

A Qualitative Pilot Case Study of the Academic Success of At Risk Youth Participants in SOS
Outreach

by Philip Haberman

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Carolyn Ann Morrison

Primary Advisor

Vicki Nilles

Second Reader

Dr. Megan Hughes-Zarzo

Honors Program Director

The Academic Success of At-Risk Youth Participants in SOS Outreach

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by

Phillip Haberman

Vicki Nilles, PhD, Primary Thesis Adviser

Ryan Campbell, Secondary Thesis Adviser

Barbara McKenzie, Ed.D, Faculty Mentor and Committee Member

Ben Moritz, PhD, Honors Chair

Honors Thesis

Metropolitan State University of Denver

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SOS Outreach

The Participants

Arn Menconi

Seth Ehrlich

Brian Phipps

MSU Denver

Dr. Vicki Nilles

Ryan Campbell

Dr. Barbara McKenzie

Honors program

Dr. Ben Moritz

Jennifer Lutes

Writing Center

Keturah

Ron

Pam

Family

Father (Robert Haberman)

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Abstract

Introduction

Statement of Problem

In 2012, The Children's Defense Fund prepared the, *State of America's Children Handbook*. According to its research, every 8 seconds during the school year a public high school student drops out. (Children's Defense Fund, 2012, pg. 3). That is a disturbing statistic that highlights the academic reality for youth who are at-risk and the urgency that is needed to keep at-risk youth from dropping out. The research presented by The Children's Defense Fund also highlights exposure of our youth to risk factors. For instance, America ranks worst in industrialized nations in the following areas: relative child poverty, adolescent birth rates (ages 15 to 19), and lifetime use of cocaine, marijuana, and tobacco. (Children's Defense Fund, 2012, pg. 3). The research prepared by the Children's Defense Fund clearly illustrates that youth who are at-risk have an exponentially higher probability of dropping out of high school and are being exposed to some of the highest percentages of various risk factors.

A definition of what it means to be a youth who is at-risk is offered by Schrader (2012), she states that some researchers feel that the term at-risk "indicates an adolescent whose challenges will hinder them from graduating high school unless an intervention is implemented," while other researchers report at-risk to mean the "factors that increase the likelihood of an adolescent engaging in delinquent behavior" (Schrader, 2012). It is emphasized by Schrader that experts do agree that there are "three general sources of risk in adolescents and they are individual, family and environmental factors" (Schrader, 2012; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008; Rink & Tricker, 2005; Middlemiss, 2005). Youth who are considered to be at-risk because of their exposure to any combination of these three sources of risk have a greater chance of their academic success being negatively impacted.

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Background and Significance

There are a multitude of variables that contribute to a youth being classified as at-risk and these numbers are dramatically on the rise (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). Adolescents who are at-risk are particularly susceptible to academic problems (Hill, 2007). SOS Outreach offers at-risk youth outdoor adventure recreation in addition to character development, community service, and leadership opportunities to positively impact their lives and academic success. If it is determined that participation in SOS Outreach has positive academic impacts for at-risk youth then there is great potential for this program model to reach this expanding population.

Research Question

Main Research Question: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts as participants of SOS Outreach?

Sub-Questions:

- a. Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts as participants of outdoor adventure recreation in SOS Outreach?
- b. Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts from character development in SOS Outreach?
- c. Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts from community service in SOS Outreach?
- d. Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts from leadership opportunities in SOS Outreach?

Literature Review

According to the research conducted by Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards (1997) Outward Bound was designed by Kurt Hahn in 1957 to accelerate the development of independence, physical fitness, and self-reliance of youth participants (Hattie et al, 1997, pg. 44). Outward Bound and SOS Outreach share some important components in how they approach youth development. A few of the shared components of these programs include: Peer leadership, small groups, challenging activities, and goal setting (Sibthorp, 2011). Each of the aforementioned components have been determined to be critically important in positive youth development and the adaptations made by SOS Outreach have been implemented to further impact at-risk youth's life and academic success.

SOS Outreach also shares important components of Wilderness Therapy. Assessment and planning are identified as important components of Wilderness Therapy in the research study conducted by Hill (2007). An additional component of Wilderness Therapy programs is activities that provide participants with a perceived risk (Hill, 2007). Assessment, planning, and outdoor recreation activities with a perceived risk are shared components of SOS Outreach and Wilderness Therapy. In summary, SOS Outreach has adapted components of Outward Bound and Wilderness Therapy programs to maximize positive outcomes for at-risk youth participants that may positively impact academic success.

In Duerdon et al's research study it was determined that all youth benefit from outdoor recreation activities that are structured, supervised, and allow for skill building (Duerdon, Widmer, Taniguchi, and McCoy, 2009; Mahoney, Larson, and Eccles 2005). It must be noted that, "the impetus for at-risk youth to join SOS Outreach was the opportunity to learn the

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exciting sport of snowboarding” (Schrader, 2012, pg. 128). Snowboarding has been determined to be the draw for at-risk youth in SOS Outreach but in order to go snowboarding they must also participate in the character development and community service activities as well as serve in leadership positions.

All youth, experience the life stage of identity development. This life stage plays an important role in their academic and future success. Youth who are affected by the circumstances of being at-risk experience compounding variables during their life stage of identity development (Duerdon, 2009). The research conducted by Duerdon et al was focused on the work of Erikson (1959) and Berzonsky (1989). Erikson’s studies investigated psychosocial development of youth, while Berzonsky’s investigated the formation of their identity. Research studies have shown that programs, like SOS Outreach, positively impact identity development. Through the research conducted by Duerdon et al it was determined that recreation components of similar programs to SOS Outreach positively impact male and female participants psychosocial and identity development (Duerdon, 2009).

Identity development is discussed at length in the 1997 meta-analysis conducted by Hattie et al. This research states that self-concept, which is the outcome of identity development, has been analyzed as an important outcome of programs similar to SOS Outreach (Hattie et al, 1997, pg. 67). Within the area of self-concept Hattie reports that the greatest growth in the following categories: independence, confidence, self-efficacy, and self-understanding. This research study also found that these areas were further enhanced during follow up analysis (Hattie et al, 1997, pg. 67). The research of Hattie et al (1997) set out to measure growth in youth self-concept whereas the more current research of Schrader (2012) set out measure the growth in

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specific areas of identity development to determine if SOS Outreach is producing positive outcomes for at-risk youth.

The 2007 Hall-Lande study focused on protective factors in adolescents. This study determined that protective factors can positively impact the identity development of at-risk youth. To put it simply, risk factors raise the chance of poor outcomes, while protective factors raise the chance of good outcomes (Anderson-Moore, 2006). One of the protective factors that is highlighted by Hall-Lande and also happens to be emphasized by SOS Outreach is healthy peer and adult relationships. Hall-Lande emphasize that children and adolescents with close and supportive friendships report higher levels of motivation, active school involvement, and increased school performance (Hall-Lande, 2007, pg. 266). Healthy peer and adult relationships is one example of how SOS Outreach exposes at-risk youth to protective factors that have the potential of positively influencing their identity development as well as their academic success. The research of Hall-Lande highlights several potential outcomes, including academic success, that were the result of exposure to a targeted protective factor.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to conduct interviews with at-risk youth participants from SOS Outreach to collect self-reported qualitative data to determine if there are positive academic benefits from participation in this program. Participant interviews emphasized the main program components of SOS Outreach to determine the potential role of each component in positive academic outcomes. The main components of SOS Outreach are: outdoor adventure recreation, character development, community service, and leadership opportunities.

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Research Design

A qualitative research design and a pilot case study model were determined to be the most effective research methods for this study. According to Saldana (2011) qualitative research methods are effective when, “the info or data collected and analyzed is primarily non-quantitative in character, consisting of textual materials, such as interview transcripts (Saldana, 2011, p. 4)”. It was first determined that this research study would be best approached through a qualitative research approach because data collection was done through participant interviews. It was further decided that a pilot case study would be most effective because, “a case study focuses on a single unit for analysis-one person, one group, one event and one organization (Saldana, 2011, p.8)”. A pilot case study was determined to most effective because all interviews were conducted with participants of one organization, SOS Outreach. Therefore, the researcher determined that the most effective research methods for this study were a qualitative research design with a pilot case study model.

Data Collection

The data will be collected for this qualitative research study through participant interviews. The interview questions for this research study were developed to focus on (1) Program Participation (2) Components of SOS Outreach (3) and School outcomes of participation in SOS Outreach. The questions that were asked during the at-risk youth participant interviews were carefully selected. Each interview question was designed as open ended to allow for meaningful qualitative data to be gathered. The interviews took place in a guided conversational style so that participants were able to naturally express themselves. To

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ensure accuracy responses were recorded and notes were also taken throughout the interview to add additional details that may have not been picked up through the recording.

Participants

There were a total of 9 participants of the SOS Outreach program interviewed for this research study. Pseudonyms have been used as safeguards to protect the identities of participants. Participants are presented in the order in which they were interviewed. It is important to note that Mountain High School is actually 3 different high schools but each is located within the same school district and is identified as being in the same type of environment.

City High School

1. **Mary** is 18 years old and is a senior at City High School. She has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 4 years and is currently in the SOS University program. Mary identifies as a Caucasian/white and has an annual household income of 12, 000-25,000\$.
2. **Felipe** is 19 years old and is a graduate of City High School. At the time of the interview he was a first semester sophomore in college. Felipe has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 6 years and is currently in the SOS Master's program. He identifies as a Hispanic/Latino and has an annual household income of 12, 000-25,000\$.
3. **Isabella** is 18 years old and is a senior at City High School. She has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 4 years and is currently in the SOS University program. Isabella identifies as a Hispanic/Latino and her annual household income is 12, 000-25,000\$.
4. **Sebastian** is 19 years old and is a graduate of City High School. At the time of the interview he was a second semester freshman in college. Sebastian has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 6 years and he is currently in the SOS Master's program. He identifies as a Hispanic/Latino and has an annual household income of 25,000-40,000\$.

Mountain High School

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5. **Rodrigo** is 17 years old and is a junior at Mountain High School. He has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 8 years and is currently in the SOS Master's program.

Rodrigo identifies as Hispanic/Latino and has an annual household income is 0-12,000\$.

6. **Alejandro** is 18 years old and is a senior at Mountain High School. He has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 8 years and is currently in the SOS Master's program.

Alejandro identifies as Hispanic/Latino and has an annual household income of 12,000-25,000\$.

7. **Juliana** is 14 years old and in currently a freshman at Mountain High School. She has been a participant in SOS Outreach for 6 years and is currently in the SOS Master's

program. Juliana identifies as Hispanic/Latino and has an annual household income of 25,000-40,000\$.

