

Promoting Resiliency and Flourishing Through Collegiate Outdoor Orientation Programming

Eleanor Crofford, Abigail Rossiter, Eddie Hill, Erik Edwards, Mike Willett, & Chris Zajchowski



Introduction: Outdoor Orientation Programs

- College programs that use wilderness and adventure experiences (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1996).
- The first O.O.P. began at Dartmouth College in 1935
- By 2014, there were >191 O.O.P's at colleges and universities in the U.S. (Bell et al., 2014).
- Focus on group initiatives (e.g., Gass & Seaman, 2012; Priest & Gass, 2005).



Introduction



- Old Dominion University (ODU)
 - Located near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, in Norfolk, Virginia
 - 24,000 students
 - Urban campus
 - Minority serving institution (M.S.I.)
- ODU Outdoor Adventure Program
 - Established in 2006
 - O.D.U.'s O.O.P. program: First Ascent



First Ascent Goals



“The goal of the First Ascent Program is to engage every student as completely as possible and ensure that they feel like they are part of the university community.”

1. Ease the stress associated with the transition to college
2. Helping students to develop connections
3. Feel welcome in the university community
4. Understand more about university life
5. Develop confidence in themselves and their abilities



Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Resilience

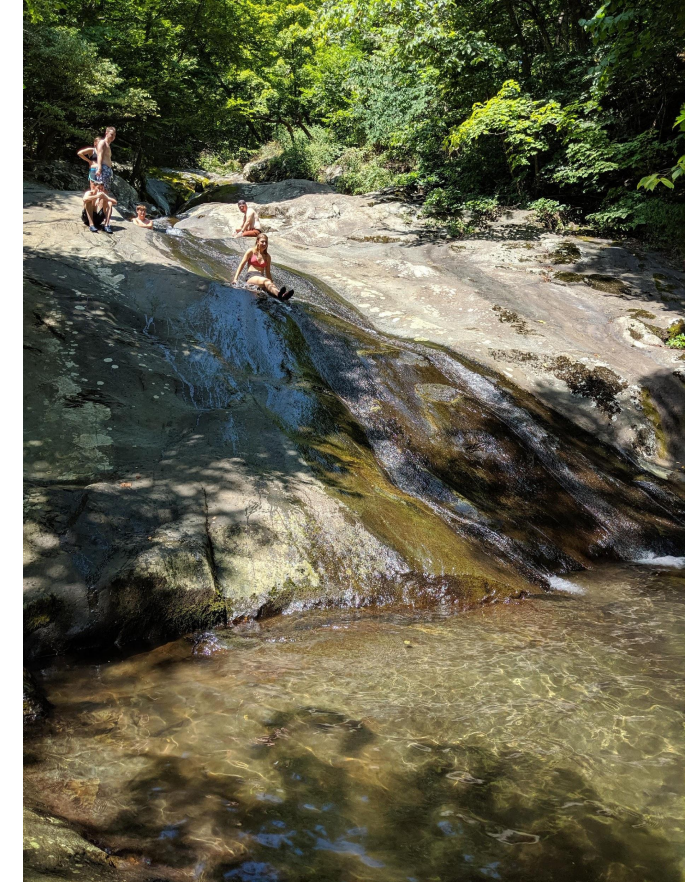
“Resilience, simply stated, is one’s ability to deal with and adapt to stress or adverse circumstances (Wagnild & Young, 1993). By definition then, one’s degree of resilience is developed, at least in part, when one is exposed to stressful situations” (Shellman & Hill, 2017).



Flourishing



“Not only are flourishing individuals free of mental illness, they also are filled with emotional vitality and they are functioning positively in the private and social realms of their lives. Far from being supermen or superwomen, flourishing individuals are truly living rather than merely existing” (Keyes, 2003).



Setting



- Four-day programs (Friday through Monday)
- Student led; faculty mentor
- Two program types
 - Backpacking and climbing trip in Shenandoah National Park, VA
 - Surfing and biking trip to Ocracoke Island, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, NC



Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Methods

- Pre-trip, post-trip, and follow-up surveys
- 2017 & 2019 (6 trips; 27 participants)
- Mixed Methods approach
 - Quantitative analysis: Paired t -test
 - Qualitative analysis: Thematic analysis



Research Questions

1. Does participation in First Ascent increase participants' perceived level of resilience?
2. Does participation in First Ascent increase participants' perceived level of flourishing?
3. How are the First Ascent goals being met?



