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## The Transformation of High-Risk Youth: An Assessment of a Faith-based Program in South Africa

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# Addressing Poverty and the Legacy of Apartheid in South Africa: Outward Bound South Africa



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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper considers the case of Outward Bound South Africa (OBSA), an outdoor adventure education program specifically designed for disadvantaged youth in the aftermath of apartheid in South Africa. Founded by American philanthropist Charles Stetson, the goal of OBSA is to provide recourse for South Africans who are victims of history and culture. OBSA seeks to instill values and to create economic empowerment for at-risk youth in the midst of severe social and economic deprivation. Recently, OBSA initiated a faith-based component to their program that follows many of the tenets of the original founder of Outward Bound, German educator Kurt Hahn. This paper is an assessment of that effort. The research consists of pretest and posttest surveys of 453 South African students who went through the OBSA program between 2005 and 2012. Results suggest that of the fifteen different variables studied, participants showed statistically significant improvement on twelve in the traditional educational program. In the faith-based program, the average increase was greater than for the traditional data in thirteen of the fifteen variables, and it was statistically significant from the pretest to the posttest on 11 of the variables.

**Keywords:** South Africa, High Risk Youth, Outdoor Education

## **Introduction**

Outward Bound is an outdoor adventure-based educational program which began in the 1940s in Great Britain. Although it was originally Biblically inspired, over the years, it evolved into a more secular outdoor wilderness challenge. Recently, the Outward Bound program of South Africa initiated a faith-based approach to their curriculum that follows many of the tenets of the original founder of Outward Bound, German educator Kurt Hahn. This paper is an assessment of that effort. We begin by providing background for our research through a review of the literature in four areas: faith-based research, the current state of South Africa, the history of the Outward Bound movement, and Outward Bound South Africa (OBSA) specifically. We then describe our research project, where we compare data collected on the outcomes of the traditional OBSA program with the more recent faith-based approach. The population of this study is 453 South African students who went through the Outward Bound program between 2005 and 2012.

## **Literature Review**

### **A Brief Overview of Faith-based Research**

Terry, et al, (2015) point out that faith-based organizations (FBOs) have increasingly been involved in addressing many social issues, but “they generally have been slow to embrace evidenced-based practices (EBPs) – those that have scientific evidence of being beneficial” (p. 212). A trend toward faith-based research in the United States began with the passage of the “charitable choice” amendment to the Personal Responsibility and Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. What “charitable choice” did was open the door for FBOs to compete for federal grants and contracts related to welfare reform. The volume of this activity was raised when President George Bush created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2002. He also created faith-based initiatives in several cabinet level agencies. One of these, the Compassion Capital Fund in the Department of Health and Human Services, helped faith-based organizations compete for federal grants (White House Faith-Based & Community Initiative, 2002).

John DiIulio (2002) has pointed out that there was a substantial body of research at that time documenting the impact of what he called “organic religion” (those who believe in God and attend worship services) on various health and behavioral factors, such as suffering less from depression, drug and alcohol abuse, non-marital child bearing, delinquency, etc. However, studies on faith-based initiatives to change things, or what he called “intentional religion,” were very few,

and the research was so problematic that no definitive conclusions could be reached. A similar assessment was reached by Byron Johnson (2002) where he identified only 25 studies at that time which examined the effectiveness of faith-based initiatives. He concluded from his review that, because of the limited number and quality of studies, he could not unequivocally determine that faith-based programs were more effective than their secular counterparts. Since then, there has been a growing body of research on faith-based initiatives, primarily because President Bush stated that only those initiatives that had proven outcomes would be funded

(President George W. Bush Announces Plan for Faith-Based Initiatives, 2002).

Early descriptive research by Harvard University researchers Christopher Winship and Jerry Berrien (1999) documented the key role played by the faith-based community and religious mediators in a dramatic youth violence reduction program in Boston. Research on the Prison Fellowship Ministries by Mark Young, et al (1995), where inmates were trained to be volunteer prison ministers, also showed a significantly lower rate of recidivism than in a matched group. Bicknese's evaluation research on Teen Challenge (1999), a faith based substance abuse prevention and treatment program, showed that offenders who participated in the faith-based drug treatment initiative were more likely to remain sober and maintain employment than those who did not. They were also more likely to be employed full-time and less likely to return to treatment than a comparison group. These early studies have been buttressed, over the last 15 years, by a substantial and growing body of research that has generally supported the effectiveness of faith-based approaches in a wide variety of areas (Lancaster, et al, 2014; Robinson, et al, 2015; Szaflarski, et al, 2015). It is to this body of research that we hope to make a contribution by studying the impact of a faith-based program in Outward Bound South Africa.

