

ABSTRACT

Exploring Connections between College Students' Purpose and Deliberate Outdoor Adventure Activities

Kayla A. Molnar, M.S.Ed.

Mentor: Perry L. Glanzer, Ph.D.

This phenomenological qualitative research study explores possible connections between traditional-age college students' engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and their understanding of their life purpose. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews and journal prompts of seven traditional-age college students and one graduate student from various postsecondary education institutions within the United States. A two-phase manual coding process used to analyze the data identified four major ways that participants found engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influenced their understanding of their life purpose. Participants viewed engagement in these types of pursuits as: (1) a means for purpose reflection, (2) a medium to refine and hone skills and attitudes necessary for purpose fulfillment, (3) a way to motivate and re-energize for living purposefully, and (4) a foundational element of purpose. Limitations and implications for practice and future research are provided in the concluding chapters.

Exploring Connections between College Students' Purpose
and Deliberate Outdoor Adventure Activities
by

Kayla Molnar, B.S.Ed.

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Robert C. Cloud, Ed.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Thesis Committee

Perry L. Glanzer, Ph.D., Chairperson

Nathan F. Alleman, Ph.D.

W. Dale Connally, Ph.D.

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
DEDICATION	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction.....	1
Defining Key Components	4
Overview of Study	7
CHAPTER TWO	9
Literature Review	9
Distinguishing Between Purpose, Meaning, and the Good Life.....	10
Springboard Studies in Outdoor Adventure Literature.....	21
Justification for Inquiry.....	25
CHAPTER THREE	30
Methodology.....	30
Research Paradigm.....	30
Sampling Method.....	31
Recruitment Method	33
Data Collection Methods	36
Data Analysis Methods	38
Ethical Considerations	39
Trustworthiness.....	40
CHAPTER FOUR.....	44
Data Analysis and Interpretation	44
Getting to Know the Participants.....	44
Participants' Perceptions of the Purpose and Meaning.....	48
Core Themes	66
Relationship Between Purpose and Meaning Types and Core Themes	85
Conclusion	86

CHAPTER FIVE	87
Discussion, Contributions, Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion	87
Discussion	87
Contributions	93
Limitations	94
Implications	97
Conclusion	102
APPENDICES	103
APPENDIX A	104
Positionality Statement	104
APPENDIX B	111
Participant Email Invitation	111
APPENDIX C	113
Consent Form	113
APPENDIX D	116
Interview Guide	116
APPENDIX E	119
Journal Exercise	119
BIBLIOGRAPHY	120

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics.....	35
Table 4.1 Participants' Perceptions of Purpose	50
Table 4.2 Participants' Perceptions of Meaning	57
Table 4.3 Participants' Perceptions of Purpose Compared to Meaning	63

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DEDICATION

To outdoor adventurers discovering their life purpose

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Many college students exist in a state of transition while participating in higher education. Engaging in college life constitutes an exciting period in one's life in which individuals experience newness unlike any other time in their pre-college lives. This phase in a college students' life "is rightfully a time of asking big questions and crafting worthy dreams" (Parks, 2000, p. 8). Parks (2000) explains that during this time individuals seek information about the roles they play within the larger society. Several scholars, such as Baxter-Magolda (2001), Chickering and Reisser (1993), Kohlberg (1981), and Perry (1970), present various theories attempting to explain students' development while in college and how their development influences the ways in which students answer these larger questions. Some of these theoretical milestones outlined by student development scholars include: constructing healthy friendships with others (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), wrestling with pluralistic ideals (Perry, 1970), moving beyond dichotomous thinking (Kohlberg, 1981), and determining the guiding narrative of one's life (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

As college students grapple with issues of personal identity and the effects of increasingly complex thinking, they also begin taking more responsibility for their actions. One aspect college students gain more control over while participating in higher education is their choice and level of participation in physically active pursuits, such as leisure opportunities, sports experiences, exercise programs, and deliberate outdoor

adventure activities (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Sylvia-Bobiak, 2006). Newfound freedom in college may encourage some students to attempt new challenges never yet experienced, and for others, this increased control over one's physical activity might result in an overall decrease in participation in physical activity. Although higher education campuses offer a wide variety of opportunities and experiences to engage in physically active pursuits (i.e. state-of-the-art fitness centers, intramural sports, and living-learning programs promoting participation in outdoor activities), it is ultimately up to the student to decide whether to begin, persist, or discontinue participation in these activities (Sylvia-Bobiak, 2006).

Higher education institutions also provide individuals with constructive environments in which to wrestle with larger issues, such as discovering one's purpose in life. As a result of their participation in the higher education environment, college students begin to formulate life-long goals, engage in the practice of discernment, and commit to personally meaningful values (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Nash & Murray, 2010; Parks, 2000). According to several scholars, many students in higher education begin to conceptualize and pursue their purpose in life during their time in college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Nash & Murray, 2010; Parks, 2000).

My personal experiences in higher education offer a parallel narrative to these literary arguments mentioned above. During my undergraduate career, I took more responsibility of my leisure time and participated in more personal deliberate outdoor adventure activities. I also found myself thinking about my life purpose, especially during the moments I spent engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities.

For example, when I participate in deliberate outdoor adventure activities I personally experience an extraordinary aliveness within myself and tendencies toward self-actualization that I do not necessarily encounter in other contexts. The reason for this stems from my belief that engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provides space and opportunity for personal reflection and growth. It is during my participation in deliberate outdoor activities that I discover myself thinking about larger issues and asking deep questions of myself, especially as they relate to my life purpose. I notice this predominantly when I engage in physical activities such as hiking, climbing, caving, biking, and cooking dinner at our primitive campsite with my brother, my loyal camping companion. The sights of nature, the smell of the outdoors, and the physical challenge of the activities inherent in outdoor adventure all encourage me to “set [my] mind on things above,” particularly God and God’s plan for my life, to set aside the mundane, and to think about the future (Col. 3:2, New International Version). In particular, deliberate outdoor adventure activities prompt me to reflect on the purpose of my life and how my previous and future behaviors and thoughts contribute to the fulfillment of my life purpose.

My personal experiences in outdoor adventure as well as the thoughts and feelings I encountered while engaging in these types of activities served as a major influential factor that led to the creation of this study. Essentially, I wanted to know if others who participated in deliberate outdoor adventure activities experienced similar thoughts about issues of purpose as I do whenever I engage in these types of pursuits. I also decided to study connections between issues of purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activities

to determine if this type of activity could be utilized by higher education professionals as a resource for encouraging purpose development among their student populations.

In order to determine whether other individuals experience similar instances of reflectiveness, particularly in relation to their life purpose, while participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and to identify if this type of activity could be used in colleges and universities to cultivate student purpose development, this study seeks to answer the following question: *How does traditional college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influence their understanding about their purpose in life?*

Defining Key Components

Before delving further into the relevant literature, I briefly introduce key components used throughout the study to provide clarity and to enhance understanding of the literature review, data collection and analysis phases, and the discussion that follows. The three major components of this study – college students, deliberate activity, and purpose – as well as related terms are succinctly described below.

The first component consists of the population of interest which, for the purposes of this study, includes traditional-age college students. Students who fit this criterion are those who range from 18 to 23 years of age. I identified participants using a purposive sampling technique and recommendations from outdoor adventure program directors (or equivalent) at the participants' respective postsecondary institutions. Students selected for this study included those who, within the last three to five months, participated in an outdoor adventure experience sponsored either commercially, educationally, or personally. This time-specific criterion allowed students the opportunity to reflect on

their experiences without losing significant details since the experiences are still considered fairly recent.

The second component of the current research study explores how engagement in deliberate activities, such as physical outdoor adventure activities, affects college students' understanding of their life purpose. *Deliberate activities* within this study include those meaningful activities that foster one's individually exclusive purpose, encouraging movement toward a specific life objective (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Scheier et al., 2006;). Such a broad definition suggests that activities may encompass a wide variety of activities such as physical activity, community service, or serving as a caretaker for a loved one.

For the purpose of this study, however, I narrow my focus to include only those deliberate activities that also qualify as recreational outdoor adventure activities. According to Clawson and Knetch (as cited in Colton & Morrione, 1973), outdoor recreation is defined as “simply recreation that is typically carried on outdoors” and is “undertaken because one wants to do it” (p. 1). Colton and Morrione (1973) provide a descriptive list of outdoor recreation activities, including pursuits such as “swimming, bicycling, fishing... nature walks... camping, hiking... canoeing, sailing, mountain climbing, and snow skiing,” to name a few (p. 2). All of these activities could be considered *deliberate outdoor adventure activities*, or activities that occur in a wilderness context, “involve doing physically active things away from the person's normal environment” (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997, p. 44), and may inspire movement toward a particular purpose. These activities usually include “a variety of mental and/or

physically challenging objectives” that encourage individuals’ exercise of “problem solving and decision making” capabilities (Hattie et al., 1997, p. 44).

I include a fraction of Colton and Morrione’s (1973) list above to illustrate examples of activities that occur outdoors that some might potentially consider as deliberate and personally meaningful. However, I recognize that not all of these activities (in addition to those that were not mentioned above) generate the same attitudes and feelings in every person, and thus, not everyone would consider all of these outdoor adventure pursuits as personally meaningful. Colton and Morrione (1973) emphasize that an individual’s perception of the activity is significant in determining whether the pursuit is considered recreational, leisurely, or meaningful. In other words, “the meaning that an individual places on a particular activity determines whether it is recreation” (Colton & Morrione, 1973, p. 1). I intentionally define deliberate outdoor adventure activities broadly so that individuals may determine for themselves what activities they consider as deliberate and personally meaningful.

The third major component of this study concentrates on how college students’ understanding of purpose is potentially affected as a result of participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activity. I offer a definition of purpose based on current literature as a guide for discussion throughout this study. *Purpose*, as a basis for discussion, refers to a unique life-long value that continuously motivates an individual to make a difference in his or her world in all circumstances. This definition is heavily influenced by Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) as well as Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson’s (2016) description of purpose which I describe in greater length in the following chapter. Placing the concept of purpose in the current literature and gaining familiarity with current scholarly

conversations concerning the issue of purpose provides context in which to place participants' perceptions of their life purpose. Although I offer this definition as a guide for discussion, I will primarily focus on participants' descriptions of what purpose for their life means to them. This aligns with the phenomenological nature of this study.

Overview of Study

This study seeks to gain a greater understanding regarding how engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity affects college students' understanding about their life purpose. An exploration of this phenomenon occurs throughout the following five chapters of this thesis. In the first chapter, I introduced the topic of interest as well as briefly highlighted key concepts used throughout this study.

My second chapter includes a review of literature relevant to the focus of this study. Within this chapter, I discuss my literary findings in more detail as well as provide greater clarification of key concepts used in this study. More specifically, I introduce previous research from several educational and professional fields, including psychology, behavioral sciences, and leisure services, related to the topic of interest. I also expand upon concepts like deliberate outdoor adventure activity, purpose, meaning, and related terms. I conclude this chapter with a justification as to why this study is significant and worth such consideration.

The third chapter includes an explanation of the methodology used for this study. Within this chapter, I describe the research paradigm utilized to study this phenomenon. I also provide a brief synopsis of my sampling methods, recruitment strategies, and data collection and analysis methods. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study is also discussed in the third chapter.

In my fourth chapter, I analyze the gathered data and elaborate on themes that emerged from the collected data. This chapter reveals possible links between college students' purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity based on participants' subjective experiences while engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities.

I conclude with a discussion of the data and describe limitations of this study. In addition, I offer future directions for research and implications for student affairs practitioners who desire to help college students develop in their understanding of their life purpose.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

During their college experience in higher education institutions, students encounter many new and exciting transitory experiences. Discovering self-interests, becoming more self-aware, and making decisions on one's own all surface in the collegiate experiences of many students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans et al., 2010; Schuh et al., 2011). Seeking or refining one's purpose in life as well as determining whether or not, and to what degree, an individual desires to engage in deliberate outdoor adventure activity also occurs during a students' time at college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson, 2016; Nash & Murray, 2010; Parks, 2000; Sylvia-Bobiak, 2006). A considerable amount of literature is devoted to subjects similar to these. Although related, many of these studies do not address the central question guiding this study: *How does traditional college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influence their understanding about their purpose in life?*

This research project strives to better comprehend how college students engaged in deliberate outdoor adventure activity connect these pursuits to their life purpose, if at all. A review of relevant literature concerning important terms and concepts reveals significant information regarding the topic of interest as well as highlights gaps in past publications necessary to understanding potential connections between deliberate outdoor adventure activity and purpose. The aim of this chapter is to summarize previous

scholarly conversations concerning the main question of this research project as well as to provide guiding definitions of key concepts foundational to this study.

The literature review is divided into three sections. First, I explore concepts that are related to and used interchangeably with the term *purpose*, including *meaning*, *the good life*, *eudaimonic well-being*, and *subjective well-being*. Second, I highlight studies focusing on outdoor adventure experiences that are similar to this study and that serve as a springboard to the current research project. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a justification for the inquiry.

Distinguishing Between Purpose, Meaning, and the Good Life

Literature addressing purpose, meaning, and the good life, reveals some scholars use these terms interchangeably. However, recent scholars are beginning to differentiate between these terms to allow for a more precise definition and understanding of these concepts (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Although the main focus of this research study includes how engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities affects one's thinking about their purpose in life, I suspect that some students may not consider their participation in these types of outdoor activities as an influential or contributing factor in regards to understanding their life purpose. Instead, students may perceive their engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as contributing to their life meaning or their sense of the good life. For this reason, I offer guiding definitions of these three terms as well as provide distinctions between purpose, meaning, and the good life according to recent literature.

Purpose

Several scholars in the field of higher education and student affairs as well as positive psychology define the concept of *purpose* as striving toward specific, yet personally meaningful, life goals (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Nash & Murray, 2010; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) define purpose as a “stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (p. 121). Purpose is: (1) composed of “more stable and far-reaching goals,” (2) both an individualistic and collective concept that drives one to better both themselves as well as the world in which they live, and (3) “is always directed at an accomplishment towards which one can make progress” (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 121).

Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) state purpose “provides a central organizing principle” (p. 394) with which to orient one’s future goals and “is something unique or more particular to an individual [in contrast to meaning]” (p. 188). In their recent study on college students’ understanding of purpose, Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) found college students make sense of their life purpose in three broad ways. These three major themes in college students’ perception of their purpose in life include “Self-Achiever, Relationalist, and Transcendent” outlooks of understanding life purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 191).

“Self-Achievers,” according to Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016), include individuals who view purpose as a goal to accomplish that fulfills one’s individualistic desires, such as flourishing in one’s dream job or enjoying an overall state of happiness (p. 191). Within this purpose category, participants may derive their motivation for

purpose in five ways, including their future employment, contentment, shaping and forming new creations, exploratory opportunities, and worldly pleasures, such as money or owning a house (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). “Relationalists,” on the other hand, understand their purpose in terms of their relationships with family or friends (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 191). Many seek to not only maintain these relationships, but to serve those in their sphere of influence (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Finally, “Transcendents,” the third purpose grouping identified by Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016), includes those individuals who centralize their understanding of purpose in terms of their relationship with God, their faith, or their desire to improve the world around them for the better (p. 191).

Within each major purpose category, Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) offer additional sources of purpose related to the larger theme. These sources of purpose stem from a personal aspiration or life-long goal and encourage individual striving toward one’s life purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). For example, Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) note thriving in one’s place of work, pursuing happiness, cultivating deep relationships with friends or family, or taking action to better the world and its inhabitants may serve as potential sources of purpose for individuals. Additional factors that contribute to the development of purpose include one’s occupational calling, individual hobbies, and social contexts with family and friends (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Meaningful experiences also appear to foster one’s individually exclusive purpose that encourages movement toward a specific life objective (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Scheier et al., 2006).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) as well as Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) consider the development of purpose to be a major developmental milestone for college students. Discovering and refining one's purpose requires individuals to "go beyond what is merely interesting and find an anchoring set of assumptions about what is true, principles that define what is good, and beliefs that provide meaning and give us a sense of place in the larger whole" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 234). Individuals do this by "pursuing certain goals, reaching resolutions, seeking results, and realizing particular objectives and ends" (Nash & Murray, 2010, p. xx).

Meaning

Nash and Murray (2010) claim *meaning*, on the other hand, includes one's broad perceptions of events based on their cultural worldview, personal lens, or overall outlook on life. College students "articulate or affirm that meaning is something broader [than the concept of purpose]" as well (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 188). One's worldview, lens, and/or outlook serves as the meaning-making mechanism individuals use to interpret and assess their surrounding world (Nash & Murray, 2010). Thus, according to Nash and Murray (2010), meaning refers to an individual's general assessment of a particular situation which is influenced by his or her culture and belief systems.

Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) describe meaning as represented by short-term objectives which may or may not be fixated in any clear direction, such as one's purpose in life. Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) claim college students' sources of meaning in life may also be organized according to the three general categories described above to delineate college students' sources of purpose. As with their understanding of life purpose, college students derive their meaning in life from various sources, such as

achievement, serving others, and maximizing opportunities (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016).

Surprisingly, research illustrates that many college students know and understand the meaning of their lives prior to arriving at college (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). According to Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016), “many students are not searching for meaning; they believe they have already found it” (p. 152). However, the majority of college students continue to struggle with ascertaining their life purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). For this reason, I primarily focus on the concept of purpose as it relates to college students’ deliberate outdoor adventure activities, rather than studying meaning for college students, although meaning potentially does affect one’s understanding of their life purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016).

