

Abstract

Understanding recreational experiences is a longstanding research tradition and key to effective management. Given the complexities of human experience, many approaches have been applied to study recreational experience. Two such approaches are the experiential approach (based in a positivistic paradigm) and emergent experience (based in an interpretive paradigm). While viewed as being complementary, researchers have not offered guidance for incorporating the approaches into a common model of recreational experience. This study utilized longitudinal, qualitative data to examine aspects of recreational experience posited by these two approaches. Results provided a framework for synthesizing across the two approaches. Respondents had clear pre-activity expectations, and most respondents realized their expected outcomes. This supports the experiential approach. Of the 48 activity narratives, 27 experienced something unexpected, and 45 described process-oriented, intrinsic motivation, suggesting evidence of emergent and unique characteristics specific to an individual's realization of recreational experience. This supports the application of the emergent experience approach to understand how individuals create meaning from recreational engagements. The paper proposes a model for integrating results of the two approaches. While not advocating for any specific approach, the findings can serve as an example of building a holistic model of the outdoor recreation experience. The purpose of the model is to allow for a more complete understanding of how individuals create recreation experiences, more complete documentation of the benefits of outdoor recreation for both researchers and managers, and better synthesis across studies.

Management implications

Information regarding the recreational experience can assist in implementing informed management decisions. This paper presents commonly applied approaches and discusses their differences and the benefits when combining them. The paper gives insights into different approaches focusing on desired

experiences, emergent experiences, satisfaction, or long-term benefits and the related management questions. These help managers to select the most suitable methodological approach for their respective challenges.

Key words: Expectancy-valence theory, Hermeneutics, Meaning construction, Modified analytic induction, Motivation, Ontology, Research paradigms.

1. Introduction

Understanding the relationship between human experiences and associated outdoor recreational activities and settings has been a long-standing focus of recreation research (Brooks & Williams, 2012; Cole & Williams, 2012), tracing its roots to early theoretical aspects of the recreation field (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Schreyer 1982; Wagar, 1964). Given the centrality to our field of study, researchers have studied the recreational experience from an incredible diversity of perspectives, measuring many nuances of the experience. Studies of recreational experience utilize different approaches and different paradigmatic research commitments (e.g., the Recreation Experience Preference Scales, based in the positivistic paradigm [Manfredo, Driver, & Tarrant, 1996] and Extraordinary Experience, originating from the interpretive paradigm [Farber & Hall, 2007]). We also find different research programs within a single paradigm (e.g., self-efficacy [Widmer, Duerden, & Taniguchi, 2014] and attention restoration [Weng & Chiang, 2014]). What is lacking, however, is a common definition of recreational experience and a model explicitly showing how the differing aspects of recreational experience fit together (Henderson, 2011; Mullins, 2015). To illustrate this point, two recent articles in the *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* both studied emotions associated with wildlife; one wildlife viewing (McIntosh & Wright, 2017) and the other hunting (Hicks, 2017). Both studies used qualitative methods, McIntosh and Wright (2017) did not specify a theory; Hicks (2017) followed two theoretical frameworks: Theory of

Emotional Memory and Experiential Learning Theory. McIntosh and Wright identified factors that influenced the wildlife viewing experience and concluded by discussing 4 stages of the affective processing of a wildlife viewing experience. Hicks examined the emergent themes and how emotional responses might change over one's lifetime. While both studies increase our understanding of the recreational experience and have management implications, the study background and, thus, results exist largely in isolation from each other. This is not a literature review issue, as both manuscripts have comprehensive literature reviews. Rather it would appear to be the result of a lack of a unifying framework. This lack of overarching framework contrasts to other fields, such as ecology. For example, the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON; National Ecological Observation Network, n.d.) has six umbrella areas of measurement, each with several sub areas of measurement. Within the NEON program, methods are consistent across the United States and results are uploaded into a common database. Such a design allows for landscape-level analysis and the detection of trends. That system, though, is dependent on a model for how the different components of an ecosystem fit together. The recreation field measures different aspects of the recreational experience, which could be viewed as analogous to different components of an ecosystem, yet there is no model for how different components fit together. We are not attempting to discourage diversity in researchers' approaches, nor pluralism in choice of paradigms; rather we are advocating for a model that unifies the myriad approaches to studying the recreational experience. Such a model would emphasize the compatibility among different approaches, mapping how findings from the various studies contribute to our understanding of the recreational experience. We are not alone in calling for a unified model. Veal (2017, p. 217), in a thought piece on Serious Leisure stated: "It is not possible in this article to develop detailed proposals, but a potential direction can be indicated. Some 30 years ago, Rojek (1985, p. 4) referred to the phenomenon of 'multiparadigmatic rivalry' in leisure theory; what is being proposed here is multiparadigmatic cooperation. As the discussion of complementary theory above indicates,

there are numerous existing paradigms, frameworks, and approaches which a researcher might consider when examining leisure experiences. Six such frameworks addressing leisure experiences are listed in Veal (2017), all seeking to understand the phenomenon of leisure experience. Moving toward a more complete and unified model of recreational experience should enhance efforts to document recreational benefits; allow more effective expression of recreational benefits, both within the field and to those outside the field; and increase effectiveness of recreation management.”

This article provides a case study that moves toward a more complete and unified model of recreational experience. We applied principles from two distinct approaches: the experiential approach¹ (e.g., Manfredi et al., [1996]) and the emergent experience approach (e.g., Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck [1998]). While those approaches use different paradigms with respect to epistemological and ontological commitments,² we propose the elements of experience that are the focus of these two approaches are occurring at different points in time within the same recreational experience and, thus, are compatible. Furthermore, looking more closely at both approaches in the same study contributes insights useful for developing a more complete and unified model of recreational experience.

Taking from the experiential approach, we examined whether recreationists had a priori experiences they were seeking from the recreational engagement. Those same recreational experiences were also examined with an idiographic lens to allow for an emergent experience with highly

¹ Different labels have been applied to describe the experiential approach. Borrie and Birzell (2001) label it as a “benefits-based approach.” Manning (2011), following Driver and Tocher’s language from 1970, frames it as a “behavioral approach.” Patterson, Watson, Williams, and Roggenbuck (1998) refer to it as the “motivational approach.” Here we utilize Manfredi et al.’s (1996) terminology to describe a research program committed to the idea that recreationists have specific and desired expectations for outcomes associated with their recreational engagements, and their expectations are dependent on personal variables (i.e., people are motivated to participate because they expect something in return).