### **South Africa**

Since the overthrow of apartheid in the 1990s, economic progress in South Africa has been mixed. Jeffrey Herbst stated in 2005 that one picture of South Africa showed a stable political system with free elections, a ruling party that enjoyed enormous support, and an economy that was growing rapidly and attracting foreign investment. Much evidence seemed to support this picture at the time. South Africa exceeded all expectations in 2005 with a 5.1% growth rate in the economy, capping 28 consecutive quarters of growth since 1998 (Nyanto, 2006a). South Africa experienced an average growth rate of approximately 5 per cent in real terms between 2004 and

2007. A Gallup poll reported in 2006 that 71% of the population believed that the government was performing well and then President Thabo Mbeki had a high approval rating (Nyanto, 2006b).

Current President Jacob Zuma does not seem to fare so well, with thousands of people marching across South Africa recently for his resignation (Norimitsu, 2015). This is because there is another side to this picture that is more problematic. The period 2008 to 2012 recorded average growth just above 2 percent, to a large extent the effect of the global economic crisis. Since then, South Africa's economy grew by only 1.5% in 2014 and only 1.3% in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The overall unemployment rate in 2015 was around 25%, but the unemployment rate for blacks was almost six times the rate for whites, and for black youth it was estimated to be over 40% (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

The proportion of people living in poverty has not changed significantly since 1996, which is still hovering around 26% (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The 2012 Census revealed that race disparities in wealth also continue to exist, with the average annual income of black households being about 1/6 that of white households (South Africa In-Depth Pestle Insights). Not surprisingly, South Africa is considered one of the most unequal countries in the world (Keeton, 2014)

It is true that some politically connected blacks have made it into the middle class through government intervention, but the vast majority of black South Africans remain in poverty. All of this is framed by a growing epidemic of HIV/AIDS with over 1/5 of the adult population infected (World Almanac, 2006). By 2012, South Africa had the highest number of people in the world living with HIV/AIDS (over 6 million) and in 2015 was fourth of all nations with regard to the number of deaths (World Fact Book South Africa, 2016).

In a fairly recent article in *The New York Times*, Bill Keller (2014), a frequent observer of South Africa, summarized the current situation:

In the 18 years since coming to power the A.N.C. government has created a substantial black middle class (more in the public sector than the private) and a smaller, conspicuous cadre of black privilege. But it has not — perhaps could not have — significantly narrowed the gulf between the shack-dwelling underclass and everyone else. Inequality breeds serious resentment, violent protests over undelivered services, strikes, fatalism.

Perhaps equally important is that few South Africans identify with the country as a whole. A 2012 survey found that most South Africans still identify themselves by language, ethnicity or race. Only 8.3 percent regard themselves as South Africans first, and, according to Keller, the percentage is even lower among young people (Keller, 2014). It is in this context that Outward Bound South Africa hoped to make a difference through transforming the lives of young people in the nation, especially those in the Black townships.

### **Outward Bound**

Outward Bound was initially established in Great Britain in 1941 in what was called the Gordonstoun School. During World War II, educator Kurt Hahn developed programs to instill greater self-reliance and spiritual tenacity in young British seamen being torpedoed by German U-boats. Hahn believed that post-industrial lives “were becoming devoid of inoculative, resilience-enhancing challenges which had previously been a natural part of preindustrial living” (quoted in Bacon, 1987). Hahn also believed education must encompass both the intellect and character of a person. In creating the first Outward Bound School, he expanded the concept of experiential learning to include real and powerful experience to gain self-esteem, the discovery of innate abilities, and a sense of responsibility toward others. Hahn emphasized a sense of responsibility toward others because among the many problems he saw as the “declines of a diseased civilization,” it was the decline of compassion due to the unseemly haste with which modern life was conducted that disturbed him the most, what he referred to as “spiritual death” (Bacon, 1987).

To counteract these declines, McKenzie (2002) points out that the original courses emphasized the “four pillars” of physical fitness, self-discipline, craftsmanship, and service. These pillars were congruent with Hahn’s view of the foremost task of education—to ensure the survival of the qualities of curiosity, spirit, and compassion. The importance of compassion, above all else, was captured for Hahn in the parable of the Good Samaritan of the Synoptic Gospels. This parable formed the basis of his educational philosophy and a creed for his work: “He who drills and labors, accepts hardship, boredom and dangers, all for the sake of helping his brother in peril and distress, discovers God’s purpose in his inner life” (Brereton, n.d.).