Study participants for 2017 and 2019



- Sample: $n = 27$
- Gender:
 - Males: 21
 - Females: 6
- Age: 18-39
 - Average = 19



- Race:
 - White/Caucasian: 22
 - Black or African American: 2
 - Hispanic/Latino: 2
 - Asian/Pacific Islander: 1
- Marital Status:
 - 100% Single
- Trip Type:
 - Surfing: 17 attendees
 - Climbing: 10 attendees

Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Instrumentation- Resiliency

- Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008)
- 6 items; 5-point Likert-scale
- Overall measure of resilience
- Cronbach's alpha .90
- *"I usually come through difficult times with little trouble."*



Instrumentation- Flourishing

- Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF, Keyes, 2009).
- 14-items, 6-point Likert scale: never to everyday.
- Overall measure of flourishing
- Cronbach's alpha .98
- *“How often in the past week did you feel that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it.”*



Results: Does participation in First Ascent increase perceived level of flourishing and/or resilience?

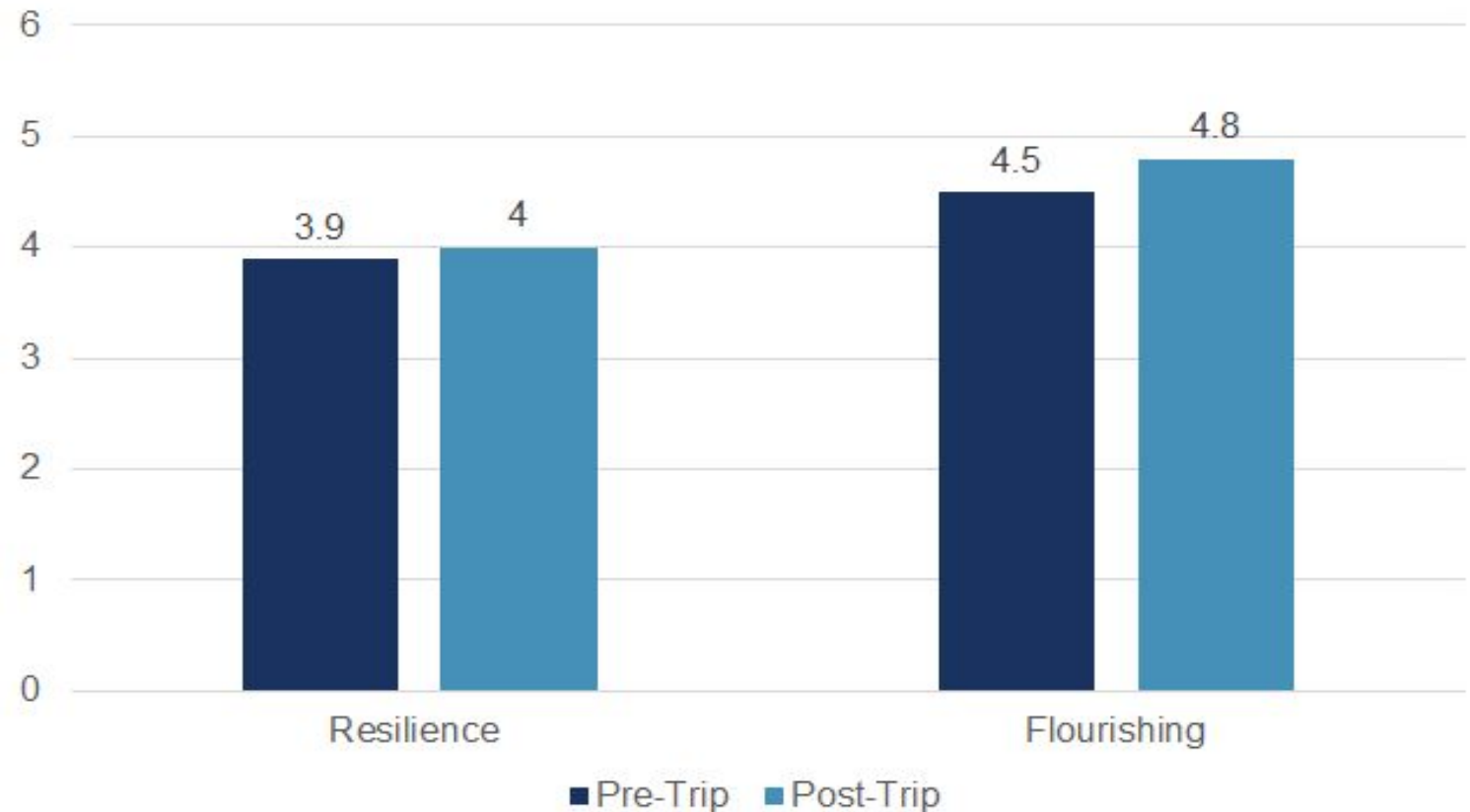


Flourishing

- $t(27) = 4.653$ $p = .01$
- Cronbach's alpha = .98

Resiliency

- $t(27) = 1.923$ $p = .06$