² Epistemology pertains to the type of knowledge that can be generated, e.g., is the observer separate from the phenomenon being observed; ontology addresses the nature of reality, e.g., reality to “uncover” vs. idiosyncratic realities; axiology refers to the goals of science, e.g., prediction vs in-depth understanding (see Patterson & Williams [1998]). As highlighted in Manfredi et al. (1996) and Appendix A of More and Drive (2005), the experiential approach is rooted in a positivistic paradigm. Patterson et al. (1998, p. 424) and Patterson & Williams (2005, p. 366) place the emergent experience within the interpretive paradigm.

individualistic meanings. It is important to note this paper is not advocating a particular methodological approach, nor suggesting these methods be replicated. Rather our purpose is to:

- synthesize knowledge across the experiential and emergent experience approaches,
- offer suggestions for conceptualization and measurement of the recreation experience, and
- provide a model for integrating research with different paradigmatic commitments.

2. Background

Since the early 1970s, one of the most prevalent approaches to studying the recreational experience has been the experiential approach and associated Recreation Experience Preference (REP) Scales (Manfredo, Driver, & Tarrant, 1996; Manning, 2011). The impetus for developing this approach was perceived shortcomings in the activities approach to recreation, which views the outcome of recreation as synonymous with participation in activities and was the dominant view through the late 1960s (Driver & Tocher, 1970; Manfredo, et al., 1996; Manning, 2011). The experiential approach was built on the idea that recreation provides valued outcomes and desired experiences beyond the recreation activity itself (Driver & Brown, 1975; Driver & Tocher, 1970; Wagar, 1964). The valued outcomes and desired experiences are motivational forces that direct people to engage in recreation. Guided by the expectancy valence theory as applied in industrial psychology (Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1964), researchers explored potential valued outcomes and desired experiences, and developed a set of psychometric scales (i.e., the Recreation Experience Preference Scales). The experiential approach defines recreation experience as the package or bundle of psychological outcomes desired from recreation (Driver & Brown, 1975; Driver & Knopf, 1976). It was also postulated that specific recreation settings could increase the likelihood of realizing valued outcomes and desired experiences. This idea sparked the development of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Manfredo, et al., 1996).

In response to anomalous research findings such as respondents' ratings of the importance of REP scales seeming to shift in response to what was actually experienced onsite (Stewart, 1992) and

questions of how individuals actually construct meaning associated with broadly worded REP scales such as “enjoy nature,” alternative paradigms were applied (e.g., Patterson, Watson, Williams, Roggenbuck, 1998). Because experience was viewed through a constructivist lens (Patterson & Williams, 2002), these researchers worked within an interpretive paradigm called hermeneutics (Patterson & Williams, 1998; Patterson & Williams, 2002, 2005; Rosenberg, 2015). One approach in particular is called emergent experience, which defines the recreation experience as “an emergent phenomenon motivated by not a very well-defined, precise or specified goal of acquiring stories that ultimately enrich their [SIC] lives” (Patterson et al., 1998, p. 450).

Key to emergent experience is the concept of situated freedom, referring to the structure in the environment providing boundaries on the experience, but within those bounds, individuals can experience the world in highly individual, unique, and unpredictable ways (Patterson et al., 1998). Researchers who developed the emergent experience approach drew from the marketing literature, a field which was undergoing an effort to refine the dominant paradigm of consumer satisfaction. This segment of the marketing literature sought to reframe consumer satisfaction from a linear process of evaluating product attributes against preconsumption standards, referred to as the comparison standards (CS) paradigm (Fournier & Mick, 1999). The goal of these marketing researchers was to redefine consumer satisfaction as a dynamic process in which satisfaction can also stem from unexpected performance of attributes, unexpected attributes, an evolving relationship between needs and attributes, and intangible meanings and identity images associated with consumption of the product (Arnould & Price, 1993; Fournier & Mick, 1999; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Oliver, 1993).

The outdoor recreation field, while acknowledging the complementary nature of the different paradigms, has not integrated the two approaches. This could be due to early literature that included the emergent experience approach with alternative paradigms that “challenge traditions” (Stewart, 1998). However, we have identified three specific artifacts that might have hindered the merging of

these two approaches to studying the recreational experience: 1) differing application of the term “expectations,” 2) a reluctance to merge findings from studies stemming from different ontological roots, and 3) examining the recreational experience at different points during the production of the experience.

2.1. Different applications of the term expectations

One source of division between the experiential and emergent experience paradigms of recreation research is the linkage between pre-trip expectations and the resulting experience. To a large extent, this division is due to semantics, owing its source to different definitions of the term “expectations.” The experiential approach uses expectations to refer to psychological states and broader outcomes (e.g., I engage in activity x to test my skills which will result in greater self-efficacy). The experiential approach defines recreation as a means to an ends, rather than the end state itself (Manfredo & Driver, 2002). The experiential approach does posit specific recreation settings (i.e., ROS classes) will facilitate those desired psychological outcomes and experiences. Critical to this discussion, though, the experiential approach does not more finely specify the relationship between setting and the production of the recreational experience, nor how experiences and meanings are created during the trip or over a longer period.

In contrast, the marketing literature forming the roots of the emergent experience approach used expectations to refer to preconceived ideas of product attributes and specific attribute performance (e.g., the comfort of a bed in a hotel, hotel staff [Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993]). Qualitative interpretive marketing studies noted a weak relationship between expectations of product attributes and satisfaction with the consumption experience. The “expectations as product attributes” view is evident in Arnould and Price (1993) whose examples of expectations include attributes such as the color of the Green River, the foliage that would be present, and competence level of the guides. The marketing field put forth the idea that satisfaction with products was more about the

creation of meaning over a longer-term consumption horizon (Fournier & Mick, 1999; Mick & Buhl, 1992). This matches the ideas put forth by the experiential approach: satisfaction with, for example, camping is not an evaluation of the amenities, but rather the desired experiences and valued outcomes that result during and after the engagement. Arnould and Price (1993), in reporting pre-trip planning, offer support for the experiential approach: “We find hints in pre-trip comments of themes that would emerge more strongly during the trip and in informants' retrospective reports. Included are hints of the themes of pilgrimage, intensification and rediscovery of self, and communion with nature and others” (Arnould & Price, 1993, p. 29). These themes, identified post-trip by Arnould and Price (1993), align with expectations as psychological states and broader outcomes as defined by the experiential approach.