The Good Life and Well-Being

The good life, or one’s ideal state of being, is related to concepts of purpose and meaning. Many college students conceive of the good life as one in which brings them individual happiness and comfort, but some mentioned occupational or vocational goals as elements of the good life (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Overwhelmingly, college students’ sense of the good life is centered on the self and focused on the present (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) note many college students talk about the good life as “wanting to achieve certain self-oriented goals such as acquiring certain material goods (e.g., house, cars), being able to engage in certain experiences (e.g., travel, skydive), achieving success, and living with no regrets” (p. 395). Many college students’ sense of the good life involves the setting and achieving of goals

that Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) note “may or may not be linked to a young person’s purpose” (p. 395).

Eudaimonic well-being. Several scholars refer to “the good life” in relation to the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 6; Ferguson et al., 2012, p. 451; Ryff & Singer, 1998, p. 2). A facet of well-being more closely related to purpose, eudaimonia essentially includes living a life that is whole, genuine, and contenting to one’s self (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2014; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Several scholars offer varying, yet similar, definitions of eudaimonia, including: “living the good life via realizing one’s daimon, or true potential” (Ferguson et al., 2012, p. 451) or “living life in a full and deeply satisfying way” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 1) that allows for “flourishing, striving for one’s best self, actualizing potential, and personal expressiveness” (Lewis et al., 2014, p. 644). Ryff and Singer (1998) argue establishing a life telos and pursuing this ambition is crucial to living a eudaimonic life. According to Ferguson et al. (2012), eudaimonia is lasting, unlike emotion which fluctuates depending on specific circumstances. Personal development and understanding one’s life purpose is essential to living the eudaimonic life (Ryff & Singer, 1998, 2008).

The core to eudaimonic well-being is the experience of living life itself, not the end goal one is striving to achieve (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Lewis et al., 2014). According to Lewis et al. (2014), these experiences in life are *felt* by individuals. What one feels during life circumstances serves as the major meaning-making factor that spurs individuals to action (Lewis et al., 2014). In other words, feelings drive individuals to action (Lewis et al., 2014). Based on scholarly definitions,

eudaimonia is action-oriented and motivates individuals toward the accomplishment of their life purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Ryff & Singer, 1998).

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) offers a different conception of the good life that includes the consideration of others, rather than simply focusing on individualistic goals. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) claims, “An active responsibility for the rest of humankind, and for the world in which we are a part, is a necessary ingredient of a good life” (p. 132). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) notes self-understanding, constant reflection of one’s actions, and learning how to harness one’s energy to accomplish personally meaningful goals are important aspects of the good life.

Some scholars believe the pursuit of eudaimonia inspires individuals to participate in life-long health-developing activities (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Ferguson et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2014; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Scheier et al., 2006). For example, their study on purpose effects on women, Ryff and Singer (1998) discovered that eudaimonic living “includes active engagement in living, [and] the selection and pursuit of projects that give meaning and dignity to one’s existence” (p. 3). According to Lewis et al. (2014), a eudaimonic lifestyle “can then be described as a personal process people engage in to grow toward their own greater potential which can in turn influence quality of life, health behaviors, and physical health” (p. 644). Eudaimonic well-being is very similar to purpose but differs since eudaimonic well-being, for many scholars, includes living life to the fullest from an individualistic perspective, focusing more on accomplishing individual objectives rather than on the collective good.

Subjective well-being. In addition to being used interchangeably with *meaning* or *the good life*, purpose is also sometimes used interchangeably with other concepts in the

fields of psychology and the behavioral sciences, such as subjective well-being. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), subjective well-being is defined as “experiencing a high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a high degree of satisfaction with one’s life” (p. 1). Carruthers and Hood (2007), Ryff, Singer, and Love (2004), and Ryff and Singer (2008) also offer a similar definition of subjective well-being in their respective studies. Sometimes referred to as happiness, subjective well-being is measured by one’s personal evaluation of their present life situation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). However, because of its strong association with affect and emotion, subjective well-being more closely aligns with the concept of *hedonia*, or pleasure, which does not fully encompass the concept of purpose (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2012; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Life is more than moments of simply experiencing pleasure or happiness, and a purposeful life rich in meaning is not necessarily an outcome of these temporary feelings. However, these feelings might contribute to a more positive existence (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Although an important aspect of human flourishing, subjective well-being differs from that of purpose since subjective well-being is temporary, rather than life-long as is the concept of purpose (Lewis et al., 2014).

Despite its differences from purpose, Carruthers and Hood (2007) believe subjective well-being is a key component of overall health and well-being. Carruthers and Hood (2007) as well as Deci and Ryan (2008) note that subjective well-being increases positive emotions (i.e. happiness and pleasure) which consequently heightens one’s sense of meaning and thus, one’s purpose in life. This occurs because, as mentioned earlier, the feelings individuals experience serve as a major motivating factor

that prompts individuals to action (Lewis et al., 2014). Contributing factors that influence one's subjective well-being include biological inheritances and genetic codes, external situations, and deliberate activity (Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Carruthers and Hood (2007) also note that while one's genetic code predominantly affects one's levels of subjective well-being, deliberate or "intentional activities, defined as effortful, goal-oriented activities, account for about 40% of a person's happiness level" (p. 285). Sheldon, Lyubomirsky, and Schkade (as cited in Carruthers & Hood, 2007) describe these activities as: "cognitive practices (such as optimism and counting one's blessings), behavioral practices (such as kindness and physical activity), and volitional practices (such as pursuing personally meaningful causes)" (p. 285). As noted by Sheldon, Lyubomirsky, and Schkade (as cited in Carruthers & Hood, 2007), these deliberate activities include physically active pursuits, such as outdoor adventure activity.

Two elements comprise these deliberate activities: leisure and flow (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Lewis et al., 2014; Ryff & Singer, 2008). First, leisure, a component of deliberate outdoor adventure pursuits, is defined as engagement in any activity during one's discretionary time whose affect results in "intrinsic satisfaction" for the participant (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Rossman & Schlatter, 2011, p. 8; Sylvia-Bobiak & Caldwell, 2006). Leisure encompasses three significant elements, including "freedom, intrinsic satisfaction, and engagement," and provides individuals space to experience pleasure and happiness (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Rossman & Schlatter, 2011, p. 8). Additionally, a "leisure context provides unique opportunities to undertake challenges, to

explore important aspects of the self, to try new things, and to develop capacities,” all of which are important to developing and discovering purpose in one’s life (Carruthers & Hood, 2007, p. 291). According to Carruthers and Hood (2007), the outcomes of these activities do not appear to diminish as time passes, but instead, they actually develop long-term effects that continue to affect the individual.

Second, deliberate activity, such as physical outdoor adventure activities, consists of what Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes as “*flow experiences*” (p. 29). These experiences include moments in life in which an individual becomes so absorbed in an activity, also known as “flow activities,” that “what we feel, what we wish, and what we think are in harmony” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 29-30). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), one usually experiences states of flow when: (1) individuals focus their attention on direct objectives; (2) beneficial feedback is supplied instantly following the completion of a task; (3) one’s competence and external challenges are equalized; and (4) one completely engages themselves in an experience without consideration of time or self. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) claims “flow experiences provide the flashes of intense living” as compared to everyday, mundane life and typically occur when an individual participates in activities that are personally enjoyable (p. 31). Csikszentmihalyi (as cited in Lewis, 2007) “suggests that if life goals are informed by personal flow experiences, then the momentary subjective state can be extended with resolution and commitment to a harmonious life purpose” (p. 3).

Scheier et al.’s (2006) study on their quantitative “Life Engagement Test” (LET) instrument also highlights the importance of deliberative activity and its possible connection to one’s purpose (p. 292). The envisioned objective of Scheier et al.’s (2006)

LET included assessing one's purpose in life by determining "the extent to which a person considers his or her activities to be valuable and important" (p. 292). However, despite their intentions, Scheier et al. (2006) discovered their LET measurement more so assessed aspects of subjective well-being rather than purpose. Although Scheier et al.'s (2006) LET could not identify whether the activities that are significant to individuals create a sense of purpose in one's life, LET did highlight the importance of subjective well-being and its effect on participation in deliberate activities.

Subjective well-being is different than purpose since subjective well-being focuses on increasing positive emotion and satisfaction in life (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2008). These aspects fluctuate depending on one's genetic predisposition, situations in life, and engagement in activities that fulfill and inspire individuals (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Although subjective well-being is an important contributing factor of purpose, the concept of purpose simply encompasses much more than temporary feelings (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Nash & Murray, 2010).

In sum, understanding the differences between purpose, meaning, and the good life helps clarify the direction of this particular study. For the purpose of this study, I borrow Damon, Menon, and Bronk's (2003) as well as Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) definition of both meaning and purpose as a basis of comparison for participants' understanding of purpose and meaning in their lives. Throughout this study, the guiding definition for meaning, then, refers to one's culturally-influenced broad perspective of life that inspires an individual to accomplish momentary objectives. The guiding definition for purpose, on the other hand, is defined as a unique, life-long value that

continuously motivates an individual to make a difference in their world as well in the community around them in all circumstances (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Finally, the guiding definition of the good life, based on Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) research, refers to those individually-derived future goals that are self-satisfying that may or may not influence one's purpose in life.

Springboard Studies in Outdoor Adventure Literature

According to several scholars in the field of recreation and leisure, interest and participation in outdoor recreational and adventure pursuits continues to increase (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Colton & Morrione, 1973; Hattie et al., 1997; Lagattolla, 2011; Libby & Carruthers, 2013). Emerging studies on the topic of outdoor adventure programs discuss connections between outdoor adventure participation as it relates to self-determination theory (Lagattolla, 2011), student academic success (Morrissey, 2014), student thriving (Rude, 2015), perception of community (Breunig O'Connell, Todd, Anderson, & Young, 2010), holistic development (Lewis, 2007; Sibthorp, 2010), "life effectiveness," (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning, 2004, p. 33), perceived body image (Bradley, 2011), and various additional outcomes related to individual self-awareness (Sibthorp, Paisley, & Gookin, 2007). All of these topics are important for understanding outdoor adventure and its benefits for college students, but none of the previously mentioned studies focus explicitly on the current topic of interest. A few studies, however, very nearly describe connections between engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity and one's understanding of life purpose. These studies served as springboards to this project.

Two influential studies focus on the perception of body image as it relates to physical health and outdoor activity. First, Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) research

provides a great deal of information regarding how college students describe their perception of purpose (or lack thereof). Interestingly, one of the main purpose predictors for college students includes how bodily health relates to purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). According to Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016), one's "*perception of health and the body... is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of purpose during emerging adulthood*" (p. 107). Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) note, "Feeling as if one has control over his or her body provides a sense of self-efficacy that seems to provide energy and direction to life (and perhaps a level of confidence)" (p. 107). Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) hypothesis regarding the connection between one's physical health and body image as they relate to purpose is significant, but it is not explored further in their study.

At first, Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) findings appear unrelated to the current research study, but their discovery is of great importance when read in tandem with Bradley's (2011) research on female adolescents and their personal perceptions of their bodies. Bradley (2011) illustrates engagement in outdoor adventure activities fosters greater satisfaction of one's body, especially for females, and that those "who are active in the outdoors tend to have a more positive body image" (p. 24). Bradley (2011) argues acceptance of one's physical body can increase self-confidence, empower individuals to survive difficult circumstances, and improve one's sense of satisfaction with one's life. Thus, when read together, Bradley's (2011) as well as Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) research demonstrates that deliberate outdoor adventure activity may potentially influence one's purpose in life since deliberate outdoor adventure activity enhances an

individual's personal perception of their physical body which may potentially affect one's sense of purpose in life.

Another significant study includes research conducted by Riese and Vorkinn (2002). Within their study, Riese and Vorkinn (2002) explain the meaning-making processes maintained by Norwegian recreational enthusiasts during their leisurely outdoor pursuits. Riese and Vorkinn (2002) utilize participants' descriptions of "cultural models and personal experience" to explain narratively how these recreationists make meaning of their outdoor adventure pursuits. Riese and Vorkinn (2002) discover that while meaning-making processes vary from recreationist to recreationist, some similarities between them do exist. For example, most participants in Riese and Vorkinn's (2002) study viewed their outdoor adventure experiences as opportunities to rejuvenate in solitude and to improve their overall health. Riese and Vorkinn's (2002) exploratory research concerning meaning construction among Norwegian recreationists demonstrates the variability with which individuals perceive their outdoor adventure experiences. Although Riese and Vorkinn (2002) do not address the current topic of interest, their findings are influential for this study. Riese and Vorkinn's (2002) study illustrates that not all of the participants involved in the current research endeavor may think about their purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity in the same way. Riese and Vorkinn's (2002) publication reiterates the importance of approaching the current topic of interest with an open mind and a willingness to be honest about potential research findings, even if they differ from my personal beliefs and experiences in the outdoors.

Other influential publications include two studies conducted by Lewis (2007, 2012). Lewis's (2007) first study concerning how outdoor adventure experiences influence the holistic development of outdoor adventure guides highlights similar topics of interest as the current study. The aim of Lewis's (2007) study includes obtaining "further insight and understanding of the phenomena of the holistic integration of flow states into a discovered life theme" (p. 2). According to Csikszentmihalyi (as cited in Lewis, 2007, 2012), discerning one's "life theme" fosters greater individual meaning and purpose development as well as formation of self (p. 2). These themes form as a result of "goal directed actions that provide meaning and purpose" for an individual, which includes deliberate outdoor adventure activity (Lewis, 2007, p. 2; see also Ryff & Singer, 1998). Lewis (2012) claims, "Leisure pursuits in general and outdoor adventure in particular present opportunities for individuals to pay attention to their lives and create unique, personally meaningful life narratives," which inform one's purpose in life (p. 108). Lewis's (2007, 2012) findings demonstrate a connection between purpose and engagement in outdoor adventure pursuits. However, Lewis's (2007, 2012) studies focus on outdoor adventure guides – exemplars in the field of outdoor recreation who consider these types of pursuits their occupational vocation. My study, on the other hand, focuses on college students' leisurely experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activities.

Loeffler's (2004) study also highlights very similar themes as the current research endeavor. One of Loeffler's (2004) discoveries, which he labels "capturing the meanings," within his research greatly informs the current research study (p. 59). According to Loeffler (2004), many of his study participants equated the outdoors as an environment in which they "can connect to a sense of a higher purpose or power" and a

place that “inspires a contemplative mindset where they are drawn to ask themselves ‘larger’ questions” (p. 59). As a result, “many of the participants identified outdoor experiences as providing opportunities for self-discovery and gaining perspectives” (Loeffler, 2004, p. 59). Loeffler’s (2004) particular findings demonstrate that engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity, in fact, does increase reflectiveness in participants and that many of those engaged in deliberate outdoor adventure activity do think about issues beyond themselves. Although Loeffler’s (2004) discovery is significant to the current study, his explanation of this phenomenon is brief and not directly tied to purpose.

Justification for Inquiry

Many justifications can be made for the inquiry of this study. For instance, several scholars highlight connections between purpose, deliberate activity, and physical and psychological health (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Bronk, 2014; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Fahlman et al., 2009; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Lewis et al., 2014; Riese & Vorkinn, 2002; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). According to Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003), purpose is important for both psychological and physical human development. Understanding one’s purpose in life curbs the negative effects of boredom which may include: “depression, anxiety, apathy, hopelessness, and lacking a sense of meaning or purpose in life” (Fahlman et al., 2009, p. 308). Purpose also reduces one’s tendencies toward “self-absorption, depression, addictions, and a variety of psycho-somatic ailments” as well as “deviant and destructive behavior, a lack of productivity, and an inability to sustain stable interpersonal relationships” (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 120). Individuals who

maintain a sense of purpose claim increased levels of satisfaction in their lives, exhibit characteristics of positive mental health, and are more resilient than their purposeless counterparts (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Bronk, 2014; Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 1998).

Living a life of purpose includes integrating positive interactions between both the physiological and psychological components of the human body (Ryff & Singer, 1998). In addition to promoting various positive psychological benefits, one's purpose in life also appears to influence physical health in a positive way (Bronk, 2014). Research indicates that those who identify as having purpose are more likely to participate in deliberate activities, including outdoor physical activity (Bronk, 2014; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). As a result of their physical activity, individuals experience greater positive physical health (Bronk, 2014). According to Bronk (2014), women, in particular, who maintained a sense of purpose in life demonstrated lower levels of stress, inflammation, and Body Mass Index (BMI) ratings. Individuals who identified with a purpose in life were also found less likely to contract chronic illnesses as well (Bronk, 2014).

Recent literature also indicates a connection between deliberate activities, such as deliberate outdoor adventure activities, and overall positive health (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2002; Trenberth, 2005). According to Henderson and Ainsworth (2002), participation in deliberate activities, in particular, actually “correlated highly with better self-rated health, lower distress, lower depression, lower anxiety, lower hostility, and better positive affect” (p. 134). Deliberate activities have the potential to increase levels of happiness, advance physical well-being, reduce negative affect,

decrease stress, and increase coping abilities of individuals (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Trenberth, 2005). Research demonstrates that individuals who live physically active and healthy lifestyles are those who exhibit greater understanding of their particular life purpose (Bronk, 2014; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004).

Various studies also note several benefits as a result of engaging in physical activity outdoors. Abraham, Sommerhalder, and Abel (2010) hold that outdoor landscapes play an important function in positive human health. According to Abraham, Sommerhalder, and Abel (2010), outdoor landscapes are connected to the formation of “meaning, identity, attachment, belonging, memory, and history” (p. 60). Outdoor spaces also affect mental, physical, and social well-being (Abraham, Sommerhalder, & Abel, 2010). These outdoor environments positively influence cognitive abilities and emotion, reduce stress, increase participation in physical activity, and foster community among fellow peers (Abraham, Sommerhalder, & Abel, 2010). In other words, “health-promoting landscapes contribute to healthy lifestyles in terms of physical activity and mental and emotional relaxation” (Abraham, Sommerhalder, & Abel, 2010, p. 66).

