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Post-trip blues: Full time college students' emotional and motivational post-trip transition from adventure break trips

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POST-TRIP BLUES: FULL TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS’ EMOTIONAL AND
MOTIVATIONAL POST-TRIP TRANSITION FROM ADVENTURE BREAK TRIPS

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Nichole Crockford
University of Northern Iowa
May 2019
ABSTRACT

Full time students who attend break long collegiate outdoor recreation adventure trips receive multiple benefits from spending time with a small group of students out in nature. Coming home from these positive experiences may lead some individuals to negative feelings. Students may struggle to find the motivation needed to return to their previous schedule and match the demands of work that is expected of them. Very little is mentioned about the topic of post-trip emotion and motivation levels, even though an argument for vacation is to experience positive benefits that help not only the individual but also the workplace.

Research was gathered through mixed procedures through qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative procedures consisted of 9 conversational interviews with full time students who attended two break trips. Using grounded theory, codes and themes were discovered to address any common topics the students found important. The quantitative procedures consisted of four questionnaires containing two affect surveys that were distributed to 18 participants who attended one of four break trips.

Findings suggest that students experienced a similar overall feeling of sadness that was derived from other feelings of loss, disinterest, and confusion.
Participants reported that reintegrating into school brings about challenges they had not experienced from other transitions from previous breaks. Individuals reported that both their emotions and motivations returned to normal levels by the end of the week of their return. The quantitative studies provided a trend in the decrease of negative feelings post-trip when compared to the control point taken before the trip.

The results can benefit both individuals and programs by providing insight on how full time college students transition. Through the experiences students found most memorable in their transition a few tips may help future trip participants. A need for reflection and a time to meet with their trip friends after the break became important to the participants. They noticed these occurrences helped alleviate the negative aspects of the transition into school. Proper preparation before the trip by individuals combined with reflection tools provided by the program may assist full time college students in a happier and fuller transition.
POST-TRIP BLUES: FULL TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS’ EMOTIONAL AND MOTIVATIONAL POST-TRIP TRANSITION FROM ADVENTURE BREAK TRIPS

A Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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Nichole Crockford

University of Northern Iowa

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This Study by: Nichole Crockford

Entitled: Post-Trip Blues: Full Time College Students’ Emotional and Motivational Post-Trip Transition from Adventure Trips

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Leisure, Youth and Human Services

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction of Topic

Collegiate adventure recreation programs strive for their participants to receive a positive experience on the program’s trips. Students will spend money for various reasons to have either volunteers or paid students take them into outdoor situations that may be completely new and/or strange. Often times, these students find uplifting and challenging experiences in which they leave feeling refreshed, motivated, and confident (Cordes & Garrett, 2015). Many programs found individuals reported positive benefits that followed participants home from the longer break trips such as Thanksgiving and Spring Break.

Underlying all the positive benefits an outdoor recreation program produces, what if a negativity that is hardly discussed or handled is affecting participants at the end of their positive recreation experience? Successful programming that creates instances of growth and overwhelming self-gratification might internally cause an individual to struggle with the grips of losing that program once it ends. Students may find they are mentally struggling once the program is over and wonder why they may be feeling these emotions over a positively powerful experience. This potential effect is seen through
collegiate student participant and leaders who return from trips offered through collegiate outdoor recreation programs.

Significance of Study

Many students have the opportunity to attend an adventure trip, such as backpacking, canoeing, white water rafting, climbing, mountain biking, etc. at reduced costs through their campus’s recreation program. Universities and college campuses developed outdoor pursuit centers to offer guidance, gear, transportation, and for some, food to college students who would not have participated in outdoor recreation activities on their own due to various barriers. Students sign up for these trips expecting adventure, fun, and maybe to learn a few new skills throughout the trip. With the success of allowing students to experience new locations at reduced prices accompanied by trained coordinators to assure a successful trip, collegiate outdoor programs can be found in more than 400 colleges and universities across the nation. (AORE, 2012)

After being immersed in these unfamiliar outdoor situations and discovering positive qualities about themselves during their school’s weeklong break, students return to their normal school schedule and are expected to perform. Immediately they return to the pressure of homework, classes, part
time jobs and other responsibilities they left behind when they attended the break trip.

As of now, these individuals have been left to transition back on their own discovering potentially negative and distracting emotions that impact their day. Having had lived out this schedule before leaving the trip, often this transition is overlooked leaving many students to transition through these negative emotions on their own.

Students who expect to return to their old schedule and participate in the routine they took a much deserved week long break from, may find they struggle when getting back into that old schedule. Emotions such as sadness, longing, and for some, depressive symptoms unexpectedly overwhelm their return. Without understanding or realizing that other fellow participants and leaders may be dealing with the same emotions, they discover this transition difficult. These students may find they lack motivation or fully enjoy their days back at school in which they were able to handle before the trip; students may be unequipped to mentally handle this shift in a productive way since the transition is so unexpected. Typically, students sign up for adventure trips to gain a new experience and or learn outdoor skills, not to have difficulty transitioning back into school.
The research study came out of personal experience from the researcher. Attending multiple break trips at various roles, the transition into school always lead to highs and lows. A conversation after an interview between one of the participants in the study and the researcher highlights the inspiration for the study.

“This is either my 10th or 12th break trip that I’ve lead. So I’m kind of used to how it goes but I definitely remember, thinking back to my first break trip and transition and, that’s why I want to do this project because- I just remember how impactful and how hard and how inspired I was and how lazy I was at the same time. I felt lazy but I was also like had a lot of motivation and I don’t understand this. I feel happy but also sad at the same time. I wondered if other people felt that too.”

Finding that other students experienced similar transitions after a break trip through passing conversations, the research study came to fruition. Students explained they wanted to know how to transition better and to know they are not alone in these feelings. The research study is attempting to assist these students by attempting to see if there is a common transition trend and determining aspects that can assist students in the future.

**Research Questions**

To help facilitate the research study, the following questions have been developed in order to gain a better understanding as to what a typical college student may undergo when transitioning from outdoor recreation trips to school.
1. What emotions are these individual’s feeling as they transition from adventure trips to school?
   a. How long do these emotions connected to the trip end up lasting?
   b. What is the extent of these feelings and level of motivation?
   c. How do they affect the daily lives of the individual?

2. Is the specific trip logistics matter in inducing negative emotions and lack of motivation upon the transition from trip to school?

3. What are the qualities from the transition that influence an individual’s negative emotions or lack of motivation after coming home from a successful trip?
   a. What are participants specifically missing from trips that they may not be getting from their normal school routine?

**Hypothesis**

The specific break trips the researcher used in the study only allows 11 people to attend per trip. Due to the known success of small group sizes on personal growth, (Garst, Scheider, & Baker, 2001) there is a higher likelihood the participants in the study will conclude the trip will be a success. It is predicted that length of the trip, strong social ties, the feeling of accomplishment, and the concept of perceived freedom in a structured setting will have significant effects
on participants transitioning back into the school world. The type of trip, i.e. climbing, hiking, etc., will not be the major influence but rather the social structure and goals of the participants on the trip will formulate how deep the negative emotions may run. This process of transition is guessed to last about one week. Most of the negative effects will be transitioned through the first few days due to the shorter nature of these collegiate adventure trips.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the research that will be conducted throughout this process. Since most of the data collected will come from Midwest traditional college students, the findings may differ in other areas. The type of programming and ways the specific collegiate outdoor recreation trips are executed may influence different results from other schools. Traveling long distances (i.e. 24 hours) to completely terrains that differ from Iowa is common for the UNI Outdoors break trips. This factor may cause a difference in answers than a student who is from Colorado who is accustomed to mountains as an example.

Limitations in passion from participants about trips in general may cause trouble in formulating themes as well as giving genuine answers to a researcher who is known for their passion for collegiate outdoor recreation. Lastly, since all
cooperation for data collection is on a volunteer basis and will occur over multiple days, lack of participation throughout the entire process or research may bring about inconclusive results.

In the end, the hope for this research is to begin a conversation that programs may have been needing for some time now. Questions such as: Do we need to consider focusing or reaching out to the participants after ending adventure trip programing? Should it be the program’s duty to offer options or services that allow for easy transitioning after activities so participants can make the most out of their recreation experience? Is after activity situations just as important as the activity itself? With this research and its findings, it is a major goal to start providing data to help answer these questions as well as open up an area of study that has produced little research in the past.

**Definition of Terms**

Transition: any time an individual faces a change in routine, relationship, assumption and/or role

Outdoor Recreation Adventure Program: collegiate program hosted through a university that provides basic services so to educate novice to experienced individuals on adventure trips
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Transition

A transition is a life event that endures a change in status, relationship, routine, assumptions, or roles (Schlossberg, 2011). These changes may be expected, unexpected, or were expected to occur but did not do so, otherwise known as non-events. Transitions possess three main phases within its process: moving in, moving through, and moving out. Schlossberg’s Transition Theory explains that the preparedness of the transition (type), the individual’s relationship to the transition (context), and the alterations on the individual’s life that transpired from the transition (impact) are key factors for understanding the event (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Meaning is derived from the type, context, and impact of the transition.

Within Schlossberg’s Transition Theory, 4 S’s were developed to explain how an individual copes with the transition. Situation, self, support, and strategies are the factors that dictate how an individual may cope during their transition. Coping is further formulated by weighing each individual 4 S’s assets and liabilities. A negative transition transpires when liabilities outweigh the assets while a positive transition occurs when assets outweighs the liabilities.
Situation dictates the setting of the transition. It involves how much control the individual has with the development of the transition, how the transition transpired, and when it occurred. Individuals may take on new roles that may add stress to the situation of the transition. Previous experience with this type of transition also affects this first S.

Self revolves around the individual. It takes into consideration their personality, resources, mental health and status, as well as other personal characteristics. Demographic material such as age, gender, race, marital status, stage in life, etc. also effect the second S. The self involves all personal individual characteristics that impact the progress of the transition.

Support comes from resources to assist with the transition. These resources can come in the shape of friends, family, organizations, and other groups. The third S relies on outside sources impact and aid for the individual.

Strategies are the actions done to cope with the transition. These can be tactics, advice, or the physical steps to move through the transition. Individuals may search to control, manipulate, or manage the situation as it is. Flexibility is considered the best mindset to approach a transition and the individual should be willing to use multiple coping mechanisms through a transition (Goodman et al., 2006).
Tools and exercises have been used to help different adults within transitions such as those who are changing careers (Schlossberg, 2011). Ideas for transitions, specifically for young adults entering college, have focused on helping students build relationships, develop listening skills, assist with goal setting, and develop proper mindfulness techniques needed for college success. These specific skills may be improved through workshops, orientation programs, and individuals who are familiar with the transition model. These opportunities would help apply the ideas of the 4S’s through directed activities and check in points with staff (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Transitions have shown to produce psychological difficulties, especially for young adults. Research has shown that improving social support and attachment assists individuals in experiencing a positive transition (Lane, 2014).

The Schlossberg transition theory has been used extensively within the veteran and military community for helping these students integrate into college after serving the country overseas. This community of students face the more dramatic issue of reintegrating into college after spending time away from their normal schedules, surrounded by individuals with similar goals and challenges, then expected to return to classes and perform. Services and studies have looked
on Schlossberg Transition Theory to explain ways in providing a positive transition for the veteran community (Schiavone & Gentry, 2014).

Qualitative studies have shown that tasks, structure, experience, responsibility, social cohesion, and anxiety proved to be the larger factors that affected the veteran students’ transitions (Naphan & Elliot, 2015). The return to civilian life proved to be troublesome through the lack of support from institutions, lack of structure, and the loss of purpose. These individuals felt as though their military was their family, normal or civilian life was alien to them, and upon their return they were searching for a new normal (Ahern, et al., 2015).

The definition and background of Schlossberg’s Transition Theory was used in the study to assist with directing the research. To gain more insight of how individuals transition, it helps to look at other terms that discuss transitioning.

**Liminal Spaces**

Another phrase commonly associated with transitioning is liminal spaces. A liminal space is not a concrete or black and white term. It is considered a space that is “in between” the threshold. Just like Schlossberg’s Transition theory, liminal spaces is considered to have three phases: Separation, transition, and incorporation. Unlike Schlossberg’s Transition Theory, individuals, such as
Turner, explain that liminal spaces is an event that cannot be broken down into concrete steps or put into a formula (Turner, 1967, pp. 93-111). The event does not provide one path of execution but is instead an individual, customized event from person to person (Land, Rattray, & Vivian, 2014).

In the process of moving through liminal spaces, events, or periods, an individual may experience or respond in two different ways: positively or negatively. The positive will introduce a new world view, a transformative state of being (McCabe & Briody, 2016), a deeper understanding of self or a topic (Cousin, 2006), connection with the world, an establishment of new terms or vocabulary that deepens one’s understanding, as well as coping mechanisms to handle daily occurrences (Land et al., 2014). On the negative side, liminal spaces may produce feelings of depression, anxiety, threat (Land et al., 2014) loneliness (Barron, 2013), confusion, and inner tension (Turner, 1967).

To further aid in the explanation of post-trip transitions for a full time college student attending a UNI Outdoors trip, the full experience of enduring a recreation experience will aid in understanding the post-trip event.

5 Stage Model of Recreation/Tourism Experience

Through the journey of recreation, an individual will pass through phases that culminate into one grand experience. Clawson and Knetsch categorized an
outdoor recreation experience into five sequential phases (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966). Everyone participating in a recreation or tourism experience will have to face the details found through the steps of (1) anticipation, (2) travel to, (3) participation, (4) travel back, and (5) recollection. These steps are known as the 5 Stage Model of Recreation and Tourism Experience; each phase bringing about its own specifics that revolve around the main goal of the desired recreation activity.

The Anticipation stage answers all of the planning questions. Throughout this time, an individual will isolate how and what they will be doing at specific moments on the trip. Individuals will be looking through books, online sources, maps, and/or looking to programs for help in planning. Planning largely depends on the goals of the trip developed by the individual (Krumpe). Whether or not the person is going for social connection, to challenge or accomplish a physical demand, or experience more of the world is determined during this time. Following questions are often answered during this time:

- Will I be visiting friends or family?
- Will I detour off the direct path to visit them?
- What other sights and attractions do I want to see apart from the main activity?
- Do I have time for these activities?
- Do I have to take a side trip in participating or visiting?
- Do I have a backup if inclement weather ruins the initial plans?
- Am I flying, taking a train, or driving?
• Does this person want to accompany?
• How much will the trip cost?

Travel to stage is the time in which the individual begins navigating towards their recreation activity, whether under their control or others. This is when the participants have packed and all initial plans have been made. Once the person steps out of their house to begin their journey towards their destination they can be found in the travel to stage. This may look different depending on the plans and goals set during the anticipation stage. Details that occur during this time that impacts the overall experience are as followed:

• The traveling mode of choice
• Direct or indirect routes to main destination
• Halfway stops or side detours
• Stopping at support facilities: (gas stations, train stations, airports)
• Food and lodging
• Hotels or driving through the night
• Utilizing airports
• Stopping at restaurants

It’s important to note that travel to is part of the recreation experience.

Participation refers to the point in which the individual begins actively partaking in the main or desired activity. There may be multiple desired activities on a given travelling experience; every occurrence the individual is involved in any of these activities will place the traveler in the participation stage. The trip can be considered a success if the predetermined goals and
expectations of the participatory activities were up to the individual’s standards developed during the anticipation stage. If the individual met their goals or thought the experience was at or better than expected, the experience can be considered worthwhile.

Travel from reflects the travel to logistics. The concern is how to return back from the trip rather than how to get there. Here is where the travelers could pick up new information on what else the area offers and detour from the previous plan set in the anticipation stage.

Recollection is any point after the trip the traveler tries to draw upon the events. This will go on through their entire life and inevitably change since humans are highly selective in their memory. People will eventually try to remember the good and forget the bad. Here is where the trip is decided as a satisfactory experience or not. Tokens from the trip that were purchased or kept as a means to remember end up playing a large role in the recollection phase. Each item will call to a different aspect and event from the trip and most likely these items will be positive.

Eventually the individual will start planning their next trip. Any memories of the trip will affect future travel plans which inevitably affect the satisfaction levels of those future plans and the trip’s execution.
All trips through UNI Outdoors experience the 5 stages. Now that transition and the structure of travel have been identified, it’s important to understand what participants may receive from adventure trips in general. The research within transition states that social bonding is a large influence within transitioning. The next section will focus on the why the formation of social bonds may also influence a student’s transition. This information will aid in a partial understanding of why participants determine a trip successful and what the participants may have gained from the UNI Outdoors break trips.

**Connecting to Adventure Trips**

For an individual to miss a trip, they ultimately must first find a deep connection and positive benefit from their experience. Outdoor recreation has been known to produce benefits such as reduced stress, physical and mental challenges, active learning, positive peer interactions, social support, social skill development, and positive life outlooks (Garst et al., 2001). Due to these benefits, outdoor recreation has been utilized by collegiate programs for a multitude of reasons such as summer bridge programs, freshman orientations, group bonding, and teamwork building exercises (Vlamis, Bell, & Gass, 2011).

Deep connections have been known to come out of outdoor recreation trips largely due to the traveling group size (Godbey, 2009). Outdoor recreation
must be considerate of the environment around them since the source of natural space strongly hinders on how well the recreationists take care of the space. With Leave No Trace and minimal impact thinking strongly dominating the culture of outdoor recreation, this has caused most activities and programs to be selective in size, either out of permit size or ethical choice. Out of respect for others, following regulations, and a desire to respect the area in which programs play in, outdoor recreation programs typically keep participating groups small (The Leave No Trace Seven Principles, 2012).

This is true for collegiate outdoor adventure programs who go out on multiple days or week long trips. Collegiate outdoor recreation programs are limited by a multitude of reasons apart from general Leave No Trace ethics; permit size being a major contributor. Depending on the area and frequency of use, many group permits will limit activities to 20 people or less. Another large influence comes from transportation. Collegiate outdoor recreation programs commonly travel in either fifteen passenger vans or large size Suburbans limiting the amount of people from eight to fifteen individuals per vehicle (Bell, Holmes, Vigneault, & Williams, 2011). As the logistical influencers keep groups small and the size of the group highly dictates how fast individuals bond with others around them, it’s common to find outdoor recreation a major player in building
strong relationships (Godbey, 2009). With smaller group sizes and demanding activities, collegiate adventure trips bring about strong attachments and feelings towards fellow travel companions.

As group size competes as a strong contributor to the strength of the attachment to trip so does the individual’s interpretation of the events in front of them. Students, prior to the trip, will come up with their own level of expectations they hope to gain from the trip, as outlined in the 5 Stage Model of Recreation / Tourism, whether it be a simple open minded list or specific personal details. Since human beings are not only logical, these expectations come with emotions which in turn become highly susceptible to influence throughout their journey. The next section will explain other contributing aspects to the formation of opinions for a trip.

Affect Control Theory

How do feelings conspire with the trip itself? The 5 Stage Model of Recreation and Tourism outlines how goals are assessed and made which eventually result in the ruling of either a successful trip or one who missed the mark. These stages help to describe how someone may come to the conclusion of a successful trip before, during, and after the trip. Affect Control Theory attempts a look into the individual’s feeling’s role in enjoying and processing the
activity in front of them. Affect Control Theory focuses on the feelings rather than logic as it’s been found that individuals will react to situations per their feelings on top of logic (Heise, 2002).

Affect Control Theory States that emotion plays a crucial role in how an individual reacts to certain social events as well as signals how events are upholding to the constructed identifiers (Kemper, 1990). The theory uses a person’s perceived identification in which they give themselves and others. These identifiers outline their expectations of what will happen in a certain event and are take the form of roles such as mother, doctor, visitor, participant, etc. Each role holds a stereotypical association of how they are to interact with the outside world which has previously been developed by the individual throughout their life and with the help of the culture they submerged themselves in (Heise & Calhan, 1995). If the events and actions coincide with the expectations then positive emotions exhibit, while the clashing of preconceived notions and transpired events will produce negative emotions (Heise, 2002).

All events consist of actors, behaviors, objects, and settings which play a role in how the individual feels during a specific event (Heise, 2002). The individual will use these items to shape the identifier for the situation and the expected result.
Affect Control Theory states that individual’s way of organizing these identifiers of others, also known as actors, is done so in a measurable way (Kemper, 1990). This measurable device is called the EPA profile. The EPA profile is broken into three sections of process: evaluation, potency, and activity (Heise, 2002). Evaluation is the process of determining what identifier will most likely fit an individual through judgements of morality, impressions, and other standards. Potency dictates how much affect or impact the individual will hold on a given social interaction and whether it will be positive or negative. Activity focuses on the individual’s real play and spontaneity of the situation and how the individual may act (Heise, 2002).

Though the Affect Control Theory typically focuses on the interpersonal reactions with other individuals or perception of another individual, studies are starting to use the theory to describe how an individual perceives events, with only a small element of social interaction. Affect control theory reveals that an individual partaking in a positive recreation experience that involves interactions with other people results in a multi-dimensional experience (Lee & Shafer, 2002). This research may elude to participants experiencing multiple emotions which depend on their environment and individuals in their space. Since Affect Control
Theory describes the possibility for both emotions, it is important to understand previous research on the positive and negative emotions attributed from travel.

**Post-Trip Happiness**

As the 5 Stage Model explains, individuals will go through multiple phases to create a culminating event that is remembered as either a good or bad experience. Though people typically reflect on the trip as a whole and dictate the success of the trip after, their emotions tend to go through a specific trend in relation to the model. More specifically, happiness lingers with individuals for a certain amount of time, the prominence of happiness is more evident in certain stages, and the intensity is more susceptible to specific trip qualities.

Very few articles were found through a meta-analysis conducted by DeBloom, Kompier, Guerra, Weerth and Taris, but some themes were drawn from the little data available on the subject (DeBloom et al., 2009). One recurring theme is that post-trip happiness does not last a significant amount of time after a trip; most individuals return back to their pre-trip happiness levels within two weeks of their return home, with one week being more likely.

The highest amount of happiness an individual will feel is found in the anticipation stage of a vacation, or, if considered highly relaxing, during the vacation (Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010). Once
individual’s return home, they are immediately thrown back into work to either get caught up on what they missed, continue with the tasks they left behind, and primarily fit back into their way of life before the trip. Having to come back to these demands and shift quickly back to their old ways, the happiness of the trip starts to fade. Those that have the largest fighting chance to hold on to their vacation happiness is individuals who classify their trip as highly relaxing which was determined from a quantitative study (Nawijn et al., 2010). The study asked vacationers to rate their vacation stress on a scale of highly stressful, moderately stressful, neutral, moderately relaxing, and highly relaxing then was compared with their happiness levels post vacation.

How individuals travel while on vacation has some effect on how happy vacationers feel afterwards. In a study with 13,000 respondents on mood reactions to travel, bicyclists were the happiest, followed by car passengers and drivers, with bus and train riders experiencing the most negative (Morris & Guerra, 2014). For those who drove on trips, they were more likely to report more negative emotion changes than auto passengers (Morris & Guerra, 2015). It is assumed the stresses with travel that drivers experience is higher than passengers which increase the likelihood for drivers to experience negative emotions on longer trips than shorter trips. The findings of a research study
conducted with over 22,000 individuals traveling suggested that shorter commute times with lower congestion of passengers will reduce the feeling of negative emotions (Morris & Guerra, 2015).

It takes about eight days for an individual to be fully engaged in their trip (DeBloom, Geurts, & Kompier, 2013). This has not proven to manipulate the post-trip happiness level though. Research found in the Meta analysis states the length of a trip does not matter when it regards an individual’s happiness after vacation. It’s believed that smaller trips produce the same results for the same length of time (DeBloom et al., 2013). Whether an individual went on a vacation for an extended weekend, three to four days, or for a longer excursion, seven to fourteen days, their post-trip happiness returned to pre-trip happiness levels in two weeks. Two weeks had been the point in which all happiness derived from the vacation would no longer affect that individual, as long as they returned to their similar schedule in which they left. Due to lack of research and repetition of surveys or tests, finding one conclusive result is difficult. On the opposite end of post-trip happiness, research on negative feelings after vacation or trips provided even less conclusive results.
Post-Trip Depression

There is a lack of scholarly evidence on post-trip depression (PTD) or similar terms such as post-trip blues, which elude to the existence of this specific condition during this period. Anecdotal evidence can easily be found through web searches and discussions with travel enthusiasts about post-trip depression but not through scholarly articles. Instead of a medically recognized phenomenon, the concept has not been officially considered a health concern. Rather, the point of time is instead contributed to other accepted feelings, emotions, and psychological terms. PTD has been recognized as a state of being comprised of a multitude of multi-dimensional conditions in which professionals hold their own opinions on the time after a trip. It has been a termed coined by the general public as well as post-trip blues, post-holiday blues, and travel nostalgia.