Within the recreation field, qualitative interpretive researchers have conflated expectations of product attributes with expectations about experiences. A misunderstanding of the experiential approach's use of “expectations” is evident in Patterson et al. (1998) who draw conclusions about the validity of the experiential approach based on, for example, respondents' expressed negative impacts of difficulties in running a river due to downed vegetation and perceived lack of information regarding onsite conditions, resulting in respondents “not knowing what to expect.” Also cited by Patterson et al. (1998) were respondents' perceived positive impacts of unexpected events such as not seeing as much wildlife as expected (i.e., not seeing potentially dangerous wildlife) and getting “bombed” by an anhinga (i.e., a novel experience). Those “expectations,” though, are about product attributes and do not address motivations for the trip, or any broader outcomes respondents may have valued and desired as part of the trip. The challenging conditions and lack of onsite information could have caused friction among group members, prohibiting bonding. The novel experience with the anhinga could have provided a learning experience, or perhaps enabled a connection to form with a companion.

Also, key to this discussion is the concept of telic and autotelic experiences (Omodei & Wearing, 1990). Telic theories associate positive human experience in the attainment of end states. End states

can encompass a relatively small number of needs, for example self-esteem, achievement, affiliation, or a wide range of idiosyncratic goals. Autotelic theories, in contrast, associate positive human experience with the progression toward an end state rather than the achievement of an end state. Within autotelic theories, recreationists are thought to be process oriented. For instance, flow is an often-cited example of an autotelic experience (see Omodei and Wearing [1990] for a discussion of telic and autotelic theories and the placement of flow as an autotelic experience). The emergent experience approach is considered to be an autotelic theory (Patterson & Williams, 2005). However, there is empirical overlap between telic and autotelic theories; while they are distinct sources of well-being, both theories rely on the perception of opportunities for need satisfaction (Omodei & Wearing, 1990). Thus, rock climbing might produce an autotelic experience, but the rock climber chooses the activity in anticipation of the satisfaction associated with the autotelic experience. The experiential approach allows for elements of the autotelic experience to be the motivating force. Further, autotelic experiences are not solely the domain of constructivist ontologies. The concept of flow has been studied from a deterministic ontology, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Jackson & Eklund, 2002; Jackson & Marsh, 1996; Omodei & Wearing, 1990).

2.2. Different research paradigms

A second source of the lack of integration between the experiential and emergent experience approaches might be due to the ontological and epistemological differences of the two research programs (Patterson & Williams, 1998). The experiential approach hypothesized a generalizable theory of recreation motivation and sought to measure those motivations using psychometrics. As such, the research adopted an objectivist nature of reality and a deterministic nature of human experience. Following those ontological commitments, it was assumed the researchers could observe the motivation

phenomenon without influencing it³ and develop generalizable laws. In contrast, the emergent experience approach is based on ideas that the recreationist is actively constructing knowledge, the experience is an emergent narrative, and humans are actively engaged in construction of meaning in a fluid, non-linear process. Following those ontological assumptions, emergent experience researchers acknowledge they are, to some extent, coproducing knowledge with the recreationist during the research process and that knowledge might “express the understanding at the moment” (Patterson & Williams, 1998).

While any one study should have consistent ontological and epistemological assumptions (i.e., to understand how an individual constructs meaning related to some phenomenon, a researcher would look within that case, rather than attempting to generalize across individuals), we propose the need for paradigmatic consistency does not preclude a unified and more complete model of recreational experience. Rather these two approaches are compatible when viewed with respect to what they are measuring or attempting to interpret. A pre-trip motivation for engaging in a recreational activity does not preclude the onsite or post-trip idiosyncratic creation of meaning from the trip. Patterson et al. (1998) introduced the concept of situated freedom as setting the bounds on the experience. We propose a model in which pre-trip motivations provide an initial context, or frame, in which recreational experiences happen. Pre-trip motivations enable the creation of meaning as the situated experience freely unfolds. The recreational event is not random. For example, the participants in Patterson et al.’s (1998) Juniper Prairie study clearly invested effort to reach that particular site with their chosen companions. Given all other possibilities to spend their time, it is not plausible the recreationists did not have expectations for how they would benefit from a trip to Juniper Prairie. While they might have had some vague expectations as to what might occur at the site, it evolved, emerged, and a narrative was

³ This assumption includes the ability to identify, and correct, biases in measurement tools, e.g., question order bias, social desirability bias, strategic bias, etc.

produced. Because these two processes are taking place at different points in time, they are not incompatible.

The marketing field has provided a precedent for integrating research insights derived from different paradigms into a holistic model. For example, Fournier and Mick (1999) suggested a process of satisfaction that is a “multi-model, multi-modal blend of motivations, cognitions, emotions, and meanings embedded in sociocultural settings, which transforms during progressive and regressive consumer-product interactions.” Developing a similar holistic model would allow the recreation field to better synthesize across studies.