According to Pryor, Carpenter, and Townsend (2005), interaction with outdoor environments has been linked to “positively affect mood state, reduce stress and tension, assist recovery from mental fatigue, and boost self-confidence” (p. 7). Pasanen, Tyrväinen, and Korpela (2014) also discovered physical activity conducted in nature increased individuals’ levels of both physiological, psychological, and affective well-being. Additional outcomes of participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activity, particularly for women and adolescents, include increased independence, social

connection, skill, and satisfaction (Libby & Carruthers, 2013) as well as increased self-awareness (Cason & Gillis, 1994).

Understanding the effects of purpose and certain kinds of deliberate physical activity, such as deliberate outdoor adventure activities, on both the psychological and physical aspects of the body justify the importance of this study. The physical and mental benefits of outdoor physical activity as they relate to positive human functioning have been explained at great length throughout recent scholarship. Determining the benefits of purpose, however, is a continually growing sector of research.

According to Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003), discovering and maintaining purpose in life is key to optimal human development. Within the field of higher education, it is the aim of student affairs professionals to provide students with developmental opportunities to flourish and thrive in all of life's dimensions (American College Personnel Association, 1996). While important, recognizing the positive impacts of purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activities should not be the end goal. Rather, gaining a deeper understanding of how purpose and intentional pursuits, and more specifically, deliberate outdoor adventure activities, connect in the lives of college students is necessary in order to incorporate findings within everyday practice at postsecondary institutions (Bailey & Fernando, 2012).

To my knowledge, this is the first study seeking to explore possible connections between college students' deliberate outdoor adventure activity and their understanding of their purpose in life. As demonstrated previously, a gap in literature exists regarding the association between deliberate outdoor adventure activity and one's understanding of life purpose. Some recent publications have touched on this subject, but further

investigation is necessary to better grasp the connection between these two concepts.

Bronk (2014) claims that more empirical research is needed to discover whether “purpose contribute[s] to physical health, or [if] people who are physically healthy more inclined to discover personally meaningful aims, or [if] a third variable is responsible for both high rates of purpose and physical health” (p. 171).

Although some studies postulate a connection between purpose and deliberate physical activities, such as deliberate outdoor adventure activities, none fully describe the issue in depth beyond initial discoveries. While recent literature acknowledges a link, few studies demonstrate how individuals connect deliberate outdoor adventure activity to their life purpose, if at all. Consequently, the purpose of this particular study is to contribute to the lengthy conversation put forth by previous scholars about the pursuit and discovery of purpose and how it relates to deliberate physical activity, specifically outdoor adventure activities, in the lives of college students who engage in these types of pursuits.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used within this study, including the research paradigm as well as the sampling, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods. Additionally, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study are discussed.

Research Paradigm

The literature review provides a rich description of research related to the topic of interest; however, none of the aforementioned studies explored the connection between deliberate outdoor adventure activity and college students' life purpose. Therefore, this study is an exploratory project that seeks to gain a greater understanding concerning how college students who engage in deliberate outdoor adventure activity perceive it influencing their purpose in life.

Ryff and Singer (1998) reveal a need for understanding influences on an individual's purpose using a qualitative research framework. Fahlberg, Fahlberg, and Gates (1992) note "it may be more appropriate to ask questions that require description, interpretation, and understanding" when attempting to comprehend people's connections between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity rather than seeking clean-cut responses from individuals that quantitative measures appear to elicit (p. 183).

Qualitatively exploring connections between deliberate outdoor adventure activity and purpose also seems most appropriate given the results of Scheier et al.'s (2006)

quantitative research framework in a previous study that sought to measure purpose as it relates to deliberate activities. As mentioned in the literature review, Scheier et al.'s (2006) quantitative assessment did not measure the concept of purpose as it related to meaningful activities but instead measured components of subjective well-being. Scheier et al.'s (2006) study revealed the difficulty in measuring the concept of purpose quantitatively. Scheier et al.'s (2006) study also demonstrates the need for the reflective responses of individuals to study the concept of purpose.

For these reasons, I utilized an interpretive phenomenological approach within the qualitative research framework to explore possible links between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Using the interpretive phenomenological methodological tradition, I sought to understand college students' lived experiences when engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activity and how these experiences potentially contribute to or influence their life purpose. Ontologically, I believe that these experiences are subjective and unique in respect to each participant. Therefore, multiple constructions of reality exist regarding potential connections between deliberate outdoor adventure activity and purpose. My epistemology stems from this subjective ontological view, and as a result, I sought participant knowledge about their experiences in order to better understand how deliberate outdoor adventure activity might affect a college students' purpose using a qualitative research framework.

Sampling Method

In order to explore connections between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity, I utilize a purposive sampling strategy to identify individuals who frequently participate in these types of pursuits. The target population used for this particular study

included up to twelve traditional-age college students (ages 18 to 23) who, within the last three to five months, participated in a commercial, educational, or personal outdoor adventure experience they considered to be personally meaningful.

Outdoor adventure experiences, in this case, includes those activities that occur in a wilderness context and “involve doing physically active things away from the person’s normal environment” (Hattie et al., 1997, p. 44), such as “swimming, bicycling, fishing...nature walks...camping, hiking...canoeing, sailing, mountain climbing, and snow skiing,” for example (Colton & Morrione, 1973, p. 2). Borrowing from Hattie et al.’s (1997) definition of outdoor adventure programs, other elements that define outdoor adventure experiences, such as deliberate outdoor adventure activity, in the current study include the encounter “of a variety of mentally and/or physically challenging objectives, such as mastering a river rapid or hiking to a specific point” and “frequent and intense interactions that usually involve group [or individual] problem solving and decision making” (p. 44). What constitutes a wilderness context in the current research study is open to individual participant interpretation based on Rutko and Gillespie’s (2013) assertion that “the interpretations of different individuals, groups, and historical cohorts suggest the impossibility of creating a universal definition of what constitutes ‘wilderness’” (p. 220).

I chose to use the three to five month criteria mentioned above for two reasons. First, I hoped participants would consider their experiences to be fairly recent, therefore, enhancing one’s ability to “reconstruct” personally important moments of their outdoor adventure experiences (Seidman, 2013, p. 90). Second, this short time frame allowed

individuals ample time for reflection about the impacts these experiences made in their lives.

Program directors of higher education outdoor adventure programs (or equivalent) helped to identify students who fit this criterion. I asked program directors to participate if their institution offered an outdoor adventure program (or equivalent) for their students. I chose the institutions in which these program directors served randomly. I considered program directors to be more knowledgeable about their college students' participation in outdoor adventure programs than the researcher since they interact with their students on a daily basis and thus, program directors served as a vital resource in generating a sample pool for this study.

Recruitment Method

Recruitment of participants occurred in two steps. First, I contacted program directors of each higher education institution's outdoor adventure program (or equivalent) chosen for this study via email to ask for their assistance in identifying one male and one female traditional-age college student ranging from 18 to 23 years of age from their institution who, within the last three to five months, participated in an outdoor adventure experience they considered to be personally rewarding, sponsored either commercially, educationally, or personally. Once program directors identified students who fit the outlined criterion, I asked program directors to share the student's email address with me as well as my faculty advisor.

Second, I invited students to participate in the current study via email using a pre-scripted participation email invitation (see Appendix B). In this email, I also attached a digital copy of the consent form (see Appendix C) for potential participants to read before

making any commitments to the current study. I followed up with students every two to five days if I had not received a response regarding their interest in participation. If individuals responded positively to the email invitation, I scheduled an in-person or live internet video conference interview with students, depending on their physical location.

The sample consisted of seven traditional-age college students and one graduate student who currently attend various colleges and universities throughout the United States (see Table 3.1). Although I did not intend to include graduate students within the current research study, I decided to incorporate this participants' data for two reasons. First, this participant was recommended to participate in this study by their institution's program director because of their unique experiences concerning the topic of interest. Second, this participant's position as a graduate student allowed them more experiences and reflections to draw from in terms of their deliberate outdoor adventure activities and their perceptions of purpose. This participant's responses reinforced findings among the responses from the seven traditional-age college students.

The study participants consist of three males and five females. The study participants range in classification (e.g., first year, sophomore, junior, senior) and major. Each university represented in this study, including one private Christian institution, one private non-religious institution, and two public institutions, offer outdoor adventure programs for its constituents. Three participants, two females and one male, attend a private, mid-size, Christian university in the South. Two participants, one of which included the graduate student, one female and one male, attend a public, small, liberal arts university in the Northwest. Two participants, one female and one male, attend a public, small liberal arts college in the Northwest. One participant, a female, attends a

private, small liberal arts college in the Northeast. Rather than focusing on one particular college or university, I interviewed participants from four higher education institutions since I believe it allows for greater credibility and potential transferability of this study.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Race / Ethnicity	Institution	Classification	Major / Minor
Katrina	F	Caucasian	Public, Northwest, Small	First year	Geology
Randy	M	Caucasian	Public, Northwest, Small	Junior	Pre-Medical
Gwen	F	Caucasian	Private, South, Medium	Junior	Nutrition Sciences & Pre-Dietetics
Blake	M	Caucasian	Public, Northwest, Small	Senior	Environmental Research
Chris	M	Caucasian	Private, South, Medium	Senior	Mechanical Engineering
Jennifer	F	African-American	Private, South, Medium	Senior	Psychology
Hannah	F	Caucasian	Private, Northeast, Small	Senior	Earth and Oceanographic Science & Environmental Studies
Megan	F	Caucasian	Public, Northwest, Small	Graduate	Education, Community Health

Data Collection Methods

Data collection occurred during the final month of the Fall 2016 semester and the first month of the Spring 2017 semester. I utilized two methods to gain greater insight regarding the potential connections between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity, including semi-structured in-depth interviews and a journal exercise. I created questions for both the interview guide (see Appendix D) and journal exercise (see Appendix E) using information gained as a result of conducting the literature review for this study and also using insight from personal participation in outdoor adventure experiences. Additionally, I also borrowed some questions used in the interview guide, both partially and in full, from Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) interview guide utilized in their recent study on college students' development of purpose.

The interview guide is divided into six categories. The first section outlines the basic process of the interview in which I introduced the study as well as explained my role as the researcher and my duty to protect participants' confidentiality. The second section includes questions pertaining to general information about participants' background (i.e. classification and major) in order to gain a better understanding of the interviewee and to build rapport (Seidman, 2013). The third section includes questions about outdoor adventure experiences prompting participants to narrate memorable outdoor adventure experiences, including details regarding their emotions, motivations, and personal impacts of these instances. The fourth section of the interview guide asks questions concerning the concepts of meaning and purpose. Since I sought to understand the participants' perceptions of these concepts, I did not offer an overall definition for them in the interview guide. The fifth section contains questions about the participants'

perception of college and how their post-secondary educational institutions potentially influenced their thinking about purpose. The last section of the interview guide concludes by allowing interviewees the opportunity to summarize their responses and to share additional information not yet mentioned.

After the conclusion of the interview, I provided participants with the journal exercise which includes similar questions as the interview guide for further reflection via email. Each of these questions were open-ended so as to gain rich information about students' perception of purpose as it relates to their engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity.

The first method used to collect participants' lived experiences in the outdoors included semi-structured in-depth interviews. To guarantee that each participant had ample time to respond to the pre-scripted questions, I allotted 90 minutes per interview. I expected research interviews to last approximately 60 to 90 minutes; however, many of these in-depth interviews averaged around 44 minutes per interview. Depending on the participants' location, I conducted research interviews either on campus in a public conference room or via a live internet video conference. During the interview process, I utilized several strategies, such as listening attentively, probing for more information and asking questions differently when necessary as well as repeating statements provided by participants to ensure that my understanding of participants' perceptions was, indeed, what they meant (Seidman, 2013). To safeguard against accidental data loss, I audio-recorded each interview.

The second method I used to gather students' stories about their experiences during outdoor adventure activities included asking participants to complete a short

journal exercise consisting of four questions requiring in-depth responses. The second method of journaling allowed for interviewees to expand upon the concept of purpose as it relates to deliberate outdoor adventure activity after given time to reflect on the subject. Talking about esoteric, lofty concepts, like purpose, in relation to one's past experiences may be intimidating or difficult for individuals during an interview process when they are asked to think about these things in the moment. I expected the journal exercise to take approximately 60 minutes to complete. After each interview, I provided each participant with a journal exercise via an editable online document to collect additional information about their experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activity and how these connect to their life purpose that they may not have presented during the interview. I allotted participants one week to complete their journal responses on the editable online document. The additional information collected through participants' journal responses added some depth to the interview data and generated a greater understanding concerning connections between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity in college students.

Data Analysis Methods

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) describe the data collection and data analysis phases of the research effort as an "iterative process" in which the gathering and interpretation of data occur "interactively" (p. 307). Data analysis took place during both the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters. I utilized two methods to analyze data generated from both the in-depth interviews and journal exercises.

First, I transcribed the entirety of each audio-recorded interview, including both verbal and nonverbal information. Transcribing both of these elements of the interviews

allow for the fullest meaning of the participants' responses to surface in the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Afterwards, I asked participants to evaluate my perceptions of how their deliberate outdoor adventure activities influenced their understanding of their life purpose based on their interview transcripts to confirm that their messages were understood as clearly and accurately as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In total, six participants offered feedback regarding my initial findings.

Second, using the interview transcriptions and journal exercise responses, I utilized an exploratory research approach to code the data. This required a two-phase coding process. The first phase consisted of carefully reading through both the transcripts and journal exercise responses line-by-line to generate preliminary categories and initial patterns (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In the second phase of the coding process, I re-read both sets of data as well as through early codes documented in a research log (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Next, I compared these codes among study participants to develop themes and sub-themes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). As a result of this two-phase coding process, participants' meaningful experiences as they relate to purpose and outdoor adventure activity came to the forefront in the form of research themes and sub-themes.

Ethical Considerations

Although participation in this study presented no foreseeable risks to those involved, I still considered ethical issues to protect study participants. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participant, I stored all participant contact information in a password-protected computer and in a password-protected online folder managed by the researcher, and only the principal researcher and her faculty advisor had access to this

information. I assigned all participants a code (pseudonym) that I used throughout the duration of the study instead of their original name. The key to the code connected their name to their information. I stored the key in a password-protected computer as well as in a password-protected online folder managed by the researcher. Only the researcher and her faculty advisor had access to the key.

During the recruitment process, I provided participants a digital copy of the consent form to read over before making any commitments to the research study. In addition, I presented one hardcopy consent form at the beginning of the interviews conducted in person. I asked participants to read the consent form before participating in the research study. The consent form included information regarding the purpose of the study, the commitments required of participants, foreseeable risks, procedures for collecting and storing data, and contact information of both the principal researcher and her faculty advisor.

I stored all electronic files of the audio-recorded data collected during the in-person interviews or live internet video conferences in a password-protected computer as well as in a password-protected online folder managed by the researcher. Only the researcher and her faculty advisor had access to the computer and online folder.

Trustworthiness

In order to promote trustworthiness of this study, I sought to accomplish Guba's (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) four elements of trustworthy research – “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (p. 327). Credibility of the current research study is enhanced in several ways.

For instance, the number of participants interviewed and the variety of higher education institutions represented in this study increase the credibility of the current research project because eight separate data sources (i.e. interview participants) each contributed their own subjective experiences to the study allowing for analysis among numerous sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Attempts to confirm that my findings were true to participants' intentions, such as pilot testing the effectiveness of the interview guide before conducting this study and rephrasing questions during the interview process to increase participant understanding and response, further improved the credibility of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, I also asked participants to check that the codes generated from their interviews were confirmable, thus, increasing credibility and overall trustworthiness of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Although I hoped that each participants' engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity positively affected their understanding of their life purpose, I realized that this may not be true for every individual interviewed (Riese & Vorkinn, 2002). In order to present the data with as little bias as possible and to honor the commitments of each individual involved during the interview process, I also included data that did not necessarily demonstrate a positive connection between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In doing so, depth of understanding of how deliberate outdoor adventure activity influences individuals was created and credibility of the current research study was enhanced.

Furthermore, I engaged in what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as "peer debriefing" in which I submitted the current research project to "a disinterested peer" outside of my department to gain critical feedback of my literary framework and findings

(p. 308). This allowed me the opportunity to process, defend, and clarify my research findings in a comprehensible manner.

The inclusion of three strategies used to decrease research bias likewise enhanced the credibility of this study. First, I attempted to convey fully my passions and perceptions regarding the topic of interest in both the introductory chapter and through my positionality statement (see Appendix A). This statement exposed my personal biases as well as reminded me of my predispositions throughout the research process. Second, in order to further minimize researcher bias, I also immediately recorded my perceptions of the interview process and any additional pertinent information in a research log directly following each interview. This helped me to recognize my effect on the interview data, thus increasing research dependability. Third, I met with my thesis chair to further ensure trustworthiness of this study. In these meetings, my thesis chair provided fresh insights, discussed additional approaches, and introduced perspectives regarding the current study. His wisdom helped me to keep the participants' true experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activity as it related to their life purpose central to the research.

Although transferability is not the aim of this study, I sought to provide detailed descriptions of my participants, their contexts, and the processes utilized within this study to collect information on the connection between purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activity so that future users may judge whether the current study is applicable in their particular setting. By thoroughly specifying my methodology, I also sought to accomplish research dependability. However, despite my efforts to ensure objectivity of this study, I am aware that no research is completely without bias. Although I am

passionate about this subject, I hope that my efforts clearly convey the individual experiences of the study participants and their connections to purpose and not my own.