8. **Enrique** is 16 years old and is currently a sophomore at Mountain High School. He has been a participant of SOS Outreach for 6 years and is currently in the SOS Master's

program. Enrique identifies as Hispanic/Latino and has an annual household income of 75,000-100,000\$.

9. **William** is 16 years old and is currently a sophomore at Mountain High School. He has been a participant of SOS Outreach for 8 years and is currently in the SOS Master's

program. William identifies as Caucasian/white and has an annual household income of 25,000-40,000\$.

Interview Sites

The interviews were conducted through the coordination of SOS Outreach and two school districts where they have established programs. Pseudonyms have been used as safeguards to protect the identity of the schools that participants attend. The pseudonyms of City High School and Mountain High School were used to reflect the environment that these schools

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are located within. The interviews that were conducted with students affiliated with City High School were conducted at the physical location of that school. The interviews that were conducted with students affiliated with Mountain High School were conducted in a professional office space used by SOS Outreach. The locations for the interviews were selected because participants were familiar with the locations and they were comfortable within those environments. The schools are presented separately to compare and contrast participant responses between the two environments where students attend school.

Youth Development Program

SOS Outreach was founded in 1993 and is currently active in 14 states and New Zealand. It is the mission of SOS Outreach to “inspire youth to make positive decisions for successful lives” (SOS Outreach, Education Guide, pg. 3). SOS Outreach strives to achieve their mission through outdoor adventure recreation, and a curriculum that is focused on character development, community service, and leadership opportunities. It seeks at-risk youth who are between the ages of 8-18, to participate in their program, in an effort to inspire positive decision making for successful life experiences (Birjulin, 2012, pg. 3). The goal of SOS Outreach is, to build character and self-esteem in at-risk youth through outdoor activities as well as community service, and leadership opportunities (Birjulin, 2012, pg. 3). There are multiple outdoor activities offered through SOS Outreach, all of which are focused on the positive development of at-risk youth. For the purpose of this research study we will discuss the Learn to Ride, University, and Master’s programs.

In partnership with school districts and other organizations, like YMCA, SOS Outreach participants have been determined to be at-risk because they have individual, family, or

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environmental risk factors that are likely to negatively impact their lives and their academic success. SOS Outreach develops 'risk profiles' for students and these profiles are made up of three different categories: (1) academic performance (a) CSAP Reading (b) CSAP Math (c) NWEA Reading (d) NWEA Math (2) early warning indicators (a) attendance (b) incidents (c) GPA (3) Demographic Status (a) English Language Learner (b) Low Socioeconomic Status (SOS Outreach, 2012-2013, Student Selection Process, pg.1).

Once they are determined to be at-risk they are then given the opportunity to become a part of SOS Outreach. Involvement in SOS Outreach begins with the Learn to Ride program. At-risk youth often begin their participation in SOS Outreach in the third grade and continue through high school and on into college. When at-risk youth have participated in the Learn to Ride program for one year they can participate in the University program. After they have participated in the University program for four years they are eligible to participate in the Master's program and they can participate in the Master's program for two years. When they complete the Master's program and they are an experienced Junior Sherpa then they are eligible to serve in the role of a Sherpa.

The responsibilities for at-risk youth are greater in the University and the Master's than with the Learn to Ride Program. Each additional year of the University and Master's program presents at-risk youth participants with additional program requirements. Each component of SOS Outreach's curriculum has been implemented to maximize opportunities for at-risk youth to positively impact their life (Birjulin, 2012, Risk and Protective Factors, pg. 3). The Master's program gives at-risk youth, who have an intimate understanding of the program and the core values, the opportunity to give back to SOS Outreach and serve in a leadership position. Through

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the Master's program at-risk youth serve as peer mentors (Junior Sherpa's) to participants in the Learn to Ride and University programs. As a participant of the Learn to Ride, University, and Master's program at-risk youth are responsible for attending each of the five ride days and participating in the community service projects, and a variety of carefully selected workshops.

The following is an example of a typical ride day in the SOS Outreach program. At-risk youth participants arrive at one of many ski and snowboard resorts and they are greeted by their mentors (Sherpa and Junior Sherpa). They begin the day at the base of the mountain in what is known as the 'Circle of Love', where a small group of at-risk youth is led in a facilitated discussion, about the daily core value core. The core values are the foundation of SOS Outreach and they are: courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom, and compassion. After sharing and reflecting upon the core value participants are accompanied to the top of the mountain and given professional snowboard instruction by their mentors. During the lunch break positive interactions take place between the at-risk youth and their mentors. After lunch participants go back out on the mountain for additional snowboard instruction. At the end of the day everyone is brought back into the 'Circle of Love' to further reflect upon their understanding of the daily core value. It must be noted that the community service projects and workshops are essential components of SOS Outreach and participants are required to be in attendance at these scheduled activities in order to participate in the ride days.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data has followed the qualitative research process focused on information collected through the participant interviews. The qualitative data collected through interviews revealed the self-reported academic impacts of at-risk youth participation in the SOS Outreach

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program. Through an extensive review of this data the researcher was able to draw conclusions about the academic success of at-risk youth is impacted by the program components of SOS Outreach. The qualitative data collected from the interviews has been broken up into sections to isolate relevant sections for comprehensive analysis. The sections of the SOS Outreach participant interviews are as follows: (1) Program Participant Background (2) Sub-Question A: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes as participants of outdoor adventure recreation in SOS Outreach? (3) Sub-Question B: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes from character development in SOS Outreach? (4) Sub-Question C: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes from community service in SOS Outreach? (5) Sub-Question D: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes from leadership opportunities in SOS Outreach?

Program Participation Background

This section will discuss how at-risk youth participants are introduced to SOS Outreach at City High School. Sebastian stated, “I heard about it [SOS Outreach] when I was in the 8th grade” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/29/13). Mary discussed that she, “wanted to go snowboarding with my teacher because he’s my favorite teacher and he has been...really promoting it” (Interviews, Mary, 1/29/13). Sebastian talked about the program progression that took place in SOS Outreach in the following passage. “With Learn to Ride...they [SOS Outreach] took us up to learn snowboarding and...then it was the University program” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/29/13). Background information provided by City High School participants provided the researcher with a clearer understanding of how at risk youth are introduced to SOS Outreach, the motivation behind their involvement, and insight into their program progression.

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This section will discuss how at-risk youth participants are introduced to SOS Outreach at Mountain High School. It was shared by Juliana that, “My parents heard about it [SOS Outreach] in Elementary School, they asked the principle and he informed us” (Interviews, Juliana, 1/30/13). Rodrigo discussed the program progression, “I started with the...Learn to Ride program...and then after that you can go to SOS University” (Interviews, Rodrigo, 1/30/13). Program progression was further discussed by William, “This is my second year as a Junior Sherpa [Master’s program] I went through the four year program [University Program]and...two years of Learn to Ride” (Interviews, William, 1/30/13). Background information provided by Mountain High School participants provided the researcher with a greater understanding of the introduction of at-risk youth to SOS Outreach in addition to a much more developed view of the progression that takes place for the participants.

It was observed by the researcher that at-risk youth participants expressed excitement when they spoke about how they were invited to participate in SOS Outreach. For example, it was stated by Felipe that he was “super excited” when he was offered the opportunity to participate by his teacher. The researcher also observed that snowboarding and participating in SOS Outreach were discussed as something that participants felt lucky to be a part of. At-risk youth participants from both interview locations were introduced to SOS Outreach through professional staff at their schools. At both locations participants also stated that their involvement began with the SOS Outreach Learn to Ride program, progressed to the University program and, for some, the Master’s program. At both locations there are at-risk youth participants who are Junior Sherpa’s, and therefore have completed the Learn to Ride program, the University program, and are currently in the Master’s program. This section of the

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participant interviews provided the researcher with a more developed background of how at-risk students are introduced to SOS Outreach and the program progression that takes place when at-risk students become participants.

Sub-Question A: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts as participants of outdoor adventure recreation in SOS Outreach?

City High School participants discussed how they felt about being given the opportunity to participate in the outdoor adventure recreation sport of snowboarding and the connection that it has to their academic success. Felipe revealed that “you can consider snowboarding as a myth from where I come from because no one really knows what it is” (Interviews, Felipe, 1/29/13). Isabella made the following comparison, “we used to play video games and we had a snowboarding game but it was like, I don’t think that I am going to be able to do this in real life”(Interviews, Isabella, 1/29/13). Sebastian shared the following, “I feel comfortable just breathing in the fresh air or just feeling the breeze as I am going down the hill” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/29/13). Sebastian went on to state that, “I like being in the mountains...and snowboarding....When I am snowboarding my mind is just clear and I am more focused... I stop worrying about...the five page paper that I have...or the test that is coming up” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/29/13). The researcher gained a greater understanding of how participants from City High School feel about being given the opportunity to participate in the outdoor adventure recreation sport of snowboarding and how they connect their participation to academic success.

Mountain High School participants further discussed outdoor adventure recreation. Interviews revealed that all but one of the participants mentioned backpacking and camping. It must be noted that camping and backpacking are new additions to the SOS Outreach program,

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offered only at some locations. Rodrigo shared the following, “this was my first time really going camping...I learned a lot of things” (Interviews, Rodrigo, 1/30/13). Juliana stated that, “being outdoors keeps me in shape and I really like to exercise...SOS has taught me how to stay in shape” (Interviews, Juliana, 1/30/13). William offered his insight through the following statement “not everyone my age is outside as much as they should be, which is absolutely a shame...I think that they would love it” (Interviews, William, 1/30/13). William finished by discussing the outdoor recreation component of snowboarding when he stated that “SOS has provided us with the opportunity to snowboard on some of the world’s greatest resorts...Thank you for getting me into snowboarding” (Interviews, William, 1/30/13). The outdoor adventure recreation section of the Mountain High School interviews provided the researcher with an understanding of a key difference between the programs. Participants discussed camping and backpacking but they also shared that the emphasis of participation in SOS Outreach is placed upon snowboarding. Analysis revealed that participants did not discuss a connection to their academic success but an appreciation for recreational opportunities was discussed at length.

Analysis revealed the importance of outdoor adventure recreation for participants at City and Mountain High Schools. Participants at both locations spoke with great enthusiasm about being given the opportunity to go snowboarding, spend time outdoors, and experience nature. It was interesting to note how participants viewed the opportunity to go snowboarding as something that they felt was unattainable. Interviews revealed the calming effects that participation had on some of the participants and on their ability to focus. A connection to academic success was made at City High School but it was not discussed at Mountain High School. This section of the interviews illustrates the importance of outdoor adventure recreation

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in SOS Outreach, allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of how it is perceived by at-risk youth participants, and also connections that can be made to positive academic impacts.

Sub-Question B: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes from character development in SOS Outreach?

