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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF APPLIED ANCESTRY
ON AT-RISK YOUTH IN A WILDERNESS THERAPY PROGRAM
SETTING

by

Elisa Rancie

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Recreation Management and Youth Leadership

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Elisa Rancie in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

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SETTING

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Master of Science

The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the Applied Ancestry program meets its objectives of assisting at-risk youth with regard to character development. The sample consisted of 40 youth (12-17 yrs) enrolled in the Anasazi Foundation Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare program. These teens were randomly assigned to either the control (n = 22) or treatment (n = 18) group. To measure the impact of Applied Ancestry on character development the VIA Signature Strengths Survey, developed by the VIA Institute, was used. A pre-post test comparison found no difference between the two groups, however the overall negative changes in survey scores for the entire sample (n = 40) were found to be statistically significant. The negative change in scores was attributed, in large part, to participants' self-concept at the time they took the survey with lack of humility being a key factor in pre test scores.

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This project has been an eye-opener in many ways. Not only has it opened my eyes to, and my appreciation of, the wonderful nature of youth it has also helped in my own self-discovery – a process I hope to continue throughout my lifetime.

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Running head: APPLIED ANCESTRY AND WILDERNESS THERAPY

An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Applied Ancestry on At-Risk Youth in a
Wilderness Therapy Program Setting

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the Applied Ancestry program meets its objectives of assisting at-risk youth with regard to character development. The sample consisted of 40 youth (12-17 yrs) enrolled in the Anasazi Foundation Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare program. These teens were randomly assigned to either the control (n = 22) or treatment (n = 18) group. To measure the impact of Applied Ancestry on character development the VIA Signature Strengths Survey, developed by the VIA Institute, was used. A pre-post test comparison found no difference between the two groups, however the overall negative changes in survey scores for the entire sample (N = 40) were found to be statistically significant. The negative change in scores was attributed, in large part, to participants' self-concept at the time they took the survey, with lack of humility being a key factor in pre test scores.

Introduction

The practice of passing on ancestral information from generation to generation, such as lineage, stories, and traditions, has occurred throughout history, starting long before the beginning of written history. In recent times, the practice seems to have declined in its popularity, perhaps due to increasing population densities and individuals leading increasingly separate lives (Bauman, 2001; Bender, 1993). It retains its value, however, and modern technology has vastly improved accessibility to genealogical information for those seeking it.

Inspired by the increase of accessibility to ancestral information, the National Heritage Foundation (NHF) has developed the concept known as “Applied Ancestry.” This concept utilizes family history information to aid in the development of life skills through activities that enable the individual to apply what they learn about their ancestors to themselves (NHF, 2002). An exploratory study conducted by NHF, in conjunction with Brigham Young University (BYU), indicates that the Applied Ancestry program is a valuable tool for helping at-risk youth evaluate and manage their lives (Rancie, 2004). The study also indicates that the program may facilitate character development, which Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest to be one way in which the development of youth can be measured. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether the Applied Ancestry program meets its objectives of assisting at-risk youth with regard to character development.

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Literature Review

Family History/Genealogy

Whether realized or not, all people are connected as much to their past as they are to their future (McGoldrick, 1995; Stratton, 1988; Vandagriff, 1993). Anecdotal evidence abounds that demonstrates the benefits of learning about one's ancestors. The suggested benefits include understanding one's family and facilitating emotional and psychological healing (Grosskopf, 1999), increasing family connectedness (McGoldrick, 1995; Taylor, 2002) and generational interconnectedness (Grosskopf, 1999; Bahr & Bahr, 1996), developing a sense of identity (McGoldrick, 1995; Taylor, 2002) and self-knowledge (Bouvard, 1998; Grosskopf, 1999; Hawkins & Doxey, 2001), and providing direction for the future (McGoldrick, 1995).

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of learning about one's ancestors is the self-understanding that comes from it. Grosskopf (1999), a therapist who effectively utilizes his clients' family history as an integral part of their therapy, states, "Even small shards of family history can provoke understanding" (p. xi). He also stated:

We should find out the long version of our parents' and grandparents' stories.

Those stories provide a framework of history that defines who we are and what we perceive. Knowing the truth of who we are and where we came from can change us, alter how we see the world, and bring us closer to ourselves (p. 230).

To further emphasize the importance of understanding one's family McGoldrick stated that "The more fully you relate to each parent's life, the more you will understand

– and perhaps sympathize with – their influence on you” (p. 72). Bouvard (1998) talks of the importance of recognizing both world and family history. She posits:

In our highly mobile and fragmented society, the present bears down on our consciousness, leaving little room for either world history or our own family histories. We are made of both, however, and when we ignore them, we lose important perspectives and paths to self-knowledge (p. xv).

Despite the abundance of anecdotal evidence, as yet there exists little empirical research regarding the benefits of learning one’s family history or the advantage to be gained from applying ancestral knowledge to self. To date only one study has been conducted that provides empirical support for what is intuitively understood to be true. The study, titled “Unplugged,” was conducted by the NHF and BYU professors and students in the “Man from Snowy River Country” of south-east Australia in November, 2002 (Rancie, 2004).

The National Heritage Foundation, a non-profit organization created in 1994 “to act as a catalyst in the development of aspects of family history not being undertaken by governments, institutions or by private enterprise” (P. R. Rancie, personal communication, received March 18, 2004), has developed a program called Applied Ancestry, of which Unplugged was the first study. The mission of Applied Ancestry is to “develop family history as a powerful agent of change and growth for Individuals-Families-and Communities” (NHF, 2004, ¶1) and “proposes that intimate knowledge of one’s ancestors provides all individuals, and especially at-risk youth, with better tools for evaluating and managing their own lives” (¶3).

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Based on this concept, the purpose of the Unplugged study was to help at-risk youth develop a greater sense of control and efficacy in their lives by looking to the past and discovering what their ancestors accomplished and how they overcame their challenges, to give the youth tools with which to shape their future. Although most participants required some assistance in applying what they learned to themselves, results from this study indicate that not only is family history important to the participants it also facilitates the development of the participants' sense of self-efficacy (Rancie, 2004). Interviews with participants conducted one year after the program reveal that most of the participants are more in control of their lives, as demonstrated by their reported involvement in school and work. Regarding the program, one participant commented, "To be successful in life I think you need both motivation and focus. For me the journey gave me motivation and the family history gave me focus" (C. Haydon, personal communication received March 10, 2004). This exploratory study indicates that the lives of at-risk youth can be positively influenced by family history knowledge. However, there is more that needs to be done in determining how, and to what extent, family history information can help adolescents make the transition to adulthood.

Adolescent Development and Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Erickson (1997) describes adolescence as a stage of "identity crisis". Although recent research has moved away from the study of normative development (such as was studied by the likes of Erikson and Piaget) to the study of atypical, or deviant, behavior (Steinberg & Morris, 2001), both approaches further our understanding of youth development.

Regardless of the approach, studies agree that adolescence is a time where youth challenge boundaries (Canary & Dainton, 2003), explore new ideas (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993), renegotiate their relationship with their parents (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Noller & Callan, 1991; Canary & Dainton, 2003), and otherwise explore who they are (Erikson, 1997; Piaget, 1966). This exploration is a period of refinement for the individual and can define the future they will have.

As adolescents seek to develop autonomy and an individual identity they will decrease the time they spend with their family in favor of spending more time with their peers (Noller, Feeney, & Peterson, 2001). Research suggests that when there is a balance between adolescent autonomy and parent authority the relationship is healthy and the adolescent experiences healthy development as a result (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000; Noller, 1995). It is not uncommon, however, for conflicts to arise, particularly between adolescents and their parents, and often occurring as a result of an imbalance of adolescent autonomy and parent authority. Causes of this conflict may include the failure on the parent(s)' part to acknowledge the changing needs of the adolescent, decisions made by the adolescent may not be congruent with the wishes or expectations of parent(s), or adolescents are disillusioned regarding their parent(s)' infallibility (Noller & Callan, 1991). Yet, even with this progressive distancing, and perhaps disillusionment, familial ties still have a guiding influence in the adolescent's life (Xu, 2002).

Research suggests that the strength of the relationship an adolescent has with their family, particularly with their parents, has an influential role in the adolescent's development. It has been suggested that the "deterioration of the parent-adolescent

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relationship often precedes at-risk behaviors” (Wells, 2001, p. 8). Conversely, research also indicates that cohesive parent-adolescent relationships which include effective communication and provide support, discipline, mentoring, and reinforcement help to reduce at-risk behavior (Ralph & Sanders, 2003; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Wells, 2001). That relationship has a direct impact on how well and how committed the adolescent will be in seeking and claiming an identity of their own (Waterman, 1993) and doing so in a socially acceptable manner (Xu, 2002).

Research further indicates that family is an important factor in adolescent development in general and of personal identity in particular. Even as adolescents spend more time with their peers, the family remains an influential factor in guiding behavior and facilitating adolescent development. Bouvard (1998) suggests that “self-knowledge is cultural and generational” (p. xv) and Kail and Wicks-Nelson (1993) cite research that indicates a positive correlation between ethnic identification and psychological and social functioning.

The development of a strong sense of personal identity is particularly beneficial for at-risk youth as it can help them find direction for their life and make the transition through the period of adolescence to become well-adjusted adults. This is supported by Newman and Murray (1983) who say that

Personal identity is like a blueprint for future commitments and life choices. It is a set of beliefs and goals about one’s relationship with family members, lovers and friends, one’s roles as worker, citizen and religious believer and one’s aspirations for achievement. (p. 294)

Individuals with a strong sense of personal identity are able to maintain a sense of who they are, regardless of what happens to them, and have direction in their lives because they understand their capabilities, character, feelings and motivations (Mish, 2003). Character is a significant part of that identity and Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest that character is one measurable way in which adolescents develop. The Unplugged study mentioned earlier also indicated that Applied Ancestry may have an impact on this aspect of youth development.

Character Development

It has been said that “Character...is what you are in the dark, when no one’s looking” (Kidder, 1998, p. 1). Aristotle defined character as “that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses and avoids” (PBS, n.d., ¶19). Character has also been defined as power (Booker T. Washington; PBS, n.d.) and destiny (Heraclitus; Lickona, 2004).

The development of character is a process that continues throughout life, however, it is during the adolescent stage in which an individual begins to recognize and define their character (Greer & Kohl, 1995). Greer & Kohl have said that “[t]o an important degree young people build their own characters and choose the kinds of people they become” (p. 3).

Character development is an important precursor to healthy functioning in society (Greer and Kohl, 1995). Those authors suggest that when “youngsters” are unable to “discover the rudiments of their characters even as they are molding them....all too often an extended disability to deal with personal problems and cold insensitivity to other

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people's lives follow" (p. 4). It has been further suggested that character development is "the cornerstone of youth development" (Kinnamon, 2003, ¶7) and "good character" has been defined as consistently living according to, and strongly identifying with, "a firm code of ethics and virtues" (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001, p. 35).