In sum, the current chapter details the methodology used to guide the current research endeavor, including an explanation of the research tradition as well as the sampling, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods. Additionally, I discussed ethical considerations and measures utilized by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The following chapter outlines the findings generated from the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The current research study seeks to explore the following question: *How does traditional college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influence their understanding about their purpose in life?*

This chapter discusses how participants describe purpose and meaning in their lives as well as the core themes that surfaced after analyzing participants' responses to the interview questions and journal prompts. These major findings provide greater insight into how college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities contributes to their understanding of their purpose in life. Before delving into the specific ways in which engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities help participants understand their life purpose, however, it is important to first become familiar with the participants, their identities, and their background since each participants' perceptions of purpose is specific to the individual.

Getting to Know the Participants

In total, seven traditional-age college students and one graduate student participated in the current research study. Within the following section, I describe each participants' institutional affiliation, field of study, how they each became involved in participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, and their current engagement in these types of pursuits to provide a general background of the participant.

Katrina is a first year female studying geology at a small, public liberal arts college in the Northwest. Influenced at a young age to pursue deliberate outdoor adventure activities through her family and her experiences at summer camps, Katrina learned to enjoy deliberate outdoor adventure pursuits at a young age. “Well, I’ve always liked being in the wild, and, like, being in the wilderness,” says Katrina. Her favorite deliberate outdoor adventure activity is canoeing, but she appreciates engaging in other types too, such as backpacking and kayaking. Katrina currently serves as a student leader in her institution’s outdoor adventure program.

Randy is a junior enrolled in the pre-medical track at the small, public liberal arts university in the Northwest that he attends. Randy’s beginnings in participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities started soon after his birth.

I grew up in an outdoor family. I learned to ski when I was two and a half, and I went on my first backpacking trip when I was two years old. So, yeah. That’s just what I’ve been doing my whole life.

Randy continues to engage in deliberate outdoor adventure activities such as these at his university as well as in many other pursuits, such as facilitating avalanche and rock climbing courses, mountain biking, and fishing.

Gwen is a junior majoring in nutrition and pre-dietetics at a private, mid-size, Christian university in the South. Gwen began participating in deliberate outdoor adventure since early childhood. Beginning in kindergarten until the end of elementary school, Gwen was an active member of a YMCA program called Indian Princesses. As an Indian Princess member, Gwen and her dad participated in “a lot of outdoor adventure type things” with other “tribes” in the surrounding community. Gwen claims her experiences in Indian Princesses is foundational to her love of the outdoors. “That’s

where I just started getting into, like, [the] outdoors,” says Gwen. Gwen currently serves as a leader in her university’s outdoor adventure club where she facilitates trips and works at the rock wall.

Blake is a senior studying environmental research at a small, public liberal arts college in the Northwest. Similar to Gwen, Blake began engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as a Boy Scout, and his father, too, “was the main person that was getting me outside and inspiring me to be outside.” In the past, Blake and his dad participated in several mountaineering trips together, but since Blake is away at college, he engages in deliberate outdoor adventure activities in different ways. Now, Blake serves as leader for his college’s outdoor adventure program, and he frequently goes on solo runs around the woods surrounding his college campus.

Chris, a senior majoring in mechanical engineering at a private, mid-size, Christian university in the South, is employed at his university’s rock wall and previously served as a summer leader during outdoor adventure orientation sessions. Like many other participants, Chris began engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activity very early in life as a Cub Scout. His dad, an ex-Marine and former Boy Scout, served as “the driving force” for Chris to enroll in Cub Scouts when he was a boy and to serve as a Boy Scout when he was old enough. “He [Chris’s dad] was the one that, like, kind of pushed me and sparked the interest,” says Chris. In these capacities, Chris grew to appreciate participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities.

Jennifer is a senior studying psychology at a private, mid-size, Christian university in the South. She began engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities when she was young as well. Jennifer credits her parents and her military upbringing as

major sources from which her affinity for the outdoors stems. “My family was just very emphatic about making me, my brother, and sister very cultured and just very aware of our surroundings and where the opportunities that are around us,” claims Jennifer, “...and living next to a military base [encouraged participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities] because the facilities are very available as well.” Now, Jennifer is heavily involved in the outdoor adventure program at her institution. She currently works at the rock wall, is a member of the sailing club, and a frequent attender of university-sponsored outdoor adventure trips.

Hannah is a senior double majoring in earth and oceanographic science as well as environmental studies at a small, private liberal arts college in the Northeast. Hannah, too, began participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities at a young age. “My parents are big outdoor buffs,” says Hannah, “and they really prioritized getting me and my brother outside.” This early encouragement to engage in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, such as taking nature hikes in her home state or backpacking in Oregon, laid a foundation for Hannah to continue to participate in these types of pursuits. Hannah currently serves as a leader in her college’s outdoor adventure program, and she also ventures off on personal trips either by herself or with her family to free-solo (i.e. rock climbing alone without any assistive or protective gear) or backpack in the backcountry.

Megan is currently a graduate student at a small, public liberal arts university in the Northwest studying education with an emphasis on community health. Megan began participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as a child with her family, but she really only became passionate about these types of pursuits during college after her friends exposed her to rock climbing. Currently, Megan engages in deliberate outdoor

adventure activities through her institution by serving in an afterschool program that introduces middle school students to various types of deliberate outdoor adventure activities and the skills necessary to succeed in these pursuits.

Participants' Perceptions of the Purpose and Meaning

Although the current research study utilized recent literature to inform conceptions of purpose and meaning, I primarily employed participants' perceptions and definitions of these major concepts in the remaining sections of the current research study since the goal of this project is to gain a greater understanding of the participants' meaning-making of their engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and their potential influences in understanding one's life purpose. In order to explain the possible connections between two core components of this study (i.e. *purpose* as it is influenced by engagement in *deliberate outdoor adventure activities*), I begin by outlining participants' understanding of their particular life purpose followed by their sources of meaning.

Purpose

All of the participants represented in this study believed they each possessed a unique life purpose, even if they could not identify the specifics of their purpose in life quite yet. Many participants in the current research study, although not all, admitted to enrolling into higher education institutions with a purpose in mind, and several participants were able to explain easily their current perceptions of purpose in their lives.

For instance, Gwen, Jennifer, and Megan confessed entering college with a specific purpose already identified. Megan recounts: "When I first got into college, I was

so sure I already had a purpose, and I knew exactly what I was going to do.” Similarly, both Gwen and Jennifer noted having “a life plan,” to use Gwen’s words, for their lives when starting their first year in their undergraduate institutions. For some participants though, their original visions for their lives did not quite play out the way they expected them to.

After completing academic courses, interacting with their college professors, and talking about their passions and directions with their peers, many participants’ original perceptions of how to fulfill their purpose changed as a result of their participation in college despite the fact that the majority of participants (except two) did not anticipate higher education to help them develop or refine their purpose in life.

To convey participants’ individual perceptions of purpose, I utilize Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson’s (2016) three purpose groups (i.e. “Self-Achievers, Relationalists, Transcendents”) described in Chapter Two to categorize the various types of purposes offered by participants in the current research study (see Table 4.1) (p. 186). Organizing participants’ purposes into Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson’s (2016) three purpose themes also helps to clarify the connections between the participants’ purpose and their engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure described later in the study.

Table 4.1

Participants' Perceptions of Purpose

Pseudonym	Purpose Category (general)	Sources of Purpose
Katrina	Self-Achiever	Career
Randy	Self-Achiever	Happiness
Gwen	Transcendent	God
Blake	Transcendent	Change the world for good
Chris	Relationalist	Family
Jennifer	Transcendent	God
Hannah	Transcendent	Change the world for good
Megan	Relationalist	Service

Self-Achievers. Two out of eight participants represented in this study understood their major source of purpose in terms achieving self-oriented goals. For example, Katrina describes purposeful living as “being deliberate in your actions... I think in a purposeful life you are aware of everything you're doing and how it can potentially affect others, and your actions are full of intent.” More specifically, Katrina currently believes her individual purpose includes serving as a wilderness therapist.

Although she began college knowing she wanted to integrate outdoors into her forthcoming career, she could not yet fully grasp her life vision until a few of her friends helped her to realize her calling. According to Katrina, these friends were previously employed at wilderness therapeutic and behavioral programs, and they often spoke about

“how rewarding it is to be able to help people and [to] be able to do it in the wild or in the backcountry.” This spurred Katrina to pursue a career in wilderness therapy. She notes, “I really enjoy leading people out in the wilderness and teaching them about all of the things about what you need to know.”

Katrina’s passion for the outdoors is foundational to her life purpose as she understands it currently. “If I hadn’t done outdoor adventure [and] gone camping as a kid, I never would have discovered this [passion],” says Katrina. Serving as a wilderness therapist allows Katrina the opportunity to integrate her love for the outdoors into a career that will fulfill her individual desire to intentionally experience the outdoors while positively impacting those in her care.

Randy’s perception of purpose also fits within this larger purpose theme.

According to Randy,

Purposeful living is goal oriented living, or actively pursuing something, such as a destination, feeling, job title, or anything in-between. A purposeful life is one which is full of reward and belonging, or a life which challenges you in all the right ways and also makes you feel like you have done something beneficial.

For Randy, purpose in life includes seeking out opportunities that are personally meaningful and fulfilling for him. Randy, in his words, is “actively pursuing” happiness, much of which he finds in the outdoors. “The outdoors definitely gives me a sense of purpose because that’s a place or an activity that I can always go to, right?” says Randy. He reiterates, “I have a strong sense of belonging in all outdoor communities. I know where I can go to find happiness.” This strong connection to participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activity significantly impacts the way Randy constructs his purpose in life, which appears to revolve around pursuing happiness in the outdoors, a seemingly individualistic goal.

Relationalists. Two participants represented in the current research study viewed their life purpose in light of their desire to serve others or to impact the lives of their family members for the better. For example, Chris, understands his purpose as relationally oriented, particularly in terms of his relationships with his family members. Chris describes his life purpose as:

just having the best relationships you can with the people that you care about, so family and friends. And, if I ever get married, you know, the family that we have. And, just sort of living that part of your life [relationships with family members] to the fullest. I think it seems like the most important.

Chris claims several factors helped him to realize his purpose in life, including the closeness his family members share among one another, growing up in the Christian faith, and gaining perspective in the outdoors. He explains that his participation in deliberate outdoor adventure experiences specifically “make you think about what’s really important,” and for Chris, this happens to be the relationships with his family. Chris describes purposeful living as “using the time you’ve been given meaningfully for yourself and others around you.” Cultivating deeper relationships and positively influencing the lives of his family members serve as the major source of purpose for Chris.

Megan’s understanding of purpose also appears to fit within the “Relationalist” category defined by Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016, p. 186); however, Megan’s perception of purpose is different from that than Chris’s understanding. Instead, Megan views her purpose in life is to serve others, not necessarily to deepen her existing relationships with her family as does Chris. Megan states, “I haven’t thought about it [life purpose] very much... But, I’ve always known that I wanted to help people.” In fact, Megan claims this is why she wanted to become an athletic trainer during her

undergraduate career originally, but she senses that her life purpose to serve others no longer fits with this particular occupation. Megan notes:

I was in track, and so I was like, ‘Yeah. I could help other athletes get better and do all this stuff.’ And, then I kind of fell out of that world. I didn’t feel like I had a purpose in sports anymore.

Instead, Megan plans to incorporate her love of the outdoors into her professional career whose role is to serve others. “It just felt better to tie my purpose to the outdoors instead of indoors (laughs),” says Megan. In particular, Megan aspires to serve others in similar ways to her current occupation now, which includes teaching teenagers how to appreciate and successfully navigate their own way through deliberate outdoor adventure activities. “I want to share that [deliberate outdoor adventure activities] with as many people as I can and give people the skills and knowledge of how to do these activities,” claims Megan. Doing so provides Megan purpose in life.

Transcendents. Four participants represented in the current research study understand their purpose in life in relation to God or their desire to better the world around them according to some moral ideal. Although each of these four participants’ perceptions of their life purpose appear to focus on goals that benefit the lives of others – a key source of purpose for “Relationalists” – their motivation for purpose stems from divine or inspirational sources (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 186).

For instance, Jennifer understands her purpose in life is to affect others around her in a positive way as she helps them to find hope, peace, and rest in a chaotic world through her Christian faith.

Specifically, my purpose [is that] I want to help others recognize their value and to...assume their self-worth and step into that. And, know they’re prized and

know that they're worthy. And, I think as a Christian my purpose is to contribute to the redemption of a broken world.

Jennifer's understanding of purpose does reveal "Relationalist" undertones (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 186), but ultimately, Jennifer perceives her purpose in light of God. Although Jennifer is unsure of the particular path God is leading her on in pursuit of this purpose identified by Jennifer, she knows that "God will unfold it [her purpose] to me as I trust in Him and live according to His will." As evidenced in her interview and journal responses, Jennifer derives her purpose from God, but within this purpose, she recognizes that her major responsibility in life is to serve and love others.

Gwen also understands her purpose in life as a goal that positively influences her own life and those around her in light of her Christian faith.

My life purpose, I guess, is, like, international missions. But, then within international missions, like, the purpose of doing missions is yet to be discovered. Like, I don't know why yet God has given me a purpose for international missions.

Gwen is currently unaware of the specific purpose of her life, but she recognizes God leading her to international missions. Gwen views her future vocation as an international missionary as one that will bring her life meaning as she incorporates Jesus into all that she does as well. Thus, Gwen's major source of purpose in life is her relationship with Christ and living in a way that aligns with Christ's core teachings: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:39, King James Version).

Hannah understands her purpose a little differently as compared to Jennifer or Gwen. Rather than finding her source of purpose in God or Jesus, Hannah's motivation for purpose arises from her environmentalist outlook – to do good to the earth and to all its inhabitants. Hannah's describes purposeful living in this way:

It means doing as little as possible to negatively impact the earth, while doing as much as possible to positively impact the people living on it. It means giving everything that I can give to leave this world a little better than I found it... A purposeful life is realizing that, no matter what one's sphere of influence is, we all have a responsibility and ability to be good, kind and impart positive change.

These constant values serve as the substantive component upon which Hannah orients her actions and future. Advocating for increased sustainability and appreciation for earth systems, eliminating social injustices, and speaking on behalf of the marginalized who do not necessarily have a voice in impending climate change and environmental issues Hannah believes are individually-specific elements important to her purpose in life.

Blake understands his life purpose similarly to Hannah in that one's purpose in life should serve to do good for others and to encourage others to live beneficial lives. Blake believes that instead of becoming bogged down in the specifics of what it means to live purposefully or focusing on particular goals in life, people "should try to live their life in a way so as to not need a purpose guiding you through life." Rather, people should generally strive to be a better person in total, according to Blake. "I just think it's important to help each other out and to utilize the empathy that we have as humans in a way that's beneficial to as much as possible," says Blake.

The way in which individuals should accomplish this goal to benefit themselves and society should not be an overpowering force, as Blake perceives the concept of purpose, directing people through certain avenues and pathways. For Blake, living simply in such a way that is not focused solely on the self, but on the ability to serve others that advances the whole of society, is living purposefully. Blake explains:

It's just trying to find a balance between moving forward in your own life in a way that you feel is progressive and positive and engaging with the greater human cause in a way that is to you at least morally beneficial and assistive.

However, Blake does not believe there is one set way or one set goal that must be achieved in order to accomplish this end.

Meaning

Some participants represented in the current research study found that determining what gives their life meaning was more challenging than describing their purpose in life. When asked what makes life meaningful for them, some participants reacted by offering considerably long pauses before providing their response or by restating the question to themselves in order to fully grasp the inquiry presented. This reaction provided by participants concerning meaning in life differed significantly in comparison to participants' reactions when asked questions about life purpose. One participant (i.e. Katrina) even noted through her laughter that the question about meaning was "a big question" to wrestle with, but she did not elicit this same response when asked questions about her purpose in life.

As with the concept of purpose above, I utilize Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) meaning framework as described in Chapter Two to organize participants' various meanings in life (see Table 4.2). Understanding participants' meaning in life may provide further clarity and greater understanding of the connections between the participants' purpose and engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016).

Table 4.2

Participants' Perceptions of Meaning

Pseudonym	Meaning Category (general)	Sources of Meaning
Katrina	Self-Achiever	Experience Achiever
Randy	Self-Achiever	Happiness Achiever
Gwen	Transcendent	God
Blake	Transcendent	Other
Chris	Relationalist Self-Achiever	Family Goal Achiever
Jennifer	Self-Achiever	Experience Achiever
Hannah	Relationalist Transcendent	General Change the world for good
Megan	Transcendent Relationalist Self-Achiever	God Family Goal Achiever

Self-Achievers. Five of the eight participants represented in the current research study identified sources of meaning that fit within Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) "Self-Achiever" category of meaning (p. 154). Within this group, three types of Self-Achievers emerged: "Goal Achievers," "Experience Achievers," and "Happiness Achievers" (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 155-157). Each of these types of Self-Achievers are described using participants' understanding of their meaning in life below.

Randy notes living happily is what makes life meaningful for him. “Happiness... definitely happiness,” claims Randy, serves as his major motivation for living. Much of Randy’s happiness is found when he engages in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. “That’s why I go outside, I guess,” claims Randy, because “that [deliberate outdoor adventure activity] makes me happy, whether it’s trying to find an adrenaline rush or just experiencing the beauty of the outdoors.” Happiness as Randy’s source of ultimate meaning justifies his placement as a “Happiness Achiever” within this larger meaning group (Glanzer, Hill, Johnson, 2016, p. 157).

For Jennifer, maximizing opportunities is meaningful in her life. “If the world is an apple,” says Jennifer through her laughter, “I just want a bigger bite.” Constantly learning about the world and the people around her while trying new things and exploring her limits makes life worth living for Jennifer.

