Diversity in the Outdoors
Student Attitudes About Wilderness in the National Outdoor Leadership School

Sara Gress
M.S. FES candidate
WFGRS 2015
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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethno-racial identity</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gateway (n = 28)</th>
<th>Non-Gateway (n = 36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White and Hispanic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican or Mexican-American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Vietnamese, Filipino, South East Asian or Indian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Mexican and El Salvadorarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Missing/did not answer: Gateway (n = 5), Non-Gateway (n = 5)
Pre- and Post-Course Wilderness Attitude Means

Non-Gateway

Gateway

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

* p = <0.05
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 definitely 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