2.3. Failure to account for different phases of the recreation experience

Considering the element of time provides further reconciliation of these two approaches. Both approaches are considering a single recreation trip. Yet, the two approaches are focusing on different temporal aspects of the trip. The experiential approach is examining pre-trip motivations and post-trip evaluations of the experience in relationship to those motivations. Emergent experience, as it has been applied, relates to how the experience progressed and the idiosyncratically constructed meanings associated with that experience. Stressed in the emergent experience approach is the non-linear aspect of the experience; the construction of meaning is not the outcome of sequential steps, but rather elements of the trip might combine in unexpected ways. Other researchers have used a hermeneutic paradigm to examine the creation of meaning over a longer period of time (referred to a meaning-based approach, see Brooks, Wallace, and Williams [2006]), further emphasizing the fluid, non-linear aspect of human experience. It is necessary, though, to examine the element of time. Of course, many of the events that shape human experience are unplanned, but when dealing with recreation, planning does come before engagement, and evaluation will occur after the engagement⁴. These individual recreation

⁴ Even “spontaneous” recreation will involve planning. For example, an unexpected flight delay might result in the sudden and unexpected need to occupy 3 hours in the airport. There will be choices available: catch up on work, read (non-work related), walk through the airport, shop, or find a pub and consume alcohol.

engagements repeat over time. These ideas have been explored elsewhere (e.g., see Figure A-1 of Driver and Brown, 1975). We are proposing, though, the recreation research field should view the experiential and emergent experience approaches through a lens of compatibility rather than distinction. The experiential approach is asking *what* is the recreationist seeking pre-trip and post trip evaluations to those expectations, while emergent experience is asking *how* the recreationist constructed the experience and what does the experience mean. One point of division between the two approaches is the relationship between satisfaction and expectations. It has been pointed out that satisfaction might occur independently of the fulfillment of the pre-trip motivations. While it has been suggested this is problematic for the experiential approach (Patterson et al., 1998; Stewart, 1992), the experiential approach defines recreation as the bundle of psychological outcomes, allowing for at least some aspects of pre-trip motivations to be met. In the event there was only one psychological outcome (e.g., “achievement”); the experiential approach includes a feedback loop which must be taken into account (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Thus, the original motivating state might remain, but the “failed” onsite experience provides feedback into the next recreational engagement. The experiential approach is also compatible with studies examining the creation of meaning over a longer time frame as it allows for expectations to change across time (e.g., engaging in an event for competition vs. solitude), and it allows for activities to no longer fulfil needs. To holistically examine the process one would need to investigate larger life projects of an individual, how specific recreation engagements fit into those life projects, and how the constructed meaning associated with the recreation engagement provides feedback into larger life projects and influences future recreation choices. Again, this is not a new idea (see Manfredi et al.’s (1996) suggestion to incorporate “personal strivings” [Emmons, 1989] into the experiential framework, and Brook’s (2003) integration of “personal projects” [Little, 1983]) into recreation experience, yet the recreation field has not moved in that direction.

3. Study concept and working hypotheses

The study design, methods, and testing logic are based in assumptions rooted in positivistic philosophies of social science; the study is not seeking to measure how individual recreationists construct an emergent experience, but rather is addressing a research question as to whether elements of the emergent experience are evident. It would be difficult to design a survey that would not influence the responses we were interested in testing. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method. The interviews allowed us to test for the presence of well-defined a priori experiences without explicitly asking; the interviews also allowed us to test for the presence of emergent experiences. To test hypotheses with qualitative interview data, we adapted modified analytic induction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Robinson, 1951). Modified analytic induction differs from statistical hypothesis testing in that it does not tolerate cases that do not fit the working hypothesis whereas the latter accepts some degree of non-conforming cases (e.g., a correlation coefficient is less than 1, but found to be of sufficient evidence to support the theory). Modified analytic induction relies on “negative cases;” cases are examined until a non-conforming case is found (i.e., the negative case), the working hypothesis is then modified to account for this negative case and the process repeats until a new negative case is discovered. While modified analytic induction has been applied to a myriad of topics in the social sciences, e.g., future care needs (Sorensen & Pinqart, 2001), phases of meaning in transformational learning (Erickson, 2007), help-seeking behavior (Walters, Iliffe, & Orrell, 2001), it has not been utilized in recreation research. When using modified analytic induction, the initial codebook is developed to reflect the working hypotheses. Departures from the original hypotheses would be evident by lack of applying the initial codes, the need to develop new codes, or the necessity of writing descriptive memos to document divergent themes. Four working hypotheses were developed.

H1: Individuals form expectations of outcomes (i.e., motivations) prior to the recreational engagement.

H2: The actual experiences, and realization of expectations, do possess emergent and contextual qualities that are idiographic in nature.

H3: The failure to meet psychological outcomes, yet be satisfied with the recreational engagement is explained by a feedback loop from outcomes to expectations in the experiential approach process (e.g., Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Driver and Tocher, 1970; Mannel & Kleiber, 1997).

H4: Individual recreational engagements fit into larger networks of desired end states (e.g., leading an enriched, happy, and healthy life) and the realization of goals from a specific recreational engagement is critical to well-being because it contributes to identities, personal projects, relationships and/or other meaningful life aspirations.

4. Methods

We designed a longitudinal study to gather data at points in time in which different aspects of experience would most likely be present. The interviews were designed to: 1) test working hypotheses for the presence of concepts associated with the experiential approach; 2) assess idiographic construction and idiosyncratic diversity in recreational experiences (Cole & Williams, 2012); 3) examine satisfaction; and 4) capture broader life themes, personal projects, and/or claimed identities (e.g., Brooks, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979; Little, 1983; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Patterson, Williams, & Scherl, 1994).

4.1. Interviews

We developed interview questions to capture conceptual aspects of interest and build a set of narratives about activities in which participants planned to participate in the immediate future (referred to as activity narratives in this paper). The first interview, which took place prior to participation in the activities to be described, focused on building rapport with respondents and identifying three activities they intended to engage in during the upcoming week. Respondents were asked to note any activities

they planned to participate in for the first time. After the activities were identified, questions were asked to gather information on:

- experience with the activity (years of participation, participation in the past six months, different locations, and special settings)
- the relationship of the activity to larger personal goals or personal projects, other activities that are part of these goals or projects, and how the goals or projects contribute to quality of life
- the role of the activity in developing respondents' claimed identities
- specific reasons for participating in the activity within the next week

The second interview focused on respondents' evaluations of the activities identified in the first interview. The second interview began by revisiting the list of activities and confirming participation in those activities during the past week. For each activity in which the respondent participated, we explored.