Instead PTD has been attributed to other recognized terms such as contrast effect (McMahan, 2015). Quantitative studies claims a lack of evidence on post-trip depression (Nawijn, 2011). It is a term used by the general public made up by the general public that is not backed by research. Other than scholarly articles, information can still be found through anecdotal evidence. Common feelings reported by travelers found on web searches and blog posts
were sadness, nostalgia, and culture shock. Frequent travelers state the period of
time may be marked by changes in an individual’s work productivity and
wellbeing that has been associated with discomfort, loss, distraction, and
disorientation. Loss in appetite, motivation, exhaustion, and feelings of nostalgia
are other common symptoms reported by the general public for PTD.

Even with the lack of evidence over the official existence of PTD or PTB,
professionals in psychology will reply with tools to help individuals into a
happier mental state. These tricks are referenced to other scenarios or conditions
associated with happiness and psychology studies. Other helpful information
can be found through personal experiences listed by the general population.

Summary

Students who sign up for outdoor recreation trips will be subject to
previous research findings discovered through transitions, liminal spaces, the 5
Stage Model of Recreation and Tourism, affect control theory, the known
happiness levels of travel, as well as the lack of knowledge of post-trip
depression. A review of literature points to a need of study in post-trip
transitions in general largely discussed in the post-trip happiness section.

Most of these studies are focused on working adults who take off time
during holidays from their job to travel with family. Little has been done for
college students during the initial weeks of return; more specifically, a gap of happiness information can be found for college students who sign up for an adventure trip through a collegiate outdoor program.

It’s important to look into this particular stage of life due to the different factors college students possess apart from the adults that make up the previous researches. For instance college students who sign up for trips travel with peers instead of family, they tend to not get behind on school work or miss anything because school is not in session during the week they are gone. Traditional students typically do not have to worry about children or other family members so their focus is solely on themselves. In the case of removing oneself from class for vacation, the stress of missing a few days of classes may be less than missing work due to the lack of dependency the class has on the student. The class will go on easily without the student while work may need an employee to be present for certain tasks to function. Because of these factors, a lot of the research may not align with the reality of college students returning from vacation.

General discussion with college participants from the return of trips suggests that not all of their transition period is full of happiness or positive benefits. Finding a sense of self, an increase in overall happiness, a higher drive to get tasks done, and leadership qualities may be externally evident and proven
to increase from outdoor recreation trips, but internally they may be harboring some negative feelings. With a lack of information already present, the call for more research has been repeatedly asked for by those starting to grasp an understanding on what an individual experiences when returning from vacation, or in the scope of this study, adventure trips (DeBloom et al., 2009).

Following will be the presentation of the methods used to obtain more information on post-trip emotional and motivation levels of full time college students. An analysis of the findings and recommendations given from these results will help to provide a deeper understanding of post-trip transitions.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participant Criteria

All participant criteria was predetermined before selecting individuals for their participation in the study. The specific criteria for participation were as followed. Students must:

1. Uphold a full student standing at the University of Northern Iowa
   a. Must be taking a minimum of 12 undergraduate credits or 9 graduate credits
2. Participated in a 10 day adventure break trip through UNI Outdoors
3. Found the adventure trip a positive experience
4. Did not plan on participating in another UNI Outdoor trip one week after their return

Participant Selection Process

Trip participants and coordinators attending adventure trips through UNI Outdoors were asked at the pre-trip meetings, held two weeks before departure dates, for those interested in participating in the study. The adventure trips used in the study were two Thanksgiving break trips, both backpacking in the Grand
Canyon, one Spring break trip backpacking in Escalante Utah and one Spring break trip involving both canoeing the Santa Fe and backpacking Cumberland Island. All four trips were 10 days in length.

All participation was on a volunteer basis and began one week before then proceeded two weeks after the trip. Participants signed an agreement allowing the researcher to send out one pre trip questionnaire, three post-trip questionnaires, and to meet for one interview focusing on their post-trip transition.

The total amount of participants who volunteered throughout the study was 19. During the Thanksgiving break trips, 10 participated in the questionnaires and 9 of the 10 conducted interviews. During the Spring Break trips, 8 completed all questionnaires. Halfway through quantitative data collection during the Spring Break research, 1 participant dropped. All materials and interview questions were sent and approved by the IRB. Consent was given through the initial pre-trip questionnaires then again at the interview.

At any point, the participants were aware of their ability to conclude their participation in the surveys and interview process. Participation in the interview process included the chance to be awarded an incentive. A drawing was held after the data collection was completed for each break. The participants were
placed in drawings depending on their participation for the following opportunities: 1) $50 prepaid VISA card for completing all four questionnaires 2) $50 prepaid VISA card for participating in an hour long interview. The drawing was devised to compensate for the students’ time needed to complete the research that occurred during the finals and midterm session.

**Instrumentation**

Research was gathered through a mixed quantitative and qualitative method. The reason for multiple intakes of data was to establish a further understanding on what the participant was feeling in the short term as well as how they remembered their feelings over the course of their transition.

The two research methods were developed around the process in which an individual reacts emotionally and then remembers these reactions to important life events. The immediate emotional response, known as conscious experience, describes what that individual feels in the moment. This response goes through an organization process on the decisions for how to feel and where to best store the memory of the event. This is done to develop the skills needed for handling the specific situation (Behrendt, 2013). Episodic memory is remembering the process and calling back what those emotions were during the process of the conscious experience (Behrendt, 2013).
The quantitative aspect of data collection will aim to collect information on the participants’ feelings over their day to discover what the participant’s potential conscious experience consists of. The qualitative approach is the attempt to collect the memory of those feelings or episodic memory (Behrendt, 2013). This process will assist in describing the overall reaction when a student transitions back from an adventure trip. By drawing from multiple research methods and aspects of memory, the research will help show what information an individual stores about their day along with their perception on their own transition.

Quantitative

The conscious experiential information was gathered through questionnaires sent out before and after the trip. One questionnaire was sent before the trip to determine the student’s control point in their emotions. Three more questionnaires were sent out the week after the trip on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. These three questionnaires were used to determine if there were common emotions that developed at certain points in the week, if a common trend of certain emotions occurred, and when the participants returned to their control point. The questionnaires were constructed for the participant to
self-report their emotions and the extent they experienced these emotions throughout the day.

For direction, a portion of the quantitative research collection reflects the quantitative techniques found in Vacationers Happier, but Most not after Holiday due to the topic and findings of the article (Nawijn et al., 2010). The research had used questions from the Positive and Negative Affect Score to gage the individual’s level of happiness pre and post vacations. Further questions were added to fill in some gaps that were pertinent for this specific study.

With a lack of understanding and research in the topic, two questionnaires were used to help narrow down the specific emotions as well as allow participants to voice their own opinion on what the questions meant to them. The questionnaires gave the participants a directed way to report and discuss their emotional response over their transition.

The questionnaires provide two different established questionnaires along with demographics. The first section asked questions on consent to the study for the IRB, demographic questions, and the participants’ feelings over the overall success of the trip. Section A consisted of questions from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule or PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) then
Section B was the Bradburn Scale of Psychologic Well-Being or the Affect Balance Scale (ABS) (Bradburn, 1969).

Questionnaire Section A: PANAS. Below is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and rate to what extent you felt this way throughout your day with the following scale:

1: Very Slightly or not at all  2: A Little  3: Moderately
4: Quite a Bit  5: Extremely

1. Interested  
2. Distressed  
3. Excited  
4. Upset  
5. Strong  
6. Guilty  
7. Scared  
8. Hostile  
9. Enthusiastic  
10. Proud  
11. Irritable  
12. Alert  
13. Ashamed  
14. Inspired  
15. Nervous  
16. Determined  
17. Attentive  
18. Jittery  
19. Active  
20. Afraid

1. What was the primary emotion you felt throughout today and was it due to the trip? (It may or may not be from the list above)

2. Did you feel motivated to do your scheduled activities?
3. Did you notice any change in your mood or motivation since your previous reflection of the trip? If yes, please explain what you noticed and how it affected your day.

4. Please note below any specific events apart from the trip that happened throughout the day which altered your feelings as well as the questions it affected.

**Questionnaire Section B: ABS.** Please answer Yes or No to the following questions if you believed this was true about your day:

Did You Feel:
1. Excited or interested in something throughout your day?
2. On top of the world?
3. That things were going your way?
4. Pleased for accomplishing something?
5. Restless that you couldn’t sit long in a chair?
6. Lonely or remote from people?
7. Bored?
8. Depressed or very unhappy?

**Qualitative**

The episodic information was gathered through a sit down interview either eight, nine, or ten days after the trip. The interview was set to provide information of the participants first week and weekend spent back from the trip.
Further research was not be needed the participants returned back to their primary well-being within the first week back from the trip (DeBloom et al., 2009).

Interviewing Participants. Interviews provided open ended questions in a semi structured, conversational approach to allow for participants to elaborate on their answers and for the researcher to probe deeper into a topic (Hill, 1997). The reason for adding qualitative research methods is that little is known or established about the subject. Qualitative research is able to point out themes in a subject that has had little research history. It provides a starting ground in a subject that does not possess an already established foundation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Interview questions were composed and given verbally to all participants, allowing for the interviewer to focus on specific subjects to isolate themes and common answers. The interviewer then asked probing questions so to further build upon statements, thoughts, and feelings in which the participants expressed. A conversation style interview allowed for the participants to speak freely and give detail upon the specific subject in an order the participants found important with little guidance from the interviewer.
The interview questions were first tested and finalized through a smaller research study with individuals who had been on previous UNI Outdoors break trips within recent years (1 to 4 years). Once the questions were formulated to acquire adequate information on the subject, the questions were grouped into categories to make an interview guide sheet. In the end, 7 categories were formulated with common initial and probing questions in each category that assisted in promoting conversation. Not all questions were asked in every interview but all categories were covered in depth or until the participants gave answers that were similar to the other participants’ answers.

**Interview Questions.** The following is the overall interview categories that starter and probing questions were derived from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Interview Categories</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Emotions and Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip and Activities</td>
<td>Stories and People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Life / Liminal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview guide helped the interviewer stay organized through a conversational approach. Participants would bring up categories naturally, in differing order from other interviews. The interviewer strove to keep the conversation moving in a natural and free flowing direction as many of the questions were personal reflections with difficult reflections to articulate. To get
real and in depth reflections, it was found that participants needed to feel comfortable with the topic and arrive at certain conversation topics after identifying others. This had the participants arrive at specific questions on their own time and effort. This tactic meant the interview often jumped around in an unstructured order. With the guide, the interviewer was able to ask all important questions needed to fully delve into the categories which was discovered through the testing and formulating period of the interview guide.

**Procedures**

All questionnaires and interviews were conducted in the 2017 - 2018 academic school year.

**Quantitative.**

At the pre-trip meetings, two weeks before the trip, participants were recruited for the research. A week prior to the trip, participants took a pre-questionnaire that resembled questions they were given on future questionnaires. The post-trip questionnaires were sent out via Google Forms at 5 PM every day to the participants’ email the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the week after the trip. A text was sent at 8 PM to their personal cell phones as a reminder to take the questionnaire. The first post-trip questionnaire inquired about the individual’s immediate emotions during their first day back from their
trip. The following two post-trip questionnaires inquired about the individual’s emotions of that day as well as how they felt they compared to the previous questionnaire.

Qualitative.

Each interview was conducted by the researcher and recorded on a digital recorder. Participants were kept anonymous and each individual assigned a code number. Personal information was kept separate via the code number and the link was destroyed once research had been completed. Each participant was asked similar questions allowing for participants to have detailed responses as well as giving the researcher the opportunity to ask more in depth questions over specific statements.

All interviews were transcribed and then analyzed for common themes. Once research had been completed, all recordings were destroyed.

Incentives

Incentives were awarded through a drawing for those who volunteered and completed all sections of the research. A total of three drawings were awarded. Two individuals participating in the thanksgiving break; one for full participation in the questionnaires and one for the interviews. One was awarded
to another individual during the spring break trip for the questionnaires as no interviews were conducted with the spring break participants.

Data Analysis

Quantitative.

Questionnaires were collected at the end of each day and stored on Google Forms. The information was then transferred to SPSS 24 and ran through repeated ANOVAs. Individual emotions, overall positive and negative emotions, and the scores from the two different scales were all run separately.

Qualitative.

Once the interviews concluded, the researcher began transcribing the interviewed recordings. After initial transcription, the transcripts were reviewed to ensure accuracy and develop an overall grasp of the material. After, the transcripts were reread to assign codes throughout the transcription as well as isolate relevant data. The codes were separated into categories and then grouped together for themes. The transcripts were reviewed again to extricate quotes. These quotations were assigned to specific categories and reviewed for accuracy. Themes and findings discovered were used to answer the original research questions.
Reasons for Data Collection

The topic of post-trip happiness and motivation lack in depth discussion and comparison. Due to the lack of studies, the topic has not effectively drawn conclusions on an accurate representation on post-trip vacations in general.

A great example of the lack of information is best shown through the Meta analysis process over topics that focused on post-trip positive effect or recovery periods after vacation. Few papers met the researchers criteria when the subject or similar subjects of post-trip vacation happiness were run through a systematic literature search through PsychInfo and Medline; the research study ignored all non-English papers, those that didn’t deal with healthy and working respondents, and those that had not been published in peer-reviewed journals (DeBloom et al., 2009). Furthermore, these journals could still be narrowed down in scope, specifically 7, since the papers to be ruled out were duplicated by similar authors or lacked proper setup to produce comparisons of outcomes. The paper had expressed a similar statement that further research projects should be conducted with better control points.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter describes participant profiles, quantitative, and qualitative findings of the mixed data collection. Descriptions of the qualitative findings will be described briefly through predominant themes. Each of these themes will then be further explained with their corresponding categories. The quantitative findings will follow.

Trip Profiles

Four trips were used in the research study. All four trips involved the activity backpacking as well as additional activities such as hiking and canoeing. For further trip information, Table 2 discusses the details of each trip.

Table 2: Trip Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Break</th>
<th>Main Location</th>
<th>Main Activity</th>
<th>Additional Activity</th>
<th>Total on Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand Canyon 1</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Fall 2017</td>
<td>Grand Canyon, AZ</td>
<td>Backpacking</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Fall 2017</td>
<td>Grand Canyon, AZ</td>
<td>Backpacking</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah Escalante</td>
<td>Spring Break Spring 2018</td>
<td>Grand Staircase, UT</td>
<td>Backpacking</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Adventure</td>
<td>Spring Break Spring 2018</td>
<td>Santa Fe, FL / Cumberland Island, GA</td>
<td>Canoeing / Backpacking</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Participant Profiles

The participants who volunteered for the study met the predetermined standards and were collected from the Thanksgiving Break trips. After interviews from the Thanksgiving Break, it was concluded that there were no further need of additional interviews from additional trips due to repetition of trends in answers. Out of the 20 eligible trip participants and leaders, 9 had volunteered for the interview process. All 9 participants volunteered for the quantitative research as well.

For the qualitative participants, demographic information may be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Involvement in Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 1</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 1</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tristan</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 2</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>2nd Yr Masters</td>
<td>Grand Canyon 1</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative

The qualitative research produced four themes and sixteen categories within the themes. Three to four categories were discovered within each theme which aid in the further explanation of the themes. The next sections will discuss the themes, represented in Table 4 followed by the associated categories.

Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lasting Reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Emotional Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Weeklong Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable Motivation Levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lasting Reactions.** The adventure trip produced lasting reactions. Everyone, whether a coordinator or participant, outlined new experiences that impacted their transition back to school. These experiences were used to dictate their thoughts over the “big picture”. Students stated they felt refreshed and were given the opportunity to reflect on their lives in ways they were unable to in their schedule prior to break. These reflections had profound impacts on their motivation and emotions which affected their week back to school.

**Difficult Weeklong Process.** Transitioning through the liminal period proved to be a difficult weeklong process. The sudden jump into studies, tests, finals, and work proved to be frustrating for all. Their daily school activities
helped them to transition quicker but they missed trip aspects, expressing desire to return to the trip world. They felt as though they were going through the motions, being physically present but not mentally.

**Mixed Emotional Experience.** The post-trip transition is a mixed emotional experience. Students reported both high and low emotions that occurred at similar times. These positive and negative emotions caught the students unaware, ultimately affecting their transition back into their previous schedule. All had found the trip experience rewarding and the sudden turn from participating on the trip to reintegrating to school was confusing. The emotions reported were similar to those found in someone who is in a liminal period or “in between” state.

**Dependent Motivation Levels.** Students reported different motivation levels after their trip; these levels depended on their motivation and work ethic before they left for the trip. The break trip either provided tools for individuals to motivate and do better in their studies than before, or find it difficult and distracting for their last weeks. The interviews suggested that coordinators and participants may find a difference in their motivation after the trip due to the differing roles on the trip.
Categories

Each theme will now be broken down into corresponding categories. This will allow for further exploration on what the students reported during their interviews. Quotes have been saved for this section as the in-depth report is focused in the categories.

Lasting Reactions

1. The shared experience developed deep social occurrences during and after the Trip.
2. Being “away from it all” created profound experiences.
3. Deeper self-awareness through exceeded expectations.
4. The trip promotes realizations and reflections on “what’s important”.

Difficult Weeklong Transition

1. Overlapping of the “trip world” and “reality” leaves individuals “there but not there” for a week.
2. Participants are forced back into the “grind”.
3. The transition period begins during the travel back phase and fully manifests during the recollection phase.
4. Participants miss trip aspects and learning.
Mixed Emotional Experience

1. The post-trip transition was unexpected, creating “surprising” realizations.
2. The “trip high” and sadness made transitioning difficult.
3. Competing positive and negative emotions during transition left participants conflicted.
4. Questionnaires identify changing negative emotions and helped participants transition.

Variable Motivation Levels

1. High motivation before the trip transforms to low motivation after the trip.
2. Low motivation before the trip transforms to high motivation after the trip.
3. Coordinators and participants may experience different motivational patterns.
4. Motivation returns between the Wednesday and Friday of the returning week.

Lasting Reactions

The shared experience developed deep social occurrences during and after the Trip. Immediately participants were eager to discuss the social bonds that occurred through their trip. The ability of strangers creating tightknit close bonds
in a short amount of time was a favorable conversation topic. Ashley had
addressed her surprise in these bonds.

> It’s weird being complete strangers then having that experience to bond
> over and then you’ll have that for the rest of your life. I definitely won’t
> hesitate to say hi to anybody when I see them.

Jacob would circle back to the bonds he made on the trip throughout the
interview. “I mean I keep I keep going back to like getting connected with
everyone but that was the thing that took me most off guards was the
connections.” Participants would discuss this importance and their surprise at
how cohesive the group worked together when reflecting on personal previous
group experiences. Ashley explained her amazement with the group’s effect on
her experience.

> The group was really, really incredible. We talked about that a lot on the
> trip, how the dynamic was just off the wall. It was just insane on how
> much we got along because I’ve been on other group trips before, never
> had I have the group gotten along so well with no drama, no fighting,
> nothing. So it was really good to have a good group to experience
> something pretty amazing.

Jacob discussed the relationships with trip participants and leaders gained
through the trip were important.

> This trip itself was amazing. Everywhere you looked was like a picture
> postcard. But the people- My experience with the people were actually
> really amazing. Holy cow the friendships I made are really special
Working through challenges and group goals brought everyone together, past a working friendship. Participants relayed the experience as the development of friendships as well as times spent with friends. Olive explained her reflection of everyone exiting the canyon.

But we definitely came out of the canyon and everyone was like happy and friends with everyone else. I think there wasn’t a single like individual that had issues with someone.

Megan discussed the difference about her reactions with individuals on the trip compared to her relationships with meeting coworkers, “Yeah I think it’s kind of nice being able to get to know them more as people instead of just as like someone to work with.” Keith listed one of the reasons the group bonded so quickly became due to the trip participant’s shared goals, “...because they were all kind of out there for the same reasons.”

Not all of the relationships were new. Some trip participants signed up with their friends and significant others. Trip coordinators know their co-coordinators through training and previous trip experiences. These friendships and relationships developed prior to the trip were deepened through the experience. Tristan described how one experience brought him closer to his significant other and experiencing that with her was important to him:
Obviously I have a deeper connection with her now from that because we did it together and I was really glad that we got to walk out together of the Grand Canyon. That was really cool.

Relationships throughout the group ran deep, allowing for everyone to open up about their lives, even though they had only known everyone for a short amount of time. Steven described that even though the friendships formed and looked differently from one another, they still developed closer, “So like we’ve all developed a relationship some different ways but all kind of increased exponentially.” Keith reflected on a previous break trip he guided where the social bonds formed along that specific trip developed quickly, “By day two we are all super close knit and like we were all girl talking and sharing secrets.”

Steven remembered the experience of how the group came together and how positive that felt:

So we slowly started opening up in our food group and after the first hike we started cracking jokes and getting more comfortable around each other. And by the end of the night we felt like we’ve known each other for a very long time in that just 10 days so it’s pretty cool.

Later on in the interview, Steven addressed how quickly these bonds formed and how personal these relationships became.

I just think it’s awesome that starting on that trip I was uncomfortable sitting with a person to the left of me. I didn’t know who was sitting in front of me, didn’t know who was driving; knew a little bit about the people behind me. I had no idea who the back was and then to be having
like life talks in the car ride with everyone... ...The games that we played like we were all really close.

Jacob also expressed how personal the relationships developed.

Honestly I didn’t expect to get so emotionally connected with a lot of people. Me and Steven had a light heart to heart in the tent on the first night. He asked me, you know, what was wrong and stuff so I opened up to him and I felt a lot better and a lot closer.

Even when the group dynamic itself wasn’t all inclusive, individuals still found connections. Mandy reported that she felt as though the trips overall social bonds did not extend to everyone, but she found growing relationships with certain individuals, “I feel like throughout the trip as it went on I became closer with some of them.”

Many stated the reason they felt these friendships form were from the situation they were in. They were forced to live the next 10 days in small spaces such as tents and 15 passenger vans, through a challenging itinerary, and days that isolated them from the rest of the world. Megan explained how the participants were forced into these tight spaces which helped her to make friendships:

When you’re in that kind of enclosed space just, you’re forced to get along with people and I thought it was gonna be a lot harder than it was but when there’s no other alternatives it seems it got a lot easier.
Ashley, who like Megan, reported she struggles at times to get along with strangers and found that the trip’s setting made it easier:

I honestly didn’t expect to get as close and relate with the people on the trip as I did. I knew they were complete strangers and usually I shell up with complete strangers but when you’re only with that group and don’t really have a ton of interaction with other people, especially on your phone, then you have to branch out and get to know people. So I wasn’t expecting to form as good of relationships as I did. I was expecting to get to know them but I didn’t know it would get-

Once the trip returned, everyone departed their separate ways for the first time in 10 days. Both trips lacked a designated time to reconnect again but had discussed a formal meeting would be arranged. When the trip was over the act of separating from the group impacted their feelings about the social bonds created through the trip they attended. Goodbyes from the trip were filled with hope that they had new friendships that would last upon their return. Mandy explained how the friendships would carry on into other roles, “I was on a trip with the same interests as me but now I have them as a support system.”

Jacob described how the final goodbyes and last group campfire reflection stood out to him, “definitely kind of feeling a lot of emotions when we’re leaving saying goodbye especially that rose, bud, thorn for that last night and that was really awesome.” Keith described his experience about his desire to stay connected with the friends he made on the trip on his first break trip.
It’s like, ‘I’m going to keep talking to these people forever’ and that didn’t happen but that was how you felt right after you left. It was kind of like that runners high where these guys are awesome.