As a Christian in the early 1940s, Hahn believed that the model of the Good Samaritan had to be a part of every aspect of Outward Bound training and the rescue efforts in World War II. Thus, the Parable of the Good Samaritan was required reading for all participants in the initial Outward Bound courses. This distinctive emphasis—that of helping one’s neighbor—was the basis

for rescuing people, even one's enemy. This emphasis separated the Outward Bound movement from later imitations of "adventure-based" learning. Outward Bound was intended to be more than just a wilderness survival school. As Charles Stetson points out in reflecting on Hahn's legacy: "Outward Bound is an individual and group experience that builds on self-reliance and interdependency. Participants learn that their greatest limitations may be self-imposed, and that in helping others, one overcomes these disabilities" (Stetson, 1995, p. 7).

In the early 1950s, Josh Miner, an American who taught under Hahn at the Gordonstoun School, was inspired by Hahn's philosophy and teaching model. Miner founded the Outward Bound movement in the United States based upon the principles of hands-on learning through outdoor adventure. The strategy of the Outward Bound movement was to employ challenging activities, combined with group discussion, mentoring, and reflection to foster personal change in students. Relying on an experiential model and breaking with the traditional pedagogies of the classroom, Outward Bound used adventure and the outdoors to produce deep insight, resilience, and lasting change in its students. Over the years, Outward Bound reflected what Neill called a "development-by-challenge" educational philosophy, which provided an underlying justification for adventure education (Neill and Dias, 2001). And, as Mark Freeman (2011) more recently pointed out, Outward Bound has become more focused on personal growth and self-discovery and less on character training, as had been the emphasis originally. By 2016, Outward Bound has grown to operate in 33 countries with over 250 wilderness and urban locations, serving over 250,000 participants each year (Outward Bound International, 2016).

### **Outward Bound South Africa**

Although efforts to start an Outward Bound program in South Africa date back to 1959, racial segregation requirements by the South African government resulted in a withdrawal of a charter for operation. With the end of apartheid in South Africa, Outward Bound South Africa (OBSA) was established through the visionary efforts of Charles Stetson, an American philanthropist and entrepreneur whose goal was to help youth in South Africa overcome a history of deprivation and social conflict. In June of 1991, a temporary charter was granted to the new Outward Bound Trust of South Africa (OBTSA) and renewed in 1994.

Charles Stetson initiated the program as a way to bring about racial reconciliation in post-Apartheid South Africa. He saw in the work of Kurt Hahn, the founder of the Outward Bound movement, a methodology and a faith that could bring healing to youth in South Africa. The



original Outward Bound program was established in Lesotho, a small independent country completely surrounded by South Africa. With the fall of apartheid, Stetson moved to establish an Outward Bound chapter in South Africa, implementing by his action the guiding principle of Kurt Hahn's work, namely, Christ's Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37, Holy Bible).

Unlike many Outward Bound programs, OBSA chose a more difficult path, deciding to innovate and assume the risk of measuring its own efforts. OBSA approached the problems of South African youth from a wholistic perspective, incorporating the earlier ideals of Kurt Hahn, many of which did not survive the cultural drift of the West during the 1950's and 1960's (Judkins and Mundy, 2006). These principles included personal transformation, intrinsic faith, and economic empowerment.

If International Outward Bound worked on the premise that "we are all better than we know," OBSA, from its inception, expanded the mission, creating new programs specifically to address the daunting challenges of South African society. OBSA's goal was to equip young South Africans with the character, will, values and self-belief to live their lives to the full and to consistently make the right choices. The program further sought to transform the economic viability of communities through the influence of transformed individuals. As its web-site advertises:

In addition to the international mission of Outward Bound, Outward Bound South Africa has its own intensely-felt mission: "To promote greater understanding between people, especially the young, of different races and cultures. To work together to remove the barriers which separate the people of the world. As a result, the school focuses on courses that intervene in the lives of young people who are trapped in cycles of poverty, crime, violence and unemployment. It helps people discover that a disadvantaged past does not have to mean a disadvantaged future, or as Hahn would put it: "Your disability is your opportunity." (Outward Bound South Africa, 2016)

OBSA was a newcomer to Outward Bound, a *nouveau arrivee* who was of the West but not really part of the West. Yet it's very marginality as an outpost in a developing country, one that was new and rich and vast, gave it a freedom to experiment. In this case, the experiment was to return to former things and to former truths, the things in question being the original principles

of its own charter. In 2008, OBSA introduced a values-based/spiritual dimension into some of its courses. Instructors used a values-based intervention to connect spiritual development to educational, vocational, and economic skills training. More specifically, the stories of David from the Bible were used to analyze and discuss the elements of leadership. In the spring of 2008, several trainers from OBSA were brought to the United States to go through a five-day training program led by Chuck Stetson, son of the founder and a current board member. The trainers returned to South Africa and conducted seven "faith-based" Outward Bound programs between 2008 and 2012.