- what made the activity enjoyable or not enjoyable
- unexpected aspects of their recent engagement in the activity and how any unexpected aspects influenced their enjoyment
- desire to participate in the activity in the future and why or why not
- new or unexpected activities engaged in by the individual since the first interview
- activities no longer practiced, activities that are avoided, or activities in which they would like to participate (but currently do not)

4.2. Sampling/recruitment

Although we were not attempting to represent any particular population, we did desire diversity among participants in the sample. The goal was to interview four individuals in each of four categories: females/males that were members of a recreational club and females/males who were not members of a club. As the goal was not a random sample, we recruited participants by posting flyers at the

University of Alaska Fairbanks student recreation center, student union, library, and two coffee shops near the campus. Interviews were scheduled as individuals contacted us; those contacting us after a respective sampling quota was reached (e.g., females who did not belong to a recreational club) were placed on a waiting list to be called in case someone who had earlier agreed canceled. Participants were compensated \$35.00 for their time.

4.3. Analysis

4.3.1. Coding

The coding process started with the coders becoming familiar with the experiential and emergent experience approaches. After that initial step, coding followed similar steps to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We utilized three coders to develop the codebook and a Kappa statistic ($\geq .60$) to indicate acceptable inter-coder reliability (Landis & Koch, 1977; Mohatt et al., 2004).

For each activity narrative, analytic memos were drafted to capture basic demographic information, a summary of the interview, and notes regarding fit of the expectancy-valence theory to the interview data. While the process of coding focused on specific concepts and constructs (i.e., separate variables), the memos were useful in considering and discussing the nature of participants' recreational activities in a more holistic manner.

4.3.2. Testing hypotheses/searching for negative cases

After the data were coded, we examined the codes for evidence of the working hypotheses as well as evidence contrary to the working hypotheses. Also considered were sections of the transcripts that offered evidence neither in support nor contrary to the working hypotheses. Contrary evidence would result in a modification to the hypothesis. A lack of evidence in support might also result in a modification to the hypothesis.

5. Results

5.1. Sample

Response to the fliers was sufficient to fill the four desired cells of the sampling plan. Ten of the 16 participants were full or part time college students. Ages ranged from 21 to 61 years old and three individuals were not citizens of the United States.

5.2. Data and coding

The average lengths of the pre and post-activity interviews were 62 and 38 minutes, respectively. Of the 16 participants interviewed, each discussed two to four activities in both the pre- and post-activity interviews for a total of 48 narratives of recreational activities. Activities were diverse, ranging from traditional outdoor activities such as fishing and biking to cooking, dancing, writing, and playing guitar; 31 different activities were identified.

The final codebook consisted of 15 codes, with an average Kappa statistic of .69. Examples of codes included *motivation*, defined as any reason why someone might participate in a particular recreational or leisure activity, and *unexpected*, defined as any emergent aspect other than what they had expected.

5.3. Working Hypothesis 1: Pre-activity motivations

No negative cases were found related to working hypothesis 1; all pre-activity interviews at time one identified specific motivations related to outcomes that were anticipated to be achieved by participation in the activity. This included seven participants with less than one year of experience with the activity. Respondents' articulation of detail regarding anticipated outcomes exceeded our expectations, with an average of 6.7 unique motivations identified per activity. Motivations ranged from commonly identified motivations such as challenge, fitness, creativity, to more refined aspects of broader motivations such as acquiring global skills as a specific expression of learning; one respondent even stated "to have an unexpected experience."

Further, a pattern emerged across all respondents in which some outcomes were linked to multiple activities, but other outcomes were linked to only one activity. For example, one respondent

linked the outcomes of being outside and appreciating surroundings to the activities of biking, jogging, and fishing. This same respondent only linked the outcome of exploring to the activity of fishing. This indicates clearly formulated expectations with regard to participation in the activities.

The pre-activity interview asked about reasons for participating in upcoming activities; the post-activity interview asked questions designed to assess beneficial outcomes. When developing the codebook, separate codes were developed to capture pre-activity motivations (“motivations”) and longer-term beneficial outcomes that may be realized after the activity (“benefits”). It was anticipated the motivation code would be used in the pre-activity interview and the benefit code in the post-activity interview. During the analytic step in which we revised the codebook, it became apparent the respondents did not possess a strong differentiation between motivations and benefits. Further, when asked the post-activity benefit question during the interview, one respondent became confused and stated to the interviewer that he had already answered the question. This provides support to the idea that recreationists have clearly defined expectations regarding outcomes before the recreational engagement transpires.

The activity narratives provided evidence to support the hypothesis that respondents’ recreational behaviors were guided by anticipated outcomes, consistent with the experiential approach.

Working Hypothesis 1 was accepted without modification.

5.4. Working Hypothesis 2: Emergent and contextual qualities

No negative cases were found with respect to working hypothesis 2. Analysis of transcripts revealed three distinct patterns that indicated emergent and contextual qualities: the occurrence of unexpected aspects while fulfilling the anticipated outcome, the prevalence of intrinsic motivation, and unique contextual qualities across respondents expressing the same motivation.

First, twenty-seven of the 48 post-activity narratives expressed an element of an unexpected aspect during the activity. When asked how the unexpected aspects affected the experience of the trip,

five reported a negative impact on the experience, 11 no effect, and 11 a positive effect. For the 21 narratives expressing no effect or positive effect, the unexpected aspect was explained to be part of the experience and was included in the motivation for participation. This suggests the experiential approach is not incompatible with post-activity findings of unexpected aspects during the trip. Further, years of participation did not differ between those who reported an unexpected aspect and those who did not ($M = 13$ vs. 16.4 , respectively; $t [20, 27] = 0.975, p = .34$), nor did years of participation differ among respondents expressing a negative impact, no impact, or a positive impact ($M = 16.4, 13.5, \text{ and } 10.9$, respectively; $F [24, 2] = .40, p = .68$). The unexpected aspects did not appear to be a function of a lack of experience with the activity.

Forty-five of the activity narratives expressed aspects that could be considered autotelic (i.e., process-oriented, intrinsic motivations). For all but 5 of these activity narratives, respondents also expressed telic concepts (i.e., goal-oriented, extrinsic motivations), suggesting multiple desired outcomes that would be realized in different ways. For example, one respondent noted that biking fulfills a desire for exercise, but her experience narrative of exercise was dominated by process-oriented motivations: "Exercise also involves appreciating the moment, the sunrise, the wind, going through the trees and leaves making noise and exercise here means a lot more than just getting some sweat down." This respondent also indicated that biking could also fulfill a social need (e.g., spending time with friends) as opposed to other exercise-oriented activities such as jogging: "so biking would be a little bit more social, or fishing, hunting, they would be more social. Jogging would be, for some reason, very solo experience." All respondents identified both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for at least one of their activity narratives. This suggests that even for activities with clearly expressed motivations, the experience associated with fulfillment of that motivation has emergent qualities.

