ways related to environmental conservation, wilderness survival, and first aid. Many engaged in new ways and gained knowledge about contemporary social issues related to the effect of technology on our minds, habits, and interpersonal interactions, as evidenced in their consistent reflections on the significance of being away from technology in the wilderness so long.

The skills domain cluster of the Civic-Minded Graduate Model relates to the individual's ability to use the knowledge he or she has gained to do something effectively in their communities and includes the skill domains of communication and listening, diversity, and consensus building. The importance of listening came up consistently throughout the data. One participant noted,

I think that when people are actually struggling . . . they need someone to just sort of, like, connect with them, and listen to them, and hear them, and understand what they are going through . . . I found out [through Outward Bound] that I was good at that.

In the construct, diversity refers to "understanding the importance of, and the ability to work with, others from diverse backgrounds; also appreciation of and sensitivity to diversity in a pluralistic society" (Steinberg et al., 2011, p. 22). Throughout our data, participants reflected on what they learned from the diverse others who made up their crews, specifically with reference to physical abilities and fitness, mental health, and class background. One participant simply noted, "The people [on my course] were people that I wouldn't have chosen to spend time with." Some participants reflected on what they learned through being in close relationship and community with someone who had an eating disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. All of these skill domains relate strongly to the theme we articulated as a new valuing of community and relationships with others. Our data also suggest that students' increased comfort through Outward Bound with risk-taking naturally impacts their openness to engaging with diverse populations and affects their intention to take on new service experiences outside of their comfort zones.

The dispositions domain cluster within the model includes valuing of community engagement, self-efficacy, and being a social trustee of knowledge. The model describes self-efficacy as "having a desire to take personal action, with a realistic view that the action will produce the desired results" (Steinberg et al., 2011, p. 22) and social trustee of knowledge as "feeling a sense of responsibility and commitment to use the knowledge gained in higher education to serve others" (Steinberg et al., 2011, p. 22). Previous program evaluation data already demonstrated significant increases of these experiences on participant community-service self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy (Wang, 2017), and this was also reflected in our data in participants' increased sense of their ability to achieve things that they previously had not thought that they could. Our data suggest a less explicit connection between participants' experiences on course and the valuing of community engagement (back home) and the disposition of being a social trustee of knowledge, though this did appear at times. The concept of being a social trustee of knowledge came up most clearly when participants reflected on their ability to share the knowledge of how to do the hard skills they learned with others in wilderness settings. In an interview, one participant noted,

I went on another backpacking trip a few weeks after where a lot of the people hadn't had a lot of outdoor experience. So, it was a lot of different things that came back from Outward Bound. So, it was like here, we can set up a bear hang, and here is how you do it. Here is how you set up this, or here is how we cook our food. Like, navigation was a huge thing, we would have been so lost. We didn't even have a physical map.

The theme of self-discovery often related to some part of the participants' knowledge or understanding of what service meant to them and also their behavioral intention providing them with a greater clarity about what they cared about and were committed to. As noted, examples throughout the data show students deciding to take on new service commitments or career paths through the sense of clarity they gained about themselves and their values. One participant reflected in her interview on the connections between her learning on course and her future intentions:

Instead of doing something like, I'm going to do, like, a leadership conference today and then going home to my warm comfortable bed with my best friends or my parents

and, like, have a conversation and talk about what I want to eat. It was like, okay, no you're going to go to a leadership conference for 28 days and never leave. So that uncomfortable and unpredictable clash of the two lifestyles was something that I had never experienced to that degree before, and I really want to take that forward with me in my service. I want to work in public education as an administrator or as some sort of public office position, and I think that it was really important for me to understand that those two need to clash and they can't always stay separate, like the idea of serving and lifestyle.

This study therefore suggests that these Outward Bound experiences in college contributed—at times substantially—to the development of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intention associated with the Civic-Minded Graduate. In this way, the Civic-Minded Graduate also offers a model for understanding how an Outward Bound experience, paired with other educational and civic experiences, might fit in the development of civic-mindedness that relates profoundly to an individual's understanding of and experiences with public service.

## Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature an understanding of how the experience of an Outward Bound course impacts undergraduate students' understanding of and experiences with public service. The relationship between outdoor education and public service is an understudied area in the field. The findings help us better understand the connections between the two and open up new research questions and practical implications to be considered.

While this study provided valuable insight into these questions, its limitations should also be noted. Participants were students already engaged in some sort of public service activity. All of our data were also self-reported, and we are unable to compare students' reflections and perceptions to any additional data on their service activities or how their understanding and interpretation of their Outward Bound experience may have changed over time. Future studies may be designed with these limitations in mind. Even with these limitations, our study provides clear rationale for further research into how outdoor education experiences might fit into a collage of other experiential education practices that make up a college student's education. This study suggests that outdoor education might have something unique to offer in the type of identity development necessary in the cultivation of Civic-Minded Graduates and thus be considered valuable to a broader cross section of the university than may already be interested in outdoor education. While it is not uncommon in higher education for community and civic engagement professionals to support the integration of civic engagement into academic courses through service-learning, the connection between outdoor education and academics or between outdoor education and civic engagement has been less clear; faculty have historically been more likely to get students out of the classroom to volunteer with a local nonprofit than they are to take them on the trail. Additionally, if a significant aspect of the learning of a course like this comes from enabling students to learn about diversity, future research should pay more direct attention to the particular identities of course participants, especially students with marginalized racial, ethnic, gender, ability, and class identities, and how they may experience outdoor educational experiences such as Outward Bound differently. The assessment tools that accompany the Civic-Minded Graduate construct could also be used to further study—and with a higher degree of precision—how these experiences relate to the model and contribute to students' development of civic-mindedness.

Acknowledging that 28-day courses are a substantial commitment of time and financial resources, we recommend programmatic experimentation and future research that explores how shorter courses and expeditions might contribute differently than the 28-day courses that were the subject of this study. It would also be valuable to study the degree to which Outward

Bound courses offer something different from outdoor education experiences provided through Campus Recreation or other independent organizations and also how students who have not demonstrated significant connection to service may respond differently. In any case, this research clearly suggests a valuable opportunity for higher education to harness the potential of outdoor education in the development of students' understanding of and experiences with public service and ultimately their identities as Civic-Minded Graduates.

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