Diversity in the Outdoors

Student Attitudes About Wilderness in the National Outdoor Leadership School

Sara Gress
M.S. FES candidate
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Context and Background

- America's changing demographics

- Disparity in outdoor recreation (Johnson, Bowker, Green, & Cordell, 2007)

- Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE) (Holman, Bobilya, & McAvoy, 2008)
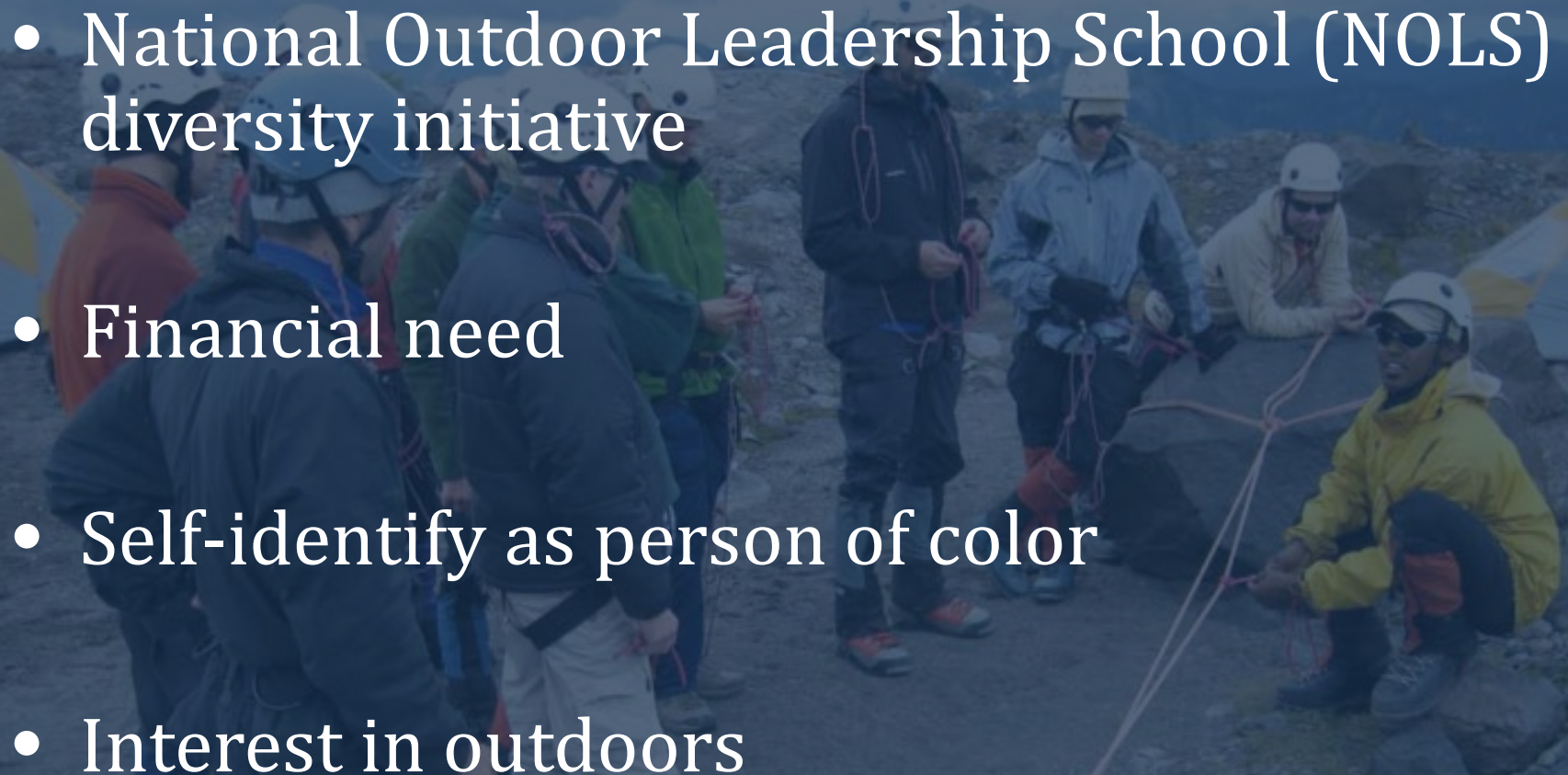
- Relevance to future generations

Why does this disparity exist?