There’s so much life undiscovered by me. There’s so much more than what I can see here. There’s so much more than what I’ve already been involved in, that I’ve already experienced, and I want to maximize my life.

Jennifer largely derives meaning from experiences, which validates her placement within the “Experience Achiever” category identified by Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) in terms of her life meaning (p. 156).

Katrina, like Jennifer, may also be categorized as an “Experience Achiever” (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 156). Katrina explains what makes life meaningful for her:

I think, like, people and experience because those are really things that shape your life. Like, you could have the same experience as someone else, but if you had it with different people, it’s going to be completely different. Or, you could be, like, with the same people, but doing different things, and it’ll [the experience] be completely different.

Although Katrina mentions the importance of people in understanding her meaning in life, she talks about others in the sense of how they shape the experiences she undergoes in life. For this reason, I believe Katrina's major source of meaning includes the experiences themselves and how people impact these experiences for her, not necessarily the relationships or connections she makes with others.

One aspect that makes life worth living for both Chris and Megan is accomplishing the goals they set for themselves. These goals help Chris as well as Megan to continuously improve as a person. "I think what makes life worth living is... I like the idea of waking up every day and just moving, like, just doing something," says Chris. Chris illustrates this point by explaining the regret and guilt he feels when he indulges in activities that do not necessarily help him to become better. Chris thinks:

I could've ran five miles, and tested my limits and, you know, proved my body, and, like, just excelled, or, like, advanced something forward instead of just sitting there and watching The Office for eight hours (smiles, laughs)... That's what I think gives me the, like, the drive for the purpose, you know – take advantage of every day.

Similarly, Megan claims of the challenges that she faces and overcomes during her engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities:

The challenge is me constantly getting better, and then I can do more if I challenge myself, and I get better. You know, I can summit that mountain hike, and I can get to the top of that crack that's super hard that no one else can get. I can push myself...

This desire to continuously improve as a person through the accomplishment of their personal goals partially defines Chris and Megan as "Goal Achievers" (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 155). However, achieving personally defined objectives is not what is solely meaningful for Chris or for Megan as I will describe in the next section.

Relationalist. Three participants represented in the current research study derive meaning from relating with others or deepening their current relationships with their friends or family members. Not only do Chris and Megan find meaning in accomplishing goals, Chris and Megan also delineate the relationships with their family and friends as meaningful to their lives. In fact, these connections with those they love most serve as major sources of meaning for Chris and Megan. Chris states, “I think just living life for my friends and my family and my loved ones. I think that is what gives me the most meaning.”

Similarly to Chris, Megan also finds meaning in the relationships with her family.

Megan explains:

I absolutely love them [family members]. Like, we’re really, really tight-knit, and, like, more than most families I would say (laughs, smiles). But, they’re a really big driving force for me, and they’re very supportive of me. And, it’s one of those things where I want to make them proud, I guess, you know? I always know that they’re right behind me (smiles, laughs) in everything I do.

Relating to others also serves as a major source of meaning for Hannah. “I think the biggest thing that makes life worth living for me is being able to interact with people and help people and be there for humans,” says Hannah. Hannah partially derives her meaning by relating to others generally. For example, learning about other people’s histories and appreciating the diversity of life within others provides meaning in Hannah’s life.

It’s a world full of just such interesting people with a lot of different paths, and I think it’s so incredible all the things that you can learn from them and that people can teach you. And, just your interactions with others can help you learn about yourself... I think a big part of why life is worth living to me is getting the chance to really engage with lots of different kinds of people.

Transcendents. Four participants represented in the current research study derive meaning from their relationship with God or their desire to positively impact others. For example, Gwen and Megan both claim to find meaning in the joy their relationship with Jesus or God brings them. For Gwen, Jesus is the ultimate reason for living, and incorporating Jesus into all that she does is what makes life meaningful to Gwen. With a big smile on her face, Gwen shares her excitement about her meaningful relationship with Jesus:

What else will give so much meaning to my life that I could be living on the streets, but, yet I have a purpose? Like, I could be, you know, lost in the wilderness with no shoes on my feet, yet I am not really lost because I have Jesus.

This relationship with Jesus serves as the major source of meaning in Gwen's life.

For Megan, her understanding of God as Creator brings meaning to her life. When asked what gives her life meaning, Megan responds, "Well, I would say God, for sure, because... I live for Him." She recognizes that God cares for and controls her life as well as the world around her. "He created everything. He created the me, and the trees around me, and the rocks I climb," says Megan. Megan's appreciation for God's handiwork serves as a principal source of meaning for Megan.

Hannah also finds meaning in terms of her desire to make the world a better place by advocating for the earth and the marginalized. Hannah explains:

[I am] really feeling a responsibility to other humans in the world [who] aren't being treated fairly and aren't being given, like, the rights that they should have... I have a lot of power to do a lot of good. And, there's a lot of people who need good done for them. [I am] feeling a lot of purpose in doing what I can in my lifetime to leave this place a lot safer and more equitable and sustainable than it was when I was here.

This passion to benefit the earth and its inhabitants establishes Hannah's place within this larger meaning category.

What makes life meaningful for Blake includes experiencing to the fullest those moments that he considers to be “spiritual.” Blake describes these instances as those in which a metaphorical light bulb turns on for him. During these moments, Blake gains a greater understanding of life and is able to see beyond his own personal viewpoint. Blake claims:

I think a lot of the times when those experiences are honest and they're meaningful to you, or at least when they're meaningful to me... I think about other people when that happens. I'm able to kind of step away from myself almost, and my lens and that perspective I have on even my life and the world around me. It opens up a little bit, and I think that maybe meaning in life would be to strive or being as present in those moments as we can be.

Embracing these “spiritual,” perspective-giving moments provide Blake meaning and perception. Although Blake's source of meaning is not connected with Jesus, God, or impacting the world for the better necessarily, what makes life meaningful for Blake are fully engaging in those moments that seem larger than himself, and for this reason, I believe Blake's understanding of meaning falls within this meaning grouping.

Comparing Participants' Perceptions of Purpose and Meaning

All eight participants represented in the current research study admitted to possessing purpose and meaning in life. For some individuals, their understanding of purpose aligned with what offered them meaning in life, while for others this was not so (see Table 4.3). Additionally, many of the participants mentioned direct connections of their purpose or meaning in life to deliberate outdoor adventure activities. For those whose purpose or meaning did not directly connect with their deliberate outdoor adventure activities, these participants identified ways in which their participation in these types of pursuits influenced their understanding of their purpose in life.

Table 4.3

Participants' Perceptions of Purpose Compared to Meaning

Pseudonym	Purpose Category (general)	Sources of Purpose	Meaning Category (general)	Sources of Meaning
Katrina	Self-Achiever	Career	Self-Achiever	Experience Achiever
Randy	Self-Achiever	Happiness	Self-Achiever	Happiness Achiever
Gwen	Transcendent	God	Transcendent	God
Blake	Transcendent	Change the world for good	Transcendent	Other
Chris	Relationalist	Family	Relationalist Self-Achiever	Family Goal Achiever
Jennifer	Transcendent	God	Self-Achiever	Experience Achiever
Hannah	Transcendent	Change the world for good	Relationalist Transcendent	General Change the world for good
Megan	Relationalist	Service	Transcendent Relationalist Self-Achiever	God Family Goal Achiever

Similar sources of purpose and meaning. Two participants derive their purpose and meaning in life from the same sources of both purpose and meaning. For example, Randy identifies achieving happiness in the outdoors as the major underlying factor of his purpose in life, and Randy also claims experiencing happiness while engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities is what makes his life meaningful. Randy's

perception of purpose and meaning both appear to directly connect with his participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities.

Gwen's perceptions of purpose and meaning are also derived from similar sources. For instance, Gwen identifies God as an ultimate source of both purpose and meaning in her life. The sources of purpose and meaning for Gwen do not seem to straightforwardly connect with her deliberate outdoor adventure activities. However, Gwen affirms that engaging in these types of pursuits influences her thinking about purpose and meaning in some significant ways which I describe further below.

Different sources of purpose and meaning. Three participants represented in the current research study identified sources of purpose that differed from their sources of meaning. For example, while I categorize Katrina's understanding of both purpose and meaning under Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) larger "Self-Achiever" category, the sources from which she derives her purpose and meaning differ (p.154, 186). Katrina primarily describes her purpose in life in terms of her future career as a wilderness therapist, but she appears to find meaning in the outdoor experiences she encounters. Like Randy, Katrina speaks of her purpose and meaning in life in terms of her deliberate outdoor adventure activities, both of which are largely influenced by her experiences in the outdoors.

Additionally, while I categorize Blake's perception of both life purpose and meaning in Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) "Transcendent" category, his sources of purpose and meaning differ (p. 164, 191). Blake appears to identify improving himself and the world for the better as a foundation of his life purpose, but he describes fully experiencing what he describes as "spiritual," perspective-giving moments as meaningful

in his life. Blake does not specifically connect his life purpose and meaning to participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, but he does mention ways in which engaging in these types of pursuits influences his understanding of purpose in his life.

Jennifer also derives her purpose and meaning from two different sources. Jennifer claims her purpose in life is rooted in God, and her specific purpose in life includes helping others to discover their own worth in order that Jennifer may make a positive impact in this world. Jennifer's ultimate source of meaning in life, however, includes maximizing her life and living life to the fullest. Jennifer's sources of life purpose and meaning do not appear to directly connect to her deliberate outdoor adventure activity, but like Gwen, Jennifer recognizes ways in which her engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities affects her perception of her purpose in life.

Varying sources of purpose and meaning. Three participants of this study identified several sources of meaning in their lives, some of which aligned with their larger purpose and some of which did not. For example, Hannah identifies advocating for the sustainability of the earth and the marginalized as both a source of purpose and meaning in her life, but she also claims to derive meaning from interacting with and learning from other people – a “Relationalist” source of meaning as compared to a “Transcendent” source of purpose (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 158, 191). Hannah's major source of purpose and meaning both appear to be closely connected with her participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activity and the outdoors.

In addition, Megan identifies sources of meaning that differ from her larger source of purpose. Megan understands her ultimate source of purpose includes serving

others in the outdoors, but she also claims to derive meaning from several sources including achieving personal goals, her relationships with her family members, and God. Megan's purpose seems to directly connect with her deliberate outdoor adventure activities as she claims to "tie [her] purpose to the outdoors." However, her sources of meaning do not appear to maintain this close of a connection to her deliberate outdoor adventure activities as does her purpose in life.

Similarly, Chris perceives a major source of purpose and meaning in his life includes the relationships he maintains with his family members, which aligns with his larger understanding of purpose, but he also identifies goal attainment as an additional source of meaning in his life. Chris's perception of life purpose and meaning do not appear to be directly connected to his deliberate outdoor adventure activities. However, Chris does note participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influences his thinking about his life purpose in key ways.

Core Themes

All participants represented in this study noted deliberate outdoor adventure activities affected their conceptions of purpose and meaning in some manner. Analysis of participants' responses revealed four major ways in which their engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influences their life purpose. First, participants viewed participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activity as a means for thinking about and reflecting on their life purpose. Second, participants also indicated engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities served as a medium in which to refine and hone particular skills important to living out their life purpose. Third, participants claimed participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities re-energized or further motivated them to fulfill

their life purpose. Finally, participants noted engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities served as the foundational element of their life purpose. Each of these themes are discussed in greater depth below.

A Means for Purpose Reflection

Several participants represented in the current research study viewed engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as a means that helped them to better understand their life purpose. Participants indicated participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities did this in two ways. One way that deliberate outdoor adventure activities helped participants gain a greater understanding of their life purpose is the space that engaging in these types of pursuits provided them.

Space to think. Four participants noted participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities allowed them a way to escape from the ordinary, everyday life. The retreat from the routines of life that engagement in outdoor adventure experiences brings for these college students provides participants room to think and engage in self-reflection.

For example, participating in deliberate outdoor adventures experiences provides Hannah much needed space to “go out and take a deep breath” from the chaos of life and to “figure out [her]self a little bit.” “There’s literally nothing else to, like, do,” says Hannah. Solo tripping, or going out into the wilderness on her own, helps Hannah to recognize what is really important in life because these experiences allow her room to reflect on herself. Hannah claims:

My participation in outdoor activities allows me the time and space away from all of the distractions and normative forcing of today's society to reflect on what I

want my legacy and life purpose to be. It has also fostered in me and innate appreciation for the earth and outdoors that has greatly influenced what I feel my specific life purpose is.

For Hannah, deliberate outdoor adventure activities provide her space to think about her purpose in life, which includes advocating for the sustainability of the earth and the marginalized affected by environmental issues.

According to Blake, outdoor activity “takes you away” from life’s demands. “I think it’s just so different from the life that, like, society demands of you to go through, you know?” says Blake. Blake claims engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities “forces you to be honest about yourself and your abilities” as an individual. This provides Blake perspective and serves as a way for Blake to “center” himself while also giving him space to engage in critical self-reflection as he attempts to figure out his place in the world. This space to think helps Blake to better understand who he is so that he can attempt to live a genuine, honest life that benefits and inspires both himself and others, a crucial element to his purpose in life. These moments to reflect also provide meaning for Blake.

Engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities also allows Chris the opportunity to escape life’s routines. “It takes you away from all the trappings of modern life,” says Chris, providing him space to “think about what is actually important” in his life, including his relationship with God and his family. More particularly, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities encourages Chris to think about “the people that you really care about.” Space to think allows Chris the opportunity to think and reflect about friends and family, both key components to his understanding of his purpose and meaning in life.

Katrina's participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provides her needed space to think about issues of purpose and meaning in her life. Katrina claims, "I think I sort of function better when I'm outside or in nature. I'm a lot calmer, and I can think much more clearly." She notes that in the wilderness the distractions of everyday life seem to disappear when she is engaged in outdoor adventure activity. "You don't have to worry about these other five billion aspects of life in the front country so it's a lot easier to focus and think about whatever it is you want to do," says Katrina.

For instance, Katrina's favorite outdoor adventure activity is canoeing. According to Katrina, canoeing allows her to become "part of the landscape" in ways that other outdoor adventure activities do not provide for her personally. During her canoeing expeditions, Katrina notes an increased sense of awareness of what is around her because canoeing "is a lot quieter than hiking, and you're able to get a lot closer to things." This intense focus and attention to the motions of her canoe helps Katrina to engage actively with the present moment. This gives Katrina a chance to think and *experience*, a major source of meaning in Katrina's life.

Engaging in these types of pursuits alone in the outdoors helps Katrina "to focus more on myself," providing her the opportunity to reflect on "what [she] could be doing to live more purposefully." Participating in deliberate "outdoor activity I think has made me more aware of how small my place in the world is, and I think that has affected my sense of purpose," says Katrina.

Provides perspective. The second way that participants mentioned deliberate outdoor adventure activities helped them to better understand their purpose in life is that through their engagement in these types of pursuits participants were able to recognize

their purpose as a piece of a larger context. In a sense, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities gave them a greater perspective on life. Four participants indicated their reflective focus shifted toward their connection with the world around them, rather than on their individual goals and pursuits.

For instance, engaging in outdoor adventure experiences offers Chris perspective in life. “It resets your perception of the world,” claims Chris while also allowing him to see how small he is in comparison to the larger world. Participation in outdoor adventure helps Chris to recognize that life is not all about him, helping Chris to learn to place the needs of others before his own in order to bring joy to his community of loved ones.

Chris narrates a particular moment during a kayaking trip that illustrates this point:

[My friend] was caught by a strainer (a tree that is near the water that catches anything passing through it). I was farther back and could not tell if [my friend] was still above water or if she was forced under the water... I sprinted over and found [my friend] trapped in the branches, but she was above water (ALWAYS wear a lifejacket). I found a good footing and was able to grab [my friend] out of the water.

In retrospect, Chris realizes his action to help his friend out of the strainer despite the danger to him served as an indication to him of the preciousness of life “because it reminded me of how fragile life really is” and how important it is to spend time wisely with those you love. This is important to Chris’s understanding of his life purpose because he views his relationships with friends and family as what gives his life meaning as well as purpose. Engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities for Chris helps him to recognize further the importance of his relationships with those he loves.

Participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities also provides Jennifer space to think about what is important to her in life. When she goes out for a climb or sets sail on the river, Jennifer is able to center herself and to recognize her smallness in

comparison to the larger world around her. “Specifically going outdoors, I like that because,” says Jennifer, “it gives me a chance to step out of the routine, to step out of the day-to-day grind,” a continuous temptation encouraging her to put herself and her needs first. “I really don’t need to walk around like the world is me, and I am the world,” says Jennifer, and engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities helps her to realize this. In this way, engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities helps Jennifer to recognize that her life is purposeful in relation to God and the larger Christian narrative.

Gwen’s deliberate outdoor adventure activities gives her a greater perspective of life and a better appreciation of God’s creation. Gwen recounts a recent memory to better explain what she means by this. Over fall break this past year, Gwen went rock climbing with a couple of her friends in Oklahoma, and she was overwhelmed by the beauty of the surrounding scenery. Gwen claims, “It was so picturesque... I mean there are people who have never seen this view and never experienced just the awe of, like, God’s creation, you know?” In relation to the nearby valleys and mountains, Gwen notes her amazement of the vastness of God’s creation, and this helps her to recognize that she is only a small portion of God’s handiwork. Like Jennifer, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities helps Gwen to place herself and her purpose within the Christian framework. Doing so allows Gwen to find meaning to fulfill her larger purpose in life.

Participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities also helps Megan to place her story within a larger Christian narrative that allows her to recognize “there are bigger things than just me in this world.” Megan claims whenever she is engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, “I almost feel closest to God when I’m up in the mountains or, you know, in the forest... because it just makes me so in awe of what He’s created...