### **Methodology**

The study design used a quantitative pretest/posttest survey approach to assess the impact of the Outward Bound experience. The population of this study was 453 Black South African students who went through the OBSA program between 2005 and 2012. Of these, 360 participated in the traditional program and 93 participated in the faith-based program. They came from thirteen different secondary schools. Although OBSA ran programs for the white population of South Africa, the programs that we studied were those with students selected from predominantly Black schools and townships. No random selection process was imposed.

The survey (Appendix A) consisted of 51 statements, which, in various combinations, indicated 15 variables: servant leadership, virtuousness, religiosity, self-confidence, internal locus of control, effective problem solving, goal setting, creative self-expression, understanding personal boundaries, conflict resolution, communication skills, cooperative teamwork, general leadership, engagement with community, and sense of environmental stewardship. Appendix B introduces the variables and their descriptions. Students responded on a scale of 1 (the statement does not describe me at all) to 8 (this statement describes me very well). Most of the statements in the survey were taken from an instrument designed by James Neill (1998) for Outward Bound research in Australia. Similar statements and variables have been used in Outward Bound programs in several nations to assess the impact of the Outward Bound experience. Statements on servant leadership, virtuousness, and religiosity were designed and included by the authors specifically for this research.

Students completed a pretest survey prior to going through the program and a posttest immediately upon completion of the program. The students ranged in age from 11 to 21 but the

vast majority was between 16 and 18 years of age, with a mean average of 16.33 years. Of this sample 40.7% were male and 59.3% were female. The training program lasted five days.

### Findings

Table 1 shows the difference of the means between the pretest and the posttest on the 15 variables for the traditional OBSA program. T-test of the difference of the means was used for level of significance. The data show an increase in the score on all 15 variables from the pretest to the posttest. In 12 of these variables, the increase was statistically significant at the .05 level. Internal locus of control, personal boundaries, and communication skills, although showing an increase, were not significant.

**TABLE 1: Difference of the Means between Pretest and Posttest for Traditional Data**

MAJOR VARIABLES	PRETEST (1) POSTTEST (2)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Difference of Means	Level of Significance
RELIGIOSITY	1.00	337	5.8427	1.77295	.61234	.000
	2.00	345	6.4551	1.65309	.61234	.000
SELFCONFIDENCE	1.00	343	6.8814	1.23131	.30655	.000
	2.00	344	7.1880	.99409	.30655	.000
VIRTUES	1.00	338	6.1982	1.25033	.44923	.000
	2.00	334	6.6475	1.14120	.44923	.000
SERVANTLEADERSHIP	1.00	259	5.9914	1.00359	.43787	.000
	2.00	264	6.4293	.96367	.43787	.000
INTERNALLOCUSOFCONTROL	1.00	338	6.0375	1.07081	.15895	.051
	2.00	336	6.1964	1.04228	.15895	.051
EFFECTIVEPROBLEMSOLVING	1.00	340	6.4451	1.18327	.37745	.000
	2.00	340	6.8225	1.03853	.37745	.000
GOALSETTING	1.00	334	7.0190	1.21879	.22189	.011
	2.00	346	7.2408	1.04077	.22189	.011
CREATIVESELFEXPRESSION	1.00	335	6.2020	1.36782	.32725	.002
	2.00	342	6.5292	1.31399	.32725	.002
PERSONALBOUNDARIES	1.00	340	6.6392	1.07040	.11746	.148
	2.00	337	6.7567	1.04185	.11746	.148
COMMUNICATIONSKILLS	1.00	340	6.3863	1.20762	.13224	.158
	2.00	342	6.5185	1.23757	.13224	.158
COOPTEAMWORK	1.00	339	6.5742	1.20730	.20256	.028

	2.00	339	6.7768	1.18130	.20256	.028
LEADERSHIP SKILLS	1.00	342	6.2027	1.41254	.43355	.000
	2.00	340	6.6363	1.34120	.43355	.000
ENGAGE COMMUNITY	1.00	342	5.7865	1.48335	.54185	.000
	2.00	338	6.3284	2.00682	.54185	.000
ENVIRON STEWARD	1.00	338	6.6529	1.26967	.30944	.001
	2.00	336	6.9623	1.04805	.30944	.001
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	1.00	330	5.4465	1.22122	.06723	.000
	2.00	334	5.8184	1.25267	.06854	.000

From 2009 to 2012, 93 students from seven schools completed the faith-based Outward Bound program. This consisted of the same outdoor adventure activities but also included discussions of the stories of David from the Bible during the small group sessions following the outdoor challenge. The pretest and posttest scores on the fifteen tested variables are presented in Table 2. For the faith-based group, there was also an increase in the score of all 15 variables from the pretest to the posttest. However, in 14 of these variables, the increase was statistically significant at the .05 level. Only religiosity did not show a significant increase.