The interactions themselves eventually changed causing the participants to desire a return to the level of friendship they experienced on the trip. Steven expressed his thoughts on the lack of time to spend with his friends and how important these friendships are to him.

We don’t get to get that opportunity anymore. This world is so fast that you don’t have more than five minutes to sit down in the same place. So just like the amount of time that we all had to bond; the time that we shared. Yeah just like meeting new people that actually care about you. You can meet new people and they forget your name in five seconds but I won’t forget you guyses names.

Mandy also described this detachment from the group of individuals she felt so connected to right after, noting the changes and how she felt about it:

I guess I’ve seen like just anything like seeing that your focus and people from the trip has kind of changed. Just having those new bonds with those different individuals has changed. I came home from the trip with these new friends and I guess that kind- Like I don’t know. Like when I meet new people and kind of become closer with them too. It kind of changes my life too.

As the week progressed, the participants tended to run into each other on campus. Some felt these random social occurrences post-trip were normal, while others felt awkward. All had noted the interactions were different and they were missing the connectedness that they experienced on the trip due to their time
commitments. Keith described the internal struggle he faces when reconnecting with another participant.

Cuz It is always really interesting when you come back from one of the trips and you see someone in the hallway. Because you always have that split-second of am I going to pretend they don’t exist, am I going to say hi and be friendly, or am I going to be like you’re my best friend, so like which one of those options. But I always come away from those like, hey they’re doing well. I’m glad I got to see them.

Steven describes this as a result from the location change. “We still act like we’re on the trip but we know we’re not in the same place so we can’t have the same heart to hearts.” Tristan described the same feelings of disconnectedness from different roles and personality behaviors that come with reintegrating into school.

It was different because we weren’t there anymore. It was likes seeing someone from like a different part of your life. As different as it sounds like, I don’t know how to explain that but-

Confusion from how to interact with the other group members after the trip lead to some awkward interactions for some. The ending of the trip comes very abruptly, even though the end date and time was known from the start, and this abruptness is handled on an individual basis. Letting go of the daily previously deep relationships is easier for some than others. Keith described how he’s noticed the differences in integrating with two different types of groups and the difference of the group change. The first was difficult while the second he felt
he handled better. He described the reasons for the new ease as his connections on the second trip were not as strong as the first and he was more prepared the second time.

So when I got back from that one I was kind of lost. I was like I don’t remember how to do this, whereas when I came back from this one, I immediately, you know, I had ten seconds of what am I doing and then I was immediately just back into the scheme of things.

Many stated the reason for the difference of interaction was due to the fact that they had undergone some changes within their personality on the trip; they felt like a different person. When they returned to school, they didn’t know how to combine the two together. Interacting with someone who was used to their “adjusted” personality while they are shifting back to their “normal” personality either conjured an internal debate of how to act or relief they can act as their trip self. Keith has noted this change and describes this as a reason for the disconnect.

It’s especially when you meet somebody out on a trip for the first time and then re-encountering them, you know. So it’s your second meeting technically when you see them when you’re back. You’re in a completely different environment and if you’re anything like me, you are a completely different person when you are out there in the backcountry versus when you were here. So there’s always that little hesitation here like do I actually want to talk to this person do they want to talk to me or is the context supposed to just kind of end at the end the trip. You never really know for sure.

For trip leaders especially, this can be a shift from assumed roles. Olive explains this shift in roles and how it affects her relationships with participants post-trip.
I think on the trip I assumed more of a leadership position just because I knew that you and Bradley and myself were in charge. Not that we’re like, we are in charge of you because we’re on the trip, but also like we need to have our information on lockdown and we have to feel comfortable with what we’re doing so that we can convey it with confidence to them that way they don’t freak out and they believe in us as like our abilities and coordinating trips. And here if I see them I’m going to be like what’s up! Bombed my exam! I don’t know, like, just like a little more relaxed. Like, I don’t really have to like assume that leadership position with them in real life anymore.

While participants had mixed reviews of their interactions with others post-trip, everyone felt a shift from the dynamic they had become accustomed to within a short amount of time. The participants grew closer together on the trip as they lacked that choice of to interact or not. Now that the participants lack the forced interaction, and begin to shift in personality due to location and roles, they come to realize the socialization post-trip will be different and their expectations on these friendships change. Bradley describes this process.

One of the things that I really, really love about the trips is like you get 10, you get 11 random people, well roughly random, to go on a trip together and you do all the things that basically a family will do. You like, you all sleep together, you all eat together, you all like travel together, you like talk, all the things that you do together is like one big, one big family. And so everyone gets their own inside jokes and mannerisms, even if they’ve never had those jokes or mannerisms like never before in their life. Like, for some reason during those 10 days that you’re with each other, you develop those things and it kind of like, it’s kind of crazy how that happens. So when you get back here you either, you’re not in the same environment as you were, you’re not doing the same things as you were. And so those mannerism seems to disappear or you can’t like- You get stuck in those inside jokes day in day out, you know, and you come back
in and you want to say those inside jokes but nobody’s going to get it because they weren’t there. So it’s kind of, that kind of sucks coming back and knowing that those things won’t happen all the time.

The social interactions derived from the trip was just one factor that participants found important enough to discuss about their transition. Another factor resulted from destination.

**Being “away from it all” created profound experiences.** A large relief the participants described was experiencing a real break from school. Being away from school physically and in new environments allowed for the participants to separate from their school routine mentally. Ashley noted how important this separation was for her break.

I kind of really wanted to go on the trip for a mental break because my mind had been going to a dark place before the trip so I just kind of needed to clear my mind and just take that time to think through things and open up my mind. So it was really good to take time to go on that trip and take the time to think big picture, look around where I’m at. Everything else seemed pretty small at home. That was really, really needed.

Tristan described the perk of going away as a tool he uses to convince others to participate in the UNI Outdoors trips. “because it was fun and it’s just it’s just an experience like an experience like get away from order and get away get out of your house. Like yeah. Sleep in a tent yeah. It’s fun.” The thought of
getting away aided in the excitement for the trip for Bradley. He explained getting away was a real break from school.

Yeah I was generally excited for the trip itself like, I don’t know, everything about it and being able to get away and like not being able to talk about like school and like do homework. Just like being out there was really, really fulfilling.

For Olive, stepping away from school and phones was largely impactful on her positive experience of the trip.

I stopped doing like real life. For a few days. I didn’t use my phone which was awesome. I stopped overthinking like things like that I guess and like doing Schoolwork and I stopped trying to study. It was just like a really big break from school which is a really big deal.

Jacob also expressed the break from phones is important for students.

I think the first aspect especially in a college student state of life with all the stress. Getting away from technology is really having me turn my phone on airplane mode and not getting bogged down with social media was really, really nice.

Physically stepping away from school was aided by the aspect of nature. Being immersed in nature or surrounding oneself in nature became common focal point when talking about being away. Olive discussed how nature aided in mental recuperation from school.

So I was hoping to get some time in nature for sure. I’ve been feeling very landlocked in Iowa. And it’s been a rough semester and so I was really going to use this as kind of like a chance to let go and like breathe a little.
And like I feel a little at home I guess and happy with my, like, physical surroundings.

Tristan enjoyed how nature and getting away became imperative for his enjoyment of the break trip.

And it was good to get away from the real world a little while and not think about things. That was probably the best thing I noticed was just concentrating on being outside and taking in the beautiful environment.

Bradley recognized the importance of being outside, “I say I feel more like sad just knowing that I’m not like out there currently like reaping the benefits of like being outside. Like there’s benefits to be had for sure.”

Being away allowed for individuals to feel relaxed mentally even if they faced physical challenges. Pairing the physical challenges with mental relaxations, the participants were able to enjoy their surroundings and break.

Megan described her surprise at how relaxed the trip was,

I got a lot more out of it than I thought I would cuz I was expecting it to be just kind of like this high stress kind of figuring out stuff and hiking but it was actually kind of relaxing. Just kind of getting away from stuff and I didn’t expected to be that relaxing.

Mandy recognized for her that getting away, along with the natural benefits, ended with therapeutic benefits that she could transfer into her previous school routine, “I think the trip was also a therapeutic thing for me and
it helped me kind of get away in that aspect to. So I think coming back like I was a lot happier.”

Leadership responsibilities cause certain trips to be more stressful than others, but overall, the trips still promoted relaxation because the participants are away from their obligations. “So it was more stressful than your typical backpacking trip but on the whole it was still very relaxing just because you’re still out and away from the world.”

As the participants experienced these trips, they developed profound insights for their personal lives. Being away from the routine allowed for the participants to slip into a reflective space. This reflection space allowed for the participants to think critically about their current situation by tuning out distractions and slowing down their pace to simpler physical tasks. Slowing down gave the opportunity for the participants to reflect on larger concerns in their life. Megan explained how the act of stepping away benefited her.

It was just really nice to be able to just get away from it all especially because I’m looking at grad school stuff now and so like that forced sort of isolation, I didn’t even have my phone charged after the first day because I didn’t want to deal with it. And so that was just kind of like a nice little brain break, not having to figure out like what I have to do next because there was nothing that I could do.

Steven, just like Megan, discussed how his routine did not allow for time to reflect on important issues. The trip became the space for him to do so.
I kind of got away from modern civilization. You get so round up of doing the same thing over and over again that it’s nice to take a step back and realize that you are human. It’s all right to not have all that commotion going on. Usually when you go and take a break on something it’s usually on your phone or- Like this experience, you couldn’t do that so you can learn a lot about yourself and your situation.

These experiences were so profound that some participants were selective in who they wanted to share the benefits with, so not to ruin the experience. It’s as if the experience was special and they didn’t want just anyone to share in it.

Steven expressed how impactful the experience was that he’d only recommend the trips to people he felt deserved the right to get away.

People I don’t like I wouldn’t. Because what I have is a unique experience and if they’re a bad person I don’t feel like they deserve to have the same experience that I went through. Good people I would recommend it in a heartbeat. Especially if they’ve never done it before like myself. It was definitely an eye-opening experience to see exactly what’s out there. The people that wanna spend the rest of their lives in Iowa kind of makes them open up their eyes to other possibilities.

Tristan decided that individuals who really understood the benefits of the outdoors should be the one to experience it, otherwise individuals will not enjoy getting away.

I would still recommend it because you should try things like this to get out of your comfort zone a little bit. Yeah I would recommend it to most people. But I would be more prone to like encouraging people like minded like myself to do it because I think they would get something more out of it rather than the people that are used to staying in the hotels.
Being “away from it all” began introducing the reflective space that all of the participants had appreciated. Once the students had addressed how important it was to get away to reflect, they began to explain what they learned about themselves and how they desired to integrate those lessons into their everyday life.

**Deeper self-awareness through exceeded expectations.** The trip participants did not know what they were getting into, while the trip coordinators did not know how the group would react to the new activities. Some participants stated they held some level of expectations but most admitted they went in blind.

They expected only a certain level of enjoyment but ended up with most, if not all, of their expectations exceeded. These expectations were exceeded mainly by their physical abilities and getting more out of the trip emotionally, socially, and mentally. Steven described his expectations as, “they were met and succeeded,” while Jacob explained a similar statement, “Exceeded. Exceeded. Definitely”. Mandy noted others in her group felt the same way as Steven and Jacob, “And then I feel like overall within the whole group, what I saw everyone either exceeded their goals just like being able to go do it and getting back out.”
This exceeding of expectations atoned for the success the participants felt about the trip. As they discussed their exceeded expectations, they would come back to reflections about themselves. They would note times they pushed their physical and mental capabilities that resulted in their expectations of not only the trip to increase, but themselves as well. Mandy discussed her reflection of the trip, “It kind of tested my abilities and it really showed me what I can really do and like what I am capable of and my potential.” Tristan discussed one of these moments he had on the trip.

Like when we went up to Utah and went up to the arch there, I got like a bit emotional, like, I was like what a cool experience I had and not everyone’s going to get that opportunity. So I felt like- I felt like really proud of myself that I came over from Australia, I’m studying university in America, and now I’m on a trip almost in the Grand Canyon and like Utah. Like the sense of pride was a big accomplishment kind of. I don’t know it all came flushing in at once in that moment.

The participants reported a deeper self-awareness occurred throughout the trip by the act of pushing their comfort zones and testing the boundaries in a controlled environment. The trip leaders helped the participants to be safe which in turn allowed for the leaders to grow themselves.

After telling a story that involved working with a participant, Keith revealed important coordinator qualities he developed. “Patience is very, very key which I knew going into this but it’s very reinforced.” Keith was not the only
one who discussed leadership patience. Mandy also noted this as a point of self-
awareness as well.

I’ve had a lot of drive when we are in the Grand Canyon. I’ve been a lot
more patient with people because usually, I hate to say it but I just do not
have patience with certain individuals sometimes. I’ve been way better at
that. Being like, I’m not mean to people but just like I’ve been talking to
people more and getting out there and I think a lot of people actually like
notice that because I usually just keep to myself. More than anything, I’ve
actually gone to the Union and hung out with people and everything like
that.

The combination of group support and individual drive helped Ashley realize
her own physical potential. She expressed this when discussing why she enjoyed
the trip.

One because I got to see the places I’ve always wanted to see. Two
because I really enjoyed the part when we were hiking up from the
bottom of the Grand Canyon and we all kinda split up into our own little
sections. It was actually a really cool experience to be on my own, hiking
that fast. Basically from the lunch spot up I was on my own and it was
really cool to experience that by myself. Even though it was nice to have
other people pushing you it was kinda nice to push yourself and know
that you accomplished it by yourself even though you had the support of
everyone else. But you had to focus on yourself and make sure you are
telling yourself to keep going. So it was really cool that I was able to
accomplish that by myself.

Participants discussed how they felt as though they received benefits to be
sounder mentally and socially. Olive explained the trip details helped her assess
where she was at mentally and then gave her the space and energy to do some
personal work that put her in better mental health. Again, like Ashley addressed, Olive found the group support helped her to a deeper self-awareness.

I think I came out of the trip with like, in a much better headspace at least in my own life and my own decisions and my own mental health. So I think that was very beneficial just having time to just relax and just be with my own thoughts. I think that was a really big takeaway and also, I guess, like interactions with the participants and the other coordinators like helped with all of that and I felt very connected to everyone. It’s a good feeling.

Some participants felt as though they developed into a different, more real self when they were in the backcountry. They stated how they enjoyed this version of themselves and the trip details were the reason they were able to get to this self. Keith expressed how he is a different person when he participates in trips which is why he likes to return to the backcountry.

Well, differences in personality wise I am much more hyped up all the time when I’m out there I’m much more excited all the time when I’m out there just because it’s like I’m out of town, thank God! I can play! When I’m here life is much more segmented and regulated. So I’m always thinking about that next task, I’ve always got this I got to do, I’ve got that that I’ve got to do, you know, maybe sometimes I’m looking forward to hanging out at night just like having my time or my time with somebody else but by the time you get there you’re tired. And you just kind of want to chill. There’s no just overarching excitement about what I’m doing all the time. Which is something that I get when I’m out there.

Tristan also expressed similar thoughts to Keith, “Yeah because I almost felt like a different, a different person for a little while. If that makes sense.”
During this recognition of deeper self-awareness, participants began to reflect on how these qualities from the trip may elude to why they were not as satisfied with themselves while at school. During the interviews, participants discussed what they needed to do that benefits themselves in their routine at home. Ashley did not note specific details but explained an overarching concern she had and what she wanted to do to improve. “So that’s one of the biggest things I’ve realized is that I just need to get outside more. So I’m trying to do more things that make me happy.” Later on in the interview, Ashley described another trip aspect that she realized resonated with her.

I like routine but after that trip I’m kind of like routines not always my favorite. I like structure I like things to be black and white but now I’m just kind of realizing that it’s OK to mix it up because it helps me focus more if I have some fun in there within my routine, not just all straight up routine. It’s just my mind loses track if I’m in my routine too much so. Yeah.

Coordinators who have participated on trips before have realized these benefits from personal experience. A few leaders expressed this as a reason of encouragement to coordinate. Bradley discussed how his previous Grand Canyon trips brought him into the role of trip coordinator.

I went on the trip last year as a participant. And so that experience for me was really life-changing and so being able to go back and do the same trip with different people. But being a leader also had an effect on me like making me like really excited to go back and like see a different part of it but be in the same place and show, just again like show like participants
like just how awesome this place is. That’s just super, super rewarding
and making sure they have a good time is like the main goal for sure.

When asked why the participants would recommend the trip to others,
they stated that learning about who you are was a major benefit that one can
derive from the trip. Bradley related, “I think that with every trip that I’ve been
on, I always learned a valuable lesson.” Keith discusses how the trip challenges
an individual to step out of their comfort zone and grow.

Because it’s awesome. If it’s something that you would normally do it’s
just a fantastic experience and it’s super fun and if it’s something you
don’t normally do. Like two of the participants on this trip had never even
gone car camping before. It’s a really, really good way to get out of your
shell, but a pretty good way to completely shatter it. It was really a
fantastic experience if it’s something you already do and it’s a very, very
good way to grow if it’s something you don’t normally do, this or
anything like it.

Out of these deep self-reflections discovered through the nature of the
adventure trips, participants were able to find purpose or rediscover that
purpose while gaining confidence. Mandy expressed how the challenges of the
trip allowed for her to develop.

Wasn’t really certain of myself and I think the trip really pushed me and
certainly and really pushed me out of my box. To realize that it’s OK to
push yourself feel the way you’re feeling and stuff like that. I think yet. I
think I know my purpose now and that really helps too.
Similar reflections were also made on the trip. After finding out how far an individual can push themselves, the students began to discover other important realizations.

The trip promotes realizations and reflections on “what’s important”.

Naturally, the participants began to reflect on what’s important in their lives as they developed deep friendships and gained further insight within themselves.

Olive discussed activities that helped her to reflect.

I feel like there’s a lot of subconscious things that happen in the time that you’re in the canyon, and like while you’re hiking and everything. And so I feel like I also spent a lot of time journaling on that zero day and drawing a lot of pictures. And so I had a lot of time to just like reflect about my entire life or like my entire life in the last few months.

Tristan also explained the activities that aided in his self-reflection on the future.

Just thinking on a different level like thinking deeper having the time to think, think deeper like think about the future, you know. You know, like if I want to continue. It makes me reevaluate stuff and the creativity was- Yeah writing, drawing, taking photos of like natural things that I really like.

Participants began to make claims of what really mattered to them. Ashley realized the importance of her happiness.

My mind was in a dark place before the trip and then it was pretty good on the trip and now it’s been kind of going back to that dark place. And I think it’s because I just realized what truly makes me happy and it’s really hard to be here and that.
Mandy explained how she wanted to be more definitive with her time.

I want to do and be more active. I guess the drive and me is kind of— I actually want to go and do things I don’t want to sit at home anymore, waste my time. I want to start working out and I think over break I’m going to start doing that just because I don’t have as much time because of school. But I like actually want to participate in my schooling and I think it showed me that it does matter.

Tristan also expressed how his appreciation affected his outlook.

I would say a deeper appreciation for doing stuff like that. And it’s actually rubbed off on me more than I think or I thought it did or was going to. Yeah just an appreciation for having an opportunity and being alive to see that kind of stuff yeah.

Bradley’s honest self-reflection came at the end of a tangent in which he discussed what was important in his life and why he attempts to make his life goals around these trips.

I catch myself saying like you know, life is good like I don’t need a whole lot of money to get like by and I’m happy. So just like. Take those lessons with me, like keep moving forward. Like share those lessons with others as time goes on. Because these trips definitely made me feel like I’m wise beyond my years in the most humble way possible.

Out of these realizations, participants made declarations to improve their routines at home so to include what they valued as important. Ashley discussed the general act of including enjoyable activities because she found the importance of enjoying life.
So I’m just kind of have more- make more time for more important things in my day and not just fill it up with meaningless void just to fill my time. Just starting to make room for more important things that make me happy.

Mandy expressed a change she was making due to the important reflections she made while on the trip.

I stopped going out a lot more. Before the trip I was having a lot of issues like going out too much and like it was just like, I realized it was a waste of my money and I should be saving my money to go on this trip and not to go out to the bars. And so I think in that aspect it was a positive change made.

Career and studies became a common point of discussion. The majority had stated they were in the right major while others came to realize they desired something different. Tristan described how the trip altered his view on his future career path.

It’s not a school thing but re-evaluating what I wanna do if I could. If I could have a job where I could get paid to do something like that. I don’t see why wouldn’t want to continue with something like that. Since coming back and even while I was in the canyon I was like oh maybe this is something I could see myself doing long-term. Being a guide or outdoor education or something like that.

Later in the interview Tristan described the impact of the trip on his reflections over what’s important for his career, “I’m just glad I did it and I guess you could say it was kind of a life-changing experience for the fact that it made me think about what kind of life- If I’ve chosen the right career path.”
Mandy noted her realization of how important her studies were to her life plans.

Realizing and just kind of realize that it’s important like my classes are important and I need to do well to do what I wanna do. It’s going to class and doing my work well is what that entails then I just need to buck up and do it.

In a conversation on why he values the time in the backcountry, Keith began describing the value he puts on the adventure trips to aid his reflections on his future plans.

Because I’m leaving all this stuff behind and I have all the stuff to look forward too, that’s where it happens. And actually I did a lot more on this trip because I’ve been thinking about what direction I’m going to go in after I graduate. So I specifically went into this trip planning to use this as reflection time for that, so I did a lot of that post-trip and within the trip.

Some realized a new found value of travel and outdoor recreation and then decided their future aspirations needed to include these items. Whether it be the location they want to live in the future or finding time to include activities that make them happy, all had reflections on including these new important aspects in their lives. Steven described his surprise at how much he enjoyed the trip which later translated into the desire to move to a location in which he can participate in outdoor activities more easily.

There’s just the possibility of living like that is kind of opening. I do wanna- I’ve been thinking about- So originally before the trip I was like thinking about living in Des Moines but now I want to live closer west so I
can go on those trips. Like, if I have a free time I can go on a hike because it just really calmed me down. Just getting away from everything.

Mandy noted that her experiences on trips reinforced her ideas of switching her major to include outdoor recreation.

I’m happy now because every trip I go on I realize a little bit more that yeah, this is really what I wanna do. And I think the Grand Canyon was a totally new experience and it really showed me that I made the right decision to switch when I was a sophomore to what I’m doing now.

Bradley also described the importance of outdoor recreation and how he plans to incorporate it into his future plans.

Because that’s what I really like to do and I always catch myself thinking about it with my future job. Are they going to allow me to have enough vacation at the end of the year to go into these things and stuff like that? And that’s really stressing me out too.

Acceptance to where they live now, though they desire to move in the future, were also drawn through the trip. Olive realized it’s important for her to be closer to outdoor recreation activities but was able to find the peace in completing her studies before she moves to a new area.

I felt pretty good with the trip itself. Like what the tasks entail and the responsibility and like the whole thing with the van or whatever. I felt very comfortable with that. So like that wasn’t so hard coming back. I think it was more like, especially thinking about my last year in Oregon and- Like coming back here it was just like a mini version of that. And so it was more just like being able to go out west and being OK with coming back to Iowa. Just because it’s been a large source of turmoil over like the last few weeks, months or whatever, that it was pretty prevalent in my
mind which caused this like weird emotion of confliction because I’ve done a like really good job of coming to terms with being in Iowa. Like I’m 100% fine with it. But I guess that was just like a little like, uh whew, a little spike in that, like oh my God what! So I think it was kind of like a deeper thing that I have been dealing with over a longer period of time that came out and it’s not negative at all, it’s just like me being OK with where I’m at. And I think that’s just kind of the big source of everything.

Another common topic of realization came through discussions of their significant relationships. Everyone had commented on some development with their significant others with either stability or inviting conversations of progression to change or their desire to start a significant relationship. Steven stated he had conversations with his girlfriend on where their future will go right after the trip. This developed through his realized desire to participate in outdoor recreation regularly, making it a valuable idea worth pursuing, even at the expense of his relationship.