I'm just amazed by everything that's around me." Additionally, Megan explains camping underneath a blanket of stars encourages deep "moments of reflection" that provide her perspective in life. Similar to both Jennifer and Gwen, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provides Megan the opportunity to view herself and her purpose in life in light of God.

A Medium to Refine and Hone Skills and Attitudes Necessary for Purpose Fulfillment

Additionally, some participants described participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as a way to refine and cultivate certain practices that helped them move toward their purpose in life. Engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities for these individuals served as a medium in which to hone and shape skills that are required in fulfilling their purpose in various contexts. Chris claims:

You can apply what you learned in whatever sport or whatever you were doing there [in the outdoors] to your everyday life, like in your job or at home... It's the knowledge that you gain from all that [participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities] that's way more influential than what just happened.

Making decisions, solving problems, and thinking critically. Two participants related their participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as helpful in practicing their ability to make decisions, solving problems, and thinking critically. Katrina's active participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, for example, refines her overall decision-making abilities. Katrina feels increasingly sure of her decision-making abilities as a result of her participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, and she is actively learning from the decisions she makes in the outdoors. Katrina recognizes "that if I make a decision, and it's the wrong decision, it's not the end

of the world.” Instead, Katrina’s engagement in the outdoors reaffirms her to continue despite any difficulty or hardship she may encounter while living purposefully in life.

Engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities also refines Katrina’s problem-solving skills. She claims that in the outdoors, “you have to fix things as they come up, and you have to solve all your own problems.” For example, Katrina explains that when tackling a white-water run on her canoe, she will carefully examine the path of the water and its movements which allows her to plan a safe route along the water.

Katrina, with a wide grin, asserts that a smooth run on a personally planned route is “one of the best feelings out there.” This sense of accomplishment after solving a problem while in the backcountry energizes Katrina to the core. Katrina notes solving problems in the outdoors is one of the biggest impacts of engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities in her personal life. Katrina explains:

When you’re in the backcountry, ya know, you can’t just slap a piece of duct tape on something and then just keep going. You have to fix things as they come up, and you have to solve all your own problems... You can’t ask someone, ya know, five hundred miles away for help every single time you don’t know where you are, or your stove isn’t working.

According to Katrina, engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities helps her to refine her decision-making and problem-solving skills. This appears to positively influence the way that she views herself and her abilities as a future wilderness therapist, a pivotal element in Katrina’s life purpose. “I’m definitely a lot more confident, and, like, a lot better at being in a leadership role since I started outdoor adventure activities,” says Katrina.

Similar to Katrina, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities refines Blake’s problem-solving and critical thinking skills, two skills necessary for furthering

Blake's life purpose. Blake relates a story about an adventure he experienced with this dad. On this trip, Blake and his dad decided to traverse a mountain despite a looming storm system and lack of proper equipment, and consequently, Blake and his dad encountered several difficulties that day. "We weren't able to see below or above us so we couldn't really figure out where we were," says Blake. Blake remembers:

We were kind of ill-prepared for everything, and so, and it had taken us three times as long to get half-way. And, by the time we got to the point of turning around, it was kind of starting to get dark, and we had to kind of hustle down, which wasn't a good thing. And, we both kind of were on edge about running into a huge cliff that we wouldn't be able to get down, or something like that.

During these challenging moments, however, Blake notes this experience offered "a sense of integrity about who you are when you overcome some of these challenges" inherent in outdoor pursuits.

Blake's ability to think critically about himself and his surrounding situations helps Blake to further identify ways to live out his purpose, which includes bettering himself as well as society. For instance, Blake notes these moments of problem-solving and critical thinking while traversing a mountain in a storm or serving as a guide on an outdoor adventure trip "helps you kind of shape and hone and figure out, at least for me, who I am and where I'm at in my life, I guess." These problem-solving and critical thinking skills not only serve Blake well in the outdoors, but they also translate into everyday life as well. According to Blake, "being able to identify a problem, understand the aspects of the problem, and having to overcome to a certain extent, is, I think, applicable to almost all of life."

Connecting with others. For three participants, engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities helps them to better relate and connect with others, a crucial element in their understanding of their life purpose and what gives life meaning for them, particularly for those individuals who fit within Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) larger "Relationalist" purpose and meaning category (p. 191).

For Jennifer, the community that she builds while engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities also influences her understanding of her life purpose. While backpacking, canoeing, or hiking through her local park, Jennifer is able to engage with a community of like-minded individuals. Jennifer explains, "It [deliberate outdoor adventure activities] helps create different communities, people with common interests, and they have the same goals." Jennifer recognizes opportunities to "interact with people more and learn about their stories (smiles)... And, you know, try and solve problems in their lives (smiles, laughs)" during her deliberate outdoor adventure activities. Communicating with others and learning about their life narratives and struggles aligns with Jennifer's ultimate purpose – "to contribute to the redemption of a broken world."

These moments in community that Jennifer shares with her fellow outdoor adventuring peers provides Jennifer inspiration to accomplish her purpose in life and helps her to practice relating and communicating with others in different contexts. Jennifer recounts a specific university-sponsored rock climbing trip where she engaged in a conversation with another student rock climber about her (Jennifer's) parents' recent divorce and its effect on Jennifer:

I was having a conversation with one girl, and we were just talking about our families... My parents had recently divorced, and so what she was asking me was just kind of striking some chords... It really meant a lot (smiles) that she asked me that question and that she was interested in hearing my side of the story. I

mean, it's kind of a deep wound to provoke... I just really admire how much she just asked a simple question. I don't remember what she said specifically, but it meant a lot to me that I was able to share with someone who appreciated my story... I like inspiring people but [also] being inspired by people on these adventures as well.

As a result of this experience, Jennifer realized the importance of connecting with others during deliberate outdoor adventure activities and how these opportunities allow her to further move toward the fulfillment of her life purpose.

In similar ways as Jennifer, Hannah views participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as a medium in which to refine her interpersonal and communication skills. Hannah claims that engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities “are positioning me to be able to go out in the world after graduation and have a positive influence on the things that I care about most deeply.” For example, as a result of participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, Hannah says, “My people skills have just gotten so much better.” These experiences directly impact Hannah's understanding of her life purpose as she understands these skills that she is refining are certainly applicable in other contexts in which Hannah lives out her purpose, which includes making a positive impact in the world by advocating for sustainability and the marginalized affected by environmental change.

For instance, Hannah currently serves as an upperclassman leader in her college's outdoor adventure club. In this capacity, Hannah trains, mentors, and teaches first year students and sophomores how to lead groups in the outdoors. Hannah describes this as an “insanely rewarding experience” for her because she is able to help others learn to appreciate the earth and to see the importance of environmental protection and sustainability. Hannah notes:

[I feel] like I'm helping other people to engage and learn about themselves and get them out in the outdoor experiences and get them out of their comfort zones and make them, like, help them to maybe fall in love with this thing I love so much.

This directly relates to her life purpose in that she, through her institution's outdoor adventure club, is advocating for the earth by way of teaching others how to respect the systems of the earth and by guiding them into personal encounters where they might begin to appreciate the beauty of the planet for themselves.

Additionally, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities also allows Chris room to practice his relational skills. Chris explains, "I think it's [engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities] a great way to build relationships with people because of the stuff you go through. It's, like, you become closer through suffering (smiles), or something like that (smiles, laughs)." Through what Chris describes as "self-inflicted suffering" he learns how to cultivate intentional relationships built with deeper intimacy, and this ability to build and maintain genuine relationships with people brings meaning to Chris's life as well as helps him to move toward accomplishing his life purpose, which includes deeply connecting with and positively impacting the lives of his family members.

Life-long learning. Two participants mentioned that engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities reiterated the importance of life-long learning for them. This desire to continue to learn appears to affect how they approach purposeful living.

For example, deliberate outdoor adventure activities teach Hannah the importance of life-long learning. Whether it is specific outdoor skills, such as how to successfully accomplish a white-water rapid while kayaking, or learning necessary life lessons, such

as how to effectively communicate or appreciate the diversity of others during a backpacking trip in the backcountry, the ability to learn continually in every circumstance helps Hannah to live more purposefully. This skill of life-long learning directly applies to her life purpose as she figures out how to assess and address issues affecting the earth's ever-changing systems.

Life-long learning is also a skill that Jennifer refines while engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. Jennifer enjoys learning and trying new things. She notes that there is so much more to discover in life, and seeking out opportunities to enrich her understanding about her surroundings provides meaning in her life. "There's just so much more to learn," says Jennifer, "I love learning too so I guess I'm driven by I want to maximize my life. I want to learn everything I can..."

Engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities has helped Jennifer to view life with this learning mindset. During her participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, Jennifer not only refines technical skills, such as the procedural ins and outs of sailing, white water kayaking, and climbing technique, but she also learns about people and their unique stories during her deliberate outdoor adventure activities as well.

Recounting a fall break trip this past semester Jennifer claims:

I love people. I love just learning about: Who are you? You know, what's your story (smiles)? You know, I think everyone has a story to share, and so my favorite parts were the times when we could just talk amongst each other, whether we were in the boat or whether we were around the camp fire (gestures). And, just sharing stories (smiles) and laughing or sharing funny things that had happened throughout the day. Just learning. Learning about people.

This skill of life-long learning translates to Jennifer's life purpose as she must consider how she may be able to positively affect those around her in her determination to help redeem a broken world.

Encountering the mystery. Two participants described how deliberate outdoor adventure activities served as a medium with which to greater understand, manage, and appreciate mystery, or in Gwen's word's, "the unknown." Learning how to manage the mysterious in life or learning to accept and appreciate this element of discovery impacted their understanding of their life purpose and their ability to move toward fulfillment of their purpose in life because doing so helps them to handle better the contexts in which they will fulfill their life purpose.

For example, encountering and dealing with mystery in deliberate outdoor adventure activities directly impacts the way Gwen understands her purpose in life. Gwen is drawn in by the awe of God's creation when she participates in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, and she is fueled by her desire to experience the extraordinary. Gwen's motivation to encounter the unfamiliar of routine life influences her perspective on her life purpose – to serve others as an international missionary. Although she is not yet sure where God is calling her to serve, she is confident in her abilities to live out her vocation because of what she has learned as a result of her deliberate outdoor adventure experiences. Gwen explains that because of her engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, she is better equipped to cope with the foreign environments she will potentially be serving in one day. Gwen says:

I guess outdoor adventure is introducing me... [and] helping me learn how to cope with once you get to that unknown place. And, so, I guess for me it's helped long term because, you know, eventually, even though it's not the same circumstances or the same setting, when I get to that place wherever God has called me to be, like, I'll know... It'll help me better process what's going on, I guess.

Additionally, Gwen claims that she will have a better respect for the place and the people that she is sharing the Gospel with because she has learned how to appreciate and

respect God's creation countless times during her deliberate outdoor adventure experiences. Gwen states, "With outdoor adventure, if you can [have a] better respect for the outdoors then you can have a little bit of respect for the setting that you'll be in [as an international missionary], you know?"

Katrina's understanding of her life purpose is also influenced by the element of discovery. Her apparent passion for readily encountering the wild unknown serves as a major influence in Katrina's understanding of her life purpose and a significant source of meaning as an "Experience Achiever" (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p.156). For example, Katrina describes the excitement of discovery as "that feeling you get when something is really difficult, but you're kind of excited about it being difficult because you're ready to do it." Not knowing what she may encounter while in the outdoors motivates her to go out and explore as well as share with others what it is like to truly *experience* the wild.

For example, Katrina recounts a particular instance in which her engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities prompted her to think about her life purpose and to gain a better understanding of what it is she aspires to do as a future wilderness therapist and outdoor adventurer. Katrina remembers:

I remember when I was, like, eight or ten, we did the whole big family road trip out to Yellowstone, and we had, like, the popup trailer and all that. And, we were, like, hiking down this trail, and there was a bear coming out of the other side of the trail. And, I just thought it was, like, the coolest thing ever. Like, I had never seen a bear before. I'd never seen anything so big, and it just looked so awesome. And, I was like, 'Dang... Like, I've got to tell everyone about this! Like, they need to know about bears, and about, like, all of this cool stuff that's out here (big smile)!"

Embracing the mystery in the outdoors is part of the experience and adventure for Katrina that serves as a major source of purpose and meaning in her life.

A Way to Motive and Re-energize for Living Purposefully

Three participants represented in this study articulated participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provided them with a motivational drive to persevere despite potential difficulties they might encounter. Essentially, for these three participants, engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activity re-energized them to continue toward the fulfillment of their life purpose.

Hannah professes that deliberate outdoor adventure experiences provide her with the drive to continue to pursue her life purpose, even when times get tough. Recounting her most formative deliberate outdoor adventure experience, Hannah narrates how difficult backpacking across Spain was at times: “just pushing yourself and your body to do this crazy thing.” Despite the challenge, Hannah says participating in this pilgrimage “lit a flame that really got me so excited to get more engaged with it [outdoor adventure activities] when I went to [college].”

Hannah’s engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities, whether she is on a hike or backpacking with a group of friends, reassures her of her life purpose: to create a more sustainable, eco-friendly, and just environment for all. Participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities serves as a “constant check (snaps) and reminder (snaps)” for Hannah that helps her to understand that even though her purpose in life may prove difficult at times, the redeeming work she is doing is not without positive impact and meaning.

Jennifer also appreciates challenge as a result of her engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. Rather than run from her struggles, Jennifer has learned to welcome whatever comes her way. Through her participation in deliberate outdoor

adventure activities, Jennifer has learned to push herself beyond her personal limits, helping her to realize that she is capable to do anything she puts her mind to, whether it's mastering a climbing route on the campus rock wall, successfully kayaking over a white water rapid, or brightening someone's day. Jennifer says:

When my motivation starts to wane, I'll go outdoors and realize that I can challenge myself. And, I can surprise myself with results sometimes. I'm stronger than I think I am, and that gives me more motivation for other places in my life.

This mindset regarding the aspect of challenge provides her the motivational drive to continue toward her life purpose.

Participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities "restokes the fire and joy" that Jennifer has about life when she gets bogged down in life's daily routines. The aspect of challenge inherent in deliberate outdoor adventure activities that Jennifer undergoes as a result of her participation in these experiences helps Jennifer to recognize that she is strong, both mentally and physically, to overcome whatever hardships and barriers life presents her. The motivational drive that she gains through her participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities affects the way that she views life, keeping her alert to seize the opportunities around her and carry on despite the difficulties that might lie ahead.

Chris also finds the drive to push beyond his own preconceived limits that he experiences during deliberate outdoor adventure experiences as meaningful and an influential factor in the way he constructs his life purpose, and engaging in these types of experiences motivates him to continue toward achieving his life purpose. "It's definitely the challenge aspect of it, like, trying to see how hard I could climb, like, difficulty-wise or whether I'm strong enough to do something," says Chris. For example, Chris describes one of his most memorable trips as one in which he accomplished his first multi-pitch

climb (i.e. a climbing route that requires the climber to stop at multiple belay points before continuing to ascend or descend) with his friends. He notes, “It was really exciting, and I knew how to do all of it. But, it was just the first time to put all of it into practice.”

Chris describes himself as a goal-oriented individual, and he enjoys accomplishing what he sets his mind to. “I do stuff to challenge myself, and then, when I get good at it, I’m like, ‘Okay. I’m good at it now... Cool. Check (gestures, smiles)’,” says Chris. Chris explains pushing himself beyond his personal limits to “improve as a whole” provides Chris meaning in his life and also “gives [him] the drive for purpose” – to cultivate positive, intimate relationships with those he loves.

This pursuit toward excellence is part of what makes life meaningful for Chris. His motto for life – “Take advantage of everyday!” – reminds Chris of the drive required of him to improve and enhance his life as well as the lives around him. Although not directly related to his purpose as a “Relationalist,” meeting and overcoming challenges in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provides Chris meaning as a “Goal Achiever” that motivates Chris to continue to excel both personally and relationally (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 191, 155), and in doing so, he is advancing toward the accomplishment of his life purpose.

A Foundational Element of Purpose

Finally, two participants explained that participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities is a foundational element of their purpose in life and their identity. For these participants, engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities not only

enhances their understanding of purpose, rather participating in these types of experiences *is* a part of their purpose in life.

For instance, Randy adamantly proclaims that participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities is essential to who he is as a person and provides ultimate happiness, a major element in Randy's perception of his life purpose. Randy considers his active engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities a "lifestyle" that he embraced at a very young age. Engaging in outdoor adventure activities is "just what I've been doing my whole life," says Randy. Since participating in outdoor adventure activities is core to Randy's identity, he claims, "The outdoors definitely gives me a sense of purpose because that's a place or an activity that I can always go to..." and engaging in outdoor adventure activities is "always something that I'm going to do." Additionally, Randy claims, "I just feel like outdoor recreation is a part of my life purpose so it makes sense that I go out and do all this stuff." In fact, Randy's passion for engaging in outdoor adventure pursuits actually served as a motivating factor in determining what higher education institution to attend and for his future career plans to serve as "a doctor at base camps on Everest and stuff like that." Randy notes, "I chose my career path based on what I could do with the career path in relation to my lifestyle." Ultimately, participating in deliberate outdoor adventure brings him happiness, a core component of his life purpose and meaning as he understands it currently.

For Hannah, participating in outdoor adventure activity has been a core part of her identity since childhood. Her parents served as key motivators and encouragers of Hannah's love of the outdoors as they too are outdoor adventure enthusiasts. Reflecting on her childhood experiences hiking in her home state or backpacking in the Oregon

mountains, Hannah notes, “It [outdoor adventure activities] became such a part of who I was, and how I identified myself in the world. It became a big credential for where I was going to go to school” and “fostered this, like, appreciation for just outdoor activities and the earth and environment in general and that we should value and appreciate those things.” This directly influences Hannah’s understanding of her life purpose as an advocate for the earth and the marginalized.