**TABLE 2: Difference of the Means between Pretest and Posttest for Faith Based Data**

MAJOR VARIABLES	PRETEST (1) POSTTEST (2)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	Level of Significance
RELIGIOSITY	1.00	73	6.2671	1.43634	.41580	.059
	2.00	82	6.6829	1.28263	.41580	.061
SELFCONFIDENCE	1.00	93	6.8674	1.21796	.64373	.000
	2.00	90	7.5111	.59166	.64373	.000
VIRTUES	1.00	91	6.1511	1.15222	.63261	.000
	2.00	89	6.7837	.99086	.63261	.000
SERVANTLEADERSHIP	1.00	81	5.8999	.86596	.82579	.000
	2.00	81	6.7257	.74537	.82579	.000
INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL	1.00	86	6.2674	1.16352	.35478	.027
	2.00	90	6.6222	.93776	.35478	.028
EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING	1.00	90	6.2296	1.29210	.58559	.001
	2.00	92	6.8152	.92366	.58559	.001
GOAL SETTING	1.00	88	7.1818	.98379	.34506	.007
	2.00	93	7.5269	.71782	.34506	.008
CREATIVE SELF EXPRESSION	1.00	91	6.1832	1.53741	.48714	.024
	2.00	92	6.6703	1.35918	.48714	.024

PERSONALBOUNDARIES	1.00	90	6.6741	1.05288	.34058	.014
	2.00	91	7.0147	.76644	.34058	.014
COMMUNICATIONSKILLS	1.00	88	6.4356	1.07611	.49480	.001
	2.00	91	6.9304	.81728	.49480	.001
COOPTEAMWORK	1.00	89	6.3670	1.38083	.66522	.000
	2.00	93	7.0323	.99766	.66522	.000
LEADERSHIPSKILLS	1.00	93	6.1792	1.42150	.74470	.000
	2.00	92	6.9239	1.00682	.74470	.000
ENGAGECOMMUNITY	1.00	85	5.0902	1.49725	.65887	.006
	2.00	89	5.7491	1.60907	.65887	.006
ENVIRONSTEWARD	1.00	92	6.2826	1.25594	.90258	.000
	2.00	90	7.1852	.89959	.90258	.000
CONFLICTRESOLUTION	1.00	89	5.8614	1.07873	.11435	.045
	2.00	92	6.1812	1.05109	.10958	.045

Table 3 provides a comparison of the traditional program with the faith-based program, showing just the mean differences between the pretest and the posttest for both groups and their significance level. What this table shows is that the actual increase in the score for the faith-based data was greater than for the traditional data in all variables with the exception of religion and conflict resolution, suggesting that the faith-based component of the training added value beyond the traditional program. One reason that the variables on “religion” and “conflict resolution” might not have shown as great an increase for the faith-based group is that the group started the OBSA program with a substantially higher score on those variables to begin with.

**TABLE 3: Difference of the Means between Pretest & Posttest for Faith Based & Traditional Based Data**

MAJOR VARIABLES	PRETEST (1)	Mean Difference Faith	Significance Level Faith	Mean Difference Trad	Significance Level Trad
	POSTTEST (2)				
RELIGIOSITY	1.00	.41580	.059	.61234	.000
	2.00	.41580	.061	.61234	.000
SELFCONFIDENCE	1.00	.64373	.000	.30655	.000
	2.00	.64373	.000	.30655	.000
VIRTUES	1.00	.63261	.000	.44923	.000
	2.00	.63261	.000	.44923	.000
SERVANTLEADERSHIP	1.00	.82579	.000	.43787	.000
	2.00	.82579	.000	.43787	.000
INTERNALLOCUSOFCONTROL	1.00	.35478	.027	.15895	.051