I didn’t really know what I wanted with my girlfriend. We had a little talk and said I really didn’t know what to do- I said I wanted to go out west and I think you want to settle down up here and so I kind of- We had a little discussion and then I took like a day from each other and just kind of thing. She wants to follow me and so we are back together so. I don’t know just kind of second-guessing everything that I’m doing. We just kind of opened up to the world and I really like that world, like the bond that I had.

Tristan who had been on the trip with his girlfriend stated the trip brought him closer. “... Yeah well I felt like that’s when I fell in love...” Others found clarity within their history and were able to “let go” of their past relationships so they
could move onto what’s important in the present and their future. Jacob discussed about feelings he brought into the trip about a significant other that he was able to overcome.

Going into the trip I was going through a relationship problem. I was definitely happy go lucky on the trip but definitely going through some stuff. Going through the trip definitely kind of let go of any anger resentment that I had so.

The trips brought about clarity for all of the participants. Concerns of significant others are important to these students because in this stage of life they may be making important decisions with their relationships. College is the stage of life in which they may be developing lasting partnerships or discovering what they desire in a lifetime companion. Trips gave them the space to realize what’s important to them for this type of relationship and whether or not their significant other is meeting these expectations.

The trip coordinators assisted in the previous important realizations by being a person to talk to, and for some, being a short term mentor. Bradley discussed his views on social media and how his role as a coordinator in trips help impact participants’ views.

I had a lot of conversations with different people on the trip about kind of like people that are important in your life and kind of like retracting from social media because that’s like a big influence on how we act. And just like taking things for what it is I think. It was, I mean, I knew some of that stuff already but just like a really friendly reminder of like what that stuff
is and how that stuff is important. And being able to just like act more human than you know robots, you know, in society I guess.

His engagement with participants and subjecting them to the natural environment so to discover what’s important was one of the reasons he valued coordinating.

Being up able to take people that haven’t been in that environment and or do those activities and see their awe and amazement and the trip was very fulfilling to me. Just being able to like share that with people.

Mandy discussed her late night campfire discussions with another coordinator brought about helpful discussions that aided in her development of what she deemed important.

As an individual I think I like reflective markers on the trip like at night when everyone else was going to bed I think. I was always one of the last people to get in bed. I don’t know why but I think- And Keith was up so, just down to talk about stuff. I think he helped a lot, like me acting on myself and everything just because I can ask questions.

Reflections experienced on the trip were about larger aspects of the participants’ lives. These realizations eventually followed them home and impacted their transition into school. Bradley expresses the importance of his trip reflections on his school routine.

The things that you get out of reflection and being outside and being with the people that are on that trip you realize a lot of things about yourself, you realize about a lot of things about the people that you’re with. You kind of just like, become more human and I feel like if everyone can do
one trip and actually be not ignorant to the things that they’re learning and seeing and doing that can make them a better person.

Social bonds, stepping away from nature, creating self-awareness, and realizing what’s important signified why the participants found the trip successful and important. These factors illustrated why the participants transitioned in the ways that they did. Next, the emotions experienced through the transition will be discussed.

Difficult Weeklong Transition

Overlapping of the “trip world” and “reality” leaves individuals “there but not there” for a week. As the participants discussed their experiences, they began to divide their transition into two different competing worlds. One was the trip world in which they felt as though they were leaving behind while the other was reality. They referenced coming back to school as reality. Their reality entailed all of the routines and expectations they were under while in college. Tristan discussed his view of the two worlds.

I kind of see them as two different things. Because like what I feel and what it is like. Being at the bottom of the Grand Canyon is completely different to here now.

Mandy also expressed the formation of two worlds and how one was more favorable to participate in than the other.
I think I got stuck in the trip life for a little bit because I was like oh. Just because like I had been gone longer and the others ones have been weekend trip. But I guess whenever I come back, I don’t know. It’s always kind of similar to what my transitions in the past because I feel like I get back and every single trip I’ve been on has pushed me to run a little bit harder on my major, working towards what I want to do.

Olive explained that her school work was routine and the daily “grind”.

So by real life I guess I mean like the day-to-day school, like school week especially. Like going to class and having my planner of things I need to do every day and different things that I feel like I need to satisfy. And like meeting certain expectations that I deemed to be worthy of expectations, based off of life choices that related to future career paths in my current major in the classes I’m taking and just like the grind.

Tristan also described reality as the schedule and need to perform.

Structure and like being around people like. Having to go to work having to go to classes. Having a schedule I think that’s what I mean by real world. And then reality setting in, this kind of like kind of the realization that you’re back here that you’re like, oh, OK I need to perform now.

Megan describes what those two worlds are and how there exists a time in between. “Yeah there was definitely like this twilight zone between the two.

There was like trip mode and then there was this awkward space of I’m going to do nothing mode and then there was back to school mode.

Later in the interview Megan explained the twilight zone involved both worlds. Ashley described how she views the two worlds relating “I would say they are mostly separate…”
A few individuals would describe these worlds as vastly different, hinting the importance of the “trip world” through their word choice and vocabulary. Ashley would refer to the trip world as fantasy and paradise through the interview. “Like that part of paradise came back with me little.” In Tristan’s explanation of how he perceived the two worlds relating, he noted the trip world as fairyland.

Getting out of trip mode was kind of like starting to think more like logically. Logically and orderly rather than kind of like being in a fairyland if that makes sense. Like you know like that like imagination.

When asked about this difference, most stated they were two different parts of their lives that generate different feelings and motivations. They couldn’t bring the two worlds together. Tristan described that the two worlds are too different to be able to coexist.

Because they’re way too different. Yet there we go. Because fairyland to me is like yeah it’s just you can’t like have an alarm set for half an hour and then say oh I’m going to go duck into fairyland. You know what I mean, like? You have to have no issues when you’re in that kind of mode, when you’re thinking like that. You have to have no worries, at least for me. Because that’s just something that’s taking you back.

Others felt the same and attempted to keep the two experiences separate. Steven described this attempt through a conversation he had with his girlfriend about meeting his trip friends.
And she’s just kept on asking me if she was ever going to meet him and I just kind of didn’t want her apart of that because she just won’t know the emotions we went through, the bond that we built. And then I don’t even think we’ll ever see each other again. Yeah so like I was going with that situation will never happen again so for the post-trip meeting, I just wanted it to be us and I don’t really want any other outside parties.

The participants didn’t want to be back or to go through the transition of the real world. They wanted to stay in the trip world. Steven explained his struggle with this.

Like I didn’t feel like I was supposed to be back. I feel like I was supposed be in the bottom of the Grand Canyon like. I find uncomfortable situations compared to the Grand Canyon and then I would say I wish I was back in the Grand Canyon instead of what I’m doing now. Such an experience will be ingrained with me forever.

Jacob also noted similar thoughts about being back.

It was definitely surreal walking up the steps and it feels very out of place being back. Like I should be in the car for another four hours; or, where are we going to find a place to camp?

Keith described his difficulties over coming back to reality and his to-do list inevitably brought reverse culture shock.

But you come back and it’s like I’ve got to do my IRB form, I’ve got to pay rent, I’ve got a find money to pay rent, so it’s all like this stuff where your very much back into, I always call it the world, but it’s very much the real life thing. It’s just like an actually thinking of being a functioning member of society. A bit of a culture shock.
Mandy described the transition difficult because of the feeling of nostalgia that she cannot return to the trip world.

I don’t know. It’s like post-trip depression kind of like I still wanted to be there but I don’t, I got to come back home. I don’t know. I just wanted to be still be there and I couldn’t I guess.

The participants stated these two different worlds that bring about different obligations ended up overlapping. Keith explained this transition as well as a previous trip as a crossfade. “But if we keep going back and using the AT as an example that one was a slower kind of overlap transition. Like a Crossfade sort of thing.” Olive used similar language in describing the overlapping transition.

I think it was kind of like an overlapping gradient. Like I think because the reason I said the Wednesday or Thursday was because there wasn’t like a very distinct day where I like woke up and I’m like I’m ready to do all this. No problem. Like, I think throughout the week like things were just getting easier and my brain was accepting the responsibilities and so it was definitely- There were some underlap probably like, I didn’t realize it but I was starting to take more initiative and like being more OK with what I needed, like, the effort that I needed to put into school, until eventually I was like yeah it’s fine. It is what it is. It will be done soon.

Ashley described it as, “...there are some cross,” and Tristan reported a similar statement, “I think they were kind of overlapping.” Steven gave a more distinct time frame of the overlap, “it was kind of a two or three day overlap. So I think about Thursday is when I finally got back into full reality mode.” Mandy
also reported an overlap during the transition reflection. “There was more of an overlap I guess.”

Tristan described that the transition was an overlap and how both worlds interacted with each other. “The fairytale was getting stripped away while the logic was coming in if that makes sense. The order was coming in and the fairytale was stripping away.” For him and other participants, both of the worlds cannot exist at the same time, but for the first week back, they do. This overlap of worlds that cannot exist together lead to specific reactions.

A common behavior found during the overlap was daydreaming. It became part of their reflection experience. Bradley described the daydreaming as a part of his reflection period.

Daydream all the time. I just think about the trip. Like. I think very briefly about trips I want to do and things I wanna do and I’ll think about the people and the people I want to see it with and then basically the transition time from like the time I get done with a trip to the time that reality sets in is just like more daydreaming. I guess just kind of like thinking, looking to the future and like thinking about the places I wanna go and the people I want to be with, you know. And just basically what I wanna do to enjoy my life.

Daydreaming would come at a times when participants were expected to work, or in the participant’s words, when they were supposed to be partaking in the real world. Daydreaming occurred within the first three days when the
participants stated the overlapping of worlds was present. Bradley described his daydreaming associated with trip planning.

I’ll catch myself daydreaming about the trip, like just like what it happened and like, what things we did and then it gets. And then sometimes you get on a tangent and future trips and when I wanna do in those kind of things. And then I realize I’m still in a lecture and I like how to keep taking notes. So I just kind of like going off into a daydream about those kind of things.

Steven would daydream in his classes for longer periods of time for the first days back. Eventually he found the daydreaming subsided.

Monday through Wednesday I found myself in class daydreaming a lot about what exactly I did. For like 10 minutes spans. The professor would be talking but I wouldn’t be knowing what she was saying and I just be in my own world about experiences that I had. I still have those every now and again but not as frequent. So like, probably every like two minutes or three minutes for class I have like that kind of stuff but it’s kind of just a fleeting memory so.

Due to daydreaming and the desire for reflection, participants felt as though they were physically present but mentally distant. Megan described what other participants had mentioned through their interviews, “I was kind of like going through the motions. Just being there. I was just getting through it “

When Keith described how involved he was with his day, he described how difficult it was for him to be completely present.

70% because it was again one of those where like I’m going through the motions I’m doing the things that I’m supposed be doing but I’m not necessarily fully engaged in it. And whether that was, you know, I think a
lot of it was just the physical and mental exhaustion from having been on that long of a trip. It wasn’t just I hate being back here, it was trying, you’re trying, your body and your mind literally trying to figure out how to do this again. Because those first couple days is just by the time I hit 4 o’clock I was absolutely exhausted. Being here is much harder work than backpacking the Grand Canyon I’ve discovered. So it’s kind of hard to put your finger on.

Ashley described her transition was difficult to focus with her desire to reflect on the trip. “I don’t know how much it overlaps I think about it constantly back home here and so it’s hard to focus on reality sometimes.”

This overlapping caused for other participants to feel mentally distant during the transition. Keith explained how being forced into the motions left him mentally distant.

It’s one of those where are you force yourself to go through the motions of doing your, I’m back in the world responsibilities but mentally you’re not quite, quite there. And that happened to an extent after this trip too but like you’re going through the thing you’re at work but you’re not completely engaged so your body is kind of doing what it’s supposed to be and you’re just kind of daydreaming half the time is I think the best way to describe it.

Steven attributed the reason for his mental distance was due to the fact that he wanted to reflect, even with no time to do so. “I didn’t have a choice I had to be but mentally I wasn’t 100% there, because I was kind of in reflecting mode.”

The “there not there” state of being made individuals feel disoriented and off balance. Tristan explained his engagement with the real world after he leaves
his description of the trip world. This status further cemented his beliefs that the
trip world and real world cannot coexist.

Kind of disorientated if that makes sense not sure where I am at or where
my head is at at that moment in life. And feeling a bit confused and like
fuzzy and dazed, like scrambled. Scrambled would probably be the best.
Because I do like feeling like it when I am in the real world, ordered. I do
like having a plan and having that plan going into and I can see I’m
going it and hitting goals but when I’m in the fairyland like, I like being
in the fairyland. But you can’t have both. I don’t think you can do both
because I don’t think you can have both at the same time. It’s like the
logical is kind of like a switch in your mind to me. OK like I’m logical
Tristan now like I have to run on a schedule I have to like get this. I have
to perform like this I have to get these grades have to do this job or
whatever at this time. Whereas when I’m like that it’s like none of that
stuff matters and all you think about is
deeper things, anything about
yourself more, other people.

Steven described this distance as why he preferred to not fully reintegrate
into his schedule.

Again an unwillingness to kind of participate so that’s why I’d rather just
stay in my room and watch a movie and all that because like I didn’t
wanna do it. Yeah. And yeah it was just like I my body was there but my
mind was somewhere else like yeah. It was like auto pilot kind of thing.

Tristan also noticed a similar reaction of withdrawing from people due to
his emotions from the transition

When I’m sad I don’t want to really interact with people, I withdraw, and
that’s weird for me because I’m an outgoing person. Or like I really don’t
want to see anyone. Like I want to lock myself in my room because I don’t
want to bring them down and I don’t like people seeing me in that kind of
way. Like that goes into the bottom factor I think, they’re all interrelated
and yeah. It goes into the unmotivated.
The daydreaming and associated feelings of being physically present but mentally absent was prevalent but something that didn’t debilitate their studies. They were able to ignore through these feelings, though it was not favorable. Tristan noticed that as the week drew on, he was able to move out of the desire to reflect. “I was back so I wasn’t getting pulled back there because I wasn’t going back there, like, I’m going back to the non-caring. It’s fading away.”

When the interviews were conducted with the participants, they stated they were no longer daydreaming and inevitably return to reality. The daydreaming and feelings from the trip began to slow down. Steven explained eventually enough time had passed and he felt like moved out of the need to reflect. “I got back, and was like yeah let’s do it we’re going to get it and then I find myself daydreaming.”

Even if they wanted to switch mentality or reflect more, participants felt as though they couldn’t due to time and location. This forced routine reinforced the feelings of feeling “there but not there” and the actions of daydreaming. When asked about how prevalent his feelings of sadness were, Steven described the emotion as there but nothing he could improve on due to the lack of time he had to reflect on how to feel better.

Not very much, I knew it was there. I couldn’t do anything about it because I was so overwhelmed with everything else. I’d reflect a lot in
between classes like in between the hectic stuff and then towards the end of the day I didn’t really think about it. I was just, just exhausted. I would just sit there and let everything roll up. I was just exhausted. Just kind of zoned out after that.

Once participants were over their transition, they were able to focus more productively and return to a higher level of motivation. Olive described her experience with leaving the transition. “I kind of got out of my rut and I was like all right finals like time to crank down and actually do work. And my motivation definitely like spiked and I got super productive.”

Ashley expressed a similar story for her transition and focus on school.

Yeah a little bit. It’s gotten a little bit better since as the week is going on. I’ve thought about the trip a little less and more developed in the school just because I have deadlines and I know that I need to focus on those but the beginning of the week was definitely a big struggle to focus on being in the present right now and what’s happening right now.

The overlap of trip world and reality lead to daydreaming which lead to feeling distance. This daydreaming inevitably was used as a tool to cope with the next section.

Participants are forced back into the “grind”. The main response participants reported for helping their transition into school was reality. This was an inescapable fact they all had to face. Megan discussed meetings and her to-do list was a major cause.
Yeah I think it was, with finals coming up just looking at the study guide and I’m like oh I actually have to hunker down and this is my priority now... …I think when things like started settling back in and like I started having meetings again and just kind of like that continuation of things that I had to do.

Others reported the necessity of doing well in classes, attending meetings, going to work, and being successful was the only reason they transitioned as fast as they did.

Mandy noticed the items that were scheduled upon her return made her reintegrate sooner than she preferred. “I had a lot of other things that were planned before I came back that I knew I was going to have to do when I was in.”

This process was constantly referred to as “the grind”. Steven expressed the term when he described the timeline of daydreaming, “And then after Thursday I was like we’re back in the grind.” During the grind, they had to power through, “crush” their emotions, do the small necessary tasks to push themselves. Mandy described this process as “pushing” her back into her routine shortly after mentioning the grind.

Well I was supposed to finish this project before I left and I was up till 5 AM the morning of the trip because I was trying to finish this project and it was just not going to happen. And so I had to finish that when I get back as soon as possible so I think that really help me push me back into reality and like. Like I actually had to do this and get this done because I was supposed to get this done before break so like a week ago. We’re just like getting caught up in homework, and having finals coming, and have just
like realizing this message for almost an hour, and I really need to buckle down and actually get stuff done.

It was described as the mental state they had to be in in order to survive their workload. Ashley described her reality with the grind notion.

Like the school grind back in school I have to go to work in a couple nights. Just that routine was back. And knowing that I had to catch up with school homework was back, work was back, figuring out next semester and what I’m gonna do over break and all that real life kind of sudden-

Jacob described the Sunday back entailed the grind. “And it was like ah man, I’m back to the grind.”

Everyone reported that school happened quickly, making it hard for them to do the reflection and personal care that would ease their transition. Olive explained her rush extended all the way through to her interview time.

I feel like school picked up very quickly and I didn’t really have very much time besides that Sunday to reflect. But even then Sunday was filled with like unpacking and getting groceries and so I don’t feel like I’ve really truly had time to just sit with the thoughts quite yet.

Keith also described how he lacked the time to go through a long transition. His to do list called for him to move through the transition quickly.

If I did it would’ve been Sunday night after we arrived or Monday morning, when I woke up and had to be at work in an hour it’s like OK *whew*. But I never had like a sit down and get back into the right mindset moment really. Just kind of jumped right back into it.
This process was noted as a quick transition, one they were forced to participate in. Keith expressed this constant feeling, “I have so much crap to do. Especially because we got back a little bit later in the afternoon and then I didn’t like do anything I like had to do a hard reset overnight.”

Megan explained the transition was based on the need for her to move on. “Probably the necessity of it. Just that last-minute panic kind of really brought it home.” Bradley directly attributed his transition to his responsibilities which inevitably brought him to reality. “Just kind of having a crap ton on my plate just kind of forced me to get into the grind.” For Bradley, and the other participants, the grind was his reality.

The participants felt as the grind was what forced the trip world farther away. Mandy described it as a source for her transition.

Just because I think that your pre-routine was a lot different between the regular routine. Having to force myself into a regular routine and from like at home I think I kind of just pushed the trip aside.

Participants felt as though the transition was happening without their full consent. Olive described her transition as a forced entity.

No, I just felt like it was happening to me. Like I was just going through the motions because I had to like go to class and go here and go there but mentally I was not putting in any effort whatsoever.
The immediate immersion into school was difficult with the participants feeling as though they did not have the adequate time to prepare for the transition. Steven expressed how his classes became difficult to adjust to.

It was a slap in the face when I went back to class and teachers were asking us to reflect on what we learned before break, and I did not remember anything. Like they would bring up a topic and I’d just stare at them. And they’d be waiting for me to respond and I would be like I have no idea what went on.

The overlapping of worlds in which one was being forced upon the students affected how they participated in their transition. The timeline of the transition also had a significant impact on the student’s first week back.

*Transition period begins during the travel back and fully manifests during the recollection phase.* All of the participants reported their transition began between the car ride home and waking up for their first class. This is when the participants began to feel the trip moving to the past with the reality of school beginning to enter. Jacob announced his reality started Sunday.

Yeah coming back that first day where as soon as- I hit the ground running. Every Sunday we have a fraternity meeting and as soon as I got back they’re like, ‘All right recruitment, what are we doing? All right Jacob you have something to do with philanthropy chair, what are we doing? I’m gonna have this many events this week.’ It’s very definite businesslike.

When participants were asked when they felt as though their trip was over they reported between the time frame of driving home and getting ready for
their first class. Olive explained the transition began during her drive. “I was driving from Omaha to Cedar Falls like really early in the morning I was like oh gosh it’s real we’re back in this land. Yeah. And that’s when it started.” Tristan described it may have started in the van but the full impact delayed until the next morning.

Waking up the morning after that was like, that was it. Even coming like even coming on the trip with us on the van ride home. It would be getting up to go to class, like knowing that I was going to class the following Monday. Yes that was it. Yeah like just setting my alarm. Yes setting my alarm go to bed. Waking up to that sound was, ugh, very yuck.

The car ride home and waking up for classes on Monday were the two points in which people felt as though the trip was over. When the trip was over they immediately focused on what was next.

Bradley expressed that the final activity for him has typically been the starting point of the transition.

When we get out of the big place that we’re at like where the destination is like, in this case the Grand Canyon, and we left the Grand Canyon we had our dinner we’re on the road back to Colorado. I mean we had like the Hot Springs to look forward to you but I soon as the Hot Springs are over, like I kind of feel like the trip is over. Just like the things to look forward to you or just you know are all done and that’s what I sort of like start thinking in my head like I have this coming up like. In the Grand Canyon, I thought like for brief seconds out of the whole entire like four days. We’re down there I was like, ‘Oh yeah school work,’ and then I was like, ‘Nope. Grand Canyon,’ you know. But as soon as we got done with a trip things were already running to my brain over things that need to get
done, the things I have to accomplish like all my tests coming up this next week. It’s just a lot of stress I guess.

The progress of transitioning for Bradley is then increased when he feels the perceived real world transition begins.

Reality doesn’t really set in until I like go back to class, like when I get back in like that like Sunday. I have all that Sunday to recoup and do my thing and then- Actually it’s not even like class it’s like 7 PM, the night before classes I’m like oh shoot that sucks because the day goes by so fast when you get back from a trip.

Steven noted that his transition wasn’t until everyone said their goodbyes and there was not a general fade into the transition into his schedule. The transition for him was abrupt.

I would say that, when we got done unpacking and we gave each other the snail hug. And then we kind of delayed of letting go and I was sure that everyone thought it was kind of awkward but I knew that once we let go we wouldn’t be in the same situation as before. So Jerry dropped me off and when I was leaving I gave them a hug and said see you later man. We won’t have this opportunity again and that’s when it kind of set in.

Tristan described his fading process was attributed to the travel back transition and helped to aid in his overall transition.

That was all to me, it was on the just knowing the ride home because I had to get out of it. I felt it kind of disappearing the closer we got there. And then when we did arrive because I just wanted to get out of the van. But if I could just been taken home like instantly from one spot to the other from Iowa it may have taken me longer if you know what I mean to feel like, feel it stripping away or something like that.
The specific moment the participants expressed as an end to the transition revolved around the moment the trip participants turned in their backpacks or when the trip coordinators finished unpacking from the trip. The trip was still something they could hold onto mentally if the physical reminders were present.

Ashley explained the attachment to her backpack.

Yeah turning in my backpack that was like the last thing that I had from the trip. Now I have to return it by myself, let go of that last little piece. So that was kind of like, ‘Yep, this is really this is really over’.

Megan also described this act as important to ending her transition.

I think when I had to turn back in the backpack. That’s what got me. Because I had it for the week before and I got kinda just used to seeing it around. And I was like, oh man.

Some participants recognized the physical draw on their remembrance of the trip and put items away so not to dwell and miss the trip. Steven discussed how impactful his trip bracelet became.

I was wearing my bracelet until Monday and so I took a shower and took it off. And I just kind of been looking at it every time I leave my room but kind of afraid to put it on and ruin it, make it dirty.

For trip coordinators, the trip ending tied to their obligations of trip clean up and planning a picture party. Keith described how the trip wasn’t over until these items were completed.
In a way because I didn’t unpack until last night. So it was literally lagging with me because my backseat was full of gear. No it’s kind of stuck around, I’ve been thinking about it a lot partially because of that, partially because we have like our picture party coming up and stuff like that. So it’s been a very long transition back. I’m back in the mindset but I’m still thinking about the trip and stuff like that.