Interviews revealed that participants in SOS Outreach are exposed to character development through what are known as the core values and the researcher observed that there was a connection between these values and positive academic impacts for these participants. Felipe stated, “Through those core values I learned how to push myself” (Interviews, Felipe, 1/29/13). Isabella reflected upon her interpretation of the core values, “all of these core values help us to learn...and it is important to know how to apply them to our own life” (Interviews, Isabella, 1/29/13). Isabella connected the core values to school, “discipline [one of the 5 core values of SOS Outreach] helps you...to get better grades...I used discipline to get straight A’s” (Interviews, Isabella, 1/29/13). A summary of the character development in SOS Outreach is offered by Sebastian “the core values are really helpful to think about when I’m going through my regular day...I have to choose what I do and just think about it, is it responsible to do this, is it wise, is it going to help my future” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/29/13). The researcher developed an understanding of how character development is integrated into the SOS Outreach program, as well as how it is looked upon participants, and how it is connected to their academic development.

Interviews at the Mountain High School further conveyed that character development is integrated into SOS Outreach through the core values. Participants discussed the connection between the values and academic success. Rodrigo revealed, “I use the core value of courage

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every day of my life...trying my hardest takes courage” (Interviews, Rodrigo, 1/30/13).

Alejandro stated, “The definitions to the core values, I didn’t know before joining SOS. I didn’t even know what a core value was” (Interviews, Alejandro, 1/30/13). It was shared by William that, “Now those [core values] are what I base my life off of, now that I have grown up around them. I have grown up with 8 years of those under my belt” (Interviews, William, 1/30/13). The researcher developed a more in depth understanding of how character development is integrated into SOS Outreach through this section of the interviews. Participants discussed how these core values have shaped their development over the years and the positive impact that this component has had on their academic development was conveyed.

Analysis of the interviews at both locations revealed that character development in SOS Outreach is viewed by participants as having a positive impact on their lives and their academic success. Participants discussed how character development in the SOS Outreach program is integrated through the core values of courage, integrity, discipline, wisdom, and compassion. A connection between these core values and academic success was discussed throughout participant interviews. Participants from both locations shared that they use the core values every day of their lives to accomplish more than they thought was possible. The researcher observed that participants discussed at length how the core values have significantly impacted their lives and that participants were proud to discuss their understanding of these values.

Sub Question C: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes from community service in SOS Outreach?

Interviews at City High School revealed that the service events were referred to by participants as activities that they thoroughly enjoyed and that the events were student led. The

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community service activities that City High School participants shared were: the Martin Luther King parade, park clean up and restoration, bullying prevention, and sustainability events.

Isabella shared the following, “I am very grateful for all of the events [community service] that we have been a part of....I didn’t know what community service was before SOS” (Interviews, Isabella, 1/29/13). Felipe discussed how SOS participants feel about community service.

“Students...they were like so happy...so excited...to help...in a community service project” (Interviews, Felipe, 1/29/13). Sebastian spoke about his experiences with community service in SOS Outreach. “I have been a part of a lot of community service projects...I used to be doing the community service projects and now I am leading the community service projects” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/29/13). The researcher was able to gain a much greater understanding of how community service is integrated into the SOS Outreach program and the importance that it has for at-risk youth participants.

Interviews from Mountain High School further reveal the importance of community service in SOS Outreach. The community service activities that Mountain High School participants shared were: Bell ringing for the Salvation Army, Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets, tutoring at an elementary school, river clean up, an annual bike race, the Humane Society, and riding horses with children with autism. Juliana shared, “I started volunteering in my Learn to Ride year. I didn’t really know how to volunteer before that” (Interviews, Juliana, 1/30/13). Rodrigo discussed the depth of community service that he has been a part of through SOS Outreach. “We have done a lot of community service, from helping the Salvation Army...to packing bags and turkeys for Thanksgiving” (Interviews, Rodrigo, 1/30/13). William described his favorite community service project and why it meant so much to him. “One of my favorites

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is the Christmas or Thanksgiving baskets...it's not the same if you don't have the family dinner...if you can't provide the presents...it's me reaching out to someone else and saying here please enjoy this" (Interviews, William, 1/30/13). The researcher was able to gain a much deeper understanding of how community service is integrated into the SOS Outreach program and the importance that it has for at-risk youth participants.

Analysis of the interviews at both locations revealed that community service is discussed as being a meaningful component of SOS Outreach. Participants at both locations shared that they were grateful for all of the community service events that they had been a part of, and that prior to their involvement with SOS their volunteer experience was limited. The researcher observed that participants felt a genuine appreciation to be able to give back and that participants conveyed that felt that their role in the community had changed. It was noted that participant interviews at both locations revealed that participants were presented with a diverse set of community service opportunities. A direct connection between community service and positive academic outcomes was not observed by the researcher. But the researcher did observe that participants conveyed other beneficial outcomes that have the potential to increase academic growth. Community service was discussed as being a meaningful component of SOS Outreach and participants shared that it had positively impacted their lives.

Sub-Question D: Do at-risk youth self-report positive academic outcomes from leadership opportunities in SOS Outreach?

At City High School it was revealed that leadership opportunities in SOS Outreach are referred to by participants as being the most meaningful aspect of this program. Felipe shared, "We not only teach students how to snowboard but we also...teach them important skills...like

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the core values” (Interviews, Felipe, 1/29/13). Isabella spoke about her love for teaching. “I like to teach others...and encourage them...not just to go snowboarding” (Interviews, Isabella, 1/29/13). Sebastian discussed how meaningful being a leader is to him. “ My favorite part is teaching the kids...They [SOS Outreach] let you guide students down the mountain...and they trust you...It is...a very awesome thing to know that somebody trusts you with people” (Interviews, Sebastian, 1/30/13). The researcher was able to gain an understanding of how community service in SOS Outreach is perceived by at-risk youth participants through this section of interviews at City High School.

Each of the participants at Mountain High School shared their perspective on the value of meaningful leadership opportunities in SOS Outreach. Alejandro discussed his experiences as a leader. “We go...teach them [at-risk peers]...teach them about core values...teach them about leadership” (Interviews, Alejandro, 1/30/13). William further developed this point when he stated that “It’s [SOS Outreach] more about me volunteering my time to make these kids [at-risk peers] understand and connect with the five core values” (Interviews, William, 1/30/13). Alejandro mentioned the leadership training that they receive through SOS Outreach in the following passage. “I enjoy...the monthly... sessions about leadership, where we talk about different leadership skills” (Interviews, Alejandro, 1/30/13). Enrique offered his perspective of how SOS Outreach approaches leadership development. “They [SOS Outreach] don’t treat you as though they are making you a leader but they are treating you as they are making you find out that you are a leader” (Interviews, Enrique, 1/30/13). The researcher was able to gain a greater understanding of how meaningful leadership opportunities are presented to at-risk youth participants through this section of interviews at Mountain High School.

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Analysis revealed the importance of leadership opportunities presented to at-risk youth through SOS Outreach. Participants at both locations expressed how they understood that their participation in SOS Outreach was much more than the outdoor adventure recreation sport of snowboarding and that their involvement was more about becoming leaders to positively impact their peers, communities, and themselves. Participants discussed how much it meant to them to have the opportunity to be able to give back, be treated with respect, and trusted to do the right thing. Participants also conveyed that they are given training and instructed regularly on ways that they can further develop the leadership skills that they already have. The researcher observed that SOS Outreach participants spoke highly about the leadership opportunities they are given and they revealed the joy that they felt when they were able to lead other at-risk youth participants. It was also observed that a clear connection to positive academic outcomes was not made but that growth in other areas was discussed by each at-risk participant that has the potential to positively impact academic success.

Findings

Qualitative analysis at both interview locations revealed that at-risk youth participants in SOS Outreach have self-reported a variety of beneficial outcomes as a result of their participation in this program. Some of the self-reported outcomes can be directly tied to academic success while others cannot. Therefore, the positive academic impacts of each at-risk youth participant will be presented in the following section.

Felipe

The interview with Felipe a student from City High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted his academic success. Felipe began this portion of the interview by

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sharing that he is an English Language Learner and he discussed how difficult school was for him as a native Spanish speaker. Felipe shared in his interview that he was struggling academically prior to his participation in SOS Outreach and shared that he was failing most of his classes. After joining SOS Felipe stated that his grades went up to a 2.5 GPA and then up to a 3.5 with mostly A's and B's. He credited the mentorship that he received from his Sherpa, Junior Sherpa, and other staff members at SOS Outreach for providing him additional support to get help when he really needed it on essays and other homework assignments. Through the support that Felipe received through SOS he stated his thinking about the future changed and that prior to his participation in this program he had thought that college was not an option for him, sharing that he is from a low income family. Felipe also credited the core values for shaping his thinking and he discussed how courage helped him to keep pushing to make it through high school. He described how he pushed even harder and was able to receive scholarships and he thought back upon the times that he had thought that he would just clean house's or work at McDonalds. Through SOS he said he was motivated to dream of something bigger, something much bigger. He expressed concern that he will never be able to pay SOS Outreach for all that they have done for him. Felipe finished by stating that he felt that the main goal of SOS Outreach is to give students the skills to succeed in the future. He went on to state that everything that he has wanted to do has come through because he pushed himself and used the skills that SOS gave to him.

Isabella

The interview with Isabella a student from City High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted her academic success. Isabella discussed how she has always been a

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good student but through her participation in SOS Outreach she has further developed her goals and expanded her dreams. Isabella stated that she currently has all A's in her classes and that her academic success is directly related to her utilization of the core value of discipline. Through the interview Isabella also discussed her further understanding of the core value of compassion and how this has impacted her desire to want to give back to the community. It is revealed that Isabella would like to be a nurse or a doctor and provide health services to people who cannot afford them in her community and around the world.

Sebastian

The interview with Sebastian a student from City High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted his academic success. Sebastian began by discussing the impact that SOS Outreach has had on academic success. Sebastian referred to the program requirement that ties participation in SOS Outreach to grades. He discussed how he made sure that he was able to go snowboarding and that he worked harder in his classes to ensure that he was able to participate in the ride days. He revealed that over time keeping his grades high and staying caught up in school became a habit for him. Sebastian discussed how he had an increase in his self-esteem because his grades were higher and that he felt more relaxed as a result of going snowboarding. Sebastian became involved with the SOS Outreach program in 8th grade and he thought back on the grades that he had when he first became involved with SOS. He stated that he had pretty low grades and that slowly they went from D's, C's, and B's to B's and A's and that his final semester of high school he had all A's. Sebastian stated that he knew that he wanted to go college since the 6th grade but that the goal setting provided by SOS helped him stay on track and remain focused. Sebastian revealed that his goal is to receive his master's

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degree in electrical engineering and to remain involved with SOS Outreach. Sebastian concluded his interview by stating that his goals for the future they are very big and that most of his goals wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the people that I have met through SOS.