Although character has been a topic of philosophical discussion for centuries, emphasis on character education in schools and communities has increased sharply over the last decade (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001; Lickona, 2004; McElmeel, 2002). Lickona (2004) attributes the increased focus to the state of society and the need for change. He states, "The premise of the character education movement is that the disturbing behaviors that bombard us daily – violence, greed, corruption, incivility, drug abuse, sexual immorality, and a poor work ethic – have a common core: the absence of good character" (p. xxiii). The emphasis on character education in schools, and state legislature, lends credence to the view that character development in individuals is important for healthy functioning in society. The "New York law on Character - §801-a," states:

The regents shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizenship and character education. Such a component shall instruct students on the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and contributions to, the community. (Office of Institutional Research Character Development, n.d.).

In order to develop this good character it is necessary to know what traits and virtues constitute it.

Seligman (2002), a leader in the field of positive psychology, and his colleagues conducted a comprehensive study to identify the character traits (which they call virtues) which are ubiquitous across cultures. Their study included a search through over 600 books and manuscripts such as the Old Testament and Koran, and works of authors including Aristotle, Plato, and Benjamin Franklin to find the virtues that were common to all. The search revealed six virtues common to all the literature and cultures: Wisdom and knowledge; Courage, love and humanity; Justice; Temperance; and Spirituality and transcendence. The meanings, or paths to attainment, of each of these virtues varied and so the research team went a step further to define the paths to each of these virtues. The resulting list is made up of 24 strengths or “moral traits” (p. 134), the five most salient of these strengths for each individual being labeled Signature Strengths and may include any five of the following: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, bravery, industry/perseverance, authenticity, zest, intimacy, kindness, social intelligence, citizenship/teamwork, fairness, leadership, forgiveness/mercy, modesty/humility, prudence, self-control/self-regulation, awe/appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, playfulness, and spirituality (Seligman, 2002). The link between Seligman’s virtues and strengths is illustrated in Table 1.

The basis of Seligman’s theory is to focus on what is right, rather than what is wrong. He said, “Raising children...[is] far more than just fixing what [is] wrong with them. It [is] about identifying and amplifying their strengths and virtues, and helping

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them find the niche where they can live these positive traits to the fullest” (Seligman, 2002, p. 28). Helping children and youth in this way gives them tools to work with as they develop into adults as well as providing protection since “...a strength, fully grown, would be a buffer against...weaknesses and against the storms of life that...inevitably come....” (p. 28).

Research on character (and personality) has indicated that its development can have positive impacts on the lives of individuals not only in how they treat and interact with others (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001) but also in their long-term health and well-being (Friedman, et al., 1995). While it may be ultimately up to the individual to develop their character it has been shown that families, both immediate and extended, play an important role in facilitating that development. There are also programs available to help youth in the development of their character and self-discovery. Wilderness therapy programs are one of those resources that are available.

Wilderness Therapy

Programs directed at providing instruction and guidance for youth began emerging in the early part of the 20th century as industrialization and urbanization increased (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994). The emergence of youth programs stemmed from a growing need to provide activities and stimulation for a burgeoning urban youth population exhibiting anti-social behavior and developmental problems. Organizations were formed and challenge activities were developed, such as youth centers and adventure programs, to stimulate and invigorate the minds and imaginations of these youth. Over 600 wilderness experience programs have been identified in recent years

(Russell & Hendee, 2000). Categories of wilderness experience programs include “recreation, education, training and development, and therapy” (Russell & Hendee, 2000; see also Priest and Gass, 1998).

Definitions of such programs, until recent years, have been lacking. Terms such as wilderness therapy, outdoor adventure, challenge course, and wilderness experience programs have been used interchangeably (Russell, 2001). The term “therapy” as part of a wilderness experience program is also often used loosely to indicate the “therapeutic benefits” of a program, yet many of those therapy programs lack a clinical therapeutic framework (Russell, 2001). This has created some confusion and concern for parents and authorities who are seeking alternative therapeutic approaches to help at-risk youth in their families and communities (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Practitioners of wilderness therapy programs are also concerned about the confusion regarding the definition of wilderness therapy. Each author of the literature reviewed in this section makes a point of distinguishing between wilderness therapy and the broader concept of wilderness programs (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Russell, 1999, 2001; Russell & Hendee, 2000; Russell, Hendee, & Phillips-Miller, 1999). Davis-Berman & Berman (1994) state that “wilderness therapy is not taking troubled adolescents into the woods so that they will feel better,” rather, “[i]t involves the careful selection of potential candidates based on a clinical assessment and the creation of an individual treatment plan for each participant” (p. 13).

Consensus on the definition of wilderness therapy became important in a practical sense with the introduction of industry trade associations (i.e., Outdoor Behavioral

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Healthcare Industry Council (OBHIC)), state licensing and national accreditations (i.e., Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)), and “the establishment of consistent measures and monitoring procedures for baseline statistics to be used as indicators of best practices” (Russell, 2001, p. 76). Along with a common definition of wilderness therapy, the establishment of these regulatory organizations and licensing/accreditation procedures proved beneficial for families who were previously unable to afford the treatment as it meant that wilderness therapy programs would be recognized by insurance companies. VisionQuest and the Anasazi Foundation (the organization utilized in this study) were among the first organizations in the Utah/Arizona area to make use of insurance options, thus making their programs more accessible (Russell, 2001).

The definition of wilderness therapy, given by Davis-Berman and Berman (1994) above, is similar to that of Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) programs which incorporate “elements of wilderness therapy to focus client behavioral assessment and intervention” (Russell and Hendee, 2000, p. 8). Early OBH programs have their roots in the late 1960s, but almost 50 percent of the OBH programs operating today have sprung up since 1980, including the Anasazi Foundation (Russell & Hendee, 2000). The term outdoor behavioral healthcare is used to describe “programs in which adolescent participants are placed in the program by parents or custodial authorities concerned for their well-being” (p. 8). The programs are “specifically aimed at changing destructive, dysfunctional or problem behaviors in clients through clinically supervised therapy, therapeutic activities, and an educational program in outdoor settings” (p. 9).

The evolution of OBH programs has been attributed to seven influences¹ and these programs are categorized by type² and model³ (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Research

¹ Influences on OBH program evolution: early therapeutic camping approaches (i.e. Camp Ahmek, established in 1929); wilderness challenge and rites-of-passage models (i.e. Outward Bound, founded in England and imported to the U.S. in 1969); primitive skill programs (i.e. desert survival programs, such as those run by Larry Dean Olson and Doug Nelson, begun in the 1960s); adjudicated programs (i.e. Wilderness Quest, operated by Larry Wells, as an alternative to incarceration); professionalism (i.e. Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group (TAPG) and Association of Experiential Education (AEE) formed by professionals in the fields of mental health, corrections, education and others); recognition by insurance companies and state agencies (Olsen and Sanchez, founders of Anasazi Foundation, were instrumental in the recognition of OBH by insurance companies); and scholarly influences (i.e. Kaplan and Kaplan, Davis-Berman and Berman, Bandoroff and Scherer, and Russell and Hendee)

² *Private*: Private placement OBH programs have earlier beginnings, starting in the late 1960s and participants are enrolled in the program by their parents or a custodial authority. Family involvement in the therapeutic process is an integral part of the success of OBH. (Russell & Hendee, 2000).

Adjudicated: Adjudicated programs made their first appearance in the 1970s and are conducted by organizations such as VisionQuest and Alternative Youth Adventures. Participants are ordered to go into the programs by judges as an alternative to incarceration. The approach of these programs is usually direct and goal-oriented. (Russell & Hendee, 2000).

³ OBH models: *Contained* expedition programs are those programs in which leaders and clients remain together in the wilderness for most of the program, which usually lasts about four weeks; *Continuous flow* expedition programs are those where most of the treatment is conducted in the wilderness but clients, leaders and therapists flow in and out. Clients stay in the wilderness for six to eight weeks and leaders and therapists rotate in and out, usually on an eight day on, six day off basis; *Base camp* expedition programs incorporate base camp activities with therapeutic camping practices, can last three to eight weeks

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of OBH programs have indicated that participant outcomes include increased self-concept, improved social skills, decreased substance abuse and reduced recidivism (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Outcomes also include the acquisition of knowledge and skills, greater awareness of personal and interpersonal behavior, and strengthened family relations. However, there is a concern in the OBH industry that there has not been enough research regarding program outcomes published in peer reviewed journals (Russell & Hendee, 2000). In their comprehensive evaluation of OBH, Russell and Hendee indicate that less than 75% of OBH programs conduct internal evaluations of their programs and less than 10% use external evaluation and standards. Clearly research into the effectiveness of OBH (and wilderness therapy) programs is needed.

This study will add to that body of knowledge. The OBH program run by the Anasazi Foundation was chosen first and foremost for its tradition of family involvement as well as its record for low recidivism (Russell & Hendee, 2000). It was also chosen for the close contact participants have with therapists and other mentors. Findings from the initial Applied Ancestry study indicate that participants may require assistance to apply the information they receive to themselves (Rancie, 2004), and it is expected that the

or more and involve setting up a base camp in a natural environment as well as two to three week expeditions. Participants return to the base camp following their expedition to process their experience and prepare to return home; and, *Residential* expedition programs, such as recovery centers, often last up to 14 months and utilize “wilderness and outdoor treatment as a tool to augment other services” (Russell & Hendee, 2000, p. 11).

weekly sessions with therapists and the constant availability of mentors will facilitate participants' ability to gain insights and understand the content of their families' stories.

Summary and Hypothesis

Even though adolescence is a stage where individuals seek separation from their family, the research reviewed suggests that the family continues to have significant influence on adolescent development. The research already reviewed here also suggests that knowledge of one's family history has therapeutic implications, though, as yet, the research does not fully capture the impact family history knowledge can have on the lives of at-risk youth. The development of character has also been shown to be an important element of youth development. The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether the Applied Ancestry program meets its objectives of assisting at-risk youth with regard to character development. With that in mind, the following hypothesis was formed: Adding Applied Ancestry to an existing extended outdoor wilderness therapy program will enhance the participants' signature strengths (Seligman, 2002) more so ($p < .05$) than the wilderness therapy program alone.

Methods

Participants and Setting

Participants for the study were selected from Anasazi Foundation's OBH "Young Walker" program and were aged 12 to 17 years. Those accepted into the Anasazi program are "physically and emotionally able to handle the rigors of the trail" and their parents are willing to actively participate in the therapeutic process (Anasazi, 2004c, ¶1).

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Individuals in the program will have exhibited one or more of the following behaviors: conflict with family; depression; suicide ideation; substance abuse; oppositional behavior; school failure; eating disorders; and/or ADD and ADHD (Anasazi, 2004c).

Set in the desert and high mountains of Arizona, this program is a continuous flow wilderness therapy program designed to give individuals the opportunity to “effect a change of heart” through a “primitive living experience” (Anasazi, 2004b, ¶1).