Apart from the timeline and overlapping of perceived worlds, students found that the qualities they missed from the trip made the trip transition difficult as well.

**Participants miss trip aspects and learnings.** Participants reported certain trip aspects as favorable and that they missed participating in those aspects every day. Most of these aspects were not reflected in their school schedule. Steven described how the opposite nature of his schedule from the trip caused for his desire to return to the trip.

It was sad. Just the bonds that you built, the way of living you kind of got used to and then you got back to reality. And the first week was crazy and I had two exams, a presentation to do, homework. I had club events to go to. I literally had no time for myself so. Yeah I was just kind of overwhelmed and like all the stuff that I put on myself. So I’m pretty much back into the flow although I do have five finals that I need to study for. Six finals; one this week and five next week or so. I’m just kind of brain-dead right now. Kind of missing the simple life at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

Megan expressed one of the aspects she missed from the trip was also not prevalent in her normal schedule.
I think just being able to like get out there and do things with like almost that instant gratification, like I walk, I’ll get somewhere instead of like filling out like all applications and like homework. It’s like you got to fill it out and then you got a wait and then you don’t know if you did it right.

Keith described how the natural area and freedom were aspects he missed that were not reflected in his normal schedule.

And then there’s something to be said for not being in the natural area too because I mean there’s the freedom associated with it and then there’s the fun of adventuring, and I came back and it’s freaking cold. So there’s that too. So I would say the most specific thing would just be having to have these 30 things that I have to get done today and that sucks.

As already discussed, their social ties were an important trip aspect for the trip participants which lead to one of the qualities that they missed the most. The participants desired for the deep social interactions again as well as the slow nature the trips tend to produce which enabled them to reconnect with others.

Ashley discussed this as a surprising trip aspect she missed.

It surprised me just how much I really miss being out there being with a group compared to being here. Like I love my friends and I like going to school but definitely been itching to get back there.

Steven explained how nature and the social bonds experienced through the trip were met through the slow nature of the trip.

The stars, the bond that we had with the people were probably the two biggest things that I missed the most and people like understanding who you are and the situation you’re going through. Everything’s so fast you don’t really have the time to pick up on what’s going on with people. So
with everything, with it slowing down that’s- I’ve kind of learned to pick up on little things like that. It was sad, I missed it. Usually I like being by myself but with you guys, I felt like I didn’t need that closure. I was who I was and I didn’t need to fake anything.

Jacob explained how he felt lost after departing from the group.

Definitely the closeness with people I mean. So I guess kind of one of the aspects was that kind of sense of loss from the group because, you know. I wasn’t gonna be sitting around a campfire every night anymore talking about Rose, bud, thorn, which is a fantastic thing. Anyway. I think I’m gonna try to implement that into my fraternity. But the sense of like, we’re not gonna be as close, but, I mean we’re gonna be still close, but there’s still a difference between being with them every night. So I was kind of feeling that loss.

Bradley described why he missed the social experiences from the trip.

Kind of like quiet and reflective I guess. I say that’s how I feel because I kind of reflect on what happens during the trip like all the cool memories I made, it makes me sad. Like, during the trip you obviously you go with like people, and the crazy thing about like going with all the strangers here actually, you actually become really good friends with people that you go on trips with. And I told this to one of the participants but like you’re going to feel weird when you go back to classes and you don’t see the people you’ve been hanging out with for the last 10 days like 24/7. And so it feels just weird to be not with those people just because you’ve been spending so much time with them. So I get really reflective with that. And a little bit sad thinking that like I might never ever hang out with these people again. But yet we had this amazing trip that lasted 10 days long. Yeah. Yeah. I don’t know.

Another aspect they missed were natural areas and the benefits of nature.

As many quotes already addressed, the participants enjoyed the stars and sleeping under them. Jacob also relayed the desire for sleeping under the stars
again. “You know looking at Cedar Falls is a lovely place but looking around it’s not the same as the Grand Canyon. I definitely miss the stars though. I’ve always miss the stars.”

Ashley, as most of the other participants noted, were excited to get the necessary tasks out of the way such as taking a shower and sleeping in their own bed. Even with the excitement of returning to higher and cleaner standards, they still desired the conditions to be similar to those they found on the trip. “Once I got back and once I was by myself at home I was like well I’m excited to sleep in a bed again but I wouldn’t mind sleeping under those stars right now.”

Other common trip aspects participants desired were the sense of freedom, sense of purpose, sense of accomplishment, and inspiration. They felt the trip was better at promoting these feelings compared to their schedule.

Megan addressed why freedom was so important to her.

I like the freedom it gave because there was a lot of, you could kind of choose your own day, I mean within limits, but there was a lot more freedom that way and you weren’t always having to be thinking about what’s next. You just kind of like be like oh I’m here, I can just walk and think and not a lot of- Especially when you get back, there’s a lot of work and all that kind of thing so.

Keith also addressed the sense of freedom within his daily routine.

Not having the freedom to go do whatever the heck I wanted. Because it is the best feeling to literally have one thing that I have to do this day and that’s get to camp, and that’s it. And once you get to camp you can do
anything. So like you can go down by the rapids, sit there and just watch
the water for 20 minutes or I can go talk to this person or I can go climb
that rock. Just the lack of freedom to do stuff like that.

Tristan described his disinterest in schedules and how the trip evoked the feeling
of being free from the schedule.

I don’t like having time. I don’t like having time as an overpowering thing
in my life like, I have to get this done at this time or I’m running on a
schedule. There I didn’t really, I didn’t need to.

At one point Tristan also addressed another quality the trip allowed, “And it
allowed for me to be more creative too.” During a separate portion of the
interview he described more positive qualities he missed such as sense of
accomplishment that made the break important.

Like I said the sense of accomplishment. Like I did something over the
break. I didn’t just sit around like a lot of people may have done like
getting caught up on work. Like I didn’t even want to think about
studying. I want to get away from all that and just have a break
worthwhile.

Jacob explained how the physical challenges and accomplishments were what
stood out in experience and he missed these challenges. Like Megan, he
described how he missed the instant gratification of obtaining these goals.

I guess mixed with, you know, hiking every day and like pushing every
day physically, pushing myself physically. Then keeping up with Bradley
that was a blast, it was so fun. Holy cow. I don’t know if he told you but I
was starting to smile when doing the switchbacks on the way up and
knowing that I was looking forward to all of that. And now it’s all gone.
There’s nothing but schoolwork for me. With finals coming up that was definitely what contributed to my sadness.

Jacob continued to list further qualities he missed from the trip later in the interview.

Sense of peace, sense of purpose. The purpose as well like hey we’re going here today and we need to get here. Sense of accomplishment. Definitely a lot of pride. Like hey I did this I’m proud. A sense of community to which I know I keep going back to the social aspect but that’s just the sense that I got too.

Tristan further explained that the lack of a schedule allowed for him to pursue activities that gave him purpose.

Well even though there was a schedule, like getting out at this time, but it was more of like I was waking up anyway, like I didn’t feel like I was waking to have to be somewhere like, there wasn’t pressure to do anything. Like even though we’re getting up tomorrow at this time it didn’t feel like when I go to bed here, when I go get up to go to work, and it’s the same time, you know. I didn’t feel like more refreshed when I wake up here. Like tomorrow I have to wake up at the same time. I got to get up at 6:30 which is the time we had to get up over there, and I struggled to get up. That’s why I call in sick so many times.

Participants also enjoyed the time they could reflect about their lives.

Tristan discussed how time for reflection was another aspect he missed about the trip along with nature. “The in-depth thinking that was going on in my head.

Yeah. That. The scenery also but yeah.”
Olive explained in depth what other participants also addressed. They missed the adventures and partaking in the new. They missed discovering the trip and found they were unable to integrate the same level of adventure into their daily routine.

But in general like leaving the kind of outdoor situation that we spent a week in was very saddening. Like, I just feel way more natural over there. Here, I come here and I’m like I’m going to go home and I’m like what else can I do? Nothing. What can I do? I can go to Hartman and I can go to George Wyth, I can go for a bike ride. Like all of that feels kind of normal. I think that’s where the sadness stems from. Everything is just normal. Nothing, I don’t have anything left to discover anymore. And it’s just kind of boring.

Typically when the participants transitioned in the past they were ready to return. Other Thanksgiving break transitions created general disinterest in homework and school, but participants reported they still were excited returning for classes. After the trips, they noted a difference. Megan explained the difference for her was in the amount of activity that occurs during the break.

At the end of Thanksgiving break under normal circumstances, I’m usually kind of restless to get back to school to get back to doing things. But when I got back from this trip, I just wanted to, you know, I wanted a break.

Ashley also reflected on other Thanksgiving breaks. She stated they were too similar to school which made those transitions easier for her. Her trip to the Grand Canyon was out of the ordinary and involved activities she’s proud of.
It’s usually not as hard as a transition because it’s kind of like yeah kind of just doing the same thing. Nothing I looked forward to that really got me excited during break and so coming back I’m kind of in that same little funk. But this time it was definitely a lot different because I spent the Thanksgiving break doing something pretty incredible and not typical of other people and their Thanksgiving break. So it’s definitely harder to come back.

Thoughts from the trip impacts all aspects of the participants’ days when they returned. Bradley expressed why he felt the trip transition was so dramatic compared to his other break returns that did not involve a UNI Outdoors trip.

Almost after every trip I go on, this one included of course, I always feel like the next 3-4 days afterwards I’m just like slumping around because like I wish I could do that more often and because I feel so much more alive and like fulfilled when I’m out there doing those kind of things rather than you know having like 10 assignments due like in a week and like having to go to clinicals and going to work. Not that I don’t enjoy like going to work and that kind of stuff but like I definitely kind of enjoy like the lack of time I have to do my assignments and like, just those things, and like, I have a test coming up and just like studying for them just like, taking a class, regurgitating it, and then forgetting it afterwards. So I feel like it’s not as important because I feel like I learn more like life lessons when I’m on my trips and stuff. So like the first four days I’m just kind of like why am I doing this, like this sucks? I wish I could just be like outside all the time. Those kind of things.

When it came to storytelling, and describing their trip, some became disappointed and frustrated when they tried to relate the trip to their friends and families. Some felt that most of their peers did not get it and were frustrated that others could not see how important the trip was to them. To those not on the trip, it was an experience that was fun, not something with deeper impacts.
Those that told stories for personal amusement over recognition did not leave their stories feeling disappointed. They simply enjoyed telling the stories for what they were and were content with more mundane responses.

The previous two themes discussed why the trip was important to participants as well as why the trip was difficult. The next theme will now specifically focus on the emotional response the student’s endured during their transition.

**Mixed Emotional Experience**

The post-trip transition was unexpected, creating “surprising” realizations. Everyone had reported they were surprised by part of their transition whether they were a first time participant or a veteran trip coordinator. The adjustment into school work was difficult and this caught students off guard. Olive explained the stresses of coordinating inevitably lead to her decrease in motivation when she returned home.

Yeah definitely didn’t see that coming. In my brain I figured yeah whatever it’s going to be more work. But it really like took a toll on my body I guess. Because I mean I’ve just gone on like personal weeklong trips over spring break, whatever, Thanksgiving and I come back and I’m fine. But in this situation like I don’t- I was so drained on Sunday it was ridiculous. It’s probably also because I didn’t get very much sleep that night but.
Her description of these events were unexpected. “When I got back I needed three days to do nothing. So that was very surprising.”

Keith who had been on previous break trips found this transition different than those before. He found his motivation to be the opposite as he expected and was surprised that his previous transitioning experience before made this one unexpectedly easier.

I expected it to be more like where I had no idea what I was doing, and with myself. And on this one I kind of just jumped right back into the swing of things, and I mean I didn’t like it but I did it just fine. So that was a little surprising.

Megan was surprised at how much she hated being by herself right after the trip. “Oh I hated it. Which is rare because usually I’m very much like I dig my alone time. But going back to my dorm room I was like, nope.”

Ashley noted that she did not expected the weight of the negative emotions to hit her so hard.

I didn’t expect to feel as sad that I wasn’t out there as I did. I’ve been on little trips and vacations before and like yeah I missed them and I wished I wasn’t back here doing school, I wished I was traveling. But this one hit the hardest out of any trip I’ve been on just because everything about it was so awesome. Like, one of the things I noticed biggest was that I was outside so much on that trip with like cooking, sleeping, hiking, and now I’m inside all of the time.

After the conversation of how he developed closure from a previous relationship, Jacob was asked if this was a goal for the trip when he went on the
trip. After asked about the expectation of his closure her responded, “No not really actually. No I didn’t so that was a very pleasant surprise.”

Even if they were expecting some type of let down from previous experiences, participants were still surprised by the impact and length of the negative feelings they experienced. Tristan, who travelled on his own and experienced negative feelings post vacations previously, was still surprised at the depth in which he felt the negative emotions.

I knew that post-trip depression was kind of like a thing and I know I’m a very emotional person and that I know I’m gonna go through this, but not for so long. I guess that is what I didn’t expect.

Bradley who have participated on multiple UNI Outdoors trips noted that he wasn’t completely taken off guard by the emotions, but it still surprised him. “I mean I don’t think I was surprised but I don’t think I was not surprised.”

They did not expect this transition nor knew how to handle these surprises. Some did nothing while others tried to control them. Olive decided on the route of doing nothing.

I was very surprised by my lack of motivation and my like general exhaustion. I think that was really the only thing that was like tied to my week that really like impacted my week. Yeah just like I wish I would have been a little more productive during the week. But once I get myself out it was fine. It just took a few days.
Jacob attempted to fill his time with tasks but found it difficult. “I definitely didn’t. I guess it was kind of like a lack of sleep too. I didn’t know what to do with myself.”

Even though the participants were surprised at the intensity or the general negativity of the transition, they still found the experience to be worthwhile and would knowingly submit themselves through that process again in the future. Tristan described his desire to submit himself to the negative transition due to the benefits “And I was happy to go through it. Because I expected it but unexpected for it to go on so long.” Megan explained how returning from the trip took effort for her to transition but found it worthwhile. “It does take effort but I think the efforts with it.” Steven expressed how dramatic of a change it was for him to reengage in his school schedule but it was worth the energy.

This transition is kind of like a cold start. It took several days warming up and grinding. A lot more grinding than I usually do. I enjoyed that trip so much that it was worth it. Usually when you grind that hard you don’t like it or wouldn’t want to do it again. But that experience that I had with the trip, I would do anything to have that experience again.

Some of the surprises aided in their reflections outlined in the previous sections. These surprises brought out emotions and directed individual motivations. Tristan discussed how he was surprised about his career
motivations and realizations after the trip. He had always desired to switch his major but the reflections from the trip showed him it is possible.

I wasn't expecting even that to be honest. But since meeting her it kind of always been on my mind, well if she can do it- It’s kind of interesting I guess. Until I actually got there I was like maybe seriously I could do it.

The “trip high” and sadness made transitioning difficult. After the trip, many participants reported a “trip high”. The participants felt high levels of positive emotions that were directly associated with the trip that followed into their routines. This “trip high” made it difficult to focus on their schoolwork as it was distracting. Along with the high came the low which to all the participants was an underlying sadness.

The most common emotion that every participant discussed was sadness. Everyone reported they felt sad during their post-trip transition. Tristan described it is as an, “...umbrella of sadness yeah. An unwillingness to try to make things feel better like go for a walk or-”

Steven described the trip high gave way to sadness during his first week back to school.

So, travel high, the backpacking high is gone. like I can reminisce a little bit about it but the feeling that I had during the trip and the I’d say the two days after the trip were pretty incredible and when I try to think about it I can experience it. But it will never be the same as after than during.
Jacob reported both excitement and sadness was derived from the trip. The positive emotions he experienced brought about a drive to do more but the sadness of missing the trip was still present.

I wasn’t really distressed, definitely kind of more sad. Interest? Interested? Like there was a lack of interest. There is nothing that really interested me. Excited. I guess it was a little bit of excitement in the back that I got back from the trip. As sad as I was with like that it was- I did feel a sense of inspiration that kind of sense of hey I got back. I did it. I got back. I accomplished what I wanted.

The immediate return to their schedules included the trip associated sadness or trip high. This made returning to classes a mental struggle to find satisfaction in their previous routine. Olive explained how the sadness made accomplishing tasks difficult.

I was very sad. Like I just, I begrudgingly did all my schoolwork, like I didn’t want to do it. I knew that I had to because I had my planner and I had my schedule and it’s what it said I needed to do. But I just like, like for Monday and Sunday, I was going to do school work on Sunday but like I just couldn’t bring myself to do it and I never really have that issue. So that was difficult.

Megan noted that when she immediately returned to her dorm room, she had to leave because of her emotions associated with the trip.

I liked having stuff to do and so like coming back to my dorm room it was very constricting. I didn’t even like being inside at that point, I just went for a walk and ended up finding people to talk to just because I didn’t want to be back.
With the feelings of sadness, some participants noticed they were lost or had this feeling of searching. Jacob experienced these feelings of wanting to do more once he was back. “Just like I don’t know what to do with myself. I just like sat in my room and I was like alright did everything before noon. What to do now?” Megan also felt similarly in regards to her sadness and moving on to her next step. She stated, “It was more I was just already for the next thing.” These statements were made in discussion of how their sadness affected them.

Both of these emotions were distracting for everyone, making schoolwork impossible for some. Olive, who explained her normal high energy for school work was derailed by the emotions she held from the trip. “No. I didn’t wanna do any of it. It was really rough.” Eventually they overcame and outgrew the sadness associated with the trip. Mandy explained her thoughts on working through her sadness.

But I know I have to do what I’m doing right now to be able to do these trips in the future. So it sucks putting in that grind of work because it makes me sad because I just want to be able to travel all the time but I got to put in the work now so it’s kind of just hard to keep focusing on that, just like keep looking ahead, like it will happen again. I need to put in the work now. So like it’s frustrating at the same time. It’s hard.

Some trip participants reported feelings of nostalgia that coincided with their trip high, which made transitioning distracting. When both feelings of nostalgia and sadness were discussed by participants, they noted the transition
as bittersweet. The participants were excited to be back, looking forward to more trips in the future, but they still missed the trip. Keith described how nostalgia played a role in his transition into school.

Not so much like this week but especially last week. Because the whole time you’re still working through the adjustment and everything so in the back of your head you just had, ‘Man last week was awesome. I would really love to go back there.’ So anything awesome that happens during the following week was just dampened a little bit. So I would say more of like a general feeling of like bittersweet nostalgia if that makes sense. Because it’s like yeah it’s good to be home but God that was nice.

Mandy also noted a bittersweet transition.

It’s more of like bittersweet. Well it’s good that I’m back that I can work towards my goals and everything and I have a better understanding of what those goals are but I was definitely a little sad. Maybe not quite depressed but just wishing I wasn’t in Cedar Falls and I was somewhere else.

For some, the associated feelings of nostalgia translated to hope for the future which inevitably turned to trip planning. This helped to ease many of their transitions. Ashley reported her drive to accomplish work was transferred to trip related topics as she did not want to focus on school so quickly.

It’s hard to focus sometimes, like I just stare out the window. One of the first days I got back I just like doodling on my calendar. I was supposed to be doing homework but I came up with a travel list of things I want to travel to by the time I’m 30 by the time I’m 40 and yeah. It’s been hard to focus because I’m thinking how awesome the trip was and how much I want to be back there.
While some focused on hope, others became caught up in a cycle of stress. They start feeling the positive emotions from the trip but find the introduction of their routine do not keep them relaxed for long. They reminisce in the trip high when school began that eventually leads to their workload becoming overbearing that they were forced to give it proper attention. Megan explained the moment when the cycle of stress started for her.

It was probably the 29th. Because that was the day- Because I had a final the 30th so it was like in that moment I had realized I had done messed up because I started looking at the study guide and I was like, ‘Oh, oh no.’

Once they realized the amount of work they needed to accomplish, the trip high immediately vanished and was replaced with stress. Mandy reflected how she tends to normally fall into this cycle as a student and noticed the trip had caused this, even with her newly found motivation.

I guess just like getting caught up on school and trying to buckle down has been really stressful and kind of- When I get that stressed I kind of shut down and I just don’t wanna do anything. And I’m going to wait till last minute and then I’m going to do it which is not something that I should be doing. I guess just stressed out because of all this work and then stressed out again because I have to make myself do it.

Bradley, who feels prepared to handle the transition reports he inevitably falls into the stress cycle.

Because it’s happened too many times for me to be like, I just know it’s going to happen. Like the next week is kind of like meh. I’m just kind of walking through stuff like I’m not like overly concerned over my
homework and stuff. I’m just kind of like, I have to do this and I’m not super stressed out but it builds up and I get this stressed.

Olive explained her own stress cycle of reintegrating into school coinciding with the trip sadness.

I felt very unproductive with my day so like I would go to bed and I would be like I have so much to do so like it was like cyclical saddening and then stress and then sad and stress for like the first good half of that week. It made me unproductive which then made me stressed which then made me unhappy and then it just kind of started back all over again.

As this category outlines, the participants felt both a major positive emotion and a major negative emotion. These two emotions, along with other positive and negative emotions coincided and caused a confusing reaction.

Competing positive and negative emotions during transition left participants conflicted. When asked about their emotions after the trip, everyone gave a mix of positive and negative emotions. They would report a list of emotions and state they would all occur at the same time. This occurrence was difficult to process for most of the participants. Ashley reported a multitude of strong emotions.

Inspiration to do that and travel more. Umm. Those strong feelings for Robert were some of the emotions I was feeling and didn’t expect too so. Umm. Let’s see. Yeah just a little bit of sadness I’m not there and I have to be stuck in Iowa doing school but I know I’ll get there eventually. I guess hope is another one you know. This isn’t the only trip I’m only ever going to go on. I know there’s hope in the future that I’ll get back to the Grand Canyon and do more and get more trips in.
Tristan addressed this competition of emotions during his transitioning.

“Obviously I wasn’t very happy about it. But there still was a sense of accomplishment.” Later in the interview he continued to express his transitioning emotions,

Boredom I think. It’s not really an emotion but kind of stuck back in repetitive nature of life. I don’t know if I would say depression but kind of like a little bit like depressed I guess. Unhappy that would be a better word for it, unhappy. Disconnected to people as well, yeah.

Bradley addressed his confliction over his emotions during the course of his week for various reasons.

I would say I feel like, like dissatisfied when I come back or well, like, I’m satisfied with the trip but I’m like dissatisfied with, like, the life that I live, like, with school when I get back. Or I, like, I’m, like, stressed. I’m honestly, like, I’m stressed but I’m honestly, like, less stressed when I come back from a trip even if I have a lot of stuff coming up. I feel less stressed when I get back than I do like during when I’m in a long like period of not going on a trip and stuff. Kind of like irritated almost. I feel like irritated with just like all the stuff that comes out of me like during the week because like as soon as I like- I have all my week all laid out. I’ve got Monday then I go to my class on Monday and I have like these assignments when I get done and I get all those assignments that are going to go to class. I have the same class on Wednesday and they have given me an assignment due on Friday. Like that’s so annoying, I have days when I have so much stuff to do and like I’m so tired that I would honestly get kind of like angry, I just get angry with everything. That doesn’t happen too often but it has happened. But it always makes me have hope for what’s to come and it like gets me super excited for things that I want to do.
When asked if they felt more positive or negative emotions, the answers were always mixed. Some reported negative right away and then would explain the positive emotions they experienced and vice versa. Some explained that both were so prevalent, they couldn’t decide on how to feel. Tristan described this exact occurrence, “I don’t think I felt anything like it was like a numbness. Just like I know happy nothing is making me happy nothing was making me sad I was just kind of numb to it.”

What emotions they focused on was different from person to person and even the depth of those emotions were conflicting for participants. Tristan attempted to explain his level of negative emotions.

Unmotivated and bored, bored was definitely on there. Depressed. So even though I was feeling a bit depressed I couldn’t put, I couldn’t put an extreme because that wasn’t coming close to some of the experiences I had before with that.

What level would you put it at?

Mild...