Rodrigo

The interview with Rodrigo a student from Mountain High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted his academic success. Rodrigo shared that he was deeply influenced by the core values of SOS Outreach and that they have had significant impact on his academic success. Rodrigo described a relationship between his academic success and the core value of courage and he shared that he understands that it is his responsibility to stay on top of his grades. The connection between the core values and his academic success is further communicated when Rodrigo stated that he uses courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom and all of the core values to stay on top of his grades. He revealed that he currently has a 4.0 GPA and that this is his first time ever having straight A's. Rodrigo shared that he is planning on going to college for physical therapy and that he would be the first in his family to be given the opportunity to attend college.

Alejandro

The interview with Alejandro a student from Mountain High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted his academic success. Alejandro began this section of the interview by stating his involvement with SOS Outreach has helped him with the challenges that he has faced throughout his academic career. Goal setting is mentioned specifically by Alejandro and is a component of SOS Outreach that he attributed to positively impacting his academic success. Leadership opportunities are another SOS Outreach program component that Alejandro

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cites as being a critical factor in his academic success. Alejandro shared that his grades are currently all A's and B's and he stated that he felt that SOS Outreach has definitely helped him out a lot through school. Alejandro revealed that he has decided that he would like to go to college to study towards a career as a computer engineer.

Juliana

The interview with Juliana a student from Mountain High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted her academic success. Juliana discussed that she felt an important component of SOS Outreach is the requirement that doesn't allow participation if homework is not complete. The importance of the core values is also discussed by Juliana and she shared how her academic success has been positively impacted by these program components. Juliana shared that she has taken on many more responsibilities since she became involved with SOS Outreach and that this has resulted in her being much more organized and efficient with her time. Juliana shared that her grades are currently all A's and that she feels that her participation in SOS Outreach has really improved her educational abilities. Juliana discussed her plans to go to college to pursue a career as a dentist or a doctor and she stated that she feels her future has been positively shaped by her participation in SOS Outreach because of the positive impact that it has had on her academic success.

Enrique

The interview with Enrique a student from Mountain High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted his academic success. Through the interview with Enrique a skepticism of how much of participant success can be related to SOS Outreach is revealed but this is met with Enrique's belief that his participation in SOS Outreach has positively impacted

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his academic success. All of the SOS Outreach program components are mentioned specifically by Enrique. Character development, community service, leadership opportunities, and outdoor adventure recreation are discussed. Enrique mentioned that the character development gave him additional confidence because of his consistent and long term exposure of being in SOS Outreach. He revealed that he felt more confident in school to do things and to share his knowledge with the class. Enrique revealed that his leadership experience and seeing leaders within SOS has been beneficial. He discussed that he is aware that he may not necessarily have to go to college to pursue his dreams but if it does there than he will be better prepared for that challenge because of his participation in SOS Outreach. Enrique revealed that all of the program components of SOS Outreach have positively impacted his academic success.

William

The interview with William a student from Mountain High School revealed that SOS Outreach has positively impacted his academic success. William discussed that he has connected the core values of SOS Outreach to every aspect of his academic success. He cites the core value of courage and his overall participation in SOS Outreach as the main reasons why he has taken advanced classes in high school. William also shared that he knew that he wanted to go to college prior to his involvement with SOS Outreach but that he didn't know what he wanted to study or where he wanted to go. Through his participation in SOS Outreach he revealed that he wants to go to a university that has an outdoor campus because he now understands of the love that he has for the environment. William also shared that he would like to major in pediatrics and ultimately become a pediatric neurosurgeon. Through his participation in SOS Outreach he

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described that he know believes that in order for him to feel successful he would like to give back to youth who haven't had the same opportunities that he has had.

Discussion

SOS Outreach offers at-risk youth adventure recreation, character development, community service, and leadership opportunities to positively impact their lives and academic success. The purpose of this research study is to determine if at-risk youth self-report positive academic impacts as participants of SOS Outreach. This qualitative research study revealed that for each of the interview participants there was a self-reported connection between their involvement with SOS Outreach and positive academic outcomes. Through an analysis of the data the researcher has determined that the combination of the program components of SOS Outreach collectively contribute to the positive impact of the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

Outdoor adventure recreation in SOS Outreach is critical because it was revealed to be the draw for at-risk youth participants and it also positively impacted the academic success of at-risk youth participants. Each participant revealed that they were excited to be given the opportunity to participate in a sport that they did not feel would ever be available to them. In relation to positive academic outcomes, snowboarding served as a major motivator for the at-risk youth participants and pushed them be academically successful. It was also reported that snowboarding reduced their levels of stress and made them more focused and prepared to take on academic challenges. Through the qualitative analysis of SOS Outreach participant interviews the researcher has concluded that participation in the outdoor adventure recreation sport of snowboarding had a positive impact on the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

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Character development in SOS Outreach was also determined to positively impact the academic success of at-risk youth participants. Character development in SOS Outreach is presented through the core values of courage, discipline, wisdom, integrity, and compassion. A clear connection between the core values and the academic success of at-risk youth was self-reported through participant interviews. Interviews also revealed that the core values were meaningfully and effectively integrated into every aspect of SOS Outreach. Qualitative analysis revealed that character development in SOS Outreach was self-reported to have a positive effect on the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

Community Service in SOS Outreach was also determined to positively impact the academic success of at-risk youth participants. Qualitative analysis revealed that being given the opportunity to participate with in the community was something that most participants had never experienced prior to their participation in SOS. It was also revealed that participants are required to plan and develop the service projects, which gives them the opportunity to explore personal areas of interest. Working within a group is important to academic success and it was determined that prior to participation in SOS participants didn't feel comfortable sharing their ideas but through service they experienced greater self-esteem and were more willing to share their ideas with other group members. Participating in community service gave at-risk youth participants the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers and their community towards a common goal. Qualitative analysis of SOS Outreach participant interviews revealed that community service had a positive impact on the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

Leadership Opportunities in SOS Outreach were also determined to positively impact academic outcomes of at-risk youth participants. It was determined that being given the

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opportunity to share personal knowledge with peers was the most powerful component of SOS Outreach experience for at-risk youth participants. Qualitative analysis revealed that at-risk youth were given the opportunity to share their knowledge of snowboarding, character development, community service, and personal life experiences with at-risk peers. Qualitative analysis further revealed that at-risk youth joined SOS to participate in snowboarding but they realized that what they enjoyed most was having the opportunity to serve in leadership positions. Qualitative analysis of SOS Outreach revealed a positive impact on the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

It was determined by this qualitative research study that participation in SOS Outreach positively impacts the academic success of at-risk youth. Qualitative data analysis revealed that each of the components of the SOS Outreach program is critically important for at-risk youth participants and their academic success. Outdoor adventure recreation serves as draw for at-risk youth and offers participants the opportunity to connect with nature, character development shapes students and gives them the core values to base their life on, community service allows for meaningful collaboration and a sense of empowerment and instills a deep desire to give back, and leadership opportunities allow for participants to share their knowledge and feel the joy of contributing to the empowerment of their peers. The researcher has determined through qualitative analysis that participation in the SOS Outreach program is self-reported as positively impacting the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

Implications

The conclusions provided by this qualitative research study give SOS Outreach and other Youth Development programs a greater understanding of the impact of participation in their

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programs. At the present time SOS Outreach and additional researchers are continuing to develop comprehensive evaluations to measure the impact that participation has on at-risk youth. To balance the qualitative research of this study quantitative evaluations are being conducted to determine if SOS Outreach is: reducing school discipline problems, increasing attendance, increasing students GPA's, and increasing student performance on formative state mandated assessments (SOS Outreach, Youth Development Leadership PPT, pg. 25). When there is a combination of more qualitative and quantitative data SOS Outreach will be able to more effectively demonstrate the positive impact that there program has on the academic success of at-risk youth participants.

SOS Outreach currently has strong relationships with School Districts and Youth Agencies and there is potential for significant growth to positively impact the academic success of more at-risk youth. SOS Outreach is currently working with School Districts, and Youth Agencies to close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates for larger numbers of at-risk youth (SOS Outreach, Youth Development Leadership PPT). When SOS Outreach is able to further quantify the positive impacts of their program the greater support they will receive from school districts and other organizations. This makes this research study and future studies critically important to the field of youth development. Through the relationship that SOS Outreach has with School Districts and Youth Agencies there is great potential for larger numbers of at-risk youth to be exposed to the academic benefits of participation in this type of program.

This qualitative research study provided SOS Outreach and the field of Youth Development programs with meaningful data that further demonstrates the positive impact that

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participation in SOS Outreach has on the academic success of at-risk youth. SOS Outreach needs more qualitative and quantitative studies to measure the extent to which at-risk youth participation in SOS Outreach has on academic outcomes. At the present time qualitative analysis is being coupled with quantitative analysis to further demonstrate the impact of SOS Outreach. Through the coupling of this data the reach of SOS Outreach can be expanded and the academic success of at-risk youth can be further expanded.

The researcher has recently completed a teacher licensure program at the Metropolitan State University of Denver and has a deep interest in offering this program to his students. The researcher is receiving his teacher licensure in Special and Linguistically Diverse education and is currently teaching in an urban school environment with at-risk youth. The researcher is interested in teaching within the at-risk community and has a deep personal interest in the Native American community as well as the international community. This qualitative research study has served as the foundation for the future research on Youth Development programs as the researcher has a strong interest in attending a master's program as well as doctoral program with an emphasis on youth development.

Limitations

The qualitative data collected within this study is limited by the following factors: (1) Qualitative data pertaining to student success was collected from students. (2) The sample size is small, as there were only a total number of 9 participants. (3) Data was only collected at two locations. (4) The researcher spent a very limited number of hours at each interview location.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board

In accordance with the requirements of the Metro State's Honors Program the researcher was required to successfully complete the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process in order to conduct the interviews with SOS Outreach participants to answer the research question, does participation in SOS Outreach positively impacts academic success. To successfully complete the evaluation by the IRB the researcher was required to complete a Request for Review and provide a Description of the Study Design.

The Request for Review includes the following two sections:

(1) Study and Investigator Information

The researcher is identified within this section as Phillip Haberman a student of MSU Denver's post baccalaureate teacher licensure program as well as a member of the Honors program. Upon completion of the teacher licensure program the researcher will hold teacher licensure in the state of Colorado in Kindergarten- 12th grade Special Education with an additional endorsement in Linguistically Diverse Education. The researcher became interested in SOS Outreach through his long term participation in a similar non-profit organization that works with adolescents through outdoor recreation and his academic coursework at MSU Denver.