- Leisure theory
  - Marginality
  - Subculture
  - Assimilation
  - Discrimination
- Problematic (Floyd, 1998)
  - Ethnocentric
  - Normalizes dominant patterns
  - Monolithic race and ethnic groups

Social Justice

- Disrupt dominant discourse (Rose & Paisley, 2012)

- Inclusion versus assimilation (Warren, Roberts, Breunig, & Alvarez, 2014)

- Reflect diverse perspectives

Gateway Scholarship Program

- National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) diversity initiative

- Financial need

- Self-identify as person of color

- Interest in outdoors

Research Questions

- Do students' attitudes change over the course of a NOLS experience?

- Do Gateway Scholarship students and non-scholarship students have different wilderness attitudes before and after a NOLS course?

- Are the differences in wilderness attitudes explained by personal and cultural factors?

Methods

- Wilderness attitudes

- Mixed methods

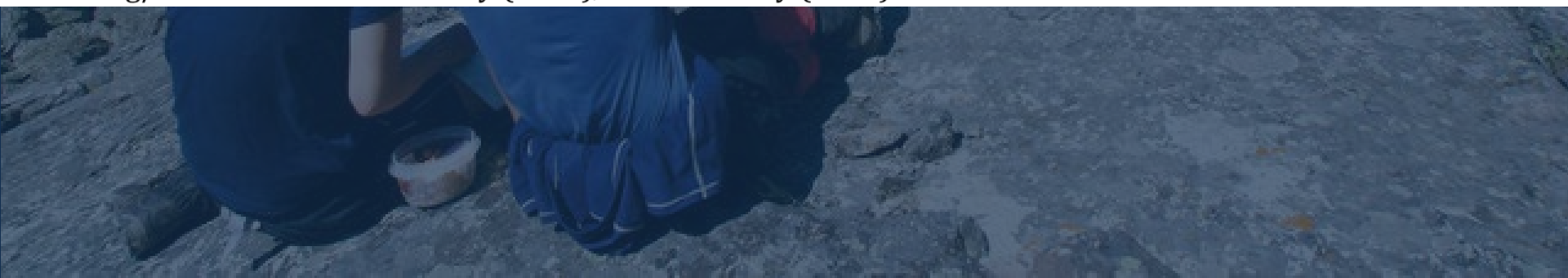- Retrospective pre- and post-test