Some participants noticed that what they felt and how much the post-trip emotions affected them determined with what they were doing. Keith explained his thoughts on this. “But they were mostly based on what I have been doing that day. So it was less my general vibe and more of what I had just gotten done
doing in my work life." If an action that correlated with a positive emotion they felt on the trip, the participants felt more positive. If they were not doing something related to the trip and was inactive, they felt more of the negative emotions.

Most addressed confliction on the moment they returned home. Mandy addressed this moment which resembles similar feelings already discussed in the previous section.

When we pulled in to Cedar Falls I guess. I was like oh we are home and this is like over. I’m not going to be driving around in a van or not showering for an extended amount of time with all these people. Which is kind of bittersweet.

For all of the students, they felt as though their emotions were inconsistent. Many were confused and they had difficulty in articulating exactly how they felt. Olive at one point explained her week with the inconsistent emotions and how they ultimately made her react.

Emotionally, I was- My emotions were like everywhere. Yeah I like new I think the main emotion that I was conflicted cause like why am I feeling like this? I know that I have all of these things to do but I don’t have any desire to do them. And so due to that, that kind of confliction I think I just felt like everything was happening to me. Like I was just a wall and things were being thrown and just like bouncing off, like I wouldn’t react or whatever.
When the participants described how the emotions were difficult, inconsistent, confusing, and everywhere, the students found one tool that aided in their emotional transition.

Questionnaires identify changing negative emotions and helped participants transition. The helpfulness of the questionnaires were a mixed review among the participants. The response to how much the questionnaires helped them depended on how naturally reflective the individuals were on their own. Steven was one to voice his opinions on the reflection, “I was doing that enough myself I didn’t really need a questionnaire to figure out have afraid or timid I was.” Some, like Steven, felt as though they didn’t need assistance while others enjoyed the direction. Megan described her difficulty with the questionnaires as she did not know how to translate her reflections into the questions that were being asked.

I was never quite sure like what the words were directed at because like within a day I’d be- Like they’re such a range I wasn’t quite sure like there were some things that I was proud of and things that I wasn’t proud of like. In general I tried to like branch out generally what I felt but I don’t know. It’s always hard to analyze those kinds of questions.

Ashley stated the questionnaires were a direct help.

Honestly the questionnaires that you sent out kind of helped me like reflect still on the trip and realize that yeah that was a really great trip but I also kind of need to stay focused because it forced me to think about those feelings other than sharing the memories I had. Like it forced me to
think about each of those feelings. How I felt during the day made me really reflect. Like you know even though you know you are feeling those things it’s ok to feel them but it’s ok to push them aside a little bit and know that you have to get things done. So. Yeah. I guess that kind of helped to put everything in place to get done and prioritize a little bit.

Steven found some of the questions were too random and thought they were a joke. Other questions resonated with him.

I thought it was a joke like the emotions you feel. It was just kind of weird here like pride, or nervous, or afraid and I was like what the hell is this. Some of them I felt and still feel the same way after the trip. Some were kind of just like out there feelings that I don’t know if you should feel but some of them did hit, and make a difference when I got back. I’d say the biggest one that stands out to me was do you feel on top of the world? My answer to that I believe was yes after the trip but on the last poll, I was like no. And that was my answer before the trip as well.

Some thought the questions were difficult while others thought they did not cover enough material. Some desired for more open ended questions while others enjoyed the direct emotions. Keith described how the questions were not how he preferred to address how he was feeling.

It was really hard for me to try and select answers on the Likert scale just because since it was just a one word emotion description it was hard for me to kind of pick out if I felt like I had really felt something like that during the day just because what I was feeling was less defined than that. So like I was able to do it kind of like on a general feeling vibe sort of thing. So for example when it said depressed, it’s like well no I never felt depressed but I did feel bummed that one time so it was kind of stuff like that. So open spaces would be helpful just because one word emotions are really kind of hard to plug-in sometimes.
Mandy decided the questionnaire helped her focus on her emotions.

I guess like usually I’m not thinking about, I don’t think about my emotions I just kind of - So I guess like going through them and answering them kind of made me think about how I was feeling and how I was feeling when I got back. I think like putting a name on my emotions.

Bradley agreed with Keith on more open spaces to do individualized reflection.

It made me think a little bit. Kind of like think about like- Honestly like the comment portion was more profound than like the grading portion just because the portion where you could comment like you asked about like how did it affect your day and what happened during your day that made you like think the way that you thought or whatever. And, like, I don’t know, it just made me think about all the like, the small details that go into a day rather than the big picture. I like, if I catch myself thinking about like trips that day then I feel like I’m more down I guess because like I don’t have anything coming up for a while and I want something to come up like tomorrow tonight, like leave now. Yeah.

Certain words stuck with the participants over other emotions, especially the emotions that they could connect directly with the trip. The emotions they enjoyed the most were the positive ones that were experienced while on the trip. It aided their reflection and transition by seeing how the trip world could be applied to the real world. Megan noticed her reactions on the trip reflected her emotions in her school routine.

I would like the on top of the world one because after doing like the Grand- After getting to the top of the Grand Canyon that was on top of the world and so coming back it’s like oh, I suppose I could be here.
Keith noted how some questions stood out because he remembers his experience with them on the trip and they were experienced with recognizable moments from his school routine.

I don’t remember the exact word was but I felt accomplish. Maybe it was accomplished because it happened to be the day that I finished revamping the new climbing wall manual that I was really, really proud of. So that one really struck with me just because I had done that and that’s how I felt for that day.

Even though the depth of impact and opinion on the questionnaires differed between participants, all the participants noted the questionnaires aided their transition. Picking emotions everyday showed they were going through a transition and forced the participants to face their emotional reality. They realized their answers were changing which prompted their own self-reflection and acceptance of where they were at for that day. At the minimum, the questionnaires helped the participants recognize their present state. For some, it went so far as to direct them towards a more positive mindset and hope. Olive explained why she felt the questionnaires helped her through her reflections and acceptance.

It’s like triggering the memory of what I last responded and so like I could kind of see like the variations just from my own memory. But I think it helped to see the emotions like actually written out and see like my response to it because like in the day-to-day life your like I’m stressed I
have all this to do but if you sit down and you’re like what emotion do I really feel right now and why do I feel it, like that really clarifies things. Like even just taking a minute and asking yourself like out loud or in your brain or whatever. And so I think having it written down also really helps. Like oh my gosh I apparently feel very distressed and like anxious and like all these negative words. Why? So I am also like a visual learner where I learn best when I see it. So I feel like I was a lot more accepting to my emotions and by seeing it written down I felt less confused and frustrated as to why I had all these emotions. And I’m like obviously something is wrong when I am answering these questions honestly and I’m not like feeling well. When otherwise I’m like why do I keep feeling like this and I’m like OK fine I just accept it. Something is wrong.

Ashley also noted the questionnaires helped her with the acceptance of her feelings.

I guess some of the emotions I just never like think that I feel but then looking at it and actually thinking about it, yeah I actually do feel those. You just normally don’t think about how they affect you until you actually really think about it. So yeah just being forced, like thinking about those emotions and how they really did impact me was kind of hard at times. Like yeah, actually, I did feel like some of the sadder ones. I don’t want to feel that way but sometimes I do. So it’s kinda good to be in touch with your emotions, to recognize that.

Tristan explained how the time to answer the questions helped him realize what emotions he felt.

It impacted my realization of it. It was reinforcing when like pushing in 2 or 1, I was like oh God, I wish I wasn’t doing this but I wanted to be honest. Like it was making me feel like I am unhappy at the moment. It was reinforcing what I wasn’t thinking about, like it made me think about it again. And that would be the only impact it had on it if that makes sense. It reinforced to go and do something about it. Like trying to get out of it and just realize you might be feeling like that just because of the experience, coming back from an awesome place to live. Like don’t worry,
you’re probably not gonna feel like this for the rest of your life or anything like that. You know what I mean?

Mandy mentioned the questionnaires helped her face her emotional realities.

I guess we’re going into the trip and not knowing what was really going to happen I think. Coming back after like the first week and filling out the surveys that you sent I kind of like, oh that’s really true. I guess I’ve been a lot different than when I left and stuff.

Bradley noticed his personal trends through specific emotions.

I know the questions are the same or roughly the same but I could definitely tell that for some reason I was answering the questions differently the second time, like after the trip than before the trip. I couldn’t remember what I put down the first time but I definitely felt like I was putting down more sad answers the second time.

The questionnaires help to solve the problem the participants had discussing before, they didn’t have time to reflect. If the participants chose to fill out the questionnaires for the night, they were forced to sit and reflect for a short amount of time. Mandy expressed gratitude towards the questionnaires, “I think it really helps just because it was nice to sit down Monday, Wednesday, Friday and kind of reflect on myself. It was really cool.”

In the end, the participants concluded the questionnaires helped to show their progress. Being able to see that they were making progress to returning to their normal states helped their transition. Even if the questionnaire style was not
received positively by all, they noted the purpose had proven helpful. Since the participants could take part in seeing their trend and knowing it was improving made their negative emotions more bearable. Knowing they will improve helped. Steven admitted the questionnaires helped in this way. “I’d say the polls helped me understand that when I was digressing. So after the trip I could see myself going back to normal.”

The theme mixed emotional experience expressed what emotions contributed to a difficult transition. It built on why participants may face difficulties with returning to their schedule. The next theme will now focus on the motivation levels apart from the other factors.

Variable Motivation Levels

High motivation before the trip transforms to low motivation after the trip. Participants who reported high motivation dedicated to school related work noticed they no longer felt the same when they returned. Jacob noticed an increase in his motivation, “I’d say then Monday I was a little bit more motivated to get stuff done.” Megan was another participant who noticed this difference.

It’s interesting trying to compare like how I was before the trip and then after the trip. I definitely see there’s like, with like homework and stuff, the lack of drive. Like I was usually one of those people that would get it done a couple days in advance and now I have assignments due today that I haven’t even started. I’m like oh, well here we go.
Later in the interview, Megan further explained the difference in her motivation.

I suppose one of the things, it was just really hard to get motivated to do stuff. Just, I was just. I don’t know I kind of got burned out on school to begin with so this will rejuvenate me, but I enjoyed that so much more than I thought I would. Just trying to get back, I’m like well motivations gone.

Ashley explained her motivation for schoolwork decreased but her reflections on what’s important increased.

Motivation for schoolwork has probably decreased just because I spend so much time thinking about the trip. I’m just thinking about everything else but my motivation to do things more like this has definitely increased because it just made me feel so wholly happy and I know that’s what I want to get out of life. So I definitely want to continue doing things that make me happy.

Megan also mentioned her motivation went into tasks that were not school related.

I wasn’t looking to doing any of the stuff that I should be doing and I was like, oh, I will just find little things to take up time. Like, I know I did a lot of like Christmas shopping and so that was something that was fun and easy to do. I need to do it anyways so might as well get that out-of-the-way.

Bradley found the rush of the post-trip details caused his motivation to increase but the trip held a reverse effect after.
My motivation and stuff is out the window. Like before I leave my motivation is super high so I can get everything done so I can get on the trip and then when I get back I’m just like I don’t wanna do this.

Earlier in the interview he reflected on what that difference looks like for him.

I guess I say feel like I’m more quiet after a trip than before a trip. Like before a trip I might listen to music and like listen to just like- I feel like I’m more aggressive with the work that I do like before the trip and then after a trip I feel like I’m much more quiet and reserved when I do my homework and like go study and like study that I’m getting my work done.

Keith described his first day back. “So Monday. So for example that one was kind of a down day. There were parts where I just get super unmotivated during the day.” Individuals in this category still completed their work, but would not go to the amount of effort as they did before they left. Bradley described this decrease in effort

I mean I do my stuff and I get all my work done and everything like that but as far as like being in-depth in my work, not very much I guess. I kind of just like make sure to get it decently to get a good grade.

While some participants noticed a drop in motivation, others experienced a different trend within their schoolwork.

Low motivation before the trip transforms to high motivation after the trip. Individuals who found it hard to concentrate on their schoolwork beforehand found energy from the trip to propel them into their work. Some
found their studies increased in value on the trip because it would bring them closer to their larger life goals. They found the resilience to attack their homework. They took the skills they learned and practiced in the backcountry then applied it to their school work.

Jacob described his general motivation was higher and helped his natural energy levels.

A lot higher actually. I got everything done before noon. Going back to class on Monday I was definitely, I was ready to go. I woke up and the hit the ground running. It was great. Didn’t even need coffee. Actually the trip broke my coffee addiction so that was pretty good.

Mandy who reported that the trip made her realize the importance for school found her motivation increase. In the discovery of her new found passion, she was ready to get to work.

I think like school wise, after I came back from the trip and stuff I’ve been a little way more gung ho towards like working towards like what I actually want to do. I think that the Grand Canyon trip really helped me show that trip coordinating is something that I really want to do and something that I really want to do after college and maybe try doing what Andy Martin is doing. So I’ve been working way harder for that. The day that I got back I actually went and got belay certified and so I’ve been working on that. I have gone to the rock climbing wall a lot more. And I’ve been going to work out. I thought I would come back and think that I don’t want to be in school and I don’t want to really do it. I’ve been working a lot harder than I was before. I’ve been more focused on school and stuff and back into a routine which is nice too.
Steven had expressed the difference in his motivation even though it returned days later.

At first it was sky high and then after the third day it was back down to finals weekend, back to reality and the same feelings that I felt before the trip was back. So that adventure high disappeared after like three days.

Due to the different roles of the trips, coordinators and participants had discussed different motivation levels that pertained to their roles and attachment to the UNI Outdoors program.

**Coordinators and participants may experience different motivational patterns.** Participants tended to be more flexible in their motivation levels. Coordinators, on the other hand, showed a more consistent trend. All coordinators had noticed their motivation towards school was less. Keith explained how he fought to gain his motivation.

And I’m like, oh my God I’m not ready for this and that’s what the rest the week felt like. So it was very much like just trying to take it one day at a time. And I wouldn’t say it was stressful or depressing or anything like that. It was just very much trying to like get back into the swing of things and take control over the things that I didn’t have to think about for a week, which was a bit of a struggle but I got through it.

Those that voluntarily lead the trip felt as though they came back and needed a break from guiding the break. Olive described why she noticed a difference from when she switched roles from participant to leader.
When I’m a participant, you just pack your bag and you worry about your food group and maybe if you have water, but usually they give you water. And you just enjoy the van rides like while you’re traveling or whatever and, darn I need to pay for my own meal. God! Seven bucks down the drain right there. Like, just kind of little things to worry about. And I’m not saying like this trip to coordinate was super stressful, like I don’t think it was that stressful. I think everything came very naturally and like the teamwork was super great but I guess my mind was like a lot more active or I was more aware of what needed to be done and so I was very tired when we came back.

Bradley also described why the transition was different for him.

I feel like it’s worse when I’m a coordinator as compared to participant. So the participant you didn’t really have to work very hard to like make sure all the things were right on the trip, Kind of just like you just go on the trip basically. So I don’t think they get to not say that they didn’t enjoy it but they didn’t get to enjoy more of it. So like I feel like I wish I could’ve enjoyed more of what I want to do as a person who likes to be outside, however, I come back with the fact that I have lead this group in the back country, to do these things. I take pride in the fact that like I’m a trip coordinator and I can do these things and like make an impact, I guess, with those people that go on the trip and just like the skills that I have to offer just because of like what we do.

In their opinions, they never officially received a break, though the work they did over break was highly rewarding. Bradley further expressed his views on the rewards of coordinating.

I think what we as coordinators find most enjoyable is seeing people’s attitudes and perceptions of the world just get flipped upside down, you know, because of these trips. And you know, even for me, like that wasn’t my first time going to the Grand Canyon in total but I still thought of how it changed me and how it changed the people that went on that trip. Like primarily the break trips that’s where a lot of the profound things come from like the participants.
When the trip returned, the coordinators desired a day to do absolutely nothing and be prepared for school. The coordinators all reported they felt as though they needed more time to not only take a break, but unpack from the trip before their school work began. Even with getting back early Sunday morning, and having an entire afternoon open to prepare for the next day, the coordinators ended up relaxing in their own way instead. Olive, one of the coordinators, noted her needs of introversion dictated her first day back.

I like just kind of vegged out and did a lot of thinking about it and just kind of relaxed just because I’m naturally an introvert. And like, I love spending time around other people but also like I need that time to be by myself to recharge. And so I also like kind of feel like I felt kind of grounded when I was by myself when we got back because I’m like OK, it’s fine, The trips done. I’m here by myself and things are going to be OK and I can kind of just do things at my own pace now.

They may have started activities to clean up their personal gear, but they did not start on homework or take enough steps to feel fully prepared for the next day. What they wanted was one more day which caused them to struggle motivationally through the first week back. Olive expressed her need for a break before she could fully focus on school. “I was like oh I don’t really feel like doing anything so I’m not gonna do anything. And I’m going to treat myself. And so that was- The first thing I did was nothing which was unusual for me.”
One difference between coordinators and participants is the perception of schedules while on the trip. The participants reported they enjoyed the lack of structure while coordinators feel as though there is a lot of structure to implement. This is largely due to the leadership roles of the coordinators and the expectations of guiding a safe trip. Due to this obligation, the coordinators have to implement structure from the ground up for novices. It’s a different skill set and mind set to step into the backcountry from the front country and the coordinators are responsible for implementing and teaching everything new. This expectation is to provide a safe trip.

The UNI Outdoors program teaches skills throughout the entirety of the trip. This develops into a schedule of instruction: when to teach, how to teach, and how long to teach for. Though the trip is not structured for the participants, it is for the leaders. Being in charge of this structure is an added trip component the coordinators must face in which the trip participants do not. Olive explained her reaction to this structure on her first break trip coordinating.

The trip is very structured in itself and I think I came back and I was like oh my God and I was like I’m not doing anything because that was way too much organization and structure for a while.

Even though the trip is harder on coordinators Bradley described why the role is still worthwhile.
It’s a little bit more intense because you have to clean up and stuff but I feel like I had more, I don’t know I feel pretty complete. I feel fulfilled with how the trip went with the participants just because I feel like we have a good impact on them.

With the different levels of motivation, individuals still found they returned to their normal levels around the same time. The next section will discuss the timeline of returning motivation.

Motivation returns between the Wednesday and Friday of the returning week. The motivation levels were different, but the timeline in which everyone reported their normal level of motivation became consistent. Participants were back to normal between Wednesday and Thursday while coordinators reported normal motivation levels by Thursday and Friday. By the second half of the school week, everyone had returned to their normal levels. Megan explained, “There was no motivation I didn’t do anything until like Thursday and that was only because I had an exam”. Jacob described, “I would say probably 2 to 3 days.”

Steven was unsure as to why he felt his motivation increase but he noticed his motivation returned three or four days after the trip.

I feel like only just recently. Like yeah it’s taken like yeah- I feel completely like back motivated. If I was to do one of those quizzes I would feel like I’ve accomplished a little bit more lately. I think yeah like lately 3 to 4 or a week ago or three or four days ago really that I feel- And I
guess I could be the timing because it’s getting to the end of the semester as well.

Mandy also felt her motivational transition lasted for the first couple days.

Probably like halfway through last week, like taking a couple days to get back into the swing of things. I just kind of feel like I was totally unorganized and like I didn’t know what was going on. My room was a mess.

Olive’s reflection also coordinated with the other participants and leaders.

“I think like Wednesday or Thursday of that week when we got back. Like I finally felt OK I think on Thursday of that week.”

Keith noticed his motivation return with the other coordinators, “Probably this past Friday if not this Monday but somewhere within those last few days. Definitely not before Friday though.” After he mentioned how much he perceived his motivation and emotional motivation was affected by the transition.

Emotionally and motivational less so. So if I said that mentally like getting the work done I was at like a 70%, emotionally probably more like a 40%. Whether that was, again whether that was just the transition being tiring and being exhausted or not wanting to be here, probably half-and-half for that, but it definitely took a couple days for me to like be emotionally motivated to kind of partake in the day.

Ashley addressed her motivation was returned by Wednesday or Thursday even with her drive to reflect on the trip.
Probably mid-week Wednesday or Thursday. I have a lot to do on Thursday and I’m transitioning positions from job to job and wrapping up some projects with some classes. So that’s kind of when it hit, that I’m focused on school now. This is go time just get through this and once finals are done then I have no school obligations and can think about the trip as much as I want. I just got to get through school and then reminisce as much as I want.

Allowing participants to discuss their personal transitions in their own words provided further knowledge in what college students found worthwhile from the trip, what was difficult about the transition, what emotions were prevalent, and how their motivation changed. In the next section, findings will focus on the quantitative results to discover and outline any trends students experience during their transition through questionnaires.

**Quantitative**

Findings through the quantitative methods provide results from the demographics, Positive and Negative Affect Scores (PANAS), Affect Balance Scores (ABS), and the individual emotions associated with the two surveys. First, I will discuss the demographics of the trips. Next, I will discuss the PANAS separated by the individual PANAS emotions then by the total change in the positive and negative scores. Then I will proceed with the ABS separated by the individual Balance emotions then by the positive, negative, and total Balance changes.
Demographics

The demographics from the trip addressed gender, trip activities, trip attendance, and trip success. All of the participants were full time traditional college students in which 1 was taking graduate courses and 17 were full time undergraduate students. There were 11 females and 7 males that completed all 4 questionnaires. Only 1 had quit taking the questionnaires after the trips and were not included in the demographics.

The questionnaires were given to participants from four different trips over two different breaks. During the Fall 2017 Thanksgiving Break trip, 8 participated in one Grand Canyon backpacking trip and 3 participated in the second Grand Canyon backpacking trip. During the Spring 2018 Spring Break trip, 3 participated in the Utah backpacking trip and 5 participated in the Florida Georgia canoeing and backpacking trip. Further breakdowns of the demographics of gender over the four break trips can be found in Table 5 and Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Gender by Trip</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Females by Trip</th>
<th>Males by Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand Canyon #1</td>
<td>8(44.4%)</td>
<td>4(22.2%)</td>
<td>4(22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Canyon #2</td>
<td>3(16.7%)</td>
<td>2(11.1%)</td>
<td>1(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah Escalante</td>
<td>3(16.7%)</td>
<td>1(5.6%)</td>
<td>1(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Georgia</td>
<td>5(26.3%)</td>
<td>4(22.2%)</td>
<td>1(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Gender by Break

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>11(61.1%)</td>
<td>5(26.3%)</td>
<td>6(31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>8(38.9%)</td>
<td>6(31.6%)</td>
<td>2(10.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the participants had verified they found the trip successful. The qualitative data was used to further define that success rather than the quantitative.

Positive and Negative Affect Scores

The questionnaire had been divided into three different sections. After the demographic and IRB questions, the participants provided scores on a Likert Scale for how prevalent the emotions were experienced during the day. Means and Standard Deviations (SD) were used to describe the scores. Separate repeated ANOVAs through SPSS 24 were used for each dependent variable: individual emotions. Significance was set at .05.

There was significant differences from three emotions: distressed, nervous, and afraid. Distressed had significant changes between phase assessments (F(2.64,44.84)=3.37, p=.03) in which the trend in means suggest a higher mean prior to the trip then slowly descended after the break trip. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction did not indicate significant differences between any days for the emotion distressed. Conflicting results
between ANOVA and Bonferroni analysis compelled me to rerun the follow-up analysis using a new Post Hoc procedure. The data was rerun using LSD for Distressed which indicated the mean score for the Pre Test (M=3.00, SD=.30) was significantly different than Day 3 (M=2.33, SD=.28) = .04 and Day 5 (M=2.06, SD=.29) = .02 However, Day 1 (M=2.44, SD=.29) did not significantly differ from the other days.

Nervous had significant changes between phase assessments (F(2.72,46.23) = 6.73, p=.001) and a trend that suggest higher levels before the trip that descend between phases after the trip. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated for Nervous that the mean score for the Pre-Test (M= 3.06, SD=.29) was significantly different than Day 3 (1.94, .29) = .01 and Day 5 (1.78, .29) = .006. However Day 1 (M=2.06 , SD = .29) did not significantly differ from the other days.