The Study and Investigator Review section also identifies the faculty that is supporting the researcher at MSU Denver. The Faculty members are: (1) Dr. Benjamin Moritz; Chair of the Honors Program at MSU Denver (2) Dr. Vicki Nilles; Primary Reader and faculty at MSU Denver (3) Mr. Ryan Campbell; Secondary Reader and faculty at MSU Denver (4) Dr. Barbara McKenzie; Additional support and faculty at MSU Denver.

(2) Description of Study Design.

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The second section of the Request for Review is the Description of Study Design and this section contains specific details about the research project. Included within this section is the:

(1) Hypothesis and Specific Aims (2) Background and Significance (3) Participants and Methodology (4) Recruitment (5) Participant Privacy (6) Participant Safety (7) Consent Process (8) Risk and Benefit (9) Cost and Payment (10) Data and Document Safety (11) and Participant Follow up.

The researcher was also required to complete additional components to meet the requirements for the MSU Denver's Institutional Review Boards Request for Initial Review: The additional components of the IRB process are: (1) CITI Training (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) (2) Research Involving Children Addendum (3) Assent forms (4) Informed Consent (5) Letter of Cooperation and (6) Interview Questions. On December 5, 2012 the researchers Request for Review was approved by the IRB committee at MSU Denver. Having the approval of the Institutional Review Board allowed the researcher to conduct the interviews with participants of SOS Outreach.

Research will be conducted in an enclosed environment at the SOS Outreach headquarters Avon, Colorado. A staff member will be present at all times during the interview to ensure that the participants are safe from harm, deception, invasiveness, and any adverse impacts. Careful consideration of the participant's well-being has been given in the development of the proposed interview questions. Participants will be encouraged to volunteer only information that they are comfortable sharing and only information that is in their best interest to share. In order to protect the subjects from harm if at any time during the research study a participant demonstrates or eludes to any anxious or upset behaviors the researcher will

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immediately stop the interview. Under the direction of the SOS staff member the researcher will follow the best practice for debriefing of the appropriate parties. Debriefing will take place in clear and plain language immediately following the completion of the interview.

Informed consent will be ensured through plain and clear language within the personal assent and parental consent waivers. The verbiage included in those materials has been carefully selected so that the reading is at an elementary level. The waivers place emphasis on the voluntary nature of this research study as well as the participant's ability to discontinue participation in the study at any time. It is critically important that subjects are clearly informed that their participation in this research study is voluntary and that they may end the survey at any time throughout the process. In addition to the special consideration being given to the wording within the waivers participants and their legal guardian(s) will be informed verbally that their participation is voluntary and that they will not be penalized in any way if they decide to not participate or to discontinue their participation.

A series of strategic steps have been taken to ensure that the risks to participants in this study are minimal. Great care and consideration has been placed into the development of questions that will be asked to the participants. Close collaboration with the development director for this organization has taken place to ensure that the best practices for this population are followed at all times during the research. Licensed and credentialed personnel from the SOS Outreach program will be present at all times during the research to ensure the safety of the participant at all times. As a result of these efforts the probability of risk to the participant has been minimized and safeguards will be in place at all times during the research to ensure that the needs of the participant will be met. However, due to the small sample size of five participants there is

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potential for the identity to be revealed even with the aforementioned safeguards. The potential benefits that may arise through the approval of this research study are significant. Through the proposed survey the researcher will gain greater insight into the possibility of increasing positive outcomes in educational experiences for youth who are at-risk. All of the questions that will be asked will be directly related to outdoor recreation and how their academic learning may or may not have been impacted by being involved in an adventure recreation program. Through the insight provided by this research study outdoor adventure programs and the children that they serve could be significantly strengthened.

There was no cost associated with the participation of this interview. Participants also did not receive any compensation. (Haberman, Request for Initial Review, pg. 2-6)

The researcher understands the responsibility of ensuring that research materials are safely kept at all times. Upon receipt of these documents the researcher will immediately place them in a secure folder that will remain in his position at all times. All documents containing any identifiable information will be securely stored within the office of the faculty adviser from Metro State University, Dr. Vicki Nilles. The data that is collected during the course of this study will only be shared after study codes and pseudonyms have been implemented. There will be a separate document that links the study codes and pseudonyms to subjects identifying information and this document will be located within the secure location. All of the documents containing any identifiable information will be stored within the locked location within the faculty member's office and access will be limited to that of the researcher and Metro State University faculty member. When applicable all paper documents will be properly destroyed (shredded) and all of the e-documents will be deleted within the 3 year time limit.

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Upon completion of the research study the development director of SOS Outreach, Seth Ehrlich will be notified and he will contact the participants and their guardian(s). Mr. Ehrlich will be notified that the honors program has made the thesis available through their website, which is as follows: <http://www.msudenver.edu/honors/>.

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Appendix B: IRB Approval

*Ann Morrison, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board*

*Metropolitan State University of Denver
P.O. Box 173362, Campus Box 21, Denver, CO 80217-3362
303-352-7083 – cmorri46@mscd.edu – www.mscd.edu/irb/*

December 5, 12

Dear Dr. Nilles and Phillip Haberman,

Your Request for Initial Review, #1210-17, titled “Does participation in outdoor recreation through SOS Outreach contribute to the academic success of youth who meet the criteria to be classified as at risk?” has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. The IRB has approved your protocol pending modifications that do not require second review under section 46.111 of Title 45 Part 46 of the United States Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations.

The following documents were used to make this determination:

- 1210-17_11.30.12_RfIR_Rev
- 1210-17_11.30.12_AssentForms_Rev
- 1210-17_11.30.12_InformedConsent_Rev
- 1210-17_11.30.12_InterviewQuestions
- 1210-17_11.30.12_ResearchInvolvingChildrenAddendum
- 1210-17_11.30.12_LetterofCooperation

Please make the following modifications prior to beginning your research:

- Raw data are not to be stored at a student’s place of residence. Rather, all documents containing any identifiable information should be securely stored within a locked location in a faculty office.
- Please send a copy of your revised materials for our files.

You are free to begin your study after making the modifications described above. Approval for this research protocol will expire on December 5, 2013. If you plan to continue this study after the expiry date, please submit a Request for Continuing Review well before then.

If, while completing your research you encounter unanticipated problems that may pose additional risk to your participants, please contact me immediately. If you wish to modify your research protocol in the future, please submit a Request for Review of Protocol Modification.

I wish you the best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Jessica Rossi-Katz
Member, Institutional Review Board

Appendix C: Consent Form**Metropolitan State University of Denver****Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

My name is Phillip Haberman and I am currently going to school for my teacher's license at Metro State University. I am writing my Honors Thesis about children from the ages of 8-18 who are involved in the SOS Outreach program, and are currently in school. I became interested in this subject through my passion for outdoor recreation and my dedication to teaching youth. You are receiving this consent form because your child meets the criteria for this research study.

If your child participates they will be asked questions about their participation in SOS Outreach and their school performance. The interview will last around 30 minutes within the SOS Outreach office in Avon, Colorado. The interview will also take place in an enclosed area to reduce the potential of being identified by other participants or staff members. I will be conducting the interview and a staff member from SOS Outreach will be present at all times during the interview.

Many steps have been taken to ensure that the risks of your child's participation have been minimized. The questions that will be asked during the interview have been carefully selected. Your child will be encouraged to volunteer only information that they are comfortable sharing. If at any time they would like to no longer participate they are welcome to do so without consequence and the researcher will immediately stop the interview. Their name will not be used in any published reports of the research and all documents containing any identifiable information will be securely stored within a locked location in a faculty office. However, there will only be a total of five participants in this study and there is a chance that your child could be identified even if their information is taken out.

There are no direct benefits for you or your child if you choose to allow them to participate in this research study. However, an indirect benefit may include meaningful contributions to

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adventure recreation programs for youth. Also, there will be no costs associated with your child's participation in this study and there will be no compensation for their participation.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact the researcher, Phillip Haberman at 720-212-9481 or haberman@msudenver.edu. The research adviser, Dr. Vicki Nilles, at (303) 556-6228 or ybevill@msudenver.edu. The Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Ann Morrison may also be contacted at 303-352-7083 or cmorri46@msudenver.edu. The Development Director for SOS Outreach, Seth Ehrlich can be contacted at (970) 926-9292 or seth@sosoutreach.org.

Allowing your child to participate in this interview is completely voluntary. You don't have to allow them to participate. If you don't want them to participate it will not be held against them in any way. If you are interested in allowing them to participate please sign this form.

Parent/Guardians name (print) _____

Parent/Guardian signature _____ Date _____

Researcher name (print) _____

Researcher signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D: Assent Form**Metropolitan State University of Denver
Institutional Review Board**

Assent for a Child, Approximately 14-17 Years Old

My name is Phillip Haberman and I am going to school for my teacher's license at Metro State University. I'm writing my Honors Thesis about children from the ages of 8-18 who are involved in adventure programs and their performance in school as a project for my university. I became interested in this subject through my passion for outdoor recreation and my dedication to teaching youth.

If you would like to participate you will be asked questions about your participation in SOS Outreach and your school performance. The interview will last around 30 minutes and will be within the SOS Outreach office in Avon, Colorado. The interview will also take place in an enclosed area to reduce the potential of being identified by other participants or staff members. I will be conducting the interview and a staff member from SOS Outreach will be present at all times during the interview.

Many steps have been taken to ensure that the risks of your participation have been minimized. The questions that will be asked during the interview have been carefully selected. You will be encouraged to volunteer only information that you are comfortable sharing. If at any time you would like to no longer participate you are welcome to do so without consequence and the researcher will immediately stop the interview. Your name will not be used in any published reports of the research and all documents containing any identifiable information will be securely stored within a locked location in a faculty office. However, there will only be a total of five participants in this study and there is a chance that you can be identified even if your information is taken out.

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation in this research study. However, an indirect benefit may include meaningful contributions to adventure recreation programs for

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youth. Also, there will be no costs associated with your participation in this study and you will not be compensated for your participation.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact the researcher, Phillip Haberman at 720-212-9481 or haberman@msudenver.edu. The research adviser, Dr. Vicki Nilles, at (303) 556-6228 or ybevill@msudenver.edu. The Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Ann Morrison may be contacted at 303-352-7083 or cmorri46@msudenver.edu. The Development Director for SOS Outreach, Seth Ehrlich can be contacted at (970) 926-9292 or seth@sosoutreach.org.

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You don't have to participate. If you don't want to participate it will not be held against you in any way. If you are interested in participating please sign this form.

Participant name (print) _____ Age _____

Participant signature _____ Date _____

Researcher name (print) _____

Researcher signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What is your name? How old are you? What grade are you in?
2. How long have you been involved with SOS Outreach?
3. How did you get started with this program?
4. What activities have you been a part of?
5. Can you talk about what the core values are and what they mean to you?
6. Please tell me about what you enjoy most about this program?
7. What role does being outdoors play in your enjoyment of this program?
8. Is there a part of this program that has helped you in school?
9. Since you have been involved with this program have you noticed a change in your performance at school?
10. Can you talk about your greatest experience that you have had with this program?
11. What are your plans for the future? Has this program helped shape those plans?