Many respondents expressed similar motivations (e.g., exercise, creativity, learning, fulfilling a social role). These motivations clearly fit into nomothetic research on recreation behavior and

inventories of experience motivations (e.g., the REP scales). However, reporting at the nomothetic level, while useful as an inventory of beneficial outcomes associated with recreational experiences and general management direction, does not tell us how individuals use recreation as a means to create meaning in their lives. For example, 11 activity narratives (associated with 8 individuals) related to a motivation of exercise. While there was overlap in the explanations of other outcomes associated with exercise, fully understanding the meaning associated with participation in the activity would be best achieved through the emergent experience approach. For example, feeling better, socializing, and being outside were mentioned by four, six, and six individuals, respectively. Yet, even when many similar motivations were present, the narrative provides insight into individualized meanings of the experience. For example, within the exercise motivation, three respondents who were describing biking also mentioned transportation and a centrality to their lives of using a bicycle for transportation, yet how that translated into their individual identities differed. One individual appeared to be attempting to create an identity to distinguish him from others, while another used the same activity as transportation to be engaged in a particular community, another appeared to be pursuing practical reasons. The analogous analysis in a nomothetic-based study might entail clustering by motivations and comparing the clusters on other variables, building profiles of similar respondents. Again, while the cluster approach produces results with theoretical and management utility, the idiographic construction of meaning would not be revealed. If a researcher or manager desires to fully understand how individuals create meaning from recreational experiences, an emergent experience or meaning-based approach would best achieve that objective.

Hypothesis 2 was accepted without modifications.

5.5. Working Hypothesis 3: Unmet psychological outcomes, satisfaction, and the feedback loop

Of the twenty-seven activity narratives that expressed an unexpected aspect during the activity, five reported a negative impact on the experience and said that it impaired their ability to achieve

desired outcomes. Further inquiry regarding these narratives revealed for two it was simply understood that is how the activity sometimes progresses, another provided a source of learning, and another recognized it was just one setback on way to reaching a long-term goal. The final activity narrative in this category explained that having the skills to conquer the unexpected negative aspect was actually a longer-term goal, but at that point in time, they did not possess the skills needed to overcome the challenge; the intensity of the experience exceeded their skill level and anxiety resulted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982). Thus, for these narratives, while the experience was diminished, the resulting cognitive process was feedback into future engagement with the activity, indicating general satisfaction with the activity, not cognitive dissonance between beliefs about relationship between participation in the activity and the outcome. That is, the respondents did not modify their beliefs that participation in the activity leads to specific outcomes, but rather gained a better understanding of the process of achieving those outcomes. In the one case in which the positive unexpected aspect was not part of the original motivation, it did not replace the motivation but added to it. Across all 27 narratives with an unexpected aspect, the respondents indicated they would participate in the activity again; five of those stated modifications to or future evaluations of the activity. Only one of these five was in the “negative effect” group, the others in the negative effect group would continue with the activity in the same manner. There was evidence in the data that when unexpected situations occurred, respondents, including both those whose motivation was fulfilled and those for which it was not fulfilled, were incorporating feedback from the experience into future participation. This supports earlier conceptualizations of recreation behavior (e.g., Driver & Tocher, 1970).

Although the initial hypothesis did not include situations in which motivations were met, we did not view those cases as negative cases as 1) we were focused on situations when motivation was not met and 2) several models of recreation experience explicitly include feedback even when motivations

are met. We did not modify Hypothesis 3 to include those situations. Thus, hypothesis 3 was accepted without modification.

5.6. Hypothesis 4: Larger network of desired end states

Respondents were asked if the activity fit into any larger personal goals or projects in their lives. In thirty-four narratives, respondents expressed larger goals associated with defined end states (e.g., running a marathon, collection of great books to read, someday owning horses). The other activity narratives were associated with less well-defined goals such as being self-sufficient and staying busy. The larger goals associated with all but one activity narrative could be classified into one of three dimensions associated with positive mental states (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005): 1) the pleasant life (n = 11), the engaged life (n = 30), and the meaningful life (n = 6). This indicated a link to desired end states, but perhaps not well articulated in these interviews.

Additional support for evidence of larger life goals was provided in half the activity narratives that identified substitute activities if the activity being discussed was no longer available. The respondents were not prompted for substitutes; rather they were identified in responses to two questions: 1) what would be the impact if you could not participate in this activity? And, 2) how would your life be different? In all but two of the activity narratives that identified substitutes, respondents explained how the substitute activity would help fulfill the larger goal they had identified (Table 1). This indicated the larger goals were enduring and well formed. Of the half of activity narratives that did not identify substitute activities, all but three respondents stated that it would affect their life in some manner and many expressed particular needs that would not be fulfilled (Table 2). The three cases that reported the loss of the activity would not have a large impact also noted the loss of other activities would have great impact. The level of detail associated with responses to the questions related to the activity no longer being available provides support for the idea that recreational activities are associated with specific goals.

These data provided evidence to accept hypothesis 4 without modification.

Table 1. Example Substitutes if the Activities Described in the Interview were not Available

Activity being discussed	Goal/identity linked to activity	Substitutes that fulfill goal
Dancing	Global travel and making connections with people in other areas	Playing guitar
Biking	Fitness	Running
Writing radio shows	Creativity	Playing music (instruments)
Coaching (as volunteer)	Provides a sense of well-being	Volunteer more at races
Writing a book	Start and finish a project	Build birch bark canoe