Afraid had significance changes between phase assessments (F(1.75,29.75)=4.59, p=.02) with a trend that suggest a higher mean prior to the trip. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated for Afraid that the mean score for the Pre-Test (M= 1.83, SD=.25) was significantly different than Day 1 (1.22, .10) = .04 However Day 3 (M=1.28 , SD = .14) and Day 5 (M=1.17,.09) did not significantly differ from the other days.
Other emotional changes in the PANAS section were not significant between days. For further information on the emotions that were not significant, Table 7 reveals scores for all emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F low</th>
<th>F high</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Pre-Test M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 1 M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 3 M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 5 M(SD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>36.96</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>3.72(1.02)</td>
<td>3.67(1.19)</td>
<td>3.56(1.04)</td>
<td>3.67(0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distressed</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>44.84</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>3.00(1.28)</td>
<td>2.44(1.25)</td>
<td>2.33(1.19)</td>
<td>2.06(1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>37.64</td>
<td>.392</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>4.00(.84)</td>
<td>3.67(1.14)</td>
<td>3.83(1.04)</td>
<td>3.78(.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>42.54</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>2.00(1.14)</td>
<td>2.00(1.08)</td>
<td>2.00(1.19)</td>
<td>1.39(.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>47.22</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>3.44(.62)</td>
<td>3.89(.83)</td>
<td>3.89(.83)</td>
<td>3.89(.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>33.40</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>1.50(.71)</td>
<td>1.39(.85)</td>
<td>1.39(1.03)</td>
<td>1.22(.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>31.10</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.94(1.21)</td>
<td>1.50(.71)</td>
<td>1.39(.70)</td>
<td>1.28(.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>29.56</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>1.72(1.07)</td>
<td>1.39(.92)</td>
<td>1.39(.85)</td>
<td>1.44(.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>3.78(1.11)</td>
<td>3.72(1.23)</td>
<td>3.83(.99)</td>
<td>3.72(.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>43.30</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>3.17(1.10)</td>
<td>3.78(1.17)</td>
<td>3.56(1.25)</td>
<td>3.61(1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>36.92</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>2.33(1.24)</td>
<td>1.61(1.14)</td>
<td>1.78(.94)</td>
<td>1.72(1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>44.93</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>3.17(1.79)</td>
<td>2.94(1.26)</td>
<td>3.06(1.16)</td>
<td>2.72(1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>25.12</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>1.39(.61)</td>
<td>1.17(.51)</td>
<td>1.17(.71)</td>
<td>1.39(.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>35.12</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>3.11(1.28)</td>
<td>3.83(1.34)</td>
<td>3.78(1.31)</td>
<td>3.44(1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>46.23</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>3.06(1.21)</td>
<td>2.06(1.21)</td>
<td>1.94(1.21)</td>
<td>1.78(1.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>38.73</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>3.78(94)</td>
<td>3.67(1.08)</td>
<td>3.28(1.45)</td>
<td>3.56(1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentive</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>36.44</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>3.5(1.04)</td>
<td>3.33(1.33)</td>
<td>3.11(1.18)</td>
<td>3.00(1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>39.34</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>2.28(1.27)</td>
<td>2.17(1.29)</td>
<td>1.83(1.04)</td>
<td>1.50(.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>48.03</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>3.44(98)</td>
<td>3.39(1.20)</td>
<td>2.89(1.28)</td>
<td>2.94(1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>29.75</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.83(1.04)</td>
<td>1.22(43)</td>
<td>1.38(57)</td>
<td>1.17(.38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individual scores were also divided into positive and negative and added each day to see if there was a significant change between positive and negative emotions throughout the week. Means and Standard Deviations (SD)
were used to describe the scores. Separate repeated ANOVAs were used for each dependent variables: positive PANAS and negative PANAS. Significance was set at .05.

There were significant differences between phase assessment for the negative PAS (F(1.94,32.92) = 5.26, p=.01, N =17). The trend in the means suggest a higher average score for negative emotions before the trip than any of the measurements taken after the trip. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated for Negative PANAS that the mean score for the Pre Test (M=21, SD=1.6) was significantly different than Day 5 (M=14.95, SD=1.45) = .05. However, Day 1(M=16.89, SD =1.12) and Day 3 (M=16.50, SD=1.20) did not significantly differ from the other days.

The overall positive PANAS emotions were not significant between days.

Scores for both the positive PANAS and negative PANAS are referenced in Table 8.

Table 8: PANAS Positive and Negative SPSS Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df time</th>
<th>df error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Pre-Test M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 1 M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 3 M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 5 M(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>30.90</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>35.11(6.27)</td>
<td>35.94(9.26)</td>
<td>34.83(8.89)</td>
<td>34.39(7.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>32.92</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>21.00(6.77)</td>
<td>16.89(4.75)</td>
<td>16.50(5.10)</td>
<td>14.94(6.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Affect Balance Scores**

For the third questionnaire category, the participants provided scores on a Likert Scale for how prevalent the emotions were experienced during the day for the survey on ABS. Means and Standard Deviations (SD) were used to describe the scores. Separate repeated ANOVAs were used for each dependent variable interested, on top of the world, going your way, pleased, restless, lonely, bored, and depressed. Significance was set at .05. SPSS 24.

There were significant differences between Greenhouse-Geisser phase assessment for the emotion pleased by \( F(2.20,35.20) = .70, p=.04, N =17 \). The trend in the means suggest a lower average score for pleased before the trip than any of the measurements taken after the trip.

Lonely did not show significance through the repeated ANOVA test with Bonferonni correction \( F(2.10,35.67) = 2.97, p=.062 \) but the results warrant a discussion in its trend. Lonely’s means suggest students feel less lonely after the trip than they did previously, though it was not drastic enough to show significance. The trend in means show the students feeling less lonely on their third day back from the trip than day 1 and day 5.
Other individual emotional changes in the ABS section were not significant between days. For further information on the emotions that were not significant, scores for the individual ABS emotions are referenced in Table 9.

Table 9: Individual ABS SPSS Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df time</th>
<th>df error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Pre-Test M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 1 M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 3 M(SD)</th>
<th>Day 5 M(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>45.73</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>.944(.236)</td>
<td>.833(.383)</td>
<td>.833(.383)</td>
<td>.889(.323)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Top of the World</td>
<td>2.557</td>
<td>43.475</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>.389(.502)</td>
<td>.5(.515)</td>
<td>.333(.485)</td>
<td>.556(.511)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going Your Way</td>
<td>2.073</td>
<td>35.234</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.444(.511)</td>
<td>.722(.461)</td>
<td>.778(.428)</td>
<td>.722(.461)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>35.202</td>
<td>.702</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.706(.470)</td>
<td>.824(.393)</td>
<td>.765(.437)</td>
<td>.882(.332)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restless</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>41.689</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>.444(.511)</td>
<td>.444(.511)</td>
<td>.278(.461)</td>
<td>.222(.428)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>2.098</td>
<td>35.665</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.500(.515)</td>
<td>.278(.461)</td>
<td>.167(.383)</td>
<td>.222(.428)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>2.924</td>
<td>49.713</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.556(.511)</td>
<td>.500(.515)</td>
<td>.556(.511)</td>
<td>.333(.485)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>2.262</td>
<td>38.451</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.278(.461)</td>
<td>.167(.383)</td>
<td>.111(.323)</td>
<td>.056(.236)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ABS scores were also divided into positive and negative emotions and run through separate repeated ANOVAs with dependent variables positive, negative and ABS scores. ABS scores were totaled out per the instructions of the survey. Means and Standard Deviations (SD) were used to describe the scores. Significance was set at .05.

There were significant differences between phase of Greenhouse-Geisser assessment for the overall Negative ABS emotions (F(2.27,38.66) = 3.75, p=.028, N =17). The trend in the means suggest a higher average score for the overall negative emotions before the trip than any of the measurements taken after the
trip. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction did not indicate significant differences between any days for the overall negative Balance emotions. Conflicting results between ANOVA and Bonferroni analysis compelled me to rerun the follow-up analysis using a new Post Hoc procedure.

The data was rerun using LSD for negative ABS which indicated the mean score for the Pre Test (M=1.78, SD=.28) was significantly different than Day 5 (M=.78, SD=.28) = .02 as well as between Day 2 (M=1.39, SD=.30) and Day 5 (M=.78, SD=.28) = .04. However, Day 3 (M=1.11, SD=.27) did not significantly differ from the other days.

Positive and the totaled ABS Scores were not significant between days. For more information on the emotions that were not significant, further information are found below in Table 10.

| Table 10: Positive, Negative, and Total ABS SPSS Results |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| df time | df error | F   | P   | Pre-Test M(SD) | Day 1 M(SD) | Day 3 M(SD) | Day 5 M(SD) |
| Positive | 1.97     | 33.54 | .873 | .426 | 2.50(1.15) | 2.89(1.49) | 2.72(1.23) | 3.06(1.00) |
| Negative | 2.274   | 38.662  | 3.75 | .028 | 1.78(1.17) | 1.39(1.29) | 1.11(1.13) | .778(1.17) |
| Balance  | 1.56     | 26.54  | 2.62 | .103 | .722(2.05) | 1.500(2.36) | 1.61(1.72) | 2.28(1.71) |

**Quantitative Conclusions**

The overall data suggests that students may be “hyped” up on negative emotions before they leave for a trip. When the students return, they noticed
their negative emotions began to decrease after the trip while the feeling of pleasure increased.

When viewing both questionnaires, the emotions that showed the most change were distressed, nervous, afraid, pleased, and negative emotions as a whole. They were experienced higher before the trip than after the trip. Negative emotions as a whole would decrease over the week after the students returned from the break trip. Distressed and nervous were two of the three negative emotions that changed the most for the students and would decrease throughout the week after their return. Afraid was the third negative emotion that changed the most and was experienced at higher levels during the middle of the week, though still less than before the trip. The emotion afraid then returned to a lower level at the end of the week.

The findings in this chapter for both qualitative and quantitative provided a multitude of insights to the student’s post-trip transition. The results will now be compared and explained by previous research in the next chapter along with the implications of the findings. Discussions on how to influence future behaviors for individuals and programs will also be discussed in the next chapter. The results will then be used to answer the original research questions.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The quantitative and qualitative data provided deeper insights into how a traditional college student transitions back into their school routine. Though a decisive emotional trend had not been formulated, the data proved to align with other research on the topic of post-trip vacation happiness. Students who were interviewed reported they felt as though they were back to normal within a week while the quantitative shown a leveling out after the trip that is more consistent than before the trip.

Quantitative

The quantitative findings had shown students returning from the trip with lower levels of overall negative feelings than just before the trip. The reason for this could be due to two factors. First is that the trip experiences improved the student’s negative emotions. If this is true, then the findings do not provide proof that participants experience post-trip depression or post-trip blues. This finding and reasoning reflects other claims that post-travel depression is a “myth” such as Jerone Nawijn who denied the existence of proof for post-travel depression in his study on post-trip effects, Happiness Through Vacationing: Just a Temporary Boost or Long-Term Benefits? (Nawijn, 2011).
Another reason the quantitative results could have produced higher results before their trip is the pre-trip questionnaire was taken at the wrong time in comparison to their normal behaviors. Students may not be in their “normal” motivational or emotional state within the week before the trip because typically, they do not have a break to look forward to or prepare for.

The pre-trip questionnaire provided a potentially poor control point as students were providing answers that may suggest they are in an elevated state. The control point was intended to show their “normal” emotions that was not affected by the trip so to gain a reference for how the students typically feel and to also see when they returned to this state. Instead the quantitative data provided higher emotional findings in both positive and negative emotions. Even though there may be complications with the control point as not being a true representation of the students “normal”, the evidence can still assist in the description of how students transition.

An answer to why students reported higher negative emotional states may be due to the stresses of obligations before break such as completing their assigned school tasks, preparing to be free of homework during the break, preparing for an unknown activity, as well as being excited for the trip in general which would amplify both their positive and negative feelings. Students may be
more “hyped” both positively and negatively in looking towards the trip due to these multitude of factors. Therefore, these findings found the trip may have been too close to the designated control point to be a true point of reference. This finding is in line with previous vacation happiness studies in that individuals are happiest during the anticipation phase of traveling. (Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Markl, 2000) What’s new to the previous research is that participants also reported higher negative emotions as well as positive emotions.

The quantitative data suggest higher emotional levels to be true in both positive and negative emotions before trip leave. A consideration to studies in the future would be to take the control point two or three weeks before the trip departure date rather than in the same week. This would allow for the student’s routines and emotions to have less of a chance to be affected by the break. Also distributing multiple pre-trip questions and averaging the scores may provide a better description of the student’s “normal feelings”. Doing so may reduce the variance in emotions from week to week and provide multiple opportunities to create the “normal” standard.

Apart from the discussion of control point, the quantitative data provided further information on student’s transition. The quantitative findings suggested there may be two types of transitioning people in regards to emotion. If this
proves to be true, it will align with the qualitative findings of two types of people in the theme dependent variable motivation. To gain a better understanding, it is recommended that future research conducts a larger sample size and a study solely focused on the quantitative findings of post-trip emotional and motivational behavior.

The questions themselves proved to be a mixed review. Some emotions were not relevant and distracted the participants from taking the questionnaire seriously. Other emotions described their emotions in ways participants wouldn’t have described on their own. The questions aided in their natural reflections in offering definitions on their conflicting emotions. All questions were left in so not to disrupt the scoring of the tests but in the future, they may be narrowed down and the scores adjusted accordingly.

**Qualitative**

The qualitative research gave the opportunity for students to voice their feelings in which all participants were excited to do so. The participants found the chance to talk through their experience helpful as well as therapeutic. The favorable themes brought up by participants centered on aspects found both during the trip and after. The two themes of the importance of social
developments and getting away from school were ideals they noted when attending the trip.

Implication of Themes

Each theme aided in the explanation of post-trip transitions. The findings produced by qualitative methods resembled previous research on post-trip happiness as well as providing in-depth insight to college students.

Lasting Reactions. The students enjoyed speaking about the bonds they developed with strangers and the depth of friendship to which they formed in a short amount of time. Upon the return, they experienced a sense of loss from not only the individuals but from deep relationships themselves. Many insinuated they wanted more time with the other participants, gladly putting off their relationships at home to return to the trip.

Another reason for the return of the trip is the feeling that they are a different person on the trip, one they enjoyed being more. The time away from school brought about a mental break that allowed for the students to focus on themselves, rather than classes and homework. This focus was beneficial in developing the understanding of important aspects to each individual. While on the trip, students identified certain aspects they intended to improve, change, or
integrate into their routine. Many of these came through realizations that they are able to do more than what they perceived in the first place.

As they return to their schedule, the participants were excited to be back for the amenities and to see friends and families, but they desired to still be on the trip. When they come home, the students experience either positive emotions and hope to improve their original schedule or desired to do nothing for the first few day because they were exhausted from the trip.

**Mixed Emotional Experience.** The students found the post-trip transition to be surprising, even if they had experienced transitions before; with that surprise came some difficulty in adjusting. Even though the students reported this difficulty, they still stated the trip was worth the difficult transition and they would do it all over again knowing how hard it is to reintegrate into school.

A lot of the difficulty came from an overarching feeling of sadness. Sadness played a role in everyone’s transition and it came from other feelings of loss, confusion, disinterest and stress. Some students found that the sadness had enough impact on their motivation levels that they fell into a cycle of sadness that induced stress which would induce sadness. These negative feelings and experiences are similar to those who experience a liminal period. The participants also reported positive feelings as well. Those that stood out to them
the most and the impacts they held on the students are also similar to those found in individuals that are experiencing the liminal period.

With the competing positive and negative emotions, students felt confused and their emotions were all over the place. Eventually, this faded and everyone reported they were back to normal by the end of the week, and Monday at the absolute latest. Some of the emotional confusion may be explained through the next theme’s discussion.

**Difficult Weeklong Transition.** One of the difficulties the participants faced was the integration of important aspects into their original routine. A reason being is their normal support group of friends and family did not attend the trip nor understand what the student experienced on the trip. Most of the students claimed their families have never or choose to not participate in similar experience so they miss the importance of the trip. Sometimes this comes out through storytelling from the participants who feel disappointed that their peers “don’t get it”.

More importantly, the student who is attempting to instill these changes into their routine are doing it with an audience who doesn’t understand. Their friends and family may ask a lot of questions, fail to recognize the importance to that student, or disagree with the future in which the student is trying to grow
in. Students may find they have to explain or defend themselves the entire way through their transition which may leave them exhausted, discouraged, or confused if what they learned from the trip is possible in everyday life.

On the discussion of everyday life, participants reflected on the trip as though it was a different world. Everyone had, in their own way, described the trip world leaving and reality as its own world being forced on them. As students noted these worlds and described their attributes, the perceived worlds were described to follow a common trend. Only one participant had described the trip world and real world as but that was from a trip coordinator who had practice transitioning from break trips and noted he did not feel as attached to this trip as he did the other. He did note his first break trip followed the same pattern as previously described.

Since the participants described the worlds as a trend, a visual representation was constructed to show how these perceived worlds interact with each other for their first week back. Below are four figures. The first three report the perceived worlds as they stand on their own. The last graph shows the overlap to illustrate and help report what the students were outlining during their interviews.
The vertical axis represents the amount of mental energy the participants are able to produce. Mental energy comprises of focus, ability, and willingness to engage in their daily routine and work (Leiberman, 2013). The reason I chose to use mental energy as the reference point is the concept, though new, is a term that describes the total mood and concentration level in which the students are describing. The horizontal access is time; more specifically days of the first week back, beginning Sunday, the return day.

Figure 1 is the average levels of the trip world. Figure 2 is the average levels of reality setting in. Figure 3 is the levels of normalcy. Figure 4 is the overlapping of the worlds with normalcy.

Figure 4 is a representation of the perceived world’s coexisting at the same time in which the participants described. The worlds overlap at times which may allude to why students feel conflicted; they are feeling multiple world’s occurring at one time. This is inferring that Reality Setting In and Normalcy are constant throughout their entire day. All the participants had described that these two worlds indeed did just that.
Figure 1: Perceived Trip World Leaving

Figure 2: Perceived Reality Hitting
Figure 3: Perceived Normalcy

Figure 4: Perceived Worlds Combined
During this overlap, students reported high levels of daydreaming that eventually decreased towards the end of the week. This was a coping mechanism for the students who were feeling confused with the transition to do the one action that would help them transition easier, reflect. The students desired for a time of reflection but found their unpreparedness, energy, and busy schedules did not allow the time for reflection. Since the students desired reflection but couldn’t find the time to implement into their schedules, they resorted to daydreaming about the trip or future trips, leaving the students unable to fully be emotionally and mentally present in their surroundings.

Students found the questionnaires actually aided in their transition because of the short reflection it provided. Students felt some type of obligation to fill out the surveys. Since the questionnaires were a self-report style, students had to reflect on their day and their trip. The reflection tool assisted in their identification of emotions which helped for students to move through their transition.

The focus of the study was on both emotional and motivational trends to better understand the bigger picture of what students experience when transitioning after the break trip. What the research found was the emotional
transition seemed to align or slightly extend past the motivational transition. Further discussion of the motivational results can be found in the next section.

**Dependent Motivation Levels.** The motivational trends found through this study was highly dependent on individuals. Those that were more motivate for school before the trip found they were less motivated after while the reverse is true for the individuals who were not motivated for school before the trip. This may be due to what the individuals discover about themselves while on the trip. As already outlined, students are doing profound reflections while on the trip. Those who put the priority of school high on their list may find that they want to spend their energies on other activities apart from school. Individuals with low motivation levels before the trip may have found their purpose on the trip with the reinforcement that classes is one step to get them where they want to go. These individuals also get first hand practice with resiliency and pushing through challenges which the students may have drawn from when transitioning back to school.

Coordinators found their motivation transitioned longer due to trip leadership responsibilities. They desired more time to cope, and since they had less time than the participants due to gear and trip clean up, found their motivation returned at a later time during the week. These coordinators did
know that the negative emotions and let down from the trip existed so were able to mentally prepare emotionally, but it did not extend motivationally. With the coordinators acknowledging the presence of the negative after the trip allowed for them to prepare and expect the negative emotions which in itself, made the transition easier. Having a realistic mindset for the transition helped students to transition emotionally, if not motivationally.

Still with these differences, everyone had reported that their normal levels of motivation returned by Wednesday and Thursday for the participants and Friday or Monday for the coordinators. This motivation transitioned transpired for everyone within days of each other and at most in the timespan of a week.

The research provided much for both the quantitative and qualitative research methods on their own. When viewing the data together, important insights were discovered. The next section is the discussion of the findings when considering the data from both quantitative and qualitative.

**Mixed**

The combination of quantitative and qualitative showed the possibility of a trend, but a very individualized trend. Everyone will reach the end point at the same time, but their emotional and motivational journeys will differ from one another. The results will highly depend on how the individual is feeling and
motivated before they depart for the trip. The findings together suggested a drastic change in both directions, but it highly depended on the individual in which direction and for how long the changes occur.

There is evidence of conflict between the results. The quantitative data suggest the negative emotions do not appear higher after the trip though the qualitative results prove the negative is impactful. These results reflect claims that individuals experience contrast effect, such as those reported by Dr. Gerhard Strauss-Blasche from the University of Vienna’s Department of Psychology (McMahan, 2015). The application of this claim in this specific scenario is that students react more strongly to their return because they are not used to the demands of their schedule at the levels in which they were before they left for break; they had become accustomed to lower levels of stress and therefore were reacting to it more even though they were experiencing lower levels of stress (McMahan, 2015). The students forgot how to handle situations from their previous schedule and were not experiencing more or higher negative emotions. Instead, their ability to cope has decreased, making their perceptions of where they were before and after the trip skewed.
Future Research

Since this is the first known approach to conducting interviews and providing questionnaires to address post-trip transitions of traditional college students, there are a multitude of other research possibilities that can be conducted to gain further information on the topic. It is suggested that further quantitative and qualitative research be conducted separately so the energies to conduct valid studies may not be split and produce more in depth research. These studies provided a surface level and wide spectrum of understanding rather than deep.

Through the qualitative research alone, the material and themes developed provided a wide spectrum of new material and possibilities for future studies. Since the qualitative results found many categories it is suggested that more studies be conducted on specific areas of interest. Some of the following variances in this research project are recommended below:

1. Repeat interviews at different schools in different areas
2. Conduct comparative for trip coordinators and trip participants
3. Conduct comparative study between different lengths in trips
4. Focus on the emotion Sadness alone

The quantitative research should be expanded to other regions to other universities and colleges who run different types of adventure trips. As stated before, the questionnaires provided a platform for the starting ground but
should be amended to fit the specific emotions of focus. Further suggestions on quantitative research are recommended below:

1. A quantitative research focusing solely on motivation level
2. Using a larger sampling from different colleges and universities who run similar break trips
3. Focus on different trip lengths

More research is needed on the subject of post-trip emotion and motivation trends. In the past, the focus has always been on positivity so to defend the practical use of vacations. This is supported by previous studies who were attempting to do a meta-analysis but was unable to make claims due to low articles and reliable studies (DeBloom et al., 2009). Though post-trip happiness is still important, the goal of defending vacations as a functional entity should not overshadow reality. There is a negativity that comes with returning from vacations that suggests important human desires and qualities individuals deem important to possess in their everyday lives. More studies should focus on this topic to 1) help provide examples and specific attributes that individuals should begin incorporating in their daily routine and 2) to see if there are steps to take that eases post-trip transitions to produce a happier, fuller transition. If it is encouraged to get the most out of vacation, then we should look at all aspects of it, including the more mundane.
Future Research Impacts

Even though findings were specific in status of life, the results may be applied to other individuals taking vacation. These students were considered to be in a full time position with obligations outside of their studies, a similar situation of working adults and their profession. A major difference is the immediate role of family within their vacation and after. The social roles may be different between students and working adults but it still highlights an important factor in vacation. This may be a point that aids adults who vacation with family. In fact, one of the participants pointed out that having someone to talk to after the trip who shared the same experiences helped ease their transition.