- Phone interviews

Results

- N = 74
- Gateway Scholarship students, n = 33
- Non-Gateway Scholarship students, n = 41
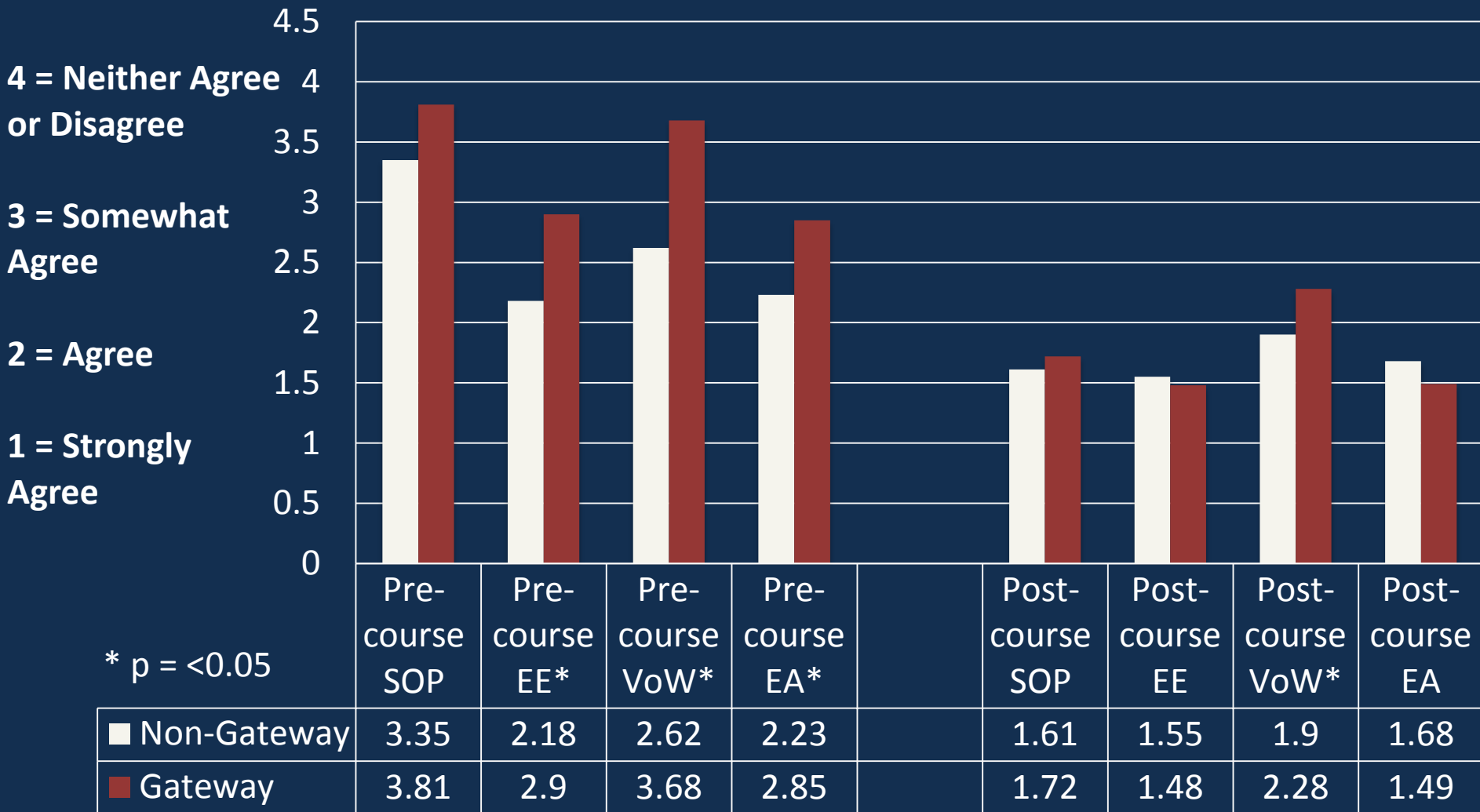- Response rate 46%
- 19 interviews

Table 1. Categories and counts of self-reported ethno-racial identities (N = 64)

Ethno-racial identity	Total	Gateway (n = 28)	Non-Gateway (n = 36)
White or Caucasian	33	1	32
Hispanic or Latino	14	13	1
White and Hispanic	4	1	3
Mexican or Mexican-American	3	3	0
Puerto Rican	2	2	0
Asian, Vietnamese, Filipino, South East Asian or Indian	6	6	0
Indigenous Mexican and El Salvadorian	1	1	0
Nigerian	1	1	0

*Missing/did not answer: Gateway (n = 5), Non-Gateway (n = 5)

Pre- and Post- Course Wilderness Attitude Means

4 = Neither Agree or Disagree

3 = Somewhat Agree

2 = Agree

1 = Strongly Agree

* p = <0.05

	Pre-course SOP	Pre-course EE*	Pre-course VoW*	Pre-course EA*		Post-course SOP	Post-course EE	Post-course VoW*	Post-course EA
Non-Gateway	3.35	2.18	2.62	2.23		1.61	1.55	1.9	1.68
Gateway	3.81	2.9	3.68	2.85		1.72	1.48	2.28	1.49