	2.00	.35478	.028	.15895	.051
EFFECTIVEPROBLEMSOLVING	1.00	.58559	.001	.37745	.000
	2.00	.58559	.001	.37745	.000
GOALSETTING	1.00	.34506	.007	.22189	.011
	2.00	.34506	.008	.22189	.011
CREATIVESELFEXPRESSION	1.00	.48714	.024	.32725	.002
	2.00	.48714	.024	.32725	.002
PERSONALBOUNDARIES	1.00	.34058	.014	.11746	.148
	2.00	.34058	.014	.11746	.148
COMMUNICATIONSKILLS	1.00	.49480	.001	.13224	.158
	2.00	.49480	.001	.13224	.158
COOPTEAMWORK	1.00	.66522	.000	.20256	.028
	2.00	.66522	.000	.20256	.028
LEADERSHIPSKILLS	1.00	.74470	.000	.43355	.000
	2.00	.74470	.000	.43355	.000
ENGAGECOMMUNITY	1.00	.65887	.006	.54185	.000
	2.00	.65887	.006	.54185	.000
ENVIRONSTEWARD	1.00	.90258	.000	.30944	.001
	2.00	.90258	.000	.30944	.001
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	1.00	.31974	.045	.37190	.000
	2.00	.31974	.045	.37190	.000

## Discussion

Our research on OBSA tends to support much of the previous research on the impact of Outward Bound on various individual indicators. Like the meta-analysis by Hattie, et al (1997), our research on the traditional OBSA program shows strong support for statistically significant increases in self-confidence, leadership skills and cooperative teamwork. We also found significant increases in goal setting indicators, which reflect the perceived ability to both set and achieve goals. These results are even more significant when you consider that both goal setting and self-confidence indicators had the highest scores on the pretest respectively (7.01 and 6.88 out of 8.00), suggesting that participants came to Outward Bound with already high levels of self-confidence and goal setting.

Our research also shows significant increases in problem solving skills and conflict resolution (the ability to avoid and resolve interpersonal and group conflicts). Although not statistically significant, we also found an increase in the participant's internal locus of control (the sense of control over one's own life). All of this suggests that OBSA seems to be having the

desired impact on improving participant's sense of self and their ability to operate effectively with other people.

Research by McKenzie provides empirical support that the original model for Outward Bound as envisioned by Kurt Hahn has perhaps been disregarded, at least in North America. Her experience as an instructor, as well as her own research in Western Canada, suggests that what Outward Bound is best at today is individual growth, or what she calls "identity formation." Promoting compassion or concern for others somehow seems more on the periphery of what Outward Bound does. She concludes that this emphasis differs from Kurt Hahn's original vision with his placement of compassion above all other values of Outward Bound. Of course, this notion that Outward Bound is moving away from its roots and an emphasis on compassion is not a new idea, as McKenzie acknowledges. Vokey suggests that "there are indications that Outward Bound's espoused commitment to promoting compassion through service has not been matched at the level of practice in North American Schools" (quoted in McKenzie, 2002). A similar conclusion was reached by Suchman (cited in Vokey, 1987):

Although a watered-down version exists in the American schools in the form of first-aid training and token "service projects," these components remain a small portion... as opposed to constituting the central theme ... of the overall program. Service's low priority is further exemplified by its tendency to be the first activity omitted from a tight course schedule. (p. 87)

McKenzie's research would suggest that Outward Bound has become more focused on individual improvement and less focused on ideals that bind the graduate to the common good. It appears as if Outward Bound South Africa has developed a program that addresses some of these issues. There are several indications from our research that Outward Bound, even in the traditional program, has an impact on the participant's perception of their altruism and their commitment or obligation to the community. The largest increases between the pretest and the posttest were for religiosity, engagement with the community, servant leadership, and virtuousness, in that order.

A major finding from our research, however, is that the addition of a faith-based component to the traditional OBSA program substantially advanced the scores of the faith-based groups beyond the traditional groups on almost all of the variables we studied. This finding was somewhat

unexpected. Although we thought that a faith-based component would make a difference, the increase in the scores from the pretest to the posttest for the traditional program were so great that there was not a lot of room left for improvement. The fact that the faith-based program showed a greater increase than the traditional program on 13 of the 15 variables was quite phenomenal. It is also important to note that with regard to the two variables where the faith-based group did not show great improvement (religion and conflict resolution), the faith-based group began the program with substantially higher scores.

### **Implications for Practice, Policy and Research**

First, our research tends to support the conclusion that a concern for the common good and moral transformation can be outcomes of outdoor adventure programs. Significant improvements in religiosity, engaging the community, servant leadership and virtues indicate that programs like OBSA have successfully incorporated many of the original ideals of Kurt Hahn into its curriculum. The addition of a faith-based component to the curriculum not only adds to this conclusion, but makes OBSA even more unique and powerful as a life changing program. It certainly adds support to a growing body of research on faith-based programs that they can be as successful, if not more so, than similar secular programs.