Appendix F: Interview Transcripts**City High School: Conducted January 29, 2013****Program Participation Background**

Mary I am in 12th grade and I have been involved with SOS Outreach for 4 years.

Mary I wanted to go snowboarding with my teacher because he's my favorite teacher and he has been like really promoting it and I thought that it sounded like fun, so I got into it and really liked it.

Mary SOS is kind of like a getaway, once a month, going snowboarding and stuff.

Felipe I have been involved with SOS Outreach for 5 years.

Felipe My PE teacher told me that there was an opportunity to go snowboarding, you know to the mountains and I mean I took the opportunity.

Felipe I mean I have been really interested in learning about snowboarding and I mean my teacher told me about the opportunity and I was super excited that he offered me that opportunity and I just started to go for it.

Sebastian 6 years, I have been a part of SOS Outreach for 6 years.

Sebastian Well from the beginning, with Learn to Ride, you know, they took us up to learn snowboarding and then after that it was the University Program.

Sebastian SOS it is a non-profit organization that helps students in high schools that usually wouldn't have the chance to go snowboarding, help them to go snowboarding, and help them improve themselves, and set goals, and also helps them academically.

Sebastian I heard about it when I was in the 8th grade, about the chance to go snowboarding.

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Sebastian I asked our PE teacher who was the head of that program at that time for our school and he said that he usually picks a name out of a hat, I guess that I got lucky and got picked and got to go, snowboarding.

Isabella I have participated with SOS Outreach for 4 years.

Isabella My brother told me that it was a good opportunity.

Isabella I don't like sports normally so he said, you learn at your own pace.

Isabella I was kind of worried 'cause I like, I never tried sports.

Outdoor Adventure Recreation

Felipe Through SOS that is how I got, that's how I had the opportunity to learn to snowboard before that where I come from, it's just, it's a small town and you know we're like so far away from the mountains so there's no chance, you know of snowboarding. Actually, uh I guess you can consider snowboarding as a myth from where I come from because no one ever, no one really knows what it is and uh, so ya I never learned about snowboarding or anything like that before SOS.

Isabella I like going to the ride days, it is always a good time to just get a break from school and just relax, 'cause when I do snowboarding I always, like, forget about everything and just focus on doing your snowboarding, it really helps me a lot.

Isabella When I am outdoors, just like I don't know, I feel comfortable just breathing in fresh air or just feeling the breeze as I going down the hill. It's just, I don't know, relaxing.

Isabella Since I started SOS it is just, like, taking advantage of what the mountains are, and just enjoying them more by doing the sport.

Isabella Snowboarding has been kind of like a process for me because I am not a fast learner, but you know it helps me to see that if you never give up, you, at some point you are going to become an expert in snowboarding.

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Isabella I would like to keep doing snowboarding because, it's, really for me helps, it's really helpful.

Isabella The first year that I did SOS I learned that I was going to do snowboarding because we used to, like, me and my brother used to play like video games, but we used to have a snowboarding game. So, it was like I don't think that I am going to get to do this in real life.

Isabella When I actually got the opportunity to because my brother told me about this program and I was like I don't think that it is possible and I finally finished the year, I was like wow, I can actually now snowboard and become a better snowboarder.

Sebastian It definitely calms me, I like being in the mountains, I like the snow, and snowboarding. I always find that when I am snowboarding my mind is just clear and I am more focused on what I am doing and stop worrying about, you know, the five page paper that I have due in a week or the test that is coming up in this class, I just focus and relax myself.

Sebastian It's definitely good to just go out and be able to just clear your mind like that, especially before a big test or something like that. You just go into it because once you come back all of the stress is kind of at a lower level and you can take your time and realize that it's, if you manage your time right, you will be able to learn and accomplish what you need to get done.

Character Development

Felipe Through those Core Values I learned how to push myself.

Felipe It doesn't matter if you're a Sherpa, Junior Sherpa, or student we try to use them all because it's for our own good.

Isabella All of these Core Values help us to learn in a new way, snowboarding, getting better at snowboarding, but also learning from experiences, and to know how to apply them to our own life.

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Isabella Discipline helps you a lot to get better grades. It is going to take time, a lot of time and that is what discipline helps with, and it is going to help you a lot with school.

Isabella I use discipline a lot to manage to get straight A's.

Sebastian They are really helpful to think about when I'm going through my regular day I have sometimes found myself in a situation where I have to choose what I do and just think about it, what uh, is it responsible to do this, is it wise, is it going to help my future, in the long run.

Sebastian Just thinking about those a lot more during the ride days and just overall through the SOS program has really affected the way that I think and the way that I act in certain situations.

Community Service

Mary We do the community service every year. We went and did awareness for the Martin Luther King parade in downtown.

Felipe I was kind of surprised because most people, you know, people outside of SOS, you know, you tell them hey we are going to do Community Service. We are going to do this and we are going to help the community and most of the time they just complain about it.

Felipe I told them hey we are going to do this, we are going to help out at this park, we are going to go clean up, we are going to be there for so long and I mean they are just giving back to the community.

Felipe My surprise was that the students, you know being there first year, you know not having so much experience with SOS, they were like so happy, so excited, you know for offering to help, you know, in a Community Service project.

Isabella We have done Community Services, uhm, we help the community. This year we are organizing an event for, to help our community. Uhm, we're organizing a day special for getting

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people to know what about, like, what's bullying. How does it affect children, how can we help them, and even make them participate in the community here at school.

Isabella I am very grateful for all of the events that we have been a part of, helping the community and I think that it has helped me to become more involved. I used to be a very shy student, I used to just, oh well, I didn't like to because I didn't know what it was doing community service but once I started SOS it actually helped me to like to do community service.

Sebastian My group did a project for renewable energy and we actually got the school to approve, we needed a dishwasher and plastic trays here for the new buildings, instead of using Styrofoam trays.

Sebastian We also did energy lighting for the new school, we just uh, we presented that to the school district, and uh, showed them the stats and everything to get them to do that.

Sebastian I have been a part of a lot of community service projects, uhm the most memorable one that I had was when we went to City Park and we took all of the flowers out and made sure that all of the beds were ready for winter.

Sebastian I used to be doing the community service projects and now I am leading community service projects or helping lead community service projects or helping lead community service projects and it is definitely a lot different.

Leadership Opportunities

Felipe This is my second year as a Junior Sherpa, I mean I guess, during my first year being a, you know, an instructor now I had the chance to see the growth in the students, you know the growth as snowboarders and their growth as persons, as people, and I mean that's the really great experience that I am not going to forget.

Felipe Their first day they have no idea how to get off of the chairlift and then by their second and third day of riding I mean they are getting off the chairlift fine. They won't fall at all, they will make S-Turns and stuff like that and I mean it's a really good feeling you know to have a

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chance to see growth because I mean that it is really touching, especially because you are one of the persons helping them.

Felipe I am glad that I have this experience you know as an instructor. I am still working with those students right now and I mean I am still amazed that they have learned so far, I mean two years and I mean we don't really get to ride that often, you know, it is just once a month, and I mean how they have, I guess, I mean what I want to say is that they are advanced riders now.

Felipe I am surprised because I mean we could be racing down the hill and I could be like, oh my god, they already passed me or, you know, that stuff, it is just, doesn't stop surprising me, you know, even to this day I still get surprised by them.

Felipe We not only teach students how to snowboard but we also like teach them important skills, you know like the Core Values.

Felipe I get to teach the Core Values and I get to teach them, you know through my, I guess, life.

Felipe What I love the most about this program is that they provide a fun activity, which is snowboarding and you know teaching the Core Values, you know how like they relate, you know, tie them together.

Isabella I would like to, I don't know, teach others to, at least encourage, not just to go snowboarding but to do other sports, that helps a lot but also I would like to help other people, 'cause uhm, doing SOS has shown me that helping your community does impact your community and it helps out a lot.

Sebastian What I enjoy most about the program is definitely, when I was in the program, is definitely the fact that they took me snowboarding every month, but now that I am a part of the program and I am a Junior Sherpa my favorite part is teaching the kids.

Sebastian There's always those moments where you get a leadership position and you are able to, they let you guide students down the mountain by yourself, and they trust you, that you will be able to guide them safely.

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Sebastian It is just a very awesome thing to know that somebody trusts you with people, and that you are very important to the program.

Sebastian It feels very good to be appreciated.

School Outcomes

Felipe When I first got to this program or when I first came to this country my, I guess, English speaking skills they were bad, they were horrible. I didn't know how to communicate with people, part of that; part of that reason why I was like that was because I am a really shy person. SOS they helped me to overcome that fear of being shy.

Felipe That literally helped me in my school career because when I first got here you know I failed my classes, I am not going to lie I failed most of my classes and also I had to take summer school classes, just to be, to be on track and graduate on time.

Felipe Once I joined SOS I had the opportunity to talk to a lot more people my grades went up and, uhm, I'm serious, I mean I started having a GPA of 3.5 you know I went from a 2.5 to a 3.5 and my grades went up to like B's and A's.

Felipe I also knew that I was going to get help from my instructor, my Sherpa uhm, you know I knew that I was going to get help from them in my snowboarding, I guess skills, or I guess yeah skills, but I also knew that I was going to get help in school, so like there were times when I really needed help with my essays and uhm you know I guess sometimes even with my math homework and stuff like that and I knew that I could rely on my Sherpa.

Felipe They were there to support me and not only my Junior Sherpa and my other Sherpa but also the staff from SOS.

Felipe It definitely has changed my, I guess, my thinking about the future, uhm, there was a point in my life where I didn't even consider going to college just because you know my family don't really have the, I guess, way, there is not really a way to support me. You know, to go to college because I mean we come from a low income family.

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Felipe There was a point in my life where I just couldn't see that chance of going to college and didn't see the chance to keep studying, you know, getting a higher education, and I mean SOS, you know, they changed my thinking by using the Core Values of courage, you know, saying hey you know it is possible as long as you push yourself, I pushed myself getting through my last few years of high school.

Felipe I pushed even harder and I got some scholarships, I got some help from the government, and, uh, I mean it really changed my thinking. I mean one day I was like actually thinking, hey after you graduate from college you're going to go and work with your parents, you know, go and clean at a store, or go clean houses, probably work at McDonalds or something and I mean SOS has really motivated me and really changed my thinking into I guess go for something, something bigger, you know.

Felipe I am so in love with this program, uhm because I mean they have done so much for me. They have done a lot of things for me and I'm really really thankful for them. In fact I feel that I am never going to have a chance to thank them enough for everything that they have done to me, or for me.