Table 2. Participant Responses to Impact Regarding Loss of Activity

Activity and	
Participant #	Response to impact question
Writing a book	<p data-bbox="448 497 1315 526">It wouldn't be as good a life if I didn't have this project. How would I be</p> <p data-bbox="448 566 1315 663">impacted? Hum, (pause) I would generally channel my energy somewhere else. Which a lot of times I think I should. There's a million book writers.</p> <p data-bbox="448 703 1315 801">But if I build Birch Bark canoes, I'd be the only guy doing it and I could achieve something. (pre-activity)</p>
Soccer	<p data-bbox="448 844 1315 940">Yeah, so without soccer I think I amenable, I'm flexible ya know of going to some other sport that, maybe lifting weights or doing some other thing</p> <p data-bbox="448 981 1315 1081">that will give that same, even if not the same, but some form of a relaxing activity. (pre-activity)</p>
Dancing	<p data-bbox="448 1124 1315 1220">If I wasn't dancing I'd be focusing a lot more on the, on the biking, climbing. So my life would be different because I wouldn't have ... nearly</p> <p data-bbox="448 1261 1315 1357">that amount of friends and range of acquaintances. I think my, my circle of acquaintances would be narrowed to people my age. If I wasn't dancing.</p> <p data-bbox="448 1397 1315 1494">But I'd be I'd just be doing a lot more outdoor stuff, which is great, I love to do that, but it would be a lot different. I'm really happy to have the variety</p> <p data-bbox="448 1534 1315 1570">I have in dance. (pre-activity)</p>
Biking to work	<p data-bbox="448 1612 1315 1709">Doesn't have to be on wheels even, doesn't have to be fast just a way to get exercise and be outdoors and do something where they're other</p> <p data-bbox="448 1749 1315 1778">people around. You know that sense of community again. (pre-activity)</p>
Cooking 61	<p data-bbox="448 1821 1251 1850">Would not be as healthy, would not spend as much time with family.</p>
Crafts 61	<p data-bbox="448 1892 751 1921">Have less companionship.</p>

6. Discussion

Results supported the idea that a single recreation experience consisted of cognitions associated with the experiential and emergent experience approaches, but not always concurrently. Studies that apply these approaches should consider the unique insights provided by both and highlight how findings might fit into a holistic model of recreational experience. The results offered insights into some of the limitations of the experiential approach expressed in the literature. Interview results revealed that all respondents quickly identified expected outcomes associated with their planned upcoming activities. The interview prompts designed to elicit the expected outcome were purposefully vague: “tell us more about the activity,” “does the activity fit into larger personal goals,” “is this activity representative of the kind of person you are,” “this weekend or next week, what are some of the reasons you are going to participate in this activity”. Yet many of the outcomes were consistent with constructs measured by the REP scales. In addition, the outcomes were often identified after the first one or two prompts, indicating the expected outcomes were highly salient. In no cases, did a respondent need additional probing questions to identify expected outcomes.

The well-defined expectations of achieving desired psychological outcomes contrasts with the emergent and contextual aspects of the activity. In many narratives, the process of engaging in the activity unfolded in emergent and unexpected ways. But these unexpected on-the-ground events are distinct from the concept of an expectation for psychological outcomes. This point is critical as researchers often lump the two together. For example, the often-cited Arnould and Price (1993) “River Magic” paper lumps a variety of expectations together, e.g., thinking the Green River in Utah would have clear blue water, or that it would be grassy and lined with trees (Arnould & Price, 1993, pg. 29). These unexpected setting-related events and characteristics might indeed be the most enjoyable aspect of the trip, but they are also the elements of the experience that might contribute most to the desired psychological outcome.

For the cases when motivations were not met, the explanations by our respondents counter the idea that satisfaction in this situation is a result of coping mechanisms such as cognitive dissonance (Stewart, 1992; Borrie & Birzell, 2001; Patterson et al., 1998). In these data, respondents understood situational aspects, e.g., inclement weather, equipment failure, hindered the realization of desired experiences and outcomes. In all cases, respondents said they would participate again to fulfill the initial motivation. With respect to fulfilling the initial motivation, respondents seemed to gain additional insight into fulfilling the motivation, which could contribute to their identity (i.e., if the motivation was competence, failing might provide a key piece of information used to become competent in the future). Another related limitation of the experiential approach is that a recreationist might realize the experience intended by management, but not view it as positive (Patterson et al., 1998). One activity narrative demonstrated this situation as the skill level required to successfully navigate the situation exceeded the respondent's ability. Performing in that situation, though, was a long-term goal of the respondent. These occurrences do not seem to be a shortcoming of the experiential approach, but rather points to the need for managers to convey to potential visitors the setting conditions they will likely encounter.

The findings regarding impacts if participation in the activity was no longer possible offer insight into the issue of reported satisfaction when expectations were not met. While there are expectations associated with a single occurrence of engaging in a recreational activity, respondents indicated multiple, repeated occasions of the activity fulfill longer-term outcomes. It might be that respondents realize that while a particular trip might not progress as planned, the longer-term outcomes can still be realized overtime through continual participation (Brooks & Williams, 2012). Further, in reflecting on this potential relationship, while the particular expectations might not have been met, the unexpected, emergent aspects—that in retrospect might become the most memorable part of the trip—might further advance the longer-term goals. For example, a person seeking to be known to others as a “hiker”

(e.g., develop and/or have a “hiking identity”) might engage in a particular hike to reach a specific hard-to-reach destination for a sense of accomplishment. Unexpected challenges might thwart reaching the destination, but perhaps 1) they learned from the experience and now have more hiking knowledge, which affirms the identity they desire to build and support or 2) surviving the challenge became an accomplishment in itself and somehow changed the person’s concept of self (e.g., improved self-image). While this proposition was not explicitly tested, it points to a potential pitfall of using a limited set of questions and research approaches to examine the relationship between expectations and satisfaction.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Research implications

Previous investigations into the validity of the REP scales have examined the scale structure (Manfredo et al., 1996) and issues related to construct validity (Rosenthal, Waldman, & Driver, 1982; Tinsley, Driver, & Kass, 1982). Although the expectancy-valence framework guided the development of the experiential approach, it has not been widely tested within that context (Manfredo et al., 1996). This study provides evidence for the presence of that component of the experiential approach. We recommend that future researchers design studies to quantify these relationships.

We found support for aspects of recreational experience amenable to application of both experiential and emergent experience approaches. This may suggest a new way to understand recreational experience and aligns with the perspective of critical pluralism (Williams, 2014). It might be useful to separate the concept of recreational experience from methods used for its measurement, which would allow for explanation of how concepts from both approaches are integrated within individuals with regard to recreation. To move the recreation field toward a more complete and unified model of experience, we offer the following propositions.