Second, while the data suggest that OBSA is achieving its goals for the transformation of high-risk youth in South Africa, its success has probably created another problem. Since most of the participants in the programs that we studied come from disadvantaged backgrounds, the sense of empowerment and even personal efficacy that comes from participation in OBSA may not necessarily translate into continued transformation of the individual or of the communities into which they will return. Within a year or so after they complete Outward Bound, most of these students will graduate from high school, mostly likely with great expectations and desires to attend college. However, very little funding is available to these students to continue their education. Our own brief interviews with graduates of OBSA six months to a year out suggests that while they have perhaps been transformed by their experience, opportunities to translate their experience into real benefits to them, or to the struggling society in which they live, are limited. In Deepsloot, a Black township north of Johannesburg, where we interviewed several student OBSA graduates that were then seniors, none were expected to be able to attend university because of a lack of funding and the few positions available. In 2012, for example, about 85,000 students had applied for the roughly 11,000 seats available at the University of Johannesburg, and this was almost



20,000 more applicants than the previous year. Also, the jobless rate among youths was nearly 70 percent, and even a college education did not necessarily guarantee a job. One estimate in 2012 found that there were 600,000 unemployed college graduates in South Africa (Polgreen, 2012). Without follow-up support, for educational and entrepreneurial activities, to allow the benefits of the Outward Bound experience to grow and develop, it is doubtful that the intended outcome of the program will be completely realized.

Those that do return to their communities or townships will also find little support, especially financially, for any entrepreneurial or social change efforts. OBSA might wish to begin looking at follow-up activities with graduates to continue communication with them and to build a community of support for them. One possibility here would be a mentoring program for recent OBSA graduates by those that graduated earlier and have had time to become successful in their respective fields. Or OBSA might consider the creation of an alumni group of former OBSA graduates to provide a support system for new graduates.

Third, research on Outward Bound graduates in other countries suggests that participation in the program elsewhere is transformative and that, in some cases, the impact is long-term. Our own initial research on participants in the OBSA program tends to support the general body of research elsewhere. However, more long-term research is needed that not only assesses participants' perceptions of internalized personal qualities, but the impact of the Outward Bound experience on other quantitatively measureable outcomes, such as employment or unemployment status, income and wealth, home ownership, and to what extent they have become leaders in their communities for social change.

### **Study Limitations**

There are several limitations of this study. First, students selected for the traditional and faith-based programs were not chosen by a random process. Therefore, a selectivity affect may have been introduced. All of the participants in the faith-based programs were recruited from religious schools and institutions. An initial earlier attempt at a faith-based course with students from secular institutions did not have the same positive results. Second, because this research was done cross nationally, difficulties in administering the survey were significant. OBSA staff administered both the pretests and the posttests. In addition to not controlling the survey administration process, the first surveys were given with incomplete or missing demographic questions, thereby limiting our analysis. Third, there was a great deal of resistance to the

introduction of a faith-based component to the training by some of the staff and probably OBSA board members. We do not know the impact this might have had on the implementation of the faith-based program or on the research process in general.

### **Conclusion**

Although over 20 years have passed since South Africa ended apartheid, the country still struggles with economic and social inequality (Keller, 2014). Outward Bound came to South Africa with the intent of establishing a program that would help to overcome the legacy of apartheid and an even longer history of deprivation and social conflict. At least in the short-term, Outward Bound programs in South Africa seem to have a positive impact on several social and behavioral indicators. Long-term implications are yet to be determined. We have conducted some initial interviews with instructors, staff and students during our visits to South Africa. If funding is available in the future, we would like to conduct more qualitative follow-up interviews with participants. Research by Martin and Leberman (2005) on Outward Bound has pointed to the limitations of purely quantitative results as a sole measure of the program's outcomes. This is especially important in long-term results, where the participants must rely on their own inner strength to make any changes in their lives (p. 56). Understanding their perceptions of the program and its impact on how they view the ability to change their lives, and the social structures they confront around them, is important.

Our research also supports the recent evidence of other studies that have found faith-based approaches as effective, if not more effective, than secular programs that attempt to solve social problems. It is still not clear as to why this is the case. Robert Wuthnow (2004), in an important book on faith-based programs makes an important point about what might be different in the more successful faith based initiatives. He argues that it is the "ability to forge encompassing whole-person personally transforming relationships" (p. 159) that accounts for any success that they might have. In Teen Challenge, for example, he argues that transformation is effected through an intensive year-long, in-residence program that includes participation in daily prayer services, church services, religious instruction, volunteer activities and vocational technical training. In prison ministry programs, inmates are involved in regular Bible studies, interaction with chaplains, and an emphasis on religious conversion. Wuthnow concludes that what these studies suggest is that "the vital ingredient includes religious teachings about hope and redemption, but also grounds

these teachings in social relationships that resemble those that occur in congregations. These social relationships are sufficiently personal and happen over a long enough period of time that people develop new attitudes, new understandings of themselves, and new friendships” (p. 160). Although OBSA did not engage participants for that length of time, what time was spent was intensive and transformative because of the challenges they faced.