Felipe I guess I can't really say enough about SOS because I mean SOS is such a cool program for the things that they do but mainly because they really care about the students, they really care about the future of their students.

Felipe Their main goal is basically to give the students the skills to succeed in the future and I mean so far they have done it. I mean I am not going to say that I have succeeded, that I am done, you know but I am going to say that I am successful, that I have been successful even to this point. With everything that, everything that I have wanted to do it's come through because I have pushed myself because I have used the skills that SOS gave me.

Isabella What I realize about my school is that I never give up on my work even though it is hard and stressful sometimes, but I always like to get good grades and that is the feeling that I get when I work hard, I always get good grades. I pretty much have A's in my class.

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Isabella I have always been a good student, but, like, SOS, I think I have more goals, more dreams that anything is possible.

Isabella I would like to, for example, my career choice for college is to, I would like to be either a nurse or a doctor because I would really like to help people and make an impact in other countries because there are other countries that are in need and not all people can afford for, to get treatment. So, I would really like to help my community and around the world.

Isabella Thanks to them I have learned that there are many ways that you help your community and your peers and many ways that you can improve academically.

Isabella SOS has helped me see a way that it is important to help people, so I kind of, it has helped me to see that I can help people.

Isabella I never thought like helping people so it has really helped me to, I don't know, to just do something for the community.

Isabella I would like to thank them for everything because it is just a great experience and has helped me to become a more social person in my life.

Sebastian When I was in the program in school there was always a requirement for grades, like you had to have a certain grade in each class to be able to go snowboarding, and since I wanted to go snowboarding, I needed to make sure that I was able to go and that is usually how it was for everybody in the program.

Sebastian Now it is just uh, it has become a habit to keep my grades up.

Sebastian It makes me feel a lot better to have those grades, and when I go snowboarding, for some reason, it just helps me relax a lot more.

Sebastian Looking back to it there is a bit of a change, because in 8th grade I kind of was, I wasn't the best student. My grades would probably be C's, B's, and maybe some D's.

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Sebastian My grades went from C's and D's to B's and C's and then A's and B's. My last semester of the year I got all A's.

Sebastian Overall it is to get a master's degree in electrical engineering.

Sebastian I still want to be involved with the SOS in the future, so I'm thinking maybe be a Sherpa for as long as I can. Keep going, keep helping with the program because they have helped me so much.

Sebastian I have always pretty much know that I have wanted to go to college since 6th grade, I think.

Sebastian SOS has really pushed me to continue that goal, to really work for it, and not just slack on it, let it happen when it happens. They have really helped me to just push and get stuff done faster and make sure that I get to where I want to go.

Sebastian Definitely with the goal setting that they have with students, that is definitely something that has helped. That they have us set personal and academic goals every season and it is definitely a good thing to be able to say, uhm that at the beginning of the season this is my goals and then at the end to say that I accomplished that goal and I even went passed it or I accomplished it faster than I did, let's set another goal, and that's really helpful.

Sebastian SOS is a really great program, I would recommend it anybody.

Sebastian I would definitely just say, thank you so much, they've , most of the people that have helped me, they have just really impacted my life, really helped me to see a better future for myself and not just electrical engineering, just overall.

Sebastian My goals for the future they are very big, I have very big goals that hopefully I can accomplish. Most of those goals probably wouldn't have been there if it wasn't for the people that I have met through SOS.

Mountain High School: Conducted January 30, 2013

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Program Participation Background

Rodrigo I have been involved for 8 years.

Rodrigo I started with the first, uh. What's it called, there's the SOS Learn to Ride Program.

Rodrigo It's like if you wanted to learn how to snowboard, it was called, Learn to Ride, SOS Learn to Ride, and then after that you can go to SOS University.

Rodrigo Season passes are really expensive and SOS can give us the pass, almost free is a good thing, it's an excellent thing.

Alejandro This is going to be my 8th year in SOS.

Alejandro It was through my school.

Juliana I have been involved with in SOS for about 6 years.

Juliana My parents heard about it and in Elementary School they asked the principle and he informed us about it and we started going to meetings and we signed up.

Enrique I am in 10th grade and I started SOS in 4th grade, so I have been involved with this program for 6 years.

Enrique They came to the school and they told us about it, and they gave us forms for if we wanted to join, and I joined.

William I wanted to learn how to snowboard, my mom got a message in the mail and said do you want to try this out, and I said sure, and I stuck with it.

William I have done the University Program, I have also done the Learn to Ride, and I am now a Junior Sherpa. Those are the three main courses that they offer, I have also done the Summer Program, which uh includes: backpacking, hiking, fishing, most of any outdoor activities that you can do in the mountains.

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William This is my second year as a Junior Sherpa, I went through the four year program, and then two years of Learn to Ride, so 8 years is how long I have been a part of SOS.

Outdoor Adventure Recreation

Rodrigo I have done a camp, it was a camping trip, 5 days and 4 nights, it was in Summit, it was good.

Rodrigo I've never been, I've never been camping, and I mean this was my first time really going camping. I mean I learned a lot of things, where to set up camp, I learned where is good to set fire, and everything, and then it just gave me a life experience of how things are and then how I can survive later on in life.

Rodrigo Being up the mountain is just, just really fun.

Alejandro It was a Junior Sherpa trip where we went camping for 5 days.

Alejandro It is a great opportunity to have, like, activities, just other than being at home, like the camping trip in the summer was really good. Snowboarding and getting to go up on the mountain with little kids and enjoy the nice weather, or sometimes powder and snow, when we get it.

Juliana I have been in all of the SOS snowboard, how would you say? Snowboarding when you go snowboarding I have been doing that for 6 years and then I have also volunteered in all of their volunteering events.

Juliana Being outdoors keeps me in shape and I really like to exercise, so uhm, SOS has taught me how to stay in shape.

Enrique The snowboarding obviously, and then I did one week camping over the summer, it was like backpacking.

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Enrique Normally when you do meet people it's usually in school and it's indoors and a lot of times you do not meet them at their best because they are not really enjoying what they are doing, but here it is something that they signed up to do, so they really want to do it, and they are having a good time, and you get to know the good side of them.

Enrique This summer when I went on the backpacking trip, I had never gone backpacking before and I mean you know what backpacking is like, you get the jest of it, I mean you get it and like yeah you are going to get a great view and you are going to have to hike a lot but it doesn't really sink in until you actually do it.

Enrique The reward of actually seeing the view, like after you, because it is so hard, I had to take so many breaks and there was just, it was like really terrible going up.

Enrique I mean the view is really good even when you are just going through the forest still but you are really tired and once you get up there you feel really accomplished.

Enrique That really is, I mean is discipline really because I kept going you know and that really I guess it is just a symbol I guess of what can happen if you use that in any part of your life not just backpacking.

William Living in Colorado, we live outdoors, all the time whether it be now, in the winter, uh snowboarding skiing, whatever, snowshoeing, whatever you do most people are still outside.

William Now in the summer, camping, backpacking, hiking, fishing, I could name a whole bunch, people again it is all outside not that has also played a role in my life because it has made me more physically active and physically or mentally or has made me connect with the outdoors more.

William Thank you for putting me outside more. Again not everyone my age is outside as much as they should be, which is absolutely a shame because I think that they would love it.

William I am one of the lucky few that get to grow up in Colorado, snowboarding on some of the world's greatest resorts, now SOS has provided us with that.

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William They have put us close enough to these world renowned resorts and said here you go this is all that we need from you and this is what we are giving you, so that is another thing that I would thank them for. Thank you for getting me into snowboarding and for putting me on these resorts.

Character Development

Rodrigo I mean the first one that I love is courage, courage, is uh, kind of,, the main one that you need to have.

Rodrigo So, courage I use courage every day of my life, for I mean, trying new things, trying my hardest takes courage.

Rodrigo Compassion, oh yeah compassion, you got to have compassion to just do all of this and to do all of community service, and have, and be willing to go up the mountain and to teach the little kids.

Rodrigo I love SOS, they help a lot, I've learned a lot from being, from having better character, being a better person.

Rodrigo Becoming a better person and working my hardest, of all of these Core Values I use courage the most.

Alejandro The Core Values are courage, integrity, wisdom, compassion, and, hmmm, I forget the last one. Did I say integrity? Discipline.

Alejandro They are just a great way to, uhm, basically base your life on, like, they are great to follow, like, using them every day to try your best.

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Alejandro The most important value is courage, because without courage I wouldn't be able to try the other things, just try something new, stepping out of the comfort zone, yeah. It is definitely challenging being with a lot of kids, and teaching them different things, uhm, and helping them out.

Alejandro Using the Core Values and things like that. Like, discipline, just doing homework.

Alejandro Giving me different skills to use in school and teaching me different things that I did not know before, like the definitions to the Core Values, I didn't know before joining SOS. I didn't even know what a Core Values was. Definitely taught me a lot.

Juliana There is 5 Core Values, uhm, courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom, and compassion.

Juliana I think that compassion would be forgiving and loving others and integrity is for me, it would be, uhm, doing what you are supposed to do with no one asking you. Uh, discipline, is when you tell yourself to do something and you follow it, so having a goal for yourself. Uhm, wisdom would be looking at your options and seeing the results and choosing which result would be better for you and I. I, courage right? Courage is taking risks even though you are scared to do it, you take the risk and just do it.

Enrique Discipline especially is something that I have been looking at this year a lot.

Enrique You hear about them and they are really kind of universal words that you know of but you don't really think about them.

Enrique Sometimes you know that you are supposed to act a certain way but you don't really think about how it applies.

Enrique Discipline I think has especially been one that I have been working on because, like I said it is like study habits and sometimes you want the end result to be great but you are not really willing to put the work that it takes to get there. So, that is one that I have been working on this year.

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William Absolutely, we have integrity, wisdom, discipline, courage, and compassion. Now those are what I base my life off of, now that I have grown up around them. I have grown up with 8 years of those under my belt.

William So, courage is stepping out of my comfort zone.

William Compassion is forgiving and loving.

William Integrity, being completely honest with whatever you are doing.

William Discipline, having the discipline to show up when you need to, having to be on time or early.

William Wisdom is being able to be book smart and street smart in my opinion. You cannot live a balanced life without both of those.

William It just varies on what you have grown up around and those have touched me greatly.

Community Service

Rodrigo We have done a lot of community service, from helping the Army Salvation, going to Avon Elementary School, then packing bags and turkeys for Thanksgiving for people that don't have money and then in December, which is the same thing, we will just go and pack food, and then go and then give it out to people, and just helping the kids out.

Alejandro We have service projects, uhm, helping out the community.

Alejandro Well every year we have something called Eagle River cleanup, and uh, SOS students go and pick up trash and things that are not supposed to be there, by the river and just help out the community.