Relationship Between Purpose and Meaning Types and Core Themes

The data indicates that a relationship may exist between two core themes and purpose and meaning types maintained among participants represented within this study. The first core theme (i.e. A Means for Purpose Reflection) appears to influence “Transcendents” in particular in their understanding of their life purpose or meaning in life (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p. 191). The space to think to engage in self-reflection and the opportunities to gain perspective provided in their deliberate outdoor adventure activities seems to help think more reflectively about their purpose and meaning as it relates to the larger Christian narrative or how their purpose and meaning may positively impact the world for the greater good, two important sources of purpose and meaning for individuals who fit within Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson’s (2016) “Transcendent” categories of purpose and meaning (p. 191).

The second core theme (i.e. A Medium to Refine and Hone Skills and Attitudes Necessary for Purpose Fulfillment), and more specifically the sub-category in which participants identified deliberate outdoor adventure activities as helping them to connect with others, appears particularly influential for “Relationalist” individuals and their understanding of purpose and meaning (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016, p 191). The

opportunities in which deliberate outdoor adventure activities provide individuals to relate, communicate, and connect with fellow adventurers is significant and meaningful for those who derive their source or purpose and meaning from these types of interactions with others.

Conclusion

In sum, participants in the current research study identified four ways in which participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activity contributes to their understanding of life purpose. These include participants' perceptions of deliberate outdoor adventure activities serving as: (1) a means for purpose reflection, (2) a medium to refine and hone skills and attitudes necessary for purpose fulfillment, (3) a way to motivate and re-energize for living purposefully, and (4) a foundational element of purpose. The following chapter discusses the findings described above as well as outlines limitations and implications of the current research study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Contributions, Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion

Within this final chapter, I discuss the four themes evident among the collected data, present the limitations of the current research study, offer implications concerning how the results of this study may impact outdoor adventure programs within higher education institutions, and conclude by briefly summarizing the major points of this project.

Discussion

The four core themes presented in the previous chapter illustrate that traditional college students can, in fact, view participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities as influential to their understanding of their purpose in life in some ways. The following chapter discusses the major conclusions derived from the findings in greater depth by comparing participants' responses to the relevant literature. In doing so, the current research study both informs and contributes to the scholarly conversations regarding similar topics of interest.

Similarities and Differences Among Purpose and Meaning Literature

Purpose. All eight participants represented in this study claim to possess a purpose in life, and many of their perceptions of purpose aligned with Damon, Menon, and Bronk's (2003) guiding definition of purpose described in Chapter Two: Purpose represents a unique life-long value in an individual's life that continuously motivates

them to make a difference in his or her world in all circumstances. The majority of participants' understanding of purpose appeared to focus not only on self-improvement but also on making a positive impact in their communities. Participants indicated that one particular element of their deliberate outdoor adventure activities, specifically its ability to provide them perspective, helps them to understand their life purpose in ways that are not solely focused on themselves. Only two participants seemed to centralize their purpose on themselves rather than contributing to the betterment of the world around them.

According to several participants represented in the study, many of them began college with a particular purpose in mind, but their initial perceptions of how to accomplish their purpose in life transformed since engaging in higher education. It appears, based on participants' responses, that their general type of purpose remained the same, despite participants' variances in the particulars of their purpose. In other words, the specific goal guiding their larger purpose altered due to exposure to certain variables in their time at college, such as those mentioned in the previous chapter, but their main source of purpose remained constant.

For example, Megan claims a major understanding of her purpose is to help others, and she originally intended to do this by serving as an athletic trainer. Now, although Megan still maintains a service-oriented view of purpose, she recognizes that helping others to appreciate and successfully navigate deliberate outdoor adventure experiences on their own as the particular path that will allow her to fulfill her larger purpose, not athletic training as she originally thought. This finding is true for other participants as well, including Randy, Katrina, Jennifer, and Gwen, and is consistent with

Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) research on college students' understanding of purpose.

Meaning. For some participants represented in the current research study, describing what gives meaning to their lives was much more difficult than describing their life purpose per se. It appeared that some students seemed to place more significance on meaning in life than they did life purpose. Perhaps the participants represented in this study reacted in this way because they may not often be asked questions of meaning ("What brings meaning to your life?"), which may require more explanation of their subjective outlooks on life (Nash & Murry, 2010), but instead, they may more so be asked questions of purpose ("What is the purpose of your life?"). Although all of the participants eventually identified sources of meaning in their lives, the hesitancy expressed by some participants in defining meaning in their lives challenges Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) claim that many college students already know what their meaning in life is when entering college. Further research may help to illuminate the reasons why some participants appeared to experience difficulty when expressing what gives their life meaning.

According to Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003), an individual's meaning in life may or may not be focused in any clear direction, such as one's purpose in life. However, for many participants' in the current research study, what makes life meaningful for them did align with their purpose, while for some this was not so. For instance, what six participants understood as meaningful in their lives was in some way connected to the individual's larger purpose in life. This is consistent with Damon, Menon, and Bronk's (2003) understanding of meaning.

Similarities and Differences Among Deliberate Outdoor Adventure Activity Literature

Interestingly, several participants represented in the current research study trace their passion for engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities to their experiences as a child. In particular, many participants indicated their fathers served as the influential figure in their lives that prompted them to participate in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. This commonality of early exposure and engagement in these types of activities among the participants represented in this study challenges whether the connections between participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and life purpose identified by participants in the previous chapter would be comparable to those potential connections made by individuals who recently started engaging in these types of pursuits in college. Further research is needed to determine if college students introduced to deliberate outdoor adventure activities later in life would also identify these types of pursuits as influential to their understanding of their purpose in similar to ways to those who began engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities at a young age.

Previous research implied that deliberate outdoor adventure activity might influence an individual's understanding of life purpose, but none fully addressed the topic of interest (Bradley, 2011; Lewis, 2007; Lewis, 2012; Loeffler, 2004; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). For instance, Bradley's (2011) as well as Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) studies illustrate participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activity possesses the potential to influence one's understanding of their life purpose because of the increasingly positive perception individuals gain and solidify about their physical bodies whenever they engage in these types of pursuits. Both Bradley (2011) and Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) suggest increased self-confidence in terms of one's physical abilities

potentially affects an individual's belief in one's capabilities to pursue their purpose in life.

Several participants mentioned their participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities did, in fact, positively affect their attitude toward themselves. When questioned further about their gains in self-confidence, however, many participants attributed their renewed sense of assurance in their decision-making and problem-solving abilities, not in their physical capabilities that Bradley's (2011) or Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson's (2016) studies suggest. Only one participant argued that her increased physical abilities as a result of overcoming challenges during deliberate outdoor adventure activities motivated her to actively pursue her goals.

Additionally, Lewis (2007, 2012) and Loeffler (2004) discuss the significance of space that participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities offers individuals and how this influences their thinking about their life purpose. Lewis (2007, 2012) and Loeffler (2004) mention engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities allows individuals the chance to participate in self-reflection and to gain perspective. The findings presented within the current study confirm Lewis (2007, 2012) and Loeffler's (2004) argument.

All of the participants represented in the current research study recognize the space to engage in critical reflection and gain perspective as influential in understanding their purpose in life. However, the current research project also offers additional ways not mentioned by Lewis (2007, 2012) and Loeffler (2004), or any other authors to date. The four major themes indicate college students may not only view deliberate outdoor adventure activities as a means for purpose reflection as indicated by Lewis (2007, 2012)

and Loeffler (2004), but this group of individuals may also perceive deliberate outdoor adventure as a medium to refine and hone skills necessary for purpose development, as a way to motivate and re-energize them for living purposefully, and, for some, as a foundational element of purpose. Thus, this study provides an increased awareness of how college students' engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities may influence one's understanding of life purpose.

Not surprisingly, the deliberate outdoor adventure activities indicated by participants, such as rock climbing, canoeing, or mountaineering, varied among each individual. However, despite the diversity in these deliberate outdoor adventure activities, the major influences of these activities revealed engagement in these types of pursuits affected each person's understanding of purpose in potentially four major ways as evidenced in Chapter Four. In other words, one specific deliberate outdoor adventure activity did not influence all participants' understanding of their life purpose in a similar or singular way. Instead, several deliberate outdoor adventure activities, particularly those that the participant frequented and found most enjoyable, or leisurely, appeared to affect their understanding of their life purpose in different respects. This is consistent with the related literature (Colton & Morrionne, 1975; Riese & Vorkinn, 2002).

The component of leisure in these deliberate outdoor adventure activities also appeared to positively influence participants' subjective well-being, or levels of happiness, and allowed participants the chance to engage challenges, push beyond personal limitations, experience new, unexplored territory, and to refine life-long skills necessary for fulfilling their larger purpose in life. The positive emotion participants claimed to feel during their deliberate outdoor adventure activities motivated them to

continue to engage in these types of activities, thus making these activities significant and meaningful to the individual. These findings align with Carruthers and Hood's (2007) findings as well.

Contributions

The current research study contributes to the current body of knowledge concerning college students' perceptions of meaning and purpose in two major ways. First, this study illustrates that some college students not only struggle to articulate their purpose in life as several scholars suggest (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016; Nash & Murray, 2010; Parks, 2000), but they may also wrestle with determining what gives their life meaning. In other words, college students may need help in discerning both their purpose and meaning in life. This finding further confirms the need for postsecondary resources that encourage college students' purpose and meaning development (Clydesdale, 2015; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016).

Second, this study highlights additional ways in which some college students may connect their deliberate outdoor adventure activities to their understanding of their life purpose that were previously unidentified in past research. Participants represented in this study indicated that not only does engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provide them with space to think about their life purpose (Lewis, 2007, 2012; Loeffler, 2004), but participating in these types of pursuits provides them opportunities to place their purpose in a larger narrative, to practice skills necessary for purpose fulfillment in other contexts, to re-energize in order to accomplish their purpose in life, and to solidify their life purpose. The current research study provides increased understanding of how

college students may potentially connect their deliberate outdoor adventure activities to their purpose in life.

Limitations

Six limitations influenced the results of the current research study. These include: (1) time constraints, (2) sample size, (3) diversity of sample, (4) triangulation method, (5) influence of technology, and (6) researcher positionality. Each of these limitations is discussed in greater depth below.

First, the major limitation that hindered greater exploration of this topic included the time constraints inherent in the master's thesis project itself. Deadlines requiring the conclusion of this research project in just six months from its inception limited the depth with which this topic could have been further investigated. Much of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation occurred during the final week of the fall semester and the first two months of the spring semester. This short time frame in which to complete these important research processes may have impacted the results of the study.

Second, these time constraints affected the size of the sample population, another limitation of this study. Although the goal for this study included interviewing up to twelve students from six different higher education institutions, one male and one female from each college or university, I was not able to accomplish this target goal. Essentially, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight total participants, three male and five female, at four separate higher education institutions.

Despite failing to reach the sample target goal of twelve, the eight connections that I did make with participants provided a wealth of information, ultimately allowing for deeper insights into how deliberate outdoor adventure activities influence college

students' understanding about their purpose in life. This smaller sample fits within the qualitative research paradigm; however, gaining more information from a larger number of participants may have provided greater diversity among respondents, possibly revealing additional ways in which engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure experiences affect college students' understanding about their life purpose.

Third, although this study sought to collect varied experiences from participants enrolled in higher education institutions throughout the United States, the research study was limited to only those institutions whose outdoor adventure program directors (or equivalent) responded positively to the invitation to participate in the project. Therefore, the variety of voices represented in this study is limited to three geographic regions of the United States and to four postsecondary institutions, particularly those of the central Southern states, the Northeast and the Northwestern states. Expanding the sample recruitment search to include additional regions of the United States to allow for increased diversity of participant experiences and backgrounds may further enhance credibility of the current research study.

Fourth, the journal exercise as a secondary method for data collection proved as an inadequate form of information retrieval for the sample population in this study for two reasons. First, this form of triangulation was difficult to obtain from all the research participants despite the provision of frequent reminders. Five out of eight participants completed the journal exercise. Second, the journal exercise that participants submitted did not offer as much depth to their interview responses about their outdoor adventure experiences and their connections to their purpose as I originally hoped. However, from

these journal exercises I discovered greater insights into their understanding about their life purpose not gathered during the interview process.

Perhaps asking college students to complete a journal exercise in addition to their regular coursework proved too much. Utilization of different triangulation methods in future research attempts may elicit greater amounts and depth of responses from participants. For example, the use of photo-elicitation, as did Loeffler's (2004) study mentioned in the second chapter of this research project, may prompt further discussion about their outdoor experiences or their understanding of purpose from participants than did the journal exercise used in this study.

Fifth, the use of live internet video conferences also served as a limitation of this study. During the data collection process, interviews conducted via live internet video conference did not provoke as deep a conversation between the participant and the researcher as did those interviews conducted in person. Participants who participated in a live internet video conference interview appeared less interested and willing to share their experiences in the outdoors and their potential connections to their life purpose. Consequently, these interviews did not last as long as those interviews conducted in person.

As a researcher, I found the relational barrier difficult to navigate because I was unable to establish what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as "prolonged engagement" with participants which made it challenging to "achieve certain purposes: learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust" (p. 301). Future research attempts may consider interviewing participants within the same physical location or face-to-face to allow for

increased rapport between the researcher and the participant and to eliminate distractions or technological failings.

Finally, personal interest in the research topic presented in this study may have inadvertently influenced the way in which I understood participants' experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and their life purpose (see Appendix A). In order to minimize this researcher bias, however, I invited each participant to confirm my initial findings based on their interview responses and to suggest changes that better fit their understanding of how their deliberate outdoor adventure activities influenced their thinking about their life purpose. Six of the eight participants responded with feedback regarding my initial findings.

Implications

The results of the current research study reveal valuable information about potential ways that college students may connect their deliberate outdoor adventure activities to their life purpose. The implications of the research findings for future researchers and practicing professionals in the field of higher education and student affairs are discussed below.

Implications for Future Research

As mentioned previously, the current study sought to address a relatively unexplored issue regarding how participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influenced college students' understanding of their life purpose. Future research on the phenomena presented in this study may illuminate additional ways in which college

students may potentially connect their engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and their understanding of their life purpose.

The limitations discussed in the previous section highlight two important implications for future studies. First, if possible, future researchers may consider devoting more time to researching the topic of interest itself. Future researchers could budget more time toward building a larger sample size of participants and toward the data analysis phase of the research process. I believe this allows for increased diversity of participant backgrounds, experiences and greater understanding of the research phenomenon.

Second, modifying the data collection methods used in this research in future studies may further illuminate how engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influences college students' understanding of their life purpose. As mentioned previously, future researchers may consider using another form of data triangulation, rather than journal exercises, to gather deeper insights into the lives of college students' purpose and outdoor adventure experiences. Additionally, as previously stated in the limitations section, future researchers may consider conducting all of their in-depth qualitative interviews face-to-face to allow for increased participant-to-researcher connection. I believe implementing these changes into future research studies may increase participant response and thus, overall understanding of the research phenomenon. In addition, future researchers may discover additional themes not found within the current study as a result of employing these suggestions into their original research.

Third, future researchers may consider extending sample recruitment of participants from additional geographic areas and institutions not represented in this study to increase the diversity of views and backgrounds of participants. In addition,

future researchers may also consider controlling for the inclusion of more male voices in their studies in order to balance the perspectives of male and female participants. I believe this would overcome one of the major limitations of the current study while heightening research credibility.

Implications for Practicing Professionals

Further research on the topic of interest may illuminate additional ways in which engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity may affect college students' thinking about their life purpose. However, the discoveries made thus far in the current research project may also have implications for student affairs practitioners and higher education administrators seeking to help college students discern and live out their purpose in life. The following section offers a few implications for practicing professionals who may consider implementing the results of this study in their daily work with college students.

Most of the participants represented in this study claimed to have a purpose in life that they understood broadly before enrolling in higher education, but they admitted they could not identify the specifics of what their purpose entailed. Many still recognize their *general* purpose, but they have yet to discover what their purpose in life means for them specifically. Despite this instability in their purpose in life, several participants did not expect to find guidance concerning matters of purpose in their colleges and universities, although many participants discovered their enrollment in higher education institutions did help them to develop and refine their purpose in life.

Recognizing that college students may require assistance in determining the particulars of their purpose in life has implications for higher education and student affairs professionals. In order to help college students develop and refine their life

purpose, colleges and universities may consider carving out academic and co-curricular spaces in which individuals wrestle with and gain a better understanding of their purpose in life.

For instance, introducing a course into the core curriculum that facilitates discussion among faculty members and peers about purpose, that explores students' sources of purpose in their lives, and encourages purpose development in ways that align with students' understanding of their life purpose may potentially benefit college students seeking to further develop and successfully fulfill their purpose in life (Clydesdale, 2015; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). By implementing a course such as this, college students would be exposed to various conceptions of purpose as well as to mentors by way of their professors to help them navigate through their personal development of purpose. A course like this could also incorporate two of the major research findings of this study to potentially enhance understanding of purpose by creating assignments that require students to engage in critical reflection about their purpose in life and their place in their world. Additionally, a course such as this could provide students various opportunities to practice skills that are necessary for purpose fulfillment in other contexts, such as interpersonal, leadership, and critical thinking skills.