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NAME: _____	DATE TODAY: _____
PROGRAM: _____	

**Important**

**Instructions:**

This is NOT a test – respond to the statements honestly, the way you feel now.  
 The results are only used for improving OBSA programs, not for reporting on you.  
 In response to each statement, CIRCLE one number, using this rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
This statement doesn't describe me at all; it isn't like me at all			More false than true	More true than false			This statement describes me very well; it is very much like me.	

STATEMENT

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01. I generally listen intently to others                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 02. I work hard at solving what's causing my problems.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 03. I strive to understand and emphasize with others                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 04. People understand me when I'm talking.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 05. I know I have the ability to do anything I want to do.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 06. Goals are important to me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 07. I cooperate well when working in team.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 08. I try to help people I know become a whole person                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 09. My own efforts and actions are what will determine my future.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 10. I respect other people.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 11. I express myself in creative ways.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 12. I resolve my conflicts with other people.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 13. I enjoy living in my community.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 14. I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 15. I believe humans must live in harmony with nature in order to survive. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 16. As a leader, I get people working well together.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

17. I am effective at building consensus within groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18. I consider myself a very humble person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19. I solve problems to the best of my ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
20. I have the ability to look beyond my own immediate situation and see the bigger picture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
21. I communicate effectively with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
22. When I apply myself to something I am confident I will succeed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
23. I have specific goals to aim for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
24. I like cooperating in a team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
25. My life is mostly controlled by external things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
26. I have a strong commitment to serving the needs of others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
27. I consider myself a religious person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28. I behave appropriately towards other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
29. I like to use creative ways of exploring my thoughts and feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30. I avoid unnecessary conflicts with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
31. If I have problems, there are people in my community who help me to solve them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
32. I think conserving natural resources is necessary.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
33. I am a capable leader.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
34. I try to nurture the personal growth of people in the groups with which I am associated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
35. I often try to build a sense of community within the groups that I am associated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>STATEMENT</b>								
36. I am effective at solving the cause of my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
37. I consider myself a very generous person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
38. I understand other people when they are talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
39. I believe "I can do it."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
40. I prefer to set my own goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
41. I am good at cooperating with team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
42. I have a great deal of patience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
43. If I succeed in life it will be because of my efforts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
44. I understand issues of personal space, touch, and appropriate behavior towards other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

45. I explore my thoughts and feelings creatively, such as through art, drama or music.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
46. I can't deal with conflict.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
47. I help people in my community to get along with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
48. My faith influences my everyday decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
49. I believe humans have a responsibility to solve environmental problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
50. I am a good leader when things need to get done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
51. I am a very compassionate person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

52. My gender is  male  female

53. My age is  years

54. My religious affiliation is:

Christian

Jewish

Muslim

Hindu

Indigenous African

Other

The End – Thank you

## APPENDIX B: Major Variables and Their Descriptions

MAJOR VARIABLES	DESCRIPTIONS
Servant Leadership (Questions 1,3,8,14,17,29,26,34,35)	Effective, caring leadership
Virtues (Questions 18,37,42,51)	Character traits that keep you out of trouble
Religiosity (Questions 27 and 48)	Religious commitment and influence
Self Confidence (Questions 5,22,39)	General confidence in one's capacity to manifest one's goals in life
Internal Locus of Control (Questions 9,25,43)	Sense of control over one's own life
Effective Problem Solving (Questions 2, 19,36)	The extent to which a person takes effective action to solve problems
Goal Setting (6, 23, 40)	Ability to set/achieve goals
Creative Self-Expression (Questions 11, 29, 45)	Finds creative avenues for expressing thoughts and feelings such as through art, drama, or music
Reflect/Understand Personal Boundaries (Questions 10,28,44)	Understands issues of personal space, touch, appropriate conduct
Conflict Resolution (Questions 12, 30, 46)	Ability to avoid and resolve interpersonal and group conflicts

Communication Skills (Questions 4, 21, 38)	Effectively communicates with other people in interpersonal and group settings
Cooperative Teamwork (Questions 7, 24, 41)	Work and cooperative with others to achieve group tasks
General Leadership Skills (Questions 16,33,50)	Ability to take on role of leader when necessary
Engagement with Community (Questions 13,31,47)	Meaningfully engages with community
Sense of Environmental Stewardship (Questions 15,32,49)	Sense of responsibility for quality of surrounding environment and conservation