Alejandro Students go to the Human Society to walk the dogs, play with the animals there.

Alejandro We also have another one that is coming up, it's riding horses, or helping, uh kids with autism, and things like that and just letting them have a good time.

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Juliana We go, like as a group, we go and volunteer and some examples are like river cleanup, uh food baskets, bell ringing.

Juliana I started volunteering in my Learn to Ride year. I didn't really know how to volunteer before that. So, yeah they introduced me to that.

Juliana I enjoy coming to SOS every Sunday, for, well, I volunteer now every Sunday for Learn to Ride kids.

Enrique I have done like the uh Christmas Baskets and Thanksgiving baskets, and there is a bike race that goes on here annually and we help set the stations for that.

JS One of my favorites is the Christmas or the Thanksgiving baskets. Where you get to go and you get to fill a cardboard box with food that is going to people that need it so that they can also celebrate Christmas or Thanksgiving.

William We all know that Thanksgiving is a time to be thankful for others, that's why I like to do it then.

William Christmas is also a great one because, Christmas, you can't, it's not the same if you don't have the family dinner, it's not the same if you can't provide that family meal, if you can't provide the presents, it is not just about the presents, it's about bonding with your family, it's about getting to know your family, just that much better.

William It's me reaching out to someone else and saying here please enjoy this, while I can also enjoy it, that way our families are just that much more the same.

Leadership Opportunities

Rodrigo Being out there and teaching kids how to snowboard, you're having a good time and then you're at lunch with them and you're just talking and having a conversation.

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Rodrigo We were reading these, these uh, these rules in a writing book from SOS about leadership.

Rodrigo Since then I took that on and I was aiming for that stride of ending with a 4.0.

Rodrigo I have been taking role in that leadership program, where I want to go to college and that is the goal that I am striving for. I would be the first in my family to go to college as I said, so that is why SOS has helped me, or has helped me to reach that goal. Will help me reach that goal.

Alejandro We go once a month with students up on the mountain and teach them how to snowboard, teach them about Core Values, uhm teach them about leadership, and things like that.

Alejandro It teaches you how to work with others, sometimes you have to, uh, troubles with some of the kids, you just have to learn how to, uhm, basically, just, uhm, you just have to teach them what is right and help them out in any way that you can, it's great!

Alejandro What I enjoy most, the monthly, uhm, sessions about leadership, where we talk about different leadership skills.

Alejandro Teaches us a lot about different leadership and how we can apply them to our life's and use them.

Alejandro Leadership, how like to take that place in a group activity, just uh, lead others, or see how others lead too.

Alejandro Teaching little kids how to snowboard, just seeing them, how they look up to you like a role model, just the smile on their faces every day when you go up on the mountain and how excited they are, is really good!

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Juliana My greatest experience was pretty much all of the volunteering that I do and see now this year, it is seeing the kids, uhm, improving because now I am pretty much the leader of the group and I really like to see the kids growing and improving with their snowboarding abilities.

Enrique This is my second year as a Junior Sherpa, so I mentor, I help mentor kids, uh train them.

Enrique It has been, I wouldn't say that it is exactly great because you find out that a lot of the things that you thought were great for teaching people don't actually work but it has opened my eyes a little bit and then sometimes it is a little more simple than you imagine it to be.

Enrique Like you have all of these ideas and techniques that you are going to teach them but really you just have to let them do it themselves and they'll figure it out, you just have to guide them. That is kind of great, I mean you learn something that you really didn't think was going to happen.

Enrique You come in with them having the assumption that you're a leader already, that you just have to get the confidence to show the world because they already treat you as an adult when you come in. I would say that they don't treat you as though they are making you a leader but they are treating you as they are making you find out that you are a leader and that is great.

William I enjoy giving back to my community, I've gone through it and I've always had my Junior Sherpa and Sherpa to help me through whatever I needed to, uh I wanted to be a Junior Sherpa since I got into the University program.

William Being a Junior Sherpa is being able to connect more with these kids, it's more about me giving back to these kids, it's more about me volunteering my time to make these kids understand and connect with the 5 Core Values like I have. So, I like the fact that I am giving back to my community, in order to have a greater community.

William Giving back to the kids has been one of my favorite parts of this program, also going to London has been another one. We met amazing people and made friendships that will last a lifetime over there.

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William Putting kids first, before myself again has been a huge success in this program. So, if it boiled down to me picking one of these, it would honestly have to be the kids since that is what I here to do. I am here to do community service, become a leader, and that's what I am honestly doing putting these kids first. I am becoming a leader.

William I would like to say thank you for making me a better leader than most other kids my age. Most other kids my age haven't had the success that people in SOS have. We have gone through leadership development programs, we're taking classes.

William That is shaping us into the young leaders and that is what SOS is striving for right now is to make better leaders, which is what I would honestly thank them for.

School Outcomes

Rodrigo My grades, I needed to have the courage to stay on top of them, even if the teacher doesn't get it, if I don't get what the teacher is teaching I need to have the character to say, oh I don't get this, or this class, just be respectful and talk to them after class or after school.

Rodrigo Yeah, uh I guess my, willing to go and help anyone, or to start, like to be willing to have a conversation with someone, helping more, or be more talkative, and then oh, and like meet new people every day, and then, or just help someone out.

Rodrigo The main thing that SOS has given me is going out there, helping out people, and being more talkative, and enjoying life, and talking to new friends.

Rodrigo This semester I ended with a 4.0. I used courage, discipline, and integrity, wisdom, and all of those Core Values so that I could be on top of my grades. This is my first time ending with a 4.0 and I mean I was really happy.

Rodrigo Go to college, I want to major in Physical Therapy, and I want to come back to this program and help out again. I want to be a Sherpa.

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Rodrigo Hopefully next year when I am 18 I can be a Sherpa but I mean I would love to come back here because I love to snowboard and everything, I mean, it is to go to college.

Rodrigo I would be the first in my family to go to college.

Rodrigo I would thank them they have helped me a lot, they have helped my sister a lot and everyone in this community a lot by starting this program. I mean most of the people in this program are Latino's and I mean from this valley that I know right now, they get the chance to go up, get up the mountain and snowboard and have a fun time, have an experience, and it's cheap, it's good, and most people, and everyone loves it, and they enjoy it.

Alejandro I have been in it since I was little so it definitely helped me out through school, and uhm different challenges in schools too, and just uh, Sherpa's, the leaders, they usually help out a lot too.

Alejandro A's and B's.

Alejandro setting goals when I was a student, before, and now being a Junior Sherpa, we had to write down goals and that definitely helped me out, through a lot of decision making.

Alejandro I would let them know how great of an experience that they have given me, that it is amazing and has definitely helped me out a lot through school, making decisions for the future, a great opportunity to be a leader, uhm it is amazing what it has taught me.

Alejandro I want to go to college, to be, uhm, a computer engineer.

Alejandro It definitely has given me different ideas of what I would like to do later on.

Juliana What I enjoy most about the program is being able to learn, while helping others, and also improving things about myself, too

Juliana With SOS you have to be responsible and take responsibilities, and well I have been taught that no one has to remind me.

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Juliana Sherpa's usually remind you but most of my Sherpa's would, uhm, just call once or twice, uhm and we would have 5 ride days so after the 2nd or 3rd time that they called you would have to take responsibility of like writing down your homework.

Juliana Every time that you go to SOS and up on the hill, uhm, you have to have your definition of the day.

Juliana If you do not have your homework done then you don't get to go and ride up with your group until you finish your definition.

Juliana Since I have been in this program, I have noticed that I am actually taking more responsibilities and I can be more organized. So I keep track of my time and I schedule out, pretty much, when to do my homework, when to eat, and all of that when I get home, so yeah, it has really improved my educational abilities.

Juliana My grades right now, I would say, last time that I checked, were all A's and last semester my lowest grade was a B.

Juliana My plans for the future are to just stay in SOS, and for like my educational plans, I want to go to college and study as a doctor or dentist.

Juliana It has also helped me shape my future for being a doctor and a dentist, because, uhm well, my grades are good.

Juliana I would thank them for thinking of others and really just helping them out and I would thank everyone for just volunteering and just being there and just helping out others.

Contributing to the world.

Enrique When you start out here the adults really kind of treat you like an adult yourself and they encourage you to voice your ideas and I guess it doesn't really, I mean I guess this isn't really any new stuff.

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Enrique I'd say that it does give you confidence and it gives you experience in voicing out your ideas and you can use that in school and that definitely has, probably has, helped.

Enrique It's hard to say how much of it was directly the program but it I mean I'd say it was a lot of the program because it just, the character building and just you know, you get confidence and you are used to being in an environment where you need to put yourself out there.

Enrique I think that what I enjoy most about this program is that you get to know a lot of people that you wouldn't normally get to meet across the valley.

Enrique I didn't really participate in sports, so I didn't really meet people from other schools and this way I get to meet people from the entire valley and it through all ages. Even if you don't become great friends with everybody you get a feel for being around people of different ages and things like that.

Enrique So, when you go to school you are a little more confident to do things, maybe you could have done something but wouldn't have done it normally, and now you do.

Enrique I wouldn't say it increased my want to go to college because I already really kind of had it planned and uhm but I would say that what I have learned through leadership and seeing leaders and what they have to say it's taught me that I really just have to follow what I want and if that takes me college that is great but it doesn't have to lead me there.

Enrique I would thank them for exposing me to this side because I really don't think that I would have been as involved in the community. Especially, community service as I have been in my life because of them and I don't, I also don't think that snowboarding would be the same thing as it is now if I had just done it and learned it on my own because I wouldn't be teaching what I have learned to kids and I wouldn't have the connections that I have and I wouldn't have learned the things that I have learned about teaching.

William Absolutely, the 5 Core Values have helped me in school.

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William Courage has helped me to take more of those advanced classes. Compassion has made me like doing those, given me the compassion to do more of those, uh wisdom it's honestly just helping me to become more book smart, uh integrity, just having to get all of my stuff done on time, that is also something that falls under discipline.

William I have obviously taken harder classes to push myself, uh that way I can get more out of it, and SOS has made me want to do this.

William Before I was a Junior Sherpa I wouldn't dress like this, uh obviously they cannot see what I am dressed like but uh this has made me want to go out to college.

William I knew that I wanted to go to college before I joined SOS but I never knew what kind of college I wanted to go to.

William SOS has made me want to go to more of a college that has an outdoor campus, I am now looking at the campus of the University of Oregon.

William It has made me want to go there because I love being outside and it is an environment just like Colorado.

William I want to major in pediatrics, uh and I want to become a pediatric neurosurgeon.

William That's again me working with these kids, it's like if I can give back to a kid that hasn't had the opportunities that adults have had, then I feel like I have succeeded.