Over the period between June 2004 and August 2005, 40 individuals (male = 22; female = 18) participated in the study. The individuals were randomly assigned to either the treatment (n = 18) or control (n = 22) group. Initially, it was expected that each group would include 30 participants. However, due to the nature of Anasazi’s intake schedule and the voluntary status of the participants, the recruitment of participants was a slow process. To meet the target group size would have taken much more time than the Anasazi Foundation was able to give, due to the need to do studies of their own.

Study Design

The study was a quasi-experimental design and all participants were volunteers, free to exit the study at any time. No participant chose to leave the study and only one left due to extenuating circumstances beyond their control. Parents of participants were informed of the purpose and methods of the study. Those that consented to have their child involved in the Applied Ancestry program were asked to supply family history information (family tree, stories, etc.). For those families who had a limited amount of family history research available, family historians collected information that was then given to the participant. Participants who did not receive family history information

during their time at Anasazi were counted in the control group. Those who did receive family history information were counted in the treatment group.

Control: Anasazi Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program. The therapeutic program that all participants were part of (regardless of whether they were in the control or treatment group of the study) was the Anasazi Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program. This program is implemented in the “Anasazi Way”. That is, “no confrontive therapy, manipulation, or behavioral modification techniques are employed” (Anasazi, 2004d, ¶3). Instead, nature is the teacher and trail guides and therapists “patiently wait for opportunities to teach....skills and the principles of unconditional love, agency, repentance, forgiveness, and restitution” (Anasazi, 2004a, ¶3).

For a minimum of 42 days, Young Walkers (participants) live primitively in the wilderness, often hiking up to 10 miles in a day. They learn to cook their own food, make shelters, build fires without matches, and acquire the skills and use the “technologies of the ‘ancient ones’” (Anasazi, 2004a, ¶1). The experience affords Young Walkers the opportunity “to ponder their lives, take responsibility for past choices and prepare to begin anew” (¶2). This process is facilitated by their therapist, with whom they meet each week.

Treatment: Applied Ancestry program. The Applied Ancestry program was facilitated by the participants’ counselor (Shadow). The Shadow was familiar with the objectives of the study and had received training in Applied Ancestry from the

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researcher, including reading the Applied Ancestry Program Guide and Applied Ancestry Teacher's Guide (NHF, 2002), prior to the commencement of the study.

The primary treatment for this study came in the form of family stories and ancestral information, which participants received either directly from their parents or through their Shadow. Several tools were utilized to help participants process the ancestral information they received. One of these tools was letters from parents. Along with sending in ancestral information, parents were also encouraged to write letters to their child. These letters were a way for the parents to share with their child their own feelings and thoughts about their family history and what it means to them, thereby not only opening a line of communication with their child, but also providing a guide for their child to follow as they processed the ancestral information they received.

Another important tool available to participants in the study was a journal. Journals were used as an aid in the learning and retention process and participants were expected to record their experiences and thoughts in these journals on a regular basis, including information such as detailed descriptions of events that occurred, thoughts and feelings about those events, and insights into their life. The NHF study, conducted in Australia, indicated that participants were more likely to experience lasting changes when they were able to remember what occurred during the program (Rancie, 2004) and the process of reflection, Stremba (1989) suggests, is a powerful tool in creating an environment for increasing self-awareness, thereby developing personal identity for participants in outdoor adventure programs. The journal "will also become an invaluable historical document for their posterity" (NHF, 2002, p. 8).

Along with the letters and journals, various Applied Ancestry program activities were also used to facilitate participants' application of family stories and ancestral information to themselves. These activities include: reading the stories of ancestors; reflecting on the values of ancestors; reflecting on specific incidents in the lives of ancestors; completing a project telling or reenacting the life of an ancestor; making a presentation that shares the stories of an ancestor and the learning gained from it; and, giving a performance that shares the stories of an ancestor and the learning gained from it (NHF, 2002). Each of these activities (or an adaptation of them) provides an opportunity for participants to absorb the information available to them and connect with their ancestors, rather than simply knowing who they are. During the last three days, when the participants' parent(s) joined them on their "walking" (time at Anasazi), participants were encouraged to discuss the information they learned about their ancestors with their parent(s).

Test Instruments

The VIA Signature Strengths Survey was utilized to measure the dependent variable, character development. Under the direction of Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson, the Values-In-Action (VIA) Institute has developed this questionnaire to indicate individuals' salient character strengths. The 24 strengths measured in the questionnaire (see Table 1) are ubiquitous across culture and include bravery, kindness, and creativity, and are listed under virtues such as wisdom and knowledge, courage, and temperance (Seligman, 2002). Signature Strengths are the five salient strengths an individual possesses and are defined as those "strengths of character

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that a person self-consciously owns, celebrates, and...exercises every day..." (p. 160).

Tests of the instrument have been conducted to test its validity and reliability. The survey, and each subscale, has an $\alpha > .70$. Test-retest correlations over a period of four months resulted in α greater than .70. Over 150,000 adults have completed the survey. A youth survey is being developed but has not, as yet, been validated (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The questionnaire format used in this study was slightly different than that available online at www.authentichappiness.com. A digital copy of the questionnaire was obtained from Petersen and Seligman (C. Peterson, personal communication received April 13, 2004) which was then put online as a continuous document rather than separate pages (as it appears on the official website). This was done to reduce the time needed to take the survey from 45 minutes to approximately 20 minutes. Questionnaires were identified by a three digit code which was given to the participant at the time they completed the survey. The questionnaire used in the study was set up so that a participant could not submit the survey without completing every question required. If one or more questions were missed a prompter would ask the participant to answer the questions before the survey would be accepted for submission. The survey response was then automatically sent directly to the researcher.

The questionnaire included 240 statements – 10 statements per character strength, scattered throughout the survey (see online survey for sample statements). Participants chose how well the statements describe them by selecting one of the following responses: Very Much Like Me; Like Me; Neutral; Unlike Me; Very Much Unlike Me. In the

reports sent to the researcher the responses were scored numerically for analysis (5, 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively). Each response score was then added to obtain a total score for each trait. The range of scores possible for each strength was 10 – 50.

Data Collection Procedures

Pre and post tests were administered to provide quantitative results regarding the effect of the program on character development, as measured by the VIA Signature Strengths Survey (Seligman, 2002). On the first day of the program the pre-tests were administered to all participants (both control and treatment groups). Once the participants had exited the program (no less than six weeks later) post-tests were then administered.

Treatment of the Data

The identity of each participant and their family, test results, and ancestral information was known only to the researcher. The participants' Shadow was familiar with pertinent facts about the individual, their family and ancestral information so far as was necessary to effectively implement the treatment and provide intervention therapy. Family historians were given pertinent information about the individuals and their families in order to collect ancestral information. None of the information gained about individuals' ancestry was kept by the researcher, Shadows, or family historians. All the information collected was given to the individual at the conclusion of the program.

Results

Once submitted by the participant, the raw data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS, a computer-based statistical analysis program. Participants' pre and post tests were paired and the character trait scores were calculated. Pre and post scores for each trait were then analyzed to determine the overall change for each individual. To test the hypothesis regarding the impact of Applied Ancestry on participants an independent samples *t*-test of the means of the average changes was used to compare the treatment group ($n = 18$) with the control group ($n = 22$). This test revealed no significant difference between the groups, failing to support the hypothesis.

Although the results failed to support the hypothesis an initial review of the data as a whole revealed an unforeseen outcome of practical significance. Unexpectedly all mean scores for each character trait decreased in the post test. To determine whether this change was statistically significant the pre and post scores were analyzed using a paired samples *t*-test. It was determined that the difference of the mean scores was statistically significant for 21 of the 24 character traits. See Table 2 for results for all character strengths. Those character traits which did not show a statistically significant difference between mean scores were Personal Intelligence, Kindness/Generosity, and Humor/Playfulness. The remaining traits showed a statistically significant difference with p value $\leq .020$ and most with p value = .000. The trait which showed the largest decrease was Spirituality (-6.98 , p value = .000). The smallest decrease was seen in the trait of Personal Intelligence (-1.00 , p value = .258). The smallest significant decrease was for Valor (-1.95 , p value = .020).

Discussion

Clearly, the results failed to support the hypothesis that participants involved in the Applied Ancestry program would increase in their character scores more so than participants who were solely part of the Anasazi program. Unexpectedly, the results actually show, on average, a decrease in character trait scores for both groups. According to the results, not only did the treatment group not increase in character strengths but both groups apparently digressed in their character development. These results beg the question: What happened?

One could easily take this data at face value and say simply that the treatment – the Applied Ancestry program – did not work, that it is not valid. However the same must then be said of the program used by Anasazi. Other evidence however, contradicts this theory. First, although the previous study on the Applied Ancestry program did not focus on character development, results did show a general increase in participants' ability to take responsibility for their future, some even making future plans based on what they learned about themselves in the program (Rancie, 2004). Second, OBH programs are designed with the healthy development of participants in mind. Research of OBH programs, conducted by Russell and Hendee (2000), showed that outcomes of such programs include: development of self-concept, knowledge and skills acquired, enhanced awareness of personal and interpersonal behavior, and strengthened family relations. Each of these outcomes would reasonably strengthen character rather than detract from it.

If the reason for the general drop in character strength scores is not found in the programs implemented, perhaps it is in the test instrument. Peterson & Seligman (2004)

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have not used the instrument as a pre/post test measurement. As far as they were aware at the publication of their book no person had taken the test twice so, although the VIA Signature Strengths Survey has been shown to be a valid instrument as a one-time test, it may not be as reliable as a pre/post measurement.

There is also the consideration that, since the test instrument was designed for adults, it is possible that the questions were beyond the cognitive power of the participants. This should have had little effect, however, since there was an adult on hand to assist the participants in interpreting the questions if/when necessary. Moreover, participant inability to understand the questions does not explain why, on average, their post scores dropped. To further nullify this argument the greatest increase between pre and post scores was achieved by a 12-year-old while the greatest decrease was recorded by a 16-year-old. It may be the case that the reason for the decrease in scores can be partially explained by the test instrument. However, the most profound explanation may be found in an examination of the participants themselves.

Since the test instrument is self-reported, it is most likely that the results were affected by the way the participants viewed themselves at the time they took the tests – a variable that is hard to isolate and difficult to measure. This self-concept may have affected the pre-scores, post-scores, or both. In consideration of what the participants experience as a result of the Anasazi program, it is possible that pride (or lack of humility) may have prompted participants to rate themselves higher in the pre-tests, or that they were more realistic about (or even under-valuated) themselves in the post-tests.

In his book, *Character Matters*, Lickona (2004) includes the following regarding humility:

Without humility...we keep all our defects; they are only crusted over with pride, which conceals them from ourselves. Humility enables us to take responsibility for our faults and failings (rather than blaming someone else), apologize for them, and seek to make amends. (p.11)

When the participants first arrived at Anasazi's head office most did not want to be there. Many could not understand why they were. It could be said that many, if not most of them, were unaware, to a practical degree, of their faults and failings. Six weeks later, back at the head office, there was a change evident in the participants. They showed greater love and respect for their parents and others and they seemed more comfortable with themselves. It may be said that they now recognized, at least in part, where they needed to improve to achieve a more harmonious relationship with their parents, family, and others, as well as with themselves.