The research may also highlight a conversation on topic of transformational leisure and recreation experiences. The results prove that because of the benefits received from their recreational experience, they discovered a negative transition. Many wanted to make larger changes in their lives after the trip but didn’t know how to apply these changes when the expectations for their return was to pick up right where they left off. This conflict of returning to the expectation and applying new life lessons they gained
from the trip may be the reason for the feeling of loss. They want to make changes but don’t know how, or know where to turn to.

The research findings helped to create a realistic picture that can be intended as a starting conversation for outdoor recreation professional, especially those in collegiate recreation. It’s evident that certain tools help the college students transition more impactful. Maybe programs should consider adding in post-trip features to their long break trips. The programs help to initiate growth in the students so why shouldn’t they take the next step to help them cement their learnings into real life application? After all, outdoor recreation programs spend a lot of time defending and explaining the benefits of attending adventure trips and how they can be applied to everyday life situations that make individuals grow into a better human being. Maybe collegiate programs should take on the responsibility of providing an opportunity for students to get to that next step.

**Applying the Research**

As the participants shifted their focus from recalling feelings from the trip to actively reflecting on their emotions for after the trip, participants described feelings of sadness, loss, confusion, and the act of daydreaming. Even though these themes were based in negativity, participants still found ways of focusing
on hope within their reflections. This act of looking forward and reminiscing in hope aided the confusing negative feelings of sadness and loss. They reflected on the skills they learned and the positivity of the trip so to make the most out of their situation and transfer lessons into their everyday lives. Finding the positive out of a negative situation and looking towards the future helped these students transition.

The physical world of leaving the trip world to starting reality was not replicated emotionally. The mental state of leaving the trip and preparing for their obligations added to their confusion. The descriptions of this state were described with fantastical imagery and dramatic vocabulary that hinted to just how hard it was to come to grips with this transition. Even with the overarching struggle, they all found they were forced to leave the overlapping confusion, even if they hadn‘t completely dealt with the transition mentally. Below are some easy and more complex ideas that students and programs could do to help enforce a fulfilling transition.

Program

The program can encourage coordinators to set up social media outlets for participants to interact post-trip. One post-trip get together, in which the participants can reflect on the trip, will help to ease the feeling of not being
understood by surrounding themselves with the people who had experienced
the same adventure without having them dwell for too long. A way UNI
Outdoors does this is through picture parties a week or two after the trip. Jacob
explained how the post-trip picture party helped him.

I definitely love the post party trip. That definitely gave what kind of put
up a lot of sadness it’s where I’m going to see these people again. Nope
you got it Jacob. A couple weeks you can hang out and chill.

In post-trip surveys, include a few questions or one section that encourage
personal and specific emotional reflection. Certain individuals are highly
reflective while others need prompts to start their effective reflections without
being overcome with sadness.

Be sure the trip is scheduled to return either late Saturday or early Sunday
morning to give everyone a chance to mentally prepare for the next day. Also
sending out tips to prepare for the return taken from the Individual tips will give
participants who have never experienced the trip transition before to prepare
adequately.

Individual

There are certain steps an individual can take to increase the likelihood of
a positive transition experience. Certain actions require effort before the trip
while most rely on activities for after.
Prior to the Trip. Attempt to prepare for the return before leaving. The travel back is when all had noted the feeling that the trip was done and they were returning to school work. If the student is able to forward plan and create a non-stressful environment for their return as well as making the return to do list as small as possible, the transition may possess more positive emotions rather than negative. This may look like having a clean space to come home to, completing homework that’s due Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and making a To-Do List or Calendar of everything that needs to be completed the first few days.

Arranging for the immediate daily tasks may make the transition easier. Examples would be setting out an empty laundry basket with detergent to immediately throw dirty trip clothes into right after the trip; setting out a clean towel, comfortable clean clothes, and shower items to make the necessity tasks easier. Making sure these necessity items are stocked, such as dishwashing soap and shower items, will help produce a relaxing environment to return home to by not adding an immediate shopping trip. Telling others when the trip ends and arranging a dinner to talk about the trip with friends and family will allow for the time to discuss the trip, an aspect the students desired to do.
On the Trip. Carry pictures of important items from home such as family, significant others, and pets. On the way home, look at the pictures to remind you that there are positive relationships waiting for you at home.

After the Trip. Expect some negative feelings and know that some surprise over these emotions will occur. Leave some time to reflect over these deep emotions and the trip experience as a whole. Participating in reflective activities helped to direct the participant’s reflections which assisted in their transition. Being able to articulate the specific emotions, more importantly the negative ones, will help for the individual to be more aware and grounded within their transition. This grounding process will let the person realize the importance of these emotions and that the negative feelings are there for a reason.

Spend Sunday, if time permits, preparing for the week. Bradley explained how his actions of doing the small tasks helped him to get into the school mindset. “Just kind of like doing like all that easy things to get back into a routine and I didn’t really do a whole lot of homework until Monday.” Begin looking at emails, the prepared To-Do List, and begin reviewing class material. Getting these items done before Monday allows for more energy to spend on
school and permits for a higher chance to reflect. Spend time with friends who were not on the trip to tell stories and reintegrate into the student culture.

Find someone to talk to who “understands”. Ashley expressed how this specifically helped her transition.

This was the first time that I actually had a formal like trip not evaluation but like actually thinking about the trip. Other times it’s just been family vacation and you look at old pictures and like you don’t actually just have the time to openly talk about and express every part of the trip and every feeling that you had coming back to reality. So it’s kind of been nice to talk about that and it makes it even more special what we all went through to be able talk about it again not just come back in forget about it.

Tristan also indicated talking about the trip with someone helped.

Even though I didn’t have an idea of it before like it’s like reflecting on it now it’s so real it is a contributing factor to things. Yeah I’m just glad to have the opportunity to talk about it as well. It’s really good.

Individuals who had returned from a trip and had another person to talk to who was either on the trip or had been on a similar trip found their transition period easier. This allowed for stories to be told with positive experiences. Keith explained how his discussions and time spent with one of the trip participants helped his transition after the trip.

Having company the whole time immediately after was huge. Not necessarily because she’s on the trip with me the whole time but I basically live alone so sitting there in my house saying this is crappy, I wish I were gone didn’t happen as much because I was with somebody most of the time. So that was a huge change for this trip as well.
Mandy also found a professor who had been to the Grand Canyon before and was excited about asking her questions. These questions helped her transition.

And having class with Smith I think helps with that because, I’m going to talk about backpacking and all that stuff all the time. He keeps asking questions about the trip like in class and stuff. I think that kind of helps the whole time. I’m always kind of thinking about it because like using the skills I guess I am already wanting to plan my next trip.

When telling stories to individuals not on the trip, it’s important to realize the reason the story is being told. When individuals told stories to those not on the trip, they were often left with a dissatisfied feeling if they attempted to impress others. They felt as though they didn’t understand and were disappointed with the response. Telling stories to impress others left for a harder transition and longing. If one goes into the situation of storytelling with a mentality that you are telling it to remember for oneself and to expect the polite responses of, “oh that’s cool” or “sounds like you had a good time” then these stories will not diminish the transition.

Also taking time to look at personal stories will help with reminiscing and transitioning. Rereading any trip journal or diary was one way Ashley noticed her transition would have improved.

I actually bought a travel journal because I saw so many people journaling on the trip. At the time I was kind of skeptical about it. I was kind of like I mean like what’s the point? Like why do you do that? Like would you really come back and look at it? On the way home reflecting on the trip I
was kind of like, you know I think it be really good to actually look back at it in the future to see what you did and what you were feeling at that time and so I actually did buy a travel journal and hope to write in it pretty soon.

Also, participants expressed having something to look forward to. Tristan explained how this helped him in the past.

Well yeah I have traveled quite a lot before like I know what it feels like and I know it’s part of it. If you want to experience the cool stuff you have to go through the sucky part. And then just like knowing the sucky part is now but I have stuff to look forward to so it helps me get through this because I know there’s more to come.

Bradley also noted that having something to look forward to helped him transition through his sadness.

And I guess I had transitioned this next weekend or this past weekend so I think that really helped. I had other things other than class to look forward to which pushed me kind of.

It’s important to reflect but don’t dwell on the negative emotions. Note that the trip was a deep and profound experience, one in which great positive attributes were discovered and that the negative emotions being experienced mean that the trip was deeply positive. Something to look forward to takes one’s mind off of the negative and returns the individual to other important aspects of their lives.
Begin planning for the next trip and look for local trips to participate in upon return. Olive explained how the thought of leaving helped her.

I was like fine I’m in Iowa I’m doing school let’s do this. Like finals are so close, let’s crank it out and then, I’m just gonna leave again. So what I have looking forward to is like leaving and it’s kind of what I use as my distraction.

Everyone mentioned they were already planning their next trip. Keith indicated some personal journeys.

I’ve got a lot of trips that I plan on doing. There’s two that I know that will happen. One is the 14er Colorado trip and the other will probably be a section of the AT with my friends in June.

Jacob indicated, “I’m planning on the next one.” Mandy also expressed her desire for the next trip. “Because like using the skills to like, I don’t know. I guess I am already to wanting to plan my next trip.”

Leave some time to feel sad. This was the most common emotion experienced by returning trip participants. It’s normal to feel this emotion and it helps to note that participants are not alone in this feeling. If it is very prevalent, share that sadness through missing the trip with a friend, coworker, or stop in the trip office to tell the coordinators who can relate in the memories.

Also, find time to sit or enjoy nature. If able, do some of the daily tasks outside like reading, homework, or working out. Missing nature was a large aspect for students. Ashley expressed how it was important to find time to
include it into her daily life because it made her feel happy. “So that’s been kind of a hard transition, just taking in the fresh air.”

Stars were a common theme that the students missed. Some nights, stay up late and look at the stars outside or see if the university provides tours through their science department on the night sky. The University of Northern Iowa has a free tour that takes interested individuals to see their telescope every Thursday night throughout the warmer semesters. Though the views may not be as pleasant, the fresh air and other properties of nature are still present.

Write a thank you letter to the outdoor recreation program. Being grateful doesn’t leave room for negative feelings. Also the program will be able to use these thank you letters to better their program and use to promote their future trips. The outdoor program may face obstacles in support from the university. Stories of profound impacts in students that align with their university’s goals help to gain support from upper administration.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the post-trip transition is a mixed emotional experience filled with both negative and positive emotions in which sadness is an overarching theme. These emotions last for a week and return by the second Monday the participants were back in school. Even though the emotions were
confusing, individuals found that they were able to adhere to their previous schedule simply because they felt as though they were forced to.

Specific trip programming did not matter as it was the similar conditions of a break trip that affected the transition. Backpacking and canoeing prompted similar responses so the focus of impacting trip logistics is found elsewhere; social bonds being one of the major impacting factors in an individual’s transition. Even when the group cohesiveness was not “perfect”, the life lessons and deeper self-reflections proved to be just as impactful.

Participants will spend the first week back daydreaming and looking toward future endeavors and trips so to create happier emotions. They desire to return to the trip and find their routine to be difficult to return to. Participants and coordinators may experience different motivational patterns in which the participants are more flexible while the coordinators fit into a more rigid routine. Due to roles on the trip, coordinators feel as though they need a break after their break from the stresses of leadership responsibilities.

As discussed by the participants, it helps to set time aside for serious reflections. Some needing more assistance than others found directed questions to specific emotions helped while others desired open ended questions. Either way, questions to direct their reflections aided in what students viewed as an
easier trip transition. The ability to talk and write about trips logistics that they missed, such as the social ties, being overwhelmed in nature, finding immediate gratification, and reuniting with purpose, helped for individuals to transition.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

UNI Outdoors Pre-Trip Reflection

Below are two sections of questions focusing on your pre-trip emotions. Answer all questions honestly about how you perceived your day had transpired before attending the UNI Outdoors trip.

I have read and agreed to the emailed Consent Form

- Yes, I will proceed with the study
- No, I would like to withdraw

If you receive the gift card, your name and student ID number will have to be submitted to the office at Business Operations for record keeping. Would you still like to be put in the drawing for the questionnaires?

- Yes, I would like to participate and be put in the drawing
- No, I would like to participate but not be put in the drawing
- No, I would like to withdraw completely from the study

A)

Below is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and rate to what extent you felt this way in the present. The present being throughout the past week with the following scale:

1) Very slightly  2) A Little  3) Moderately  4) Quite a Bit  5) Extremely
Not at all

<table>
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<th>Feelings</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
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<td>Very Slightly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Upset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td>Very Slightly</td>
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<td>Guilty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Slightly</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Hostile
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Enthusiastic
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Proud
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Irritable
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Alert
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Ashamed
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Inspired
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Nervous
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Determined
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Attentive
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Jittery
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Active
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Afraid
   Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely

Was there any emotion(s) you experienced that was not described above and to what extent?

B)
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions if you believed this was true about your week
Did you feel excited or interested in something throughout your day?
   o  Yes
   o  No
On top of the world?
   o  Yes
   o  No
That things were going your way?
   o Yes
   o No
Pleased for accomplishing something?
   o Yes
   o No
Restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair?
   o Yes
   o No
Lonely or remote from people?
   o Yes
   o No
Bored?
   o Yes
   o No
Depressed or very unhappy?
   o Yes
   o No
APPENDIX B

UNI Outdoors Day 1 Reflection

Below are two sections of questions focusing on your post-trip transition. Answer all questions honestly about how you perceived your day had transpired since returning from UNI Outdoors trip. If certain emotions stemmed from other events from the day, please include them in your score but note them at the end.

I found the UNI Outdoors break trip to be satisfactory?

- Yes, I will proceed with the study
- No, I would like to withdraw

A)

Below is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and rate to what extent you felt this way in the present. The present being throughout the past week with the following scale:

1) Very slightly/ 2) A Little 3) Moderately 4) Quite a Bit 5) Extremely
   Not at all

Interested
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Distressed
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Excited
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Upset
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Strong
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Guilty
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Scared
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Hostile
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Enthusiastic
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Proud
   Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Irritable
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Alert
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Ashamed
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Inspired
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Nervous
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Determined
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Attentive
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Jittery
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Active
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely
Afraid
    Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Was there any emotion(s) you experienced that was not described above and to what extent?

B)
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions if you believed this was true about your week.
Did you feel excited or interested in something throughout your day?
    o Yes
    o No

On top of the world?
    o Yes
    o No

That things were going your way?
    o Yes
    o No

Pleased for accomplishing something?
    o Yes
    o No
Restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
Lonely or remote from people?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
Bored?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
Depressed or very unhappy?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

Please note any major events which is not typically found in your schedule that occurred during the day that had a significant impact on any of the questions in sections A and B. If none leave blank.
APPENDIX C

UNI Outdoors Day 3 / Day 5 Trip Reflection

Below are two sections of questions focusing on your post-trip transition. Answer all questions honestly about how you perceived your day had transpired since returning from UNI Outdoors trip. If certain emotions stemmed from other events from the day, please include them in your score but note them at the end.

What is the primary outdoor activity of the UNI Outdoors trip you attended?

- Backpacking
- Canoeing
- Combination

A) Below is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and rate to what extent you felt this way in the present. The present being throughout the past week with the following scale:

1) Very slightly/ 2) A Little 3) Moderately 4) Quite a Bit 5) Extremely
Not at all

Interested
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Distressed
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Excited
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Upset
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Strong
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Guilty
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Scared
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Hostile
Very Slightly 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely

Enthusiastic
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Proud
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Irritable
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Alert
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Ashamed
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Nervous
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Attentive
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Jittery
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Active
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Afraid
  Very Slightly  1  2  3  4  5  Extremely
Was there any emotion(s) you experienced that was not described above and to what extent?

B)
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions if you believed this was true about your week
Did you feel excited or interested in something throughout your day?
  o Yes
  o No
On top of the world?
  o Yes
  o No
That things were going your way?
  o Yes
  o No
Pleased for accomplishing something?
  o Yes
  o No

Restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair?
  o Yes
  o No

Lonely or remote from people?
  o Yes
  o No

Bored?
  o Yes
  o No

Depressed or very unhappy?
  o Yes
  o No

Please note any major events which is not typically found in your schedule that occurred during the day that had a significant impact on any of the questions in sections A and B. If none leave blank.

Did you notice any change in your mood or motivation since the previous questionnaire? If yes, please explain what you noticed and how it affect your day.
APPENDIX D

RECRUITEMENT SCRIPT

In the next couple minutes, I will present an opportunity to voluntarily participate in an upcoming research project. The information collected will go towards a thesis paper focused on full time college student’s immediate transition from adventure trips. Anyone may participate so long as they hold a full student standing at either the undergraduate or graduate level and do not plan to go on a UNI Outdoor trip within a week of their return.

Those interested in participating in the study will take a Pre-Trip Questionnaire prior to their trip leave in order to develop a control point. Those that have volunteered will then be left to continue with their trip without mention of the research project for their privacy.

Upon conclusion of the trip, an email will be sent out detailing the following weeks and what will be asked of participants. A survey will be sent out every night for the following eight days after the trip and should take no longer than ten minutes to fill out.

As well as a minimum of daily surveys, anyone participating will be asked to participate in an interviews eight, nine, or tend days after the trip.
Understanding that this is a time commitment for busy college students, incentives will be given for certain participation levels. Two drawings will be held, one for the questionnaires and one for the interview. The reward for either will be a $50 prepaid visa card. Filling out all questionnaires will get your name in the drawing for one card, while participating in the interview will get your name in the other. The cards will be dispersed after all interviews have been conducted and everyone will be notified independently on whether they did or did not win.

Those that decide to participate will not receive extra treatment before or while on the trip as the focus is on post-trip transitions. Anyone not participating in the research will receive similar attention as those who have volunteered for the study.

The information gathered will be kept anonymous and completely voluntary. Once concluded, those participating will receive a copy of the findings. If anyone is interested in participating, please express interest at the email provided or stop by the PI’s desk for more information.
APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Post-trip Blues: College Students Post-trip Transition from Adventure Programs
Name of Investigator(s): Nichole Crockford

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Nature and Purpose: My name is Nichole Crockford, a master’s student in Leisure Youth and Human Services. This study is for a thesis on college students’ post-trip transition upon their return from adventure trips through UNI Outdoors. You are being invited in this research study because you are enrolled in a UNI Outdoors adventure trip and are a full time student at the University of Northern Iowa.

Explanation of Procedures: The study will require a pre-trip questionnaire four days before the trip and nightly questionnaires to be taken on your own time the week after the trip. In addition to the questionnaires, you will be asked to identify a time you will be able to interview eight, nine, or ten days after the trip. The following topics will be required throughout the questionnaire and interview process:

- Daily reflection on mood changes, both positive and negative, post-trip
- Daily reflection on motivation levels, both positive and negative, post-trip
- The effect these moods and motivation levels had in your return to your school routine
- The duration in which these items had a significant effect in your routine
- Reflection of the trip in which you attended
- Questionnaires will consist of 10 minutes for three nights

Participants in the study should be aware of the following

- You will be asked to identify a time for an interview eight, nine, or ten days after the trip
- This interview will be nonthreatening in any way
• The total length of the interview should be approximately 1 hour
• All names and identifying factors will be kept confidential, except for compensation
• You have the right to decline participation at any time for any reason
• Interviews will be audio recorded for the purpose of this study. Personal identification will not be shared with third parties except for the purposes of compensation.
  o All recordings will be used only by Nichole Crockford and the transcriber.
  o Once the recordings have been analyzed, all will be erased to maintain confidentiality. Recordings will be kept in a safe place.
  o You have the right to deny audio recordings but still participate in the study.

Discomfort and Risks: There are minimal risks for participating in this study. You may feel uneasy or embarrassed discussing your potentially negative emotional responses due to the trip you are returning from.

Benefits and Compensation: Although there is no direct benefits to you as a participant, the information you provide may lead to information over post-trip transitions for college students and highlight any trends or lengths of times these emotions occur. It has the potential to benefit college students who sign up for outdoor adventure based trips and then must return to their school routine. This may also provide insight into potential coping mechanisms for students returning from these break trips.

To compensate for the amount of time for participating you may be put in drawings depending on your involvement with the research. If you fill out all questionnaires for the week, you will be put in one drawing for $50. If you participate in the interview, you will be put in a separate drawing for $50. If you were to win the lottery, your name will be submitted to the Office of Business Operations and be connected to the study. You may choose not to be entered in the drawing but still complete all questionnaires.

Confidentiality: Information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept confidential. The summarized findings with no identifying information may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference such as the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education. Direct quotes, without identifying information, may be presented in the research
**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:** Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. Even if you begin participating in the study, you may withdraw at any point.

**Questions** Please feel free to contact me in case any questions arises regarding the study or your participation.

- You can contact me, Nichole Crockford at 641-420-2067
- If you have questions over your right in this study, or want to report any problems you can also contact the office of the IRB Administrator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-6148.

**Agreement:**

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.

**Questionnaires:**

Electronic signature will be collected on the Pre-Trip Google Form in section A by clicking Yes, I will proceed with the study.

Participant: ___________________________

Time Stamp: ___________________________

(Signature of Investigator)     (Date)

**Interviews:**

A Hard Copy will be given at the interview.
Table 11: Interview Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Opening</th>
<th>3 Transition</th>
<th>4 Emotions and Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Year in school</td>
<td>A Think back to the moment when you were finally by yourself. Can you tell me when this was and what was going through your mind at this point?</td>
<td>A Did you reflect about the trip when you got back? How much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Involvement with the trip</td>
<td>B What did you do when you were back in your routine?</td>
<td>B What were some of your thoughts that crept into your mind as you realized you were not on the trip anymore?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Tell me about the Trip Experience.</td>
<td>C When was your focus back to school?</td>
<td>C Can you explain the nature of your emotions that being back brought up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Why was it a good experience?</td>
<td>D What was the first things you did when you were back?</td>
<td>Ci Could you name some of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Trip and Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A What were you expecting out of the trip before you left?</td>
<td>E Can you explain a moment where you realized the trip was done?</td>
<td>E Can you explain a moment where you realized the trip was done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Did you meet these expectations?</td>
<td>F What did you miss from the trip as you transitioned into school?</td>
<td>E Did you feel alone in how you felt?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5 Stories and people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Did you come away with inside jokes or stories you tried to share outside of the trip?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>How did telling stories to individuals go who were not on the trip?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi</td>
<td>Were you ever disappointed or let down in their reaction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Were you close with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6 Real life/Liminal Period

| A | When you say real life, can you tell me what you mean by that? |
| B | Did you feel reality set in and when? |
| C | Do you feel involved in your day while back? (Mentally and Emotionally and Motivationally) |
| D | Do you feel like you |

### 7 Closing

| A | How long did it take to unpack? |
| B | Would you recommend the trip to anyone? |
| C | Is there any comments you would like to say about Post-trip Transitions that I didn’t hit on? |
the trip leaders and trip participants before the trip? (after?)

D How did your interactions go with people from the trip go when back at school?

E What’s different interacting with others outside of the trip than inside the trip?

were supposed to be back?

E Does the feeling of reality setting in and the trip world leaving overlap, hit separately, or transition at the same time?
APPENDIX G

Table 12: Interview Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The shared experience developed deep social occurrences during and after the Trip.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being “away from it all” created profound experiences.</td>
<td>Lasting Reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper self-awareness through exceeded expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The trip promotes realizations and reflections on “what’s important”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The post-trip transition was unexpected, creating “surprising” realizations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “trip high” and sadness made transitioning difficult.</td>
<td>Mixed Emotional Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As this category outlines, the participants felt both a major positive emotion and a major negative emotion. These two emotions, along with other positive and negative emotions coincided and caused a confusing reaction. Competing positive and negative emotions during transition left participants conflicted. Questionnaires identify changing negative emotions and helped participants transition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no idea what went on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overlapping of worlds in which one was being forced upon the students affected how they participated in their transition. The timeline of the transition also had a significant impact on the student’s first week back. Transition period begins during the travel back and fully manifests during the recollection phase. Overlapping of the “trip world” and “reality” leaves individuals “there but not there” for a week. Participants are forced back into the “grind”. Participants miss trip aspects and learnings.</td>
<td>Difficult Weeklong Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation Levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High motivation before the trip transforms to low motivation after the trip.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low motivation before the trip transforms to high motivation after the trip.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinators and participants may experience different motivational patterns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation returns between the Wednesday and Friday of the returning week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>