Change in Attitudes

- Students experienced positive change
- No negative pre- or post-course

Difference in Attitudes

- Gateway Scholarships students and non-Gateway students significantly different pre-course
- Differences disappear post course, one exception
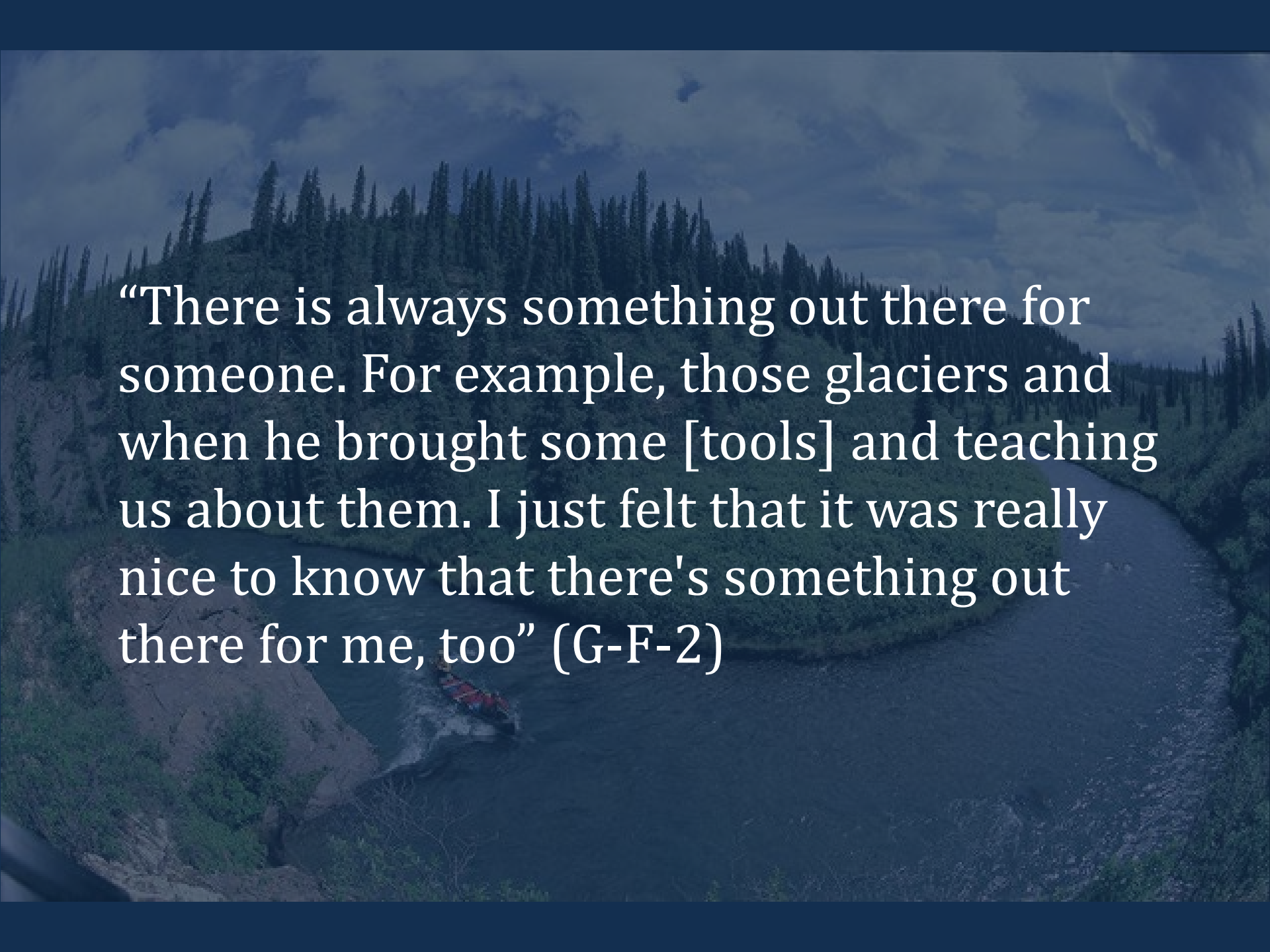
Predictor Variables

- Previous wilderness exp. significant pre-course
- Community type non-significant

Discussion

- Consistent with previous research

"I didn't expect to have the experience I had and I didn't think that I would look at the way, wilderness I do now...I appreciate a lot more" (NG-M-3)

- Careful of branding as definitively positive outcome

"There is always something out there for someone. For example, those glaciers and when he brought some [tools] and teaching us about them. I just felt that it was really nice to know that there's something out there for me, too" (G-F-2)

References

Floyd, M. (1998). Getting beyond marginality and ethnicity: The challenge for race and ethnic studies in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *30*(1), 3–22.

Holman, T., Bobilya, A. J., & McAvoy, L. (2008). Trends and issues in outdoor adventure programming : Perspectives from practitioners and scholars. Taproot, Spring/Summer, 17–24.

Johnson, C. Y., Bowker, J., Green, G., & Cordell, H. (2007). "Provide it…but will they come?": A look at African American and Hispanic visits to federal recreation areas. *Journal of Forestry*, (July/August), 257–265.

Rose, J., & Paisley, K. (2012). White privilege in experiential education: A critical reflection. *Leisure Sciences*, *34*(2), 136–154.

Warren, K., Roberts, N. S., Breunig, M., & Alvarez, M. A. G. (2014). Social justice in outdoor experiential education: A state of knowledge review. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 1–15.

Questions?