Regarding the *concept* of recreational experience:

1. Recreationists are guided in their *specific* activity and setting choices by clearly defined desired outcomes.
2. The process of realizing those desired outcomes is highly specific and contextual to the individual, and does possess emergent qualities. A similar “desired outcome” might be experienced in completely different ways and have different personal meanings across individuals.
3. Experiences from specific recreational engagements accumulate; are evaluated and processed into future recreation outings; and the nature and meaning of an activity, personal project, and/or place relationship evolve over time.

Regarding *measurement* of recreational experience:

1. Clear definitions of constructs and the associated terminology should be recognized (e.g., are expectations referring to psychological states or site conditions?). Conclusions need to stay true to the constructs measured.
2. Different research goals are best achieved by applying different paradigms to match those goals.
3. A distinction can be made with regard to attempting broad generalizations (i.e., nomothetic) versus understanding how an individual constructs the experience (i.e., idiographic). Different research paradigms are more appropriate in each of those situations. For example, a hermeneutic, meaning-based approach (which encompasses emergent experience) cannot be used to generalize to a large population of recreationists regarding universal laws of behavior, whereas a positivist approach (which includes the experiential approach) would fail to fully capture the nuances of the meanings an individual associates with recreational engagements and the significance of these over the life course.

- a. Neither approach is inherently better; rather each is applicable for learning about experience if appropriately matched to the philosophical underpinnings of researchers and the goals and objectives they wish to achieve in their research.
- b. Researchers should choose paradigms and approaches consistent with the ontology to which they adhere when studying any given human phenomenon. For example, a deterministic ontology is not consistent with hermeneutics (Berbery & Boles, 2014; Patterson & Williams, 2002).

We propose developing a more inclusive model of the recreational experience that includes a more complete set of aspects of experience (Figure 1). We encourage recreation researchers to stress how research conducted in different paradigms builds towards a common goal of understanding recreational behaviors and experiences and how these relate to broader life and societal goals, human health, and well-being.

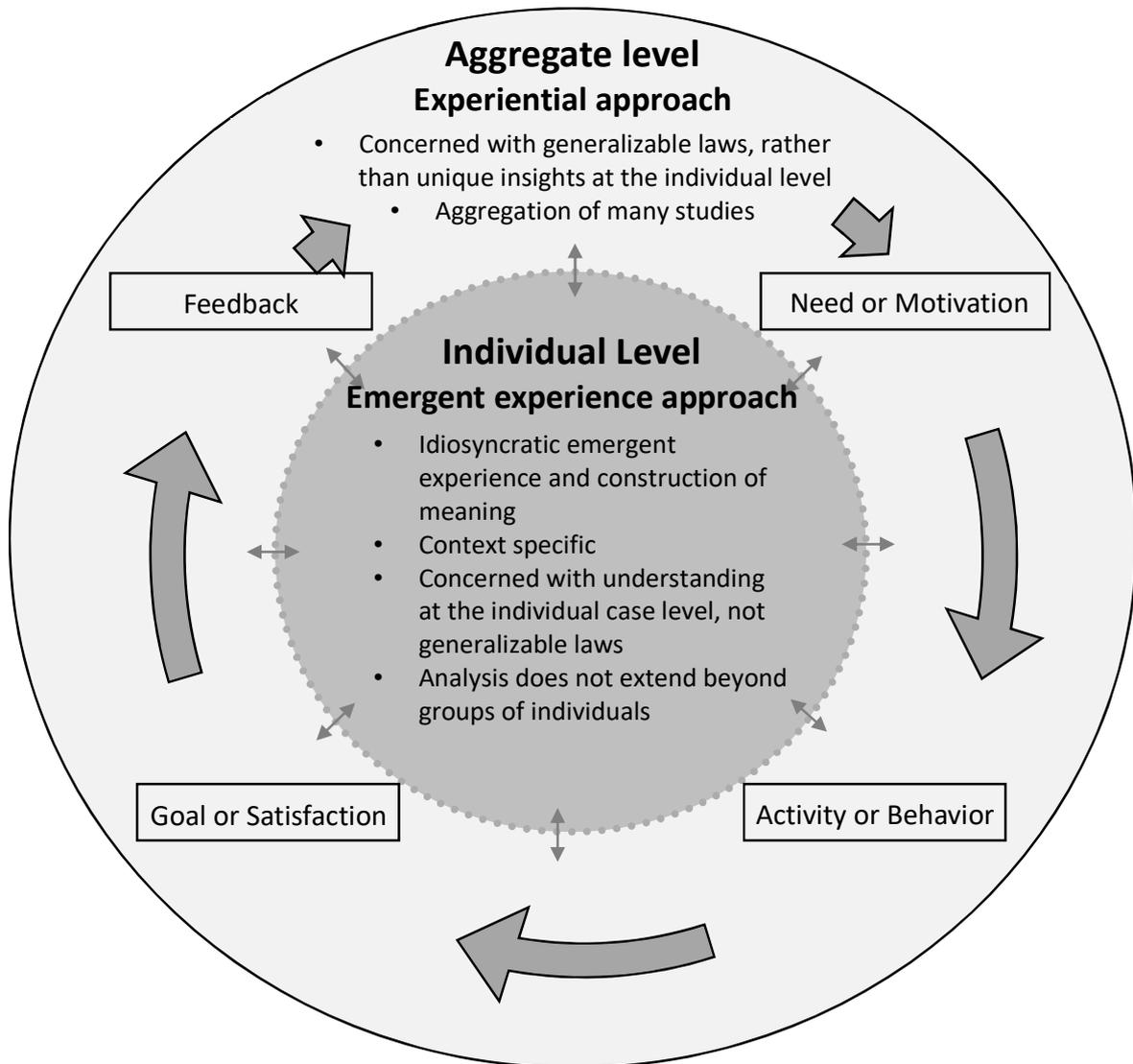


Figure 1. Aggregate-individual model of recreational experience. The aggregate level consists of many individual recreationists. We can study and understand the recreational experience at these two different scales. Different paradigms are best suited for each scale and each scale provides different, but complementary, insights into the recreational experience

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Running head: Toward a unified model of recreational experience

Achieving goals and making meanings: Toward a unified model of recreational experience

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