While they were out in the wilderness, participants had plenty of time for introspection – to think about themselves, their families, their role in that family, and any changes they might like to make in the future. This time of self-observation would almost certainly have affected how participants saw themselves, and therefore, how they would rate themselves on a character survey.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the hypothesis of this study was not supported, the results given prompt many questions that future studies may be able to answer. One question is how does the

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availability of family history through one's life influence an individual's development, especially during adolescence? This question may be answered by a study that controls for the amount of family history available to participants through their life, such as a cross-sectional study between family history knowledge and deviant behavior. Studies that focus on other variables, such as family functioning and family and personal identity, may also help to answer that question.

A future study may also benefit from the use of a different type of organization. In this study no significant difference was found between the groups. One explanation for this may be the emphasis placed on family in the Anasazi program. If participants were selected from another organization, such as a youth group, the results may be more descriptive of the influence the Applied Ancestry program can have on its participants as there would be less similarity between the Applied Ancestry program and the programs offered by the youth group.

Also, it may be more beneficial to have participants do their own family history research. In this study parents were asked to supply the stories, based on what they had available and what they thought may be of most interest and use to their children. However, rather than simply being handed stories of their ancestors it may be of more value to the individuals to do the search themselves, focusing on ancestors whose lives intrigue them the most.

Many of these suggestions have already been incorporated into the study design of the next Applied Ancestry program study. That study, which will measure change in family and personal identity, is being conducted through an inner-city shelter in the heart

of Johannesburg, South Africa. Between September and December 2005, the participants (youth aged 12 to 20 years) will be actively involved in their own family history research, primarily by interviewing family members. At the end of this research period the participants will have an opportunity to create a performance or make a presentation, to share with their family and others what they have discovered and how it has affected their life. It is expected that participant involvement in the family research process will help participants value the information they collect, more so than if it was simply handed to them. It is also expected that the process will stimulate the participants to ponder on what they are discovering, as they are discovering it, and be curious enough to actively guide their own family research. Such involvement is anticipated to increase participant's sense of family and personal identity as they come to know and better understand their family and its history. Subsequent studies will control for prior ancestral knowledge, as suggested above, to more fully understand the influence of such knowledge in an individual's development.

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Table 1

Strengths and Virtues

Virtue	Strengths
Wisdom and Knowledge	Curiosity/Interest in the world Love of Learning Judgment/Critical Thinking/Open-Mindedness Ingenuity/Originality/Practical Intelligence/Street Smarts Social Intelligences/Personal Intelligence/Emotional Intelligence Perspective
Courage	Valor and Bravery Perseverance/Industry/Diligence Integrity/Genuineness/Honesty
Humanity and Love	Kindness and Generosity Loving and Allowing Oneself to Be Loved
Justice	Citizenship/Duty/Teamwork/Loyalty Fairness and Equity Leadership
Temperance	Self-Control Prudence/Discretion/Caution Humility and Modesty
Transcendence	Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence Gratitude Hope/Optimism/Future-Mindedness Spirituality/Sense of Purpose/Faith/Religiousness Forgiveness and Mercy Playfulness and Humor Zest/Passion/Enthusiasm

(Seligman, 2002)

Table 2

Paired Samples t-test of all participants (N = 40)

Strength	Mean Scores			<i>p</i>
	Pre	Post	Difference	
Curiosity	22.35	19.83	-2.52	.004
Love of Learning	29.80	24.65	-5.15	.000
Judgment	25.85	21.78	-4.07	.000
Originality	22.00	19.30	-2.70	.003
Personal Intelligence**	20.95	19.95	-1.00	.258
Perspective	23.48	20.30	-3.18	.000
Valor***	21.53	19.58	-1.95	.020
Industry/Perseverance	25.70	22.05	-3.65	.000
Integrity/Honesty	23.17	19.87	-3.30	.000
Kindness/Generosity	20.45	19.13	-1.32	.123
Capacity for Love	21.23	19.13	-2.10	.005
Citizenship/Teamwork	23.70	20.65	-3.05	.000
Equity/Fairness	23.78	20.42	-3.36	.000
Leadership	23.10	20.03	-3.07	.000
Self-regulation	27.45	24.05	-3.40	.000
Prudence	32.32	26.23	-6.09	.000
Appreciation of Beauty	26.15	21.33	-4.82	.000
Gratitude	25.55	20.03	-5.52	.000
Hope/Optimism	25.80	20.87	-4.93	.000
Spirituality*	28.78	21.80	-6.98	.000
Modesty/Humility	28.03	25.17	-2.86	.000
Humor/Playfulness	19.65	17.95	-1.70	.060
Zest/Enthusiasm	24.03	19.25	-4.78	.000
Forgiveness	26.28	21.45	-4.83	.000

* largest decrease

** smallest decrease

*** smallest significant decrease

Appendix A

Prospectus

Chapter 1

Introduction

Ancestry and heritage have been important to people since the beginning of oral history. In recent times, information regarding one's ancestry is increasingly accessible to even the lay person through books and websites. Inspired by this increase of accessibility, the National Heritage Foundation (NHF) has developed the concept known as "Applied Ancestry." This concept utilizes family history knowledge to aid in the development of life skills through activities that enable the individual to apply what they learn about their ancestry to themselves. An exploratory study conducted by NHF, in conjunction with Brigham Young University (BYU), indicated that the Applied Ancestry program is a valuable tool for helping at-risk youth evaluate and manage their lives (Rancie, 2004). This study also indicated that the program may facilitate character development, which Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest to be one way in which the development of youth can be measured. The need for further investigation into how Applied Ancestry may facilitate character development is the basis for the proposed study.

Statement of the Problem

The proposed study is concerned with answering the question: Does adding "Applied Ancestry" to the structure of an established wilderness therapy program, for youth demonstrating problems with substance abuse and/or emotional and behavioral concerns, facilitate character development in participants?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether the Applied Ancestry program meets its objectives of assisting at-risk youth in character development. The information gained from this study will also provide the basis for implementing the Applied Ancestry program in other youth programs.

Justification for the Study

In November of 2002 the first study to test the effect of Applied Ancestry on at-risk youth was conducted in Australia (Rancie, 2004). The Applied Ancestry program provides opportunities for participants to use information from their own family history to better understand themselves and their families, thereby giving them “better tools for evaluating and managing their own lives” (NHF, 2004, ¶3). Results of the first study indicated that learning about their family history was important for the participants and was influential in helping to change their view of themselves and their family. The Applied Ancestry program was developed specifically for at-risk youth (although it is postulated that any individual may benefit from the program) however, the objectives of the program have yet to be validated through quantitative research.

Other anecdotal and empirical evidence concerning family history knowledge also suggests that this information can have a positive influence on the lives of individuals (Grosskopf, 1999; Gagalis-Hoffman, 2004; McGoldrick, 1995). Therapists, such as Grosskopf (1999), have used family history information in clinical settings. The information has helped his clients understand the possible influences creating the problems the client is seeking assistance to overcome. This knowledge may also lead to

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greater understanding and acceptance of family members (McGoldrick, 1995). Another manner in which family history information may be beneficial is through the telling of stories. In a study conducted by Gagalis-Hoffman (2004), it was determined that hearing the stories of family members can increase family connectedness as well as enhance the listener's sense of belonging and of their identity.

An individual's identity is constantly being redefined throughout the life cycle; however, it is during the adolescent stage that the individual experiences what Erikson (1997) calls an identity crisis. Noller (1995) suggests that during this stage of development the adolescent explores alternatives before settling on an identity that they are comfortable with. Tendencies toward deviant behavior during adolescence have been linked to family influences (Ralph & Sanders, 2003) as has the degree to which an individual will explore alternative identities (Noller, 1995; Noller & Callan, 1991). Understanding how adolescents develop and in what ways they develop has been a topic of past research yet needs further exploration (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest that one way in which adolescents develop is in character. Seligman is a leader in the relatively young field of positive psychology and, in conjunction with Peterson and the Values In Action (VIA) Institute, has developed a scale that measures individuals' character strengths.

A review of these strengths and the results of NHF's study suggest that Applied Ancestry may be a method for facilitating the character development of at-risk youth. It is this supposition, and the need for further investigation of the Applied Ancestry objectives, that form the basis of the proposed research.

Delimitations

The scope of the study is delimited to the following:

1. The study will include 60 participants from the Anasazi Foundation clientele list.

The study does not include participants in other therapy programs.

2. Each of the participants will be aged between 12 and 17 years. Older and younger at-risk youth are not included.
3. This study will be conducted over a period of 12 months between May, 2004, and April, 2005. Anasazi clients coming into the program before May 2004 will be excluded.

Limitations

The results from this investigation will be interpreted considering the following limitations:

1. Participants are not screened for cognitive abilities, therefore the individual's ability to apply the information gained to self, without mentoring, may vary.
2. The study will be limited to clients of Anasazi Foundation's Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program for teens between the ages of 12 and 17.
3. Due to the selection method of the study, the results will not be generalizable to youth beyond this group.
4. Due to the variation in lead time between enrollment and intake, some participants may have less family history information available to them initially than others.

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5. The duration of a participant's involvement in the program will vary, according to their individual needs, which may affect the results.

Assumptions

1. The instruments used will accurately measure the effects of the treatment of the study.
2. The counselors selected to administer the treatment understand the purpose of the study and are capable of adequately mentoring the participants.
3. Participants' family history knowledge is limited.
4. The family history provided will give new knowledge to the participants.
5. Participants will answer truthfully.

Hypothesis

In keeping with the purpose of the study, the following null hypothesis will be tested:

Adding Applied Ancestry to an existing extended outdoor wilderness therapy program will not enhance the participants' signature strengths (Seligman, 2002) any more so ($p < .05$) than the wilderness therapy program alone.

Definition of Terms

Applied Ancestry –applying ancestral knowledge (names, dates, stories, etc.) to self. The concept “proposes that intimate knowledge of one's ancestors provides all individuals, and especially at-risk youth, with better tools for evaluating and managing their own lives” (NHF, 2004, ¶3).

Wilderness Therapy Program – a therapeutic intervention program designed to help youth overcome emotional/behavioral/social concerns in a wilderness setting.

Signature Strengths – strengths, such as citizenship, creativity and kindness, that are strongly characteristic of an individual (Seligman, 2002).

At-risk Youth – Adolescents who are exhibiting dysfunctional behavior such as conflict with parents, substance abuse, and difficulty in school.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The ultimate goal of this study is to help at-risk youth make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. In other words, to help these youth successfully navigate the developmental stage known as adolescence (Noller & Callan, 1991; Blos, 1966). One method for achieving this goal may be by providing youth, who are participants in a wilderness therapy program, with the opportunity to learn about their families and the people who make up their family history. Anecdotal evidence suggests that learning such information can have positive effects in terms of personal and family identity (McGoldrick, 1995; Grosskopf, 1999, Gagalis-Hoffman, 2004). The programs provided in this study are expected to not only enhance personal and family identity but also facilitate character development. The topics covered in this chapter are intended to provide an understanding of the factors that are likely to influence the results of the study. These topics are adolescent development and parent-adolescent relationships, family systems, development of self, wilderness therapy, and family history.