Another way in which higher education institutions might assist college students in the development and refinement of their purpose in life is by offering residential, co-curricular environments that provides students opportunities to discover and define their life's purpose within a like-minded community of individuals (Clydesdale, 2015; Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). These residential communities could provide its residents spaces to reflect and gain perspective within its physical walls or through

experiential learning opportunities. Additionally, residential environments may also expose students to a variety of purpose types as individuals live and learn alongside their peers. Residing in a community of others who place an emphasis on seeking, developing, and refining their sense of purpose may also serve to encourage and motivate individuals to fulfill their own unique purpose as well.

For professionals who work in outdoor adventure programs at postsecondary institutions, the four major findings derived from participants' reflections on the impacts of lived experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activities may be directly applied to current programmatic offerings, especially in university-sponsored trips outdoors. By intentionally providing college students space to think, opportunities to practice necessary skills needed to fulfill their larger purpose, and moments to re-energize, participants of these outdoor adventure program trips may be even more inclined to think about issues of purpose or meaning while engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. Additionally, adding a purpose component in which purpose development is discussed and encouraged among participants into outdoor adventure programs and services may also assist students in discerning and living out their life's purpose.

Finally, the current research study illustrates that engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities can positively impact college students' thinking and understanding of their life purpose. For this reason, higher education and student affairs professionals may consider increasing campus-wide marketing of their outdoor adventure programs to encourage all students to utilize these services at their respective institutions. The benefits students may gain in their understanding of their purpose and meaning in life demonstrates the value of their deliberate outdoor adventure experiences.

Conclusion

The current research study sought to understand potential influences of the lived outdoor adventure experiences of traditional-age college students and their understanding of purpose, a relatively unaddressed topic in recent literature, by answering the following question: *How does traditional college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influence their understanding about their purpose in life?* Eight participants, three male and five female, enrolled at various institutions throughout the United States shared their experiences about their deliberate outdoor adventure activities and their current understanding of their life purpose in in-depth qualitative interviews and journal exercises. Four core themes emerged as a result of data analysis demonstrating how college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influenced their understanding of the life purpose. These include participants' perceptions of deliberate outdoor adventure activities serving as: (1) a means for purpose reflection, (2) a medium to refine and hone skills and attitudes necessary for purpose fulfillment, (3) a way to motivate and re-energize for living purposefully, and (4) a foundational element of purpose. This study illuminates the importance of deliberate outdoor adventure activities' influence on college students' understanding of their life purpose, and thus, contains implications for both future researchers and higher education and student affairs practitioners.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Positionality Statement

The following statement of positionality illustrates my personal interest and experience with the topic of interest, my biases and assumptions as a result of my individual history, and ways that I attempt to reduce researcher bias throughout the thesis project.

Personal Interest

The issues and challenges college students face as a result of their participation in higher education mentioned above exist not only within the theoretical constructs posited by student development scholars but also in real, lived experiences. As an undergraduate college student myself, and now a graduate student, I can personally attest that the processes of questioning, negotiating, and discovering do, in fact, take place daily in the lives of individuals engaged in higher education. Although I was unaware of the theoretical underpinnings of my actions and thoughts in the moment, several of my courses in Baylor University's Higher Education and Student Affairs Master's Program challenged me to think through and reflect on my personal development as an undergraduate student to the present. In these courses, I not only discovered a common language among scholars and practitioners to talk about the developmental experiences and negotiation processes I encountered as an undergraduate, but more importantly, I learned so much about myself, including my passions, interests, and motivations that influenced my thinking and behavior during my undergraduate career. The self-discovery

that occurred as a result of my enrollment in these courses refueled my excitement I felt toward my undergraduate major, Church Recreation and Leisure Studies, and inspired me to attempt to somehow tie my two passions – outdoor recreation and student affairs – together during my time in the master’s program. One logical way to do this included authoring a thesis that explored issues relating to both fields of study.

Personal Experience

During my undergraduate career, I took more responsibility of my leisure time and participated in more personal deliberate outdoor adventure activities. I also I found myself thinking about my life purpose, especially during the moments I spent engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. For example, when I participate in deliberate outdoor adventure activities I personally experience an extraordinary aliveness within myself and tendencies toward self-actualization that I do not necessarily encounter in other contexts. The reason for this stems from my belief that engaging in deliberate outdoor adventure activities provides space and opportunity for personal reflection and growth. It is during my participation in deliberate outdoor activities that I discover myself thinking about larger issues and asking deep questions of myself, especially as they relate to my life purpose. I notice this predominantly when I engage in physical activities such as hiking, climbing, caving, biking, and cooking dinner at our primitive campsite with my brother, my loyal camping companion. The sights of nature, the smell of the outdoors, and the physical challenge of the activities inherent in outdoor adventure all encourage me to “set [my] mind on things above,” particularly God and God’s plan for my life, to set aside the mundane, and to think about the future (Col. 3:2, New International Version). In particular, deliberate outdoor adventure activities prompt me to reflect on the

purpose of my life and how my previous and future behaviors and thoughts contribute to the fulfillment of my life purpose.

My personal experiences in outdoor adventure as well as the thoughts and feelings I encountered while engaging in these types of activities served as a major influential factor that led to the creation of this study. Essentially, I wanted to know if others who participated in deliberate outdoor adventure activities experienced similar thoughts about issues of purpose as I do whenever I engage in these types of pursuits. I also decided to study connections between issues of purpose and deliberate outdoor adventure activities to determine if this type of activity could be utilized by higher education professionals as a resource for encouraging purpose development among their student populations.

In order to determine whether other individuals experience similar instances of reflectiveness, particularly in relation to their life purpose, while participating in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and to identify if this type of activity could be used in colleges and universities to cultivate student purpose development, this study seeks to answer the following question: *How does traditional college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities influence their understanding about their purpose in life?*

My passion for this topic – how engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity influences one's life purpose – extends beyond individual subjective experience however. Not only am I personally invested in this research subject, but I also devoted my undergraduate educational career to study similar concepts as those found within the current research endeavor as a Bachelor of Science in Church Recreation and Leisure Studies major. During this time, I explored in-depth related theories and models in both

experiential and traditional classroom contexts. These educational experiences further generated personal interest for the current research topic as I learned under the instruction of three core professional recreationists who understood the complexity of outcomes as a result of participating in leisurely physically active outdoor pursuits. Whenever I engage in deliberate outdoor adventure activity, I recognize that I attempt to connect my educational experiences with my personal activity in the outdoors.

Biases

Both my personal and educational experiences with the current research topic offer a rich history from which to glean during the formation of this study. However, these experiences may also potentially present challenges in terms of trustworthiness as I conduct this study. For this reason, I attempt to introduce my biases with transparency so that my interpretations of participants' data are clear and honest to the interviewee.

First, as highlighted above, when I participate in outdoor adventure activities that are personally meaningful, I recognize my tendencies to think more deeply about my purpose in life, especially when I engage in physically active activities outdoors. However, I must consider that while this type of reflexive experience occurs during my engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity, this is not necessarily true for everyone (Riese & Vorkinn, 2002). I must remain aware of this fact: Participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activity does not yield the same effects or outcomes for each individual. Although I experience great moments of reflexivity during my engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity, some simply may not.

Second, as a result of my educational background in recreation and leisure services, I naturally assume that everyone who participates in outdoor adventure activities

thinks about their behaviors in the outdoors. When I engage in deliberate outdoor adventure activity, I notice that I try to incorporate lessons learned from previous coursework into the experience. However, I recognize that many individuals do not think through their experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activity in such a way. I must be mindful of this if responses generated from participants do not appear as rich as I would hope them to be. For example, individuals may consider engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activity as helpful in discovering their purpose in life while some simply may participate in these types of activities for personal enjoyment.

Third, it is important to note that college students vary in terms of what they believe their purpose in life is (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016). Personally, I believe my life purpose is rooted in Christianity in which I live to glorify God in all that I do. I recognize that some college students may not perceive their life purpose in the same way. In fact, Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson (2016) note that for a majority of individuals, simply to “be happy” serves as their purpose in life while others ultimately desire to succeed in their vocation, serve as caretakers for loved ones, and make an impact in their local community (p. 195). I must keep in mind that my perception of life purpose differs person to person.

Minimizing Researcher Biases

In order to increase trustworthiness of this study, I implement several strategies to minimize researcher bias. First, I utilize a purposive sampling strategy to identify one male participant and one female participant from a variety of higher education institutions, including two private Christian institutions, two private non-religious institutions, and two public institutions who offered outdoor adventure programs to its

constituents. This strategy potentially allows diverse worldviews and perceptions of life purpose to surface during the interview and journaling processes. This particular sampling approach, therefore, raises my awareness to view participants' responses with an open mind, rather than attempting to box their subjective experiences, especially as they relate to purpose, into a Christian framework.

Second, during the data collection phase of the research, I seek to guarantee that I clearly understand the meaning behind the responses of the participants. For example, while conducting interviews, I listen attentively, ask questions in a different way (if needed), and probe for additional information. During my analysis of the journal prompts, I read carefully each response in full and sometimes re-read when the meaning of the responses is not altogether clear. I ask open-ended response questions during both the interviews and in the journal prompts so as not to constrain participants' responses. After the transcription and coding processes of both the interviews and the journal prompts, I request that each participant confirm the accuracy of my conclusions. Additionally, I incorporate data of individuals who do not necessarily reflect upon or connect their deliberate outdoor adventure activity to their life purpose. These data collection strategies do not *lead* participants to answer questions in one particular way, especially in the way of my biases, but instead, allow participants to respond openly and freely regarding how deliberate outdoor adventure activity affects their life purpose, thus, reducing researcher bias.

Third, I also review my data collection procedures and analysis findings regularly with members of my thesis committee to ensure that participant experiences remain true throughout this study and to minimize researcher bias. Frequent meetings with thesis

committee members helps me to remain aware of my biases and further safeguards the accuracy of participants' responses.

APPENDIX B

Participant Email Invitation

Subject Line:

Invitation to Participate in Outdoor Adventure Research Study

Email Body:

Greetings,

Hi, [insert participant name]! I am contacting you because you were nominated by [insert program director's name], [insert institution name]'s Program Director of [insert program name] to participate in a research study because of your apparent passion for engaging in outdoor adventure pursuits.

Research Study Summary

The research study for which you have been nominated to participate in explores how your engagement in outdoor adventure activities influences your thoughts about your life purpose, meaning, or your sense of the good life.

Estimated Time Commitment

Your participation in this research study will include completing a research interview and a short journal exercise consisting of two questions requiring in-depth responses. Research interviews are expected to last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Research interviews will take place [insert location depending on participant location: on

campus in the North Village Office Suite – Conference Room #4112 (if Baylor student) *or* via Skype (if non-Baylor student)]. The journal exercise is expected to take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The journal exercise will be sent to you immediately following the research interview via email. You will have one week to complete the journal exercise.

Reasons to Participate

Understanding how participation in outdoor adventure activities affects life purpose, meaning, or the good life in college students remains relatively unexplored. Your participation in this research study will help both enthusiasts and directors of outdoor adventure activities better comprehend the effects of engagement in outdoor adventure activities, particularly as they relate to one's life purpose, meaning in life, or one's sense of the good life.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this invitation. I recognize that as a college student you are very busy. However, I believe your participation in this research study, including your insights and reflections on previous outdoor adventure experiences and life purpose, will profit you and other outdoor adventurers who enjoy engaging in outdoor adventure activities. I look forward to hearing from you, and I will check in again with you soon if I have not received a reply concerning your participation in this research study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Best,

Kayla Molnar, M.S. Ed. Candidate

Baylor University | Higher Education & Student Affairs

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Baylor University
School of Education, Higher Education and Student Affairs

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Exploring Connections between College Students' Purpose and Deliberate Outdoor Adventure Activities

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kayla Ann Molnar

SUPPORTED BY: Baylor University

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to understand the effects of traditional college students' participation in deliberate outdoor adventure activities on one's reflexivity as it relates to their life purpose. We are asking you to take part in this study because you were identified by your institution's outdoor adventure (or equivalent) program director as an individual who within the last three to five months participated in an outdoor adventure experience sponsored either commercially, educationally, or personally.

Study activities: If you choose to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview about your experiences with deliberate outdoor adventure activities and life purpose. These interviews will be audio recorded.
- Complete a post-interview journal prompt online regarding your experiences in deliberate outdoor adventure activities and life purpose.

Risks and Benefits:

To the best of our knowledge, taking part in this study should not harm you. However, should feel emotional or upset when answering some of these questions, you are welcome to stop the interview or decline to answer any questions.

Interviews

You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. Tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.

Journal Exercise

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Possible Benefits

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include increased awareness of self as influenced by engagement in deliberate outdoor adventure activities. Others may also benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

Confidentiality:

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet, which could include illegal interception of the data by another party. If you are concerned about your data security, you should not participate in this research.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by storing all records on a password protected computer as well as in a password-protected online folder that only the principle researcher and her faculty advisor may access. Additionally, we will label all study information with a code (pseudonym) instead of your name. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Compensation:

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Questions or concerns about this research study

You can call us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our telephone numbers are listed below:

Kayla Ann Molnar
Kayla_Herman@baylor.edu
281.593.5101
Higher Education and Student Affairs Graduate
Student May be reached during the hours of 8 a.m. –
5:00 p.m.

Dr. Perry Glanzer
Perry_Glanzer@baylor.edu
254.710.581
Professor, Department of Educational
Administration May be reached during the hours of
8 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

If you want to speak with someone not directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-1438.

You can talk to them about:

- Your rights as a research subject
- Your concerns about the research
- A complaint about the research

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to stop at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. Information already collected about you cannot be deleted.

By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, you are providing consent.

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

A. Introduction

- Basics about the interview:
 - Thank interviewee for their cooperation and commitment to research.
 - Introduce study.
- Confidentiality:
 - Notify interviewee that I'll be audio-recording the interview to ensure all information regarding the topic of interest is collected. These recordings will not be shared with anyone except with faculty advisor when necessary.
 - Assure interviewee that what they share is completely confidential, and I will not break confidentiality unless they told me they intended to harm either themselves or someone else, or if someone else intends to harm them.
 - Ask interviewee to share freely their perceptions and experiences rather than try to shape their responses into what they think I want to hear.
 - Ask interviewee if they have any questions.
 - Ask interviewee to read the consent form before proceeding. By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, participants are providing consent.

B. Background Information

1. What is your classification (e. g., first year, sophomore, junior, senior)?
2. What are you studying in college (major/minor)?

C. Outdoor Adventure Experiences

1. How did you begin engaging in outdoor adventure activities and these types of pursuits? What/who influenced you to get involved in this activity?
2. Have you participated in any form of outdoor adventure in the past three to five months? [IF YES] Would you describe what sorts of activities you engaged in and where these activities took place in proximity to either your college or university or your hometown? Was this a personal, commercial, or a college- or university-affiliated trip?
3. Would you mind describing your most memorable outdoor adventure experience (positive or negative), including what activities you participated in, who you were with, and where your trip took place?
 - a. What specifically made this trip so memorable?

- i. (Factors [people you were with, nature, etc.], felt emotions, the activity itself, etc.)
- 4. Generally:
 - a. How often would you say you engage in outdoor adventure activities, either personally, commercially, or through your college or university?
 - b. What type(s) of outdoor adventure activity do you participate in?
 - c. With whom do you participate in these activities?
 - d. Why do you participate in these types of activities? What motivates you to engage in these types of experiences?
- 5. What specific aspect(s) of outdoor adventure activities/experiences have impacted you?
 - a. What element(s) of these outdoor adventure activities/experiences do you deem to be influential?
- 6. How does participating in outdoor adventure experiences affect you, if at all? In other words, what are the personal outcomes generated as a result of participation in outdoor adventure experiences?
- 7. When you participate in outdoor adventure pursuits, what emotions/feelings do you experience? Why?

D. Purpose, Meaning, and the Good Life

- 1. As mentioned briefly in the introduction of this interview, I am also interested in how college students think about their life purpose.
 - a. “Do you have a sense of purpose in your life, or is this something you are still trying to figure out? Or maybe questions of purpose just aren’t all that important to you right now” (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016).
 - i. [IF YES] Can you tell me how you developed your purpose?
 - 1. Has outdoor adventure played a role in your development of your purpose or your journey to figure out your purpose?
 - a. [IF YES] How so?
 - i. Can you describe a particular instance in which participation in outdoor adventure activities spurred your thoughts about your life purpose?
 - ii. What is it about engagement in outdoor adventure activities that increases your understanding of your life purpose?
 - 1. (External environment, discussions, solitude, felt emotion, etc.)
 - b. [IF NO] [IF NO] Okay. What about questions related to meaning of your life? [NOTE: *Substitute ‘meaning’ for ‘purpose’ for in parts E and F of interview.*]

- c. [IF NO] Okay. What about questions related to your sense of the good life? [NOTE: *Substitute 'good life' for 'purpose' in parts E and F of interview.*]
 - ii. [IF NO] Are there different types of purposes you're considering?
[IF YES] What are they?
- 2. "What gives your life meaning? What makes life worth living for you" (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016)?
- 3. What would living a 'good life' look like to you?

E. Conclusion

- 1. "Did you expect college to help you think about issues of purpose in your life, or not? Do you now" (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016)?
- 2. "Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we haven't covered" (Glanzer, Hill, & Johnson, 2016)?

APPENDIX E

Journal Exercise

Outdoor Adventure Experiences

1. What are some additional outdoor adventure activities/experiences (either positive or negative) that you feel made an impact on your life that you did not mention in the interview? What specifically made these activities/experiences so impactful?
2. How does participation in outdoor adventure activity influence your thinking about your life purpose, if at all?

Purpose

1. What does purposeful living mean to you? How would you describe a purposeful life?
2. Do you feel you are living your life purposefully currently? If so, can you tell me how you're living purposefully? If you don't think you're living your life purposefully, what do you believe would make your life more purposeful?

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