

Outcomes and Personal Values Associated with Participation in an Inclusive Adventure Program: Transferring the Benefits to Everyday Life

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Background: The purpose of this research is to identify and understand the outcomes/consequences, values and trip attributes associated with participation in an inclusive adventure trip program experience, both for persons with disabilities and those without disabilities. In addition, the study seeks to better understand if and how participants are able to transfer outcomes gained on an adventure program back into their everyday life after a program experience. In their seminal meta-analysis of adventure education research, Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards (1997) called for research that examines multiple outcomes and looks at the elements of the adventure experience that produce those outcomes. Ewert and McAvoy (2000) also call for research that identifies outcomes and links outcomes to program attributes. Some of the benefits of inclusive programs have been reported by Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Seligman (1997) and summarized in the literature by McAvoy and Lais (1999). But there is a need for further study regarding the outcomes of inclusive adventure programs, why these outcomes are important to participants, how the outcomes are tied to program attributes, and how these outcomes can be transferred into the everyday life of participants. The theoretical frame for this study is the means/ends approach developed in the marketing/advertising field (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), recently applied to the leisure research area (Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey, 1993), and to adventure education (Goldenberg, Klenosky, O'Leary & Templin, 2000). This theoretical frame holds that people select certain products or services based on the anticipated outcomes or consequences of interacting with that product/service. They associate certain values with those outcomes, and they can identify certain attributes of the product/service that produces the outcomes. If service providers can better understand the potential outcomes or consequences of products/services, and the values that make these outcomes important to people, then service providers could design products/services that would better meet the needs of clients or customers.

Methods: Subjects for the study were participants, including those with disabilities, who participated in Wilderness Inquiry inclusive outdoor adventure trips of at least 4 days during the summer season of 2002. Subjects included a range of disabilities. Outcomes (consequences) and values attached to participation in an inclusive outdoor adventure program were obtained by participants completing a questionnaire at the end of their adventure trip. In addition, personal interviews were conducted 6 months after the trips to explore how the outcomes of adventure trips can be incorporated into the everyday lives of participants. 193 subjects (71% participation rate) completed a post trip questionnaire. Most, (84%) were on 4-7 day trips. 74 participants had a disability. Participants were asked to indicate in a narrative way what they got out of the trip experience (an outcome or consequence of participation). Once they indicated these outcomes, they were asked to indicate for each outcome why that outcome is important to them (the value of the outcome). They were further asked to indicate the trip attributes that contributed most to that outcome. Means/end data consists of narrative statements about outcomes, values and attributes. These narrative data were content analyzed

through a computer data analysis program called “Ladder Map” (Gengler & Reynolds, 1995). After some collapsing of codes, a total of 15 outcomes, 8 values and 9 attributes were generated. The results of the ladder map process are illustrated in a series of Hierarchical Value Maps which graphically show the importance of various outcomes (consequences), values and attributes of adventure trips. These figures allow the researcher to see which outcomes/values/and attributes are most prevalent in a sample, and also see how strongly each outcome is tied to specific values and attributes. The questionnaire further asked participants if they were willing to be contacted by phone to further discuss their trip experience. Of those who so indicated, 30 subjects were selected in a stratified random sample to be contacted by phone for an interview. The phone interview consisted of questions related to the possible transference of outcomes into a person’s life after the trip experience. Twenty nine interviews were conducted, taped and then transcribed. The interview data were analyzed through qualitative techniques including reading all responses, establishing themes, coding narrative data to develop patterns, summarizing theme areas, and using statements to illustrate themes.

Results and Discussion:

Results of the 29 telephone interviews show that participants were able to transfer outcomes to their work (41%), to outdoor skills (24%), to their family lives (24%), and to other activities (13%). Participants also indicated having positive reflections/memories of the trip (31%) as well as increased coping/transitioning skills(13%). Many participants (51%) had higher levels of motivation and increased self-confidence in their abilities. Participants expressed having a better understanding of people with disabilities/differences (44%) and being more respectful/trusting of others (51%) as a result of having participated in an inclusive wilderness adventure experience.

An examination of the outcomes for the 74 persons with disabilities included indicated the following primary outcomes: developing relationships with others, increased understanding of themselves, awareness and appreciation for nature and the wilderness, succeeding at a personal challenge, and having a new opportunity. The primary values the outcomes contribute to person’s lives were: transferring the benefits of the trip to enhance aspects of home life, self awareness, achieving a personal goal, and having a warm relationship with others.

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