Adolescent Development and Parent-Adolescent Relationships

It is commonly agreed that the transition into adolescence is signaled by puberty. However, this is just a small part of the adolescent experience (Piaget, 1966). During the adolescent stage the individual renegotiates their relationship with their parents (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986) and progresses toward adulthood as they discover who they

are and who they want to become (Erikson, 1997; Piaget, 1966). In defining who they are, adolescents will explore alternative beliefs, values, and ideas. They will do this through personal exploration and psychological differentiation (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993). As they seek to develop autonomy and an individual identity they will decrease the time they spend with their family in favor of spending more time with their peers (Noller, Feeney, & Peterson, 2001). Yet, even with this progressive distancing, familial ties still have a guiding influence in the adolescent's life (Xu, 2002). The relationship that an adolescent has with their parent(s) has a direct impact on how well and how committed the adolescent will be in seeking and claiming an identity of their own (Waterman, 1993) and doing so in a socially acceptable manner (Xu, 2002).

Parents who are democratic in their parenting styles and allow their child to make decisions for themselves are, as a consequence, encouraging their child to explore identity alternatives (Waterman, 1993). Individuals who are exposed to such parenting styles tend to develop a strong identity and are capable of sharing close relationships with others, including their parents and friends (Noller, 1995). This facilitates the developmental process toward becoming a well-adjusted adult.

Conversely, parents who are controlling will tend to have children who are less likely to explore alternatives in identity and will often forego the process of exploration for the ready identity that their parents have developed for them (Newman & Newman, 1986; Noller & Callan, 1991). Adolescents who are exposed to this type of parental style have lower self-esteem, lack judgment in controlling their own behavior, are more likely

to submit to peer-pressure and have low self-confidence (Noller, 1995). Parenting styles and parent-adolescent relationships can also fall anywhere in between the two examples provided.

Research suggests that when there is a balance between adolescent autonomy and parent authority the relationship is healthy and the adolescent experiences healthy development as a result (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000; Noller, 1995). When there is an imbalance of autonomy and authority conflict can arise. It is not uncommon for parents and adolescents to experience conflict on occasion as boundaries are renegotiated, however, when conflict continues, it has been suggested that this “deterioration of the parent-adolescent relationship often precedes at-risk behaviors” (Wells, 2001, p. 8). Following are two studies which demonstrate the interconnectedness of parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent behavior.

A longitudinal study conducted in Victoria, Australia, followed 1600 individuals from infancy to 18 years (Ralph & Sanders, 2003). The purpose of the study was to identify trends toward the development of anti-social behavior. Results of the study indicate that tendency toward, or away from, anti-social behavior begins as early as the pre-school years and has its roots in family relations. Findings indicate that, “Conflict with parents was strongly associated with contact with deviant peers, substance use, and engaging in antisocial behaviour” (p. 2). On the other hand, families who were supportive of their children by providing appropriate levels of discipline, rules, mentoring and reinforcement were “associated with less contact with deviant peers, less engagement in antisocial behaviour and less substance abuse” (p. 2).

The second study indicates how collective-efficacy (the perceived ability of a group to perform specific tasks) can reduce the occurrence of deviant (at-risk) behavior, which includes conflict with parents, substance abuse, and difficulty in school (Anasazi, 2004c). This study was conducted in Arizona and was designed to measure the effect challenge recreation programs would have on the participant family's collective-efficacy. Results indicated that these programs can increase the collective-efficacy of a family involved in a family challenge program. The results also indicated that strengthened parent-adolescent relationships could help these families with at-risk youth avoid conflict and reduce at-risk behavior (Wells, 2001).

A simultaneous study, using the same participants, supported the findings regarding improved parent-adolescent relations (Huff, Widmer, McCoy, Hill, 2002). This sister study examined parent-adolescent communication and the effect that involvement in challenge recreation has on that communication. Responses from participants at the conclusion of the study indicated that they "felt comfortable showing affection toward their family members" (p. 30) and family members were more cooperative and "fought and argued less" (p. 30). Results further indicated that family communication had improved and families were more cohesive as a consequence of their experience.

Clearly, the strength of the relationship an adolescent has with their family, particularly with their parents, has an influential role in the adolescent's development. Even as adolescents spend more time with their peers, the family remains an influential factor in guiding behavior and facilitating adolescents' development of identity. The

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interconnectedness of individuals and their environment, such as the family system, can be understood using a Systems Theory perspective.

Family Systems

Systems Theory was developed when it was realized that the traditional mechanistic models of scientific research were often not appropriate for scientific research dealing with human interaction (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). General Systems Theory, as it was originally called, was adopted by psychology and sociology, as well as family social science, to help describe the human relational systems. The main assumption of the theory is based on holism which states that “a system must be understood as a whole and cannot be comprehended by examining its individual parts in isolation from each other” (p. 328). This approach differs from its predecessors that looked at individual parts of a system rather than looking at the parts as a function of a whole.

These systems, as defined by the theory, are “a bounded set of interrelated elements exhibiting coherent behavior as a unit” (Constantine, 1986, p. 50). Systems include families, marriages, communities, and sibling systems, to name a few. Applying the systems theory means that the most effective way to locate the cause and define the solution of a problem that an individual is experiencing is to look at the system(s) within which the individual operates. It is not enough to simply look at the individual. The idea of holism suggests that whatever the individual is dealing with has connection to the system(s) of which the individual is a part. In the case of at-risk youth the systems that

are influencing them include the family system, education system, and their social or peer group, system.

There are many possible reasons why a youth is exhibiting at-risk or functional symptomatic (deviant) behavior. These reasons include the possibility that the dysfunctional behavior being exhibited is a response to others' behavior (Butler, 1997). A situation where functional symptomatic behavior is exhibited may be in a family in which the parents are arguing. The child, not wanting the parents to fight anymore, attenuates the situation by breaking a vase. The act of breaking the vase, in this case, is the functional symptomatic behavior.

In a family system, where one person's behavior can affect others' behavior, it is not unusual for adolescents and their parents to experience conflict as the adolescents seek greater autonomy. Causes of this conflict may include the failure on the parent(s)' part to acknowledge the changing needs of the adolescent, decisions made by the adolescent may not be congruent with the wishes or expectations of parent(s), or adolescents are disillusioned regarding their parent(s)' infallibility (Noller & Callan, 1991). These problems can be overcome through effective communication and renegotiation of boundaries within the family system (Canary & Dainton, 2003).

The Systems Theory model has also inspired other models that describe family functioning. Two of these models are the Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and the Circumplex Model (Olson & DeFrain, 1994). Each of these models suggests that there is a strong interrelation between individuals within a system and that communication is a key element in family functioning.

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The Bioecological model looks at individual behavior in terms of interactions on four different levels and takes into account the individual's personality as well as the environmental factors that influence behavior. The levels of the Bioecological model begin with the individual (microsystem) and extend to the global environment (macrosystem). (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The Circumplex model looks at family functioning in terms of cohesion and flexibility, which are facilitated by communication (Olson & DeFrain, 1994). The cohesion aspect of this model describes the "togetherness" of the family (p. 66) and the flexibility aspect indicates the family's "ability to change" (p. 66). Olson and DeFrain suggest that the most functional families are those that are "able to balance levels of separateness and togetherness so that they have some of both" (p. 70). The model is based on a continuum with families balancing themselves between disengaged and enmeshed (cohesion) and chaotic and rigid (flexibility).

In terms of helping youth progress through the developmental stage of adolescence, a functional family will be able to adapt to the changes and allow the individual freedom of choice while still providing guidance. In contrast, dysfunctional families will either hold on too tight to old ways of doing things (rigid-enmeshed), which could result in rebellion, or let go completely (chaotic-disengaged), which may result in irresponsible behavior. The functionality of the family influences the adolescent's ability to develop their personal identity and sense of self.

Development of Self

The development of self is strongly influenced by the social interactions in which an individual is involved. Almost from birth the individual is building a concept of self and others through these interactions (Gallagher, 2000). It is suggested that at-risk youth who are mentored in this quest for self-knowledge are better equipped to alter their own behavior and function in society in a more socially acceptable manner. Four concepts, concerned with the development of self, have been identified for discussion in this paper. These are: personal identity, family identity, self-efficacy, and character development.

Personal Identity. The definition of personal identity, or identity of self, has been a topic of discussion among philosophers such as Aristotle, Locke, and Descartes, for centuries (Gallagher, 2000). Locke (as quoted by Gertler, 2003) viewed personal identity as a product of self-awareness and stated: “[A person is] a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, *and considers itself as itself*, the same thinking thing in different times and places” (p. 17, emphasis added by author). Locke’s definition suggests that personal identity is something that guides the individual’s thinking, regardless of age, place, or circumstance.

Following this reasoning, individuals with a strong sense of personal identity are able to maintain a sense of who they are, regardless of what happens to them, and have direction in their lives because they understand their capabilities, character, feelings and motivations (Mish, 2003). The development of a strong sense of personal identity is particularly beneficial for at-risk youth as it can help them find direction for their life and make the transition through the period of adolescence to become well-adjusted adults.

This is supported by Newman and Murray (1983 as cited by Noller, 1995) who say that “identity is ‘like a blueprint for future commitments and life choices. It is a set of beliefs and goals about one’s relationship with family members, lovers and friends, one’s roles as worker, citizen and religious believer and one’s aspirations for achievement’” (p. 82).

Much of the literature on personal identity is philosophical in nature (Gallagher, 2000; Gertler, 2003), but there is also an abundant amount of literature describing the research that has been carried out on personal identity. The aspects of personal identity studied in this research includes sexual (or gender) identity (Banks, 1997; Erwin & Hood, n.d.), confidence and conceptions about body and appearance (Erwin & Hood, n.d.), personal identity as a function of the brain (Blok, Newman, Behr & Rips, 2001), immediate family influences (Lingren, 1996; Kronqvist, 1996), and the influence of multiracial families on identity development (Kronqvist, 1996; Schwartz, 1998). In a current review of the literature no publications were found that studied the effect of family history knowledge on the development of personal identity for at-risk youth participating in wilderness therapy. However, Bouvard (1998) has suggested that “self-knowledge is cultural and generational” (p. xv) which implies that family history information does have an effect on personal identity. Further investigation into this area is needed.

Thinking systemically, personal identity is a result of individual cognitive processes about the world, that is, individuals learn who they are by the way they interact with their environment. This can also be said of family identity.

Family Identity. Family identity describes the individual's sense of what their family represents and how the individual fits into that family. A sense of family identity often conjures up feelings of pride, belonging, and ownership. Along with these feelings, the concept of family identity also brings the identifying factors of surname and heritage to mind.

