

2004

## An Exploration of Meaningful Involvement in Ropes Course Programs

Kathy Haras  
*McMaster University*

Camille J. Bunting  
*Texas A&M University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded>



Part of the [Environmental Education Commons](#), and the [Leisure Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Haras, Kathy and Bunting, Camille J. (2004) "An Exploration of Meaningful Involvement in Ropes Course Programs," *Research in Outdoor Education*: Vol. 7, Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded/vol7/iss1/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Cortland. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research in Outdoor Education by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Cortland. For more information, please contact [DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu](mailto:DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu).

## AN EXPLORATION OF MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT IN ROPES COURSE PROGRAMS

Kathy Haras, McMaster University  
Camille J. Bunting, Texas A&M University

---

Ropes course programs provide numerous benefits, but few studies of adventure programs provide practitioners with principle-based information about effective programs (Sibthorp, 2003). One approach to filling this knowledge gap is to identify program principles and then use these principles to describe differences in participants' experiences (Hovelynck, 2003). Meaningful involvement is one principle that may be informative for researchers investigating adventure-based programs, such as ropes courses. It describes voluntary participation in a purposeful and challenging endeavor that individuals find personally satisfying (Larson, 2000) and consists of three areas: engagement, choice, and view of self.

The purpose of this study was to: 1) determine if there was a measurable difference in meaningful involvement between the Challenge by Choice (CbC) and Inviting Optimum Participation (IOP) approaches to ropes course program design and delivery; and 2) identify and compare the linkages among program attributes, outcomes, and values with each approach.

The study involved 360 young adolescents (ages 10 -15) who took part in full-day ropes course programs provided by one of four organizations in Ontario, Canada. Participants included 172 boys and 188 girls. The average age was 12.7 years and 47% had previous ropes course program experience. Participants completed either: 1) an experience sampling survey related to meaningful involvement; or 2) a means-end laddering survey related to program attributes, outcomes, and values.

The experience sampling data were subjected to multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The dependent variables were meaningful involvement during high (belayed) activities and low (non-belayed) activities. The independent variables were program type, sex, and ropes course experience. Program type had a significant effect ( $\lambda(3,158) = 0.937, p < 0.05$ ) for meaningful involvement experienced during high activities. Follow-up ANOVAs indicated that choice ( $F(1, 160) = 6.127, p < 0.05$ ) was significantly higher in IOP programs (ES 0.26). Differences between the programs in engagement (ES 0.06) and view of self (ES 0.22) were not significant for high activities at  $p=0.05$ . There was no significant effect for low activities.

Means-end analysis was used to identify linkages among program attributes, outcomes, and values. Participant-reported program attributes, outcomes, and values were organized into Hierarchical Value Maps (HVMs) – tree-like network diagrams that graphically summarize the results (Gengler, Klenosky, & Mulvey, 1995). Responses were organized into three HVMs: both ropes course programs, CbC programs, and IOP programs. Participants in IOP programs identified different linkages than participants in CbC programs. IOP program participants were more likely to mention the attribute “low activities” and the outcome “group efficacy” as significant and less likely to mention the outcome “anxiety.” Challenge by Choice participants

were less likely to mention "low activities" and "group efficacy" and more likely to mention "anxiety."

This study described the types of experiences that provide opportunities for meaningful involvement and indicated that ropes course program design and delivery can be manipulated to provide specific benefits. The study also identified the program attributes that are important to realizing particular outcomes. Since program design and delivery are among the factors considered most critical to program effectiveness (Neill & Richards, 1998), future studies should examine the experiences of various populations of ropes course program participants and explore how meaningful involvement may influence specific program outcomes such as self-efficacy and group cohesion.

#### References

- Gengler, C. E., Klenosky, D. B. & Mulvey, M. S. (1995). Improving the graphic representation of means-end results. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 12, 245-256.
- Hovelynck, J. (2003). Moving active learning forward: Keynote presentation to the 30<sup>th</sup> annual AEE conference. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 26(1), 1-7.
- Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 170-183.
- Neill, J. T. & Richards, G. E. (1998). Does outdoor education really work? A summary of recent meta-analyses. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 3(1), 1-9.
- Sibthorp, J. (2003). An empirical look at Walsh and Golins' adventure education process model: Relationships between antecedent factors, perceptions of characteristics of an adventure education experience, and changes in self-efficacy. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 35(1), 80-106.

Contact: Kathy Haras at [ksharas@hotmail.com](mailto:ksharas@hotmail.com)