- Cronbach's alpha = .90



Introduction

Literature

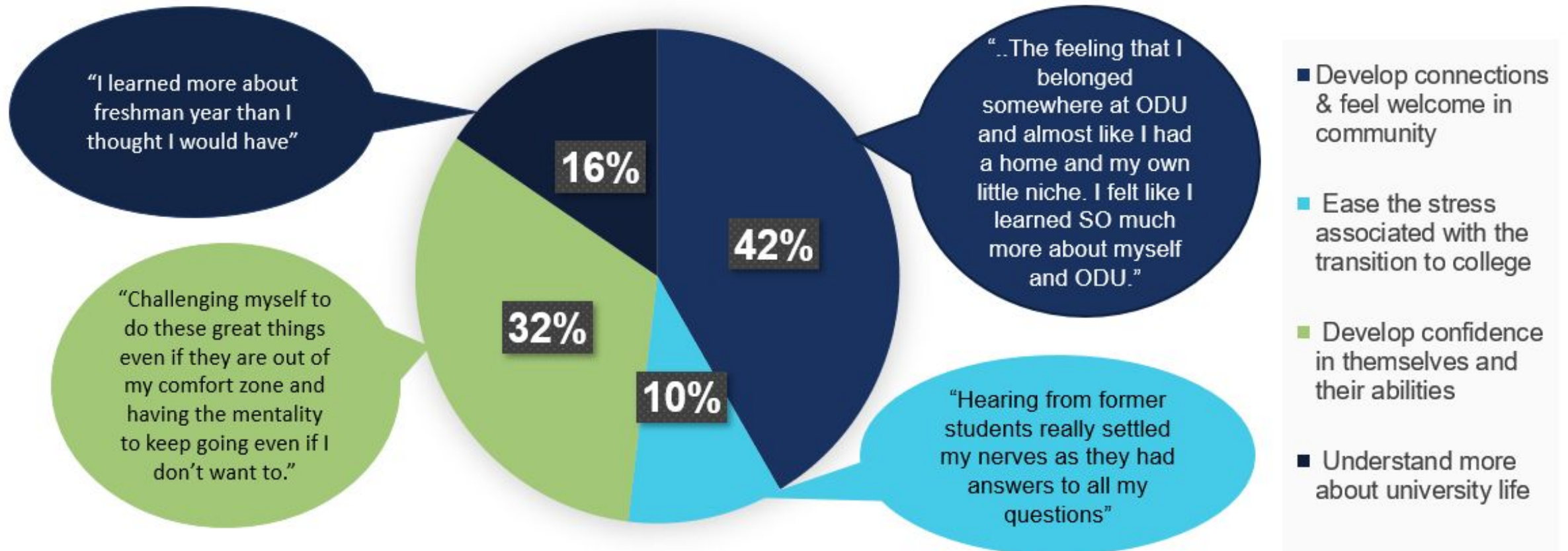
Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Qualitative Data: Post Trip Surveys



Discussion, Recommendations and Implications



- Results of Flourishing and Resilience
- Consistent with previous work in less time (Shellman & Hill, 2017)
- More responses in follow-up data
- Change data collection time intervals
- Limitations
 - Small sample size
 - Limited follow-up data



Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Discussion, Recommendations and Implications



- Combination of First Ascent goals
- Identification of OOP as High Impact Practices as defined by the AAC&U
 - First year seminars and experiences
 - Learning communities
 - Service learning
 - Undergraduate research
 - ePortfolio
- Personal testimony



Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Thank you Co-Authors!



Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?

Questions or Thoughts?



Eleanor Crofford

ecrof002@odu.edu

Old Dominion
University



Abby Rossiter

aross006@odu.edu

Old Dominion
University



Introduction

Literature

Methods

Results

Discussion

Questions?