Surnames, or last names, were a development of the 12th century. At this time nobility began identifying themselves with heritable names and the practice trickled down through the social classes over the next century (Christian, 1998). Before this time, most people had a single name, or if they had a second name it was a "by-name" (¶2) that was not hereditary. It may be surprising for some to learn that hereditary names did not become stable (unchanging from generation to generation) in some areas of the western world until the mid 19th century (Christian, 1998). Surnames are now commonly being passed down from generation to generation. These names are often the first identifying factor that distinguishes one family from another and can elicit strong emotional reactions from the bearers of the name. An example of these emotional reactions can be seen in disputes that arise between family groups.

Throughout history, feuds have been fought and grudges continued for generations simply because someone had a particular last name. The feud may have started with a simple disagreement only to mushroom into a general dislike of the entire family and their posterity. A famous example of feuding between families is the Hatfield-McCoy feud of the mid 1800s. It lasted for 30 years and, though there is the legend, no one knows for certain what started the feud (Powell, 2000). Powell also notes

that descendants of the two families are not proud that the feud happened, but “they are proud of their kinsman for fighting for their families and their beliefs” (¶14). This pride of family identity is also evidenced in other, more positive, ways.

In recent times the strength of the emotional attachment to one’s surname has been written about and even sung about. One music artist penned his thoughts about his last name and put them to song (Bentley & Allen, 2003). The song, “My Last Name,” speaks of the pride Bentley feels with respect to his surname. He sings:

Passed down from generations/
Too far back to trace/
I can see all my relations/
When I look into my face/
May never make it famous/
But I’ll never bring it
shame/
It’s my last name (¶3).

Another thought the idea of family identity brings to mind is one’s heritage. That is, who came before and what have they left for their progeny? Another popular country artist sang of her sense of who she is with respect to her family. Speaking of her heritage – the people who gave her looks and character traits to her – she sings:

I am Rosemary’s granddaughter/
The spitting image of my father/
And when the
day is done/
My momma’s still my biggest fan/
Sometimes I’m clueless and I’m
clumsy/
But I’ve got friends that love me/
And they know just where I stand/
It’s
all a part of me/
And that’s who I am (James & Verdes, 2000, ¶2).

The value of having a sense of family identity has been described by several authors (Covey, 1997; Domokos-Cheng Ham, 2003; Walzer, 2004). One author (Medhus, 2001) indicated that the development of family identity can be a valuable tool for helping children and youth develop into well-adjusted adults. Medhus stated:

“Creating a family identity is an effective way to instill our children with a sense of permanence, belonging, and stability, paving the road for raising confident, independent children” (¶1). It is suggested by Medhus that children who live in families with weak or non-existent family identity are more likely to look elsewhere (peers, etc) for belonging – that feeling of belonging that is inherently a part of families with a strong sense of family identity. Research also indicates the ways in which family identity can be developed.

These methods of family identity development include mission statements (Covey, 1997), rituals (Doherty, 1997; Medhus, 2001), storytelling (Gagalis-Hoffman, 2004), and the seeking out of ancestors through genealogical work (Morgan, 2003). Family mission statements develop family identity by providing a “unifying sense of vision and values” (Covey, 1997, p. 84). Doherty (1997) suggests that rituals create “a sense of who belongs to the family and what is special about the family” (p. 11) due to their nature of being “repeated and coordinated activities that have significance for the family” (p. 10). Storytelling develops family identity by giving individuals a sense of belonging to a unique group (Gagalis-Hoffman, 2004) and genealogical work increases lineage-consciousness (Doxey, 1993) and awareness of ancestors and their stories, thereby creating a connection between the past, present, and future.

Domokos-cheng Ham (2003) suggests that “a lack of clarity about the family’s sense of being” will result in “confusion and tension” (p. 11) which can lead to conflict within the family. Youths’ perceived ability (self-efficacy) to avoid such conflict with their parents will be discussed next.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that they can complete a specific task (Bandura, 2004a). This perception of one's capabilities influences the choices a person makes, the effort they put into doing things, how long the person will persist in a task in the face of obstacles or failure, and how the person feels (Bandura, 2004b). "Self-efficacy beliefs", Pajares (2002) stated, "provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment" (p. 3). He further stated that self-efficacy is "a critical determinant of self-regulation" (p. 3) and of "how well knowledge and skill are acquired" (p. 4).

Research on self-efficacy has looked at psychological adjustment (Caprara, et al., 1999), the exercise of personal agency (Bandura, 1990, 1992) and academic achievement (Pajares, 1991) as well as the effectiveness of particular programs on the development of self-efficacy ("Eye of the Storm", 2002). The development of self-efficacy assists individuals in making progress in other areas of their lives, including the development of their character.

Character Development. It has been said that "Character...is what you are in the dark, when no one's looking" (Kidder, 1998, p. 1). The development of character is a process that continues throughout life, however, it is during the adolescent stage in which an individual begins to recognize and define their character (Greer & Kohl, 1995).

The first place an individual learns morals, the basis of character, is in the home (DeRoche & Williams, 2001) but character education is increasingly being undertaken by schools and the community (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001; McElmeel, 2002). The emphasis on character education in schools, and state legislature, lends credence to the

view that character development in individuals is important for healthy functioning in society. The “New York law on Character - §801-a”, states:

The regents shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizenship and character education. Such a component shall instruct students on the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and contributions to, the community. (Office of Institutional Research Character Development, n.d.)

Greer and Kohl (1995) support the view that character development is an important precursor to healthy functioning in society by suggesting that when “youngsters” are unable to “discover the rudiments of their characters even as they are molding them....all too often an extended disability to deal with personal problems and cold insensitivity to other people’s lives follow” (p. 4).

It has been further suggested that character development is “the cornerstone of youth development” (Kinnamon, 2003, ¶7) and “good character” has been defined as consistently living according to, and strongly identifying with, “a firm code of ethics and virtues” (Jacobs & Jacobs-Spencer, 2001, p. 35). When individuals “walk their talk, keep their promises, do what’s right” (Kidder, 1998, p. 3) they are said to have character. In order to develop this good character it is necessary to know what traits and virtues constitute it.

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Seligman (2002), a leader in the field of positive psychology, and his colleagues, conducted a comprehensive study to pinpoint the virtues that are ubiquitous across culture. Their study included searching through over 600 books and manuscripts such as the Old Testament and Koran, and works of authors including Aristotle, Plato, and Benjamin Franklin to find the virtues that were common to all. The search revealed six virtues common to all the literature and cultures: Wisdom and knowledge, Courage, Love and humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Spirituality and transcendence. The meanings, or paths to attainment, of each of these virtues varied and so the research team went a step further to define the paths to each of these virtues. The resulting list is made up of 24 strengths or “moral traits” (p. 134), the five most salient of these strengths for each individual being labeled Signature Strengths and may include any five of the following: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, bravery, industry/perseverance, authenticity, zest, intimacy, kindness, social intelligence, citizenship/teamwork, fairness, leadership, forgiveness/mercy, modesty/humility, prudence, self-control/self-regulation, awe/appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, playfulness, and spirituality (Seligman, 2002).

Greer and Kohl (1995) have said that “To an important degree young people build their own characters and choose the kinds of people they become” (p. 3). This statement is supported by Anne Frank (1944, as cited by Greer & Kohl, 1995) who said “...the final forming of a person’s character lies in their own hands” (p. 7). Research on character has indicated that its development can have positive impacts on the lives of individuals (Emmons & King, 1988; Friedman, et al., 1995; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons &

Larson, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2001) and, while it may be ultimately up to the individual to develop their character, there are programs available to help youth in the development of their character and self-discovery. Wilderness therapy programs are one of those resources that are available.

Wilderness Therapy

Programs directed at providing instruction and guidance for youth began emerging in the early part of the 20th century as industrialization and urbanization increased (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994). The emergence of youth programs stemmed from a growing need to provide activities and stimulation for a burgeoning urban youth population exhibiting anti-social behavior and developmental problems. Organizations were formed and challenge activities were developed, such as youth centers and adventure programs, to stimulate and invigorate the minds and imaginations of these youth. Over 600 wilderness experience programs have been identified in recent years (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Categories of wilderness experience programs include “recreation, education, training and development, and therapy” (Russell & Hendee, 2000; see also Priest and Gass, 1998).

Definitions of such programs, until recent years, have been lacking. Terms such as wilderness therapy, outdoor adventure, challenge course, and wilderness experience programs have been used interchangeably (Russell, 2001). The term “therapy” as part of a wilderness experience program is also often used loosely to indicate the “therapeutic benefits” of a program, yet many of those therapy programs lack a clinical therapeutic framework (Russell, 2001). This has created some confusion and concern for parents and

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authorities who are seeking alternative therapeutic approaches to help at-risk youth in their families and communities (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Practitioners of wilderness therapy programs are also concerned about the confusion regarding the definition of wilderness therapy. Each author of the literature reviewed in this section made a point of distinguishing between wilderness therapy and the broader concept of wilderness programs (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Russell, 1999, 2001; Russell & Hendee, 2000; Russell, Hendee, & Phillips-Miller, 1999). Davis-Berman & Berman (1994) stated that “wilderness therapy is not taking troubled adolescents into the woods so that they will feel better”, rather, “It involves the careful selection of potential candidates based on a clinical assessment and the creation of an individual treatment plan for each participant” (p. 13).

Consensus on the definition of wilderness therapy became important in a practical sense with the introduction of industry trade associations (i.e. Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Industry Council (OBHIC)), state licensing and national accreditations (i.e. Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)), and “the establishment of consistent measures and monitoring procedures for baseline statistics to be used as indicators of best practices” (Russell, 2001, p. 76). Along with a common definition of wilderness therapy, the establishment of these regulatory organizations and licensing/accreditation procedures proved beneficial for families who were previously unable to afford the treatment because it meant that wilderness therapy programs would be recognized by insurance companies. VisionQuest and the Anasazi Foundation were among the first organizations in the Utah/Arizona area to make use of insurance options,

thus making their programs more accessible (Russell, 2001), although greater recognition by insurance companies is still being sought (K. Wells, phone interview conducted May 4, 2004).

The definition of wilderness therapy, given by Davis-Berman and Berman (1994) above, is similar to that of Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) programs which incorporate “elements of wilderness therapy to focus client behavioral assessment and intervention” (Russell and Hendee, 2000, p. 8). Early OBH programs have their roots in the late 1960s, but almost 50 percent of the OBH programs operating today have sprung up since 1980, including the Anasazi Foundation (Russell & Hendee, 2000). The term outdoor behavioral healthcare is used to describe “programs in which adolescent participants are placed in the program by parents or custodial authorities concerned for their well-being” (p. 8). The programs are “specifically aimed at changing destructive, dysfunctional or problem behaviors in clients through clinically supervised therapy, therapeutic activities, and an educational program in outdoor settings” (p. 9).

The evolution of OBH programs has been attributed to seven influences: early therapeutic camping approaches (i.e., Camp Ahmek, established in 1929); wilderness challenge and rites-of-passage models (i.e., Outward Bound, founded in England and imported to the U.S. in 1969); primitive skill programs (i.e., desert survival programs, such as those run by Larry Dean Olson and Doug Nelson, begun in the 1960s); adjudicated programs (i.e., Wilderness Quest, operated by Larry Wells, as an alternative to incarceration); professionalism (i.e., Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group (TAPG) and Association of Experiential Education (AEE) formed by professionals in the

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fields of mental health, corrections, education and others); recognition by insurance companies and state agencies (Olsen and Sanchez, founders of Anasazi Foundation, were instrumental in the recognition of OBH by insurance companies); and scholarly influences (i.e., Kaplan and Kaplan, Davis-Berman and Berman, Bandoroff and Scherer, and Russell and Hendee) (Russell & Hendee, 2000).

OBH programs are of two types: private placement and adjudicated, and four models: contained expedition programs, continuous flow expedition programs, base camp expedition programs, and residential expedition programs (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Adjudicated programs made their first appearance in the 1970s and are conducted by organizations such as VisionQuest and Alternative Youth Adventures. Participants are ordered to go into the programs by judges as an alternative to incarceration. The approach of these programs is usually direct and goal-oriented. Private placement OBH programs have earlier beginnings, starting in the late 1960s and participants are enrolled in the program by their parents or a custodial authority. Family involvement in the therapeutic process is an integral part of the success of OBH. (Russell & Hendee, 2000).

The models of OBH programs vary in length and the amount of time spent in the wilderness. Contained expedition programs are those programs in which leaders and clients remain together in the wilderness for most of the program, which usually lasts about four weeks. Continuous flow expedition programs are those where most of the treatment is conducted in the wilderness but clients, leaders and therapists flow in and out. Clients stay in the wilderness for six to eight weeks and leaders and therapists rotate in and out, usually on an eight day on, six day off basis. Programs that incorporate base

camp activities with therapeutic camping practices are called base camp expedition programs. These programs can last three to eight weeks or more and involve setting up a base camp in a natural environment as well as two to three week expeditions.

Participants return to the base camp following their expedition to process their experience and prepare to return home. Residential expedition programs, such as recovery centers, often last up to 14 months and utilize “wilderness and outdoor treatment as a tool to augment other services” (Russell & Hendee, 2000, p. 11).

Research of OBH programs have indicated that participant outcomes include increased self-concept, improved social skills, decreased substance abuse and reduced recidivism (Russell & Hendee, 2000). Outcomes also include the acquisition of knowledge and skills, greater awareness of personal and interpersonal behavior, and strengthened family relations. However, there is a concern in the OBH industry that there has not been enough research regarding program outcomes published in peer reviewed journals (Russell & Hendee, 2000). In their comprehensive evaluation of OBH, Russell and Hendee (2000) indicate that less than 75% of OBH programs conduct internal evaluations of their programs and less than 10% use external evaluation and standards. Clearly research into the effectiveness of OBH (and wilderness therapy) programs is needed.

It has been suggested in the research that family involvement is integral to the lasting effects of OBH (Russell & Hendee, 2000). The effectiveness of OBH may be extended through personal family history information as individuals learn the lessons of their ancestors and connect with past generations as they discover that information.

Family History/Genealogy

Many people experience a curiosity about who came before them (Taylor, 2002; McGoldrick, 1995; Hawkins & Doxey, 2001). Historical tidbits about the world in general can be fascinating and captivating. They are made even more stimulating when those historical facts involve relatives. This is supported by Rosalie Triolo, a history academic at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, who said that she has “seen the most hesitant historians (that is, hugely disinterested students) respond far more positively when presented with a history that had some direct relevance to them” (C. Haydon, personal correspondence, received January 12, 2004). Numerous books have been written as a result of the desire people have felt to know their ancestors (Franke, 2003; Hoffman, 2003; Latham, 2003; Read, 1998; Webb & Styles, 2000). This desire to know often inspires the curious to take a closer look. Many amateur family historians start out as the merely curious, thinking to learn more about their ancestors by finding dates and other facts, yet they are often “surprised to learn that family history draws them closer to their living families as well” (Hawkins & Doxey, 2001, p. 3).

Whether we realize it or not, we are all connected as much to our past as we are to our future (McGoldrick, 1995; Stratton, 1988; Vandagriff, 1993). Anecdotal evidence abounds that demonstrates the benefits of learning about one’s ancestors. The evidence and benefits include understanding one’s family and facilitating emotional and psychological healing (Grosskopf, 1999), increasing family connectedness (McGoldrick, 1995; Taylor, 2002) and generational interconnectedness (Grosskopf, 1999; Bahr & Bahr, 1996), developing a sense of identity (McGoldrick, 1995; Taylor, 2002) and self-

knowledge (Bouvard, 1998; Grosskopf, 1999; Hawkins & Doxey, 2001), and providing direction for the future (McGoldrick, 1995).

In an article by Hawkins & Doxey (2001), they include statements made by those who have had an inkling of what family history is about and have observed the benefit of it for themselves. These statements include: “I realized that by learning about your ancestors, you learn about yourself” (p.5); “I feel much closer to my parents and grandparents because I now understand them so much better than before” (p.7); and, “Family history gives me an intense understanding of self. It makes me feel, not just know, my heritage....I also gain a gratitude for those people who left me with that heritage” (p. 7). One of the greatest benefits of learning about one’s ancestors is the understanding that comes from it. Grosskopf (1999), a therapist who effectively utilizes his clients’ family history as an integral part of their therapy, stated: “Even small shards of family history can provoke understanding” (p. xi). He also stated:

We should find out the long version of our parents’ and grandparents’ stories.

Those stories provide a framework of history that defines who we are and what we perceive. Knowing the truth of who we are and where we came from can change us, alter how we see the world, and bring us closer to ourselves (p. 230).

McGoldrick (1995) stated that “Through exploring our family history, I came to love my powerful and vulnerable mother more deeply” (p. 13). McGoldrick’s statement suggests that she had not previously fully understood her mother and perhaps this had caused some friction in their relationship. Now that she had come to understand her mother more fully their relationship, at least from McGoldrick’s point of view, had

improved. To emphasize the importance of family McGoldrick further commented that “The more fully you relate to each parent’s life, the more you will understand – and perhaps sympathize with – their influence on you” (p. 72).

As a person learns more about their family history there comes a realization that parents, grandparents and other ancestors aren’t perfect. These relatives have overcome challenges, struggled through traumas, and lived their life the best they knew how. Sometimes the choices they made were not the best choice to make, but that is part of life (Hatcher, 2004).

Learning about the lives of ancestors, and understanding that those who have come before have experienced the same concerns youth are now experiencing, may help today’s youth realize that they too can overcome the challenges they face. Bouvard (1998) talks of the importance of recognizing both world and family history. She posits:

In our highly mobile and fragmented society, the present bears down on our consciousness, leaving little room for either world history or our own family histories. We are made of both, however, and when we ignore them, we lose important perspectives and paths to self-knowledge (p. xv).

As suggested in chapter 1, there has been little empirical research done on the benefits gained from applying ancestral knowledge to self. The anecdotal evidence suggests there are great benefits to be gained. To date, however, only one study has been conducted that provides empirical support for what is intuitively held to be true. The study, called “Unplugged”, was conducted by the National Heritage Foundation (NHF)

and BYU professors and students, in the “Man from Snowy River Country” of south-east Australia in November, 2002 (Rancie, 2004).

NHF is a non-profit organization that was created in 1994 – the United Nations International Year of the Family – “to act as a catalyst in the development of aspects of family history not being undertaken by governments, institutions or by private enterprise” (P.R. Rancie, personal communication, received March 18, 2004). The purpose and mission of NHF is to stretch the boundaries of the world of family history.

One way the organization has moved ahead is through the inception of the Applied Ancestry program. The mission of Applied Ancestry is to “develop family history as a powerful agent of change and growth for Individuals-Families-and Communities” (NHF, 2004, ¶1) and “proposes that intimate knowledge of one’s ancestors provides all individuals, and especially at-risk youth, with better tools for evaluating and managing their own lives” (¶3).

Based on this concept, the purpose of the “Unplugged” study was to help at-risk youth develop a greater sense of control and efficacy in their lives by looking to the past and discovering what their ancestors accomplished and how they overcame their challenges, to give the youth tools with which to shape their future. Seven themes emerged from the post program interviews of the study. These themes included family history knowledge can improve efficacy; wilderness and pioneer living can improve efficacy; engaging programs assist in the development of self-efficacy; current family identity and ancestral identity are not necessarily the same; application of ancestry to self requires abstract cognitive abilities; application of ancestry traits to self requires

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mentoring; and family history is important to the individuals involved in the study. (Rancie, 2004). Interviews with participants conducted one year after the program revealed that most of the participants were more in control of their lives, as demonstrated by their reported involvement in school and work. Regarding the program, one participant commented, "To be successful in life I think you need both motivation and focus. For me the journey gave me motivation and the family history gave me focus" (C. Haydon, personal communication received March 10, 2004). This exploratory study indicates that the lives of at-risk youth can be positively influenced by family history knowledge. However, there is more that needs to be done in determining how, and to what extent, family history information can help adolescents make the transition to adulthood.

Summary

This chapter has explored adolescent development and the social, or environmental, influences that affect that development. The chapter has also looked at the intervention provided through wilderness therapy programs, and the potential of family history knowledge, for assisting adolescents through the developmental process as they seek autonomy and an identity of their own. Even though adolescence is a stage where individuals seek separation from their family, the research reviewed in this chapter suggests that the family continues to have significant influence on adolescent development. It also suggests that knowledge of one's family history has therapeutic implications, though, as yet, the research does not fully capture the impact family history knowledge can have on the lives of at-risk youth. The study proposed in this paper will

provide empirical support for the use of family history information in assisting youth, particularly those at-risk, to progress through the stage of adolescence and become mature, well-adjusted adults by helping them develop character and become more aware of their own identity.

Chapter 3

Methods

The current study is concerned with answering the question: Does adding “Applied Ancestry” to the structure of an established wilderness therapy program, for youth demonstrating problems with substance abuse and/or emotional and behavioral concerns, facilitate character development in participants?

This chapter will describe the participants and setting, the test instruments, study design, data collection procedures, and data treatment to be used for the research.

Participants and Setting

The setting for the study will be a survival program in the desert and high mountains of Arizona. The medium for the treatment given in the study will be Anasazi Foundation’s Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program. This program is a continuous flow wilderness therapy program designed to give individuals the opportunity to “effect a change of heart” through a “primitive living experience” (Anasazi, 2004b, ¶1). The program is offered for youth aged 12-17 and young adults aged 18-25.

Those accepted into the Anasazi program are “physically and emotionally able to handle the rigors of the trail” and their parents are willing to actively participate in the therapeutic process (Anasazi, 2004c, ¶1). The individuals participating in this study will be aged 12-17 and will have exhibited one or more of the following behaviors: conflict with family; depression; suicide ideation; substance abuse; oppositional behavior, school failure; eating disorders; and/or ADD and ADHD (Anasazi, 2004c).

Participants for the study will come from the client list for the Anasazi OBH program. Along with the registration packet that is usually sent out by Anasazi will be an invitation to participate in the study. Parents will be informed of the purpose of the study and, if they wish for their child to participate, will be asked to supply basic family history information. This information will include the birth date and place of the youth, parents, grandparents and any other information that can be supplied such as stories or a request to focus the family history research on a particular ancestor or period. A consent form will also be included with the invitation. Those who do not wish to participate will not be required to do so.

Over the period between May 2004 and April 2005 it is expected that, of Anasazi's clientele, 60 individuals will participate in the study (both male and female). The individuals who agree to participate will be randomly assigned to either the control (n = 30) group or the treatment (n = 30) group. The individuals in the control group will participate in the OBH program as it is currently operated by Anasazi. Those in the treatment group will also participate in the OBH as it is currently operated, except that they will also be receiving family history information and participate in Applied Ancestry activities as facilitated by their counselor. Details of the implementation of the Applied Ancestry program are described in the study design section of this chapter.

Test Instruments

Used with permission, the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire will be utilized to measure the dependent variable, character development. Under the direction of Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson, the Values-In-Action (VIA) Institute has developed

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this questionnaire to indicate individuals' salient character strengths. The 24 strengths measured in the questionnaire are ubiquitous across culture and include bravery, kindness, and creativity, and are listed under virtues such as wisdom and knowledge, courage, and temperance (Seligman, 2002). Signature Strengths are the five salient strengths an individual possesses and are defined as those "strengths of character that a person self-consciously owns, celebrates, and...exercises every day..." (Seligman, 2002, p. 160). Tests of the instrument have been conducted to test its validity and reliability. The survey, and each subscale, has an $\alpha > .70$. Test-retest correlations over a period of four months resulted in α of greater than .70. Three items of each subscale are negatively scored. 150,000 adults have completed the survey. A youth survey is being developed but has not, as yet, been validated.

Study Design

The study is a quasi-experimental design. The implementation of the Applied Ancestry program will be described below.

The program is designed to facilitate the application of ancestry information to self through various activities. These activities include: reading the stories of ancestors; reflecting on the values of ancestors; reflecting on specific incidents in the lives of ancestors; completing a project telling or reenacting the life of an ancestor; making a presentation that shares the stories of an ancestor and the learning gained from it; and, giving a performance that shares the stories of an ancestor and the learning gained from it. During the last three days, when the participant's parent(s) join them on their

“walking,” participants will be encouraged to share the information they have learned about their ancestors with their parent(s) using one of the activities mentioned above.

The Applied Ancestry program will be administered through the participants’ counselor (Shadow). The Shadows will be familiarized with the objectives of the study and design as well as the purpose of the Applied Ancestry program. Training for the Shadows will occur primarily through reading the Applied Ancestry Program Guide and Applied Ancestry Teacher’s Guide. Shadows will also be instructed by the researcher prior to beginning the study. This instruction will be conducted to ensure consistency in implementing the Applied Ancestry program.

Each participant’s Shadow will have the family history packet of the individual and a letter from the participant’s parent(s). In addition, individuals will be given a journal in which to record their experiences and reflections. Each week, when the participant meets with their Shadow, they will be given information (if they request it) on their family history as well as the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and what they have learned. The amount of information that is given, and the format it is given in (being told a story, reading a story, or looking through the information), each week will be determined by the Shadow and the participant⁴. The Shadow will also determine the right time for delivering the letter.

Journals. An important tool that will be utilized to help participants in the learning and retention processes are journals. The NHF study, conducted in Australia,

⁴ Although the components of both the Anasazi and Applied Ancestry programs are the same for each person the implementation schedules are individualized.

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indicated that participants were more likely to experience lasting changes when they were able to remember what occurred during the program (Rancie, 2004). Participants in this study will be expected to record their experiences and thoughts in these journals on a regular basis, including information such as detailed descriptions of events that occur, thoughts and feelings about those events, and insights. This process of reflection, it has been suggested, is a powerful tool in creating an environment for increasing self-awareness, thereby developing personal identity for participants in outdoor adventure programs (Stremba, 1989). The journal “will also become an invaluable historical document for their posterity” (NHF, 2002, p.8).

Family History Packets. Participants will learn about their ancestry via family history packets that will be provided for each individual in the treatment group. The individuals’ counselor will be responsible for the care of this packet and the sharing of the information within it. The packets will include information on the individual’s ancestry (names, dates, stories, pictures, etc.), source information, research tips, ideas for sharing the information, self-reflective questions (relating to what they have learned from their ancestors), and a commitment to share the information with their current family in a presentation or performance format.

These packets will be provided by volunteer family historians. A family information sheet will be provided to each applicant to the Anasazi program in their enrolment packets. This information sheet, which includes basic information about participants’, their parents and their grandparents, will be used to initiate the research done by the volunteer family historians. The lead time needed for a thorough

investigation of an individual's family history is four weeks. However, due to the nature of the enrolment process, it is not always possible to allow for this lead time. Some individuals enroll in and begin the Anasazi program in as little as 24 hours. Those participants who enroll in the program less than four weeks before their intake date will not have access to a comprehensive family history information packet at the beginning of the program. However, the packet will be constantly added to until it is comprehensive so that by the time the participant leaves the program they will have a comprehensively researched family history information packet. This phenomenon is not expected to significantly affect the results of the study due to the nature of the study design.

Letters. The study is designed to improve child-parent relations. To facilitate this process, parents will be asked to provide a letter addressed to their son/daughter that will be presented to the participant some time during the program. Some families have trouble communicating their feelings face to face yet it is important that youth know how their parents feel about them, therefore, parents will be asked to put down on paper their thoughts and feelings regarding their current family, their parents, their grandparents, and how they see their ancestry affecting them. This letter will be sealed and delivered to the youth, via their counselor, during the program.

Anasazi Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program. The therapeutic program that all participants will be in (regardless of whether they are in the control or treatment group of the study) is the Anasazi Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program. This program is implemented in the Anasazi Way. That is, "no confrontive therapy, manipulation, or behavioral modification techniques are employed (Anasazi,

2004d, ¶3). Instead, nature is the teacher and trail guides and therapists “patiently wait for opportunities to teach....skills and the principles of unconditional love, agency, repentance, forgiveness, and restitution” (Anasazi, 2004a, ¶3).

For a minimum of 42 days, Young Walkers (participants) live primitively in the wilderness, often hiking up to 10 miles in a day. They learn to cook their own food, make shelters, build fires without matches and acquire the skills and use the “technologies of the ‘ancient ones’” (Anasazi, 2004a, ¶1). The experience affords Young Walkers the opportunity “to ponder their lives, take responsibility for past choices and prepare to begin anew” (¶2). This process is facilitated by their therapist, with whom they meet each week.

Data Collection Procedures

Pre and post tests will be administered to provide quantitative results regarding the effect of the program on character development, as measured by the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire (Seligman, 2002). On the first day of the program the pre-tests will be administered to all participants (both control and treatment groups). The day that participants exit the program (which will be no less than six weeks later) post tests will be administered.

Other data that will be used to interpret the results will include Shadows’ field notes regarding when participants asked for ancestral information, how much they requested, when/if changes in attitude/demeanor were noted and whether the changes were due to what they learned about their ancestry or whether another topic was being discussed. Participants’ journals will also be reviewed.

Treatment of the Data

The identity of each participant and their family, test results, and ancestral information will be known to the researcher. The participants' Shadow will be familiar with pertinent facts about the individual, their family and ancestral information so far as is necessary to effectively implement the treatment and provide the intervention therapy. Family historians will have pertinent information about the individuals and their families in order to collect ancestral information. None of the information gained about individuals' ancestry will be kept by the researcher, Shadow, or family historians. This information will be handed over to the individual at the conclusion of the program.

To test the hypotheses regarding the impact of Applied Ancestry on participants, the pre and post tests will be compared and analyzed for changes using SAS, a computer-based statistical analysis program. Results will be analyzed using ANCOVA to determine statistical and practical significance of the changes observed. The 24 strengths will be analyzed separately and factors such as gender and the length of the individual's treatment will also be analyzed.

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Appendix A-1

Informed Consent

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

This research study is being conducted by Elisa Rancie, a graduate student in the Recreation Management and Youth Leadership department at Brigham Young University. The purpose of the research is to determine whether Applied Ancestry influences character development. You were selected to participate because you are currently enrolled in the Anasazi Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program.

As a participant you will be asked to complete an online version of the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire on the day you start the Anasazi OBH program and again on the day you graduate from the program. This questionnaire consists of 245 questions that relate to character strengths (such as creativity, kindness, and hope) and demographics including gender, education, age, and ethnicity. The questionnaire will take 40-50 minutes to complete. If you are selected to be in the control group you will be involved in the Anasazi OBH program as it is currently operated.

The risks for participating in this study are minimal and the information gained from this study may assist youth organizations and research bodies in their effort to provide youth with opportunities for learning and growth.

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data (i.e. paper copies of questionnaires) will be kept in a locked storage cabinet and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the digital data will be erased and the paper copies will be given to Anasazi personnel responsible for ongoing evaluations of program effectiveness (to be used solely for the purpose of program evaluation).

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your involvement in the Anasazi OBH program.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Elisa Rancie at (801) 361-7735 or email emrancie@yahoo.com.au.

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, (801) 422-3873, 422 SWKT, BYU, Provo, UT, 84602, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

As the parent of the above signed, I agree to allow my child to participate in the study as it has been described in this document.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONSENT TO BE AN APPLIED ANCESTRY RESEARCH SUBJECT

This research study is being conducted by Elisa Rancie, a graduate student in the Recreation Management and Youth Leadership department at Brigham Young University. The purpose of the research is to determine whether Applied Ancestry influences character development. You were selected to participate because you are currently enrolled in the Anasazi Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare (OBH) program.

As a participant you will be asked to complete an online version of the VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire on the day you start the Anasazi OBH program and again on the day you graduate from the program. This questionnaire consists of 245 questions that relate to character strengths (such as creativity, kindness, and hope) and demographics including gender, education, age, and ethnicity. The questionnaire will take 40-50 minutes to complete. Between your intake and graduation dates, if you are selected to be in the Applied Ancestry program your family history information will be incorporated into your Anasazi program and you will have access to this information through your Shadow.

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, if you are involved in the Applied Ancestry program you may discover information in your family history that is displeasing. Your Shadow will work with you to help you understand and process this information.

If you have been selected to receive personal family history information you will have the opportunity to learn about and understand those family members who have preceded you. The information gained from this study may also assist youth organizations and research bodies in their effort to provide youth with opportunities for learning and growth.

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data (i.e. paper copies of questionnaires) will be kept in a locked storage cabinet and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the digital data will be erased and the paper copies will be given to Anasazi personnel responsible for ongoing evaluations of program effectiveness (to be used solely for the purpose of program evaluation).

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your involvement in the Anasazi OBH program.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Elisa Rancie at (801) 361-7735 or email emrancie@yahoo.com.au.

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, (801) 422-3873, 422 SWKT, BYU, Provo, UT, 84602, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

As the parent of the above signed, I agree to allow my child to participate in the study as it has been described in this document.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____