

1994

## Moods of 3-Week and 5-Week Outdoor Expedition Participants

Pamela E. Foti

*Northern Arizona University*

Suzanne R. Daiss

*Northern Arizona University*

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Foti, Pamela E. and Daiss, Suzanne R. (1994) "Moods of 3-Week and 5-Week Outdoor Expedition Participants," *Research in Outdoor Education*: Vol. 2, Article 13.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded/vol2/iss1/13>

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

## MOODS OF 3-WEEK AND 5-WEEK OUTDOOR EXPEDITION PARTICIPANTS

Pamela E. Foti  
Northern Arizona University

Suzanne R. Daiss  
Northern Arizona University

Current social trends indicate that participation in outdoor recreation expeditions as an option for challenge and adventure may increase. Outdoor recreation expeditions are defined here as resource-based experiences using non-motorized transportation and self-sufficient operation for an extended period (minimum of 3 weeks for this study). These expeditions may include activities such as backpacking, horsepacking, dogsledding, kayaking, and canoeing. While outdoor recreation expedition leaders prepare their participants for the physical rigors that may occur, many leaders neither understand nor prepare their members for the psychological aspects of expedition participation. In fact, there has been little research completed on the psychological aspects of participants while engaged in outdoor recreation expeditions.

The research available on outdoor expeditions has focused mainly on the therapeutic benefits of outdoor recreation expeditions, group dynamics, and group cohesion. Essentially, no effort has been placed on the individual's psychological states and how they change over the course of the expedition. A significant amount of research, however, has been conducted on the psychological aspects of sports participation, especially using the "Profile of Mood States" (POMS). The POMS was originally published by McNair, Lorr, and Droppleman in 1971 as a means of evaluating "right now" kinds of mood states in people undergoing counseling or psychotherapy. In the majority of sport studies, the POMS has been applied at a single evaluation point rather than over a period of time. This has resulted in a "snapshot" of an individual's moods during training, competition, or pre/post competition. Only a limited number of studies have focused on the cycle of moods that may accompany sports and recreation participation.

In an outdoor recreation expedition, this cycle of moods is extremely important due to the extended period of time in which the participants are involved in the activity.

The purpose of this research project was to investigate and document the cycle of mood states displayed by outdoor recreation expedition participants. It was hypothesized that an individual's moods pass through a predictable cycle during the beginning, middle, and end phases of a 3-week to 5-week outdoor expedition. This cycle would include fluctuations in mood states such as anger/hostility, confusion/bewilderment, depression/dejection, fatigue, tension/anxiety, and vigor. It was anticipated that tension/anxiety would be high in the beginning, medium to high in the middle, and then low at the end. Depression/dejection was expected to be low in the beginning, high in the middle, and medium to low at the end. Anger/hostility was hypothesized to low in the beginning, high in the middle, and low at the end. Vigor/activity was anticipated to be high in the beginning, low in the middle, and high at the end. It was expected that fatigue/inertia would be high in the beginning, low in the middle, and then medium to low at the end. Finally, confusion/bewilderment was predicted to be high in the beginning, then low in the middle and end.

The study population consisted of participants of the Wilderness Education Association's (WEA) 3-week and 5-week expeditions for the calendar year of 1991. A total of 71 complete cases were collected during the study period. The mood cycles were determined using the POMS. In addition to completing the POMS, participants were instructed to respond to the following question on the back of the form: "Is there anything that happened over the past 48 hours that would have a significant impact on your mood state?" The POMS was administered

The authors may be contacted c/o Dr. Pamela Foti, Associate Professor, Forestry Dept., Northern Arizona University, Box 15018, Flagstaff, AZ, 86011, (602) 523-6196.

to the 3-week and 5-week expedition participants at the beginning of the expedition and every other day of the expedition thereafter. For analysis, the data was graphed by expedition length and gender collectively. Mood scores were calculated for beginning, middle, and end sections of the expedition. The beginning, middle, and end scores for 3-week, 5-week, and gender were tested for the null hypothesis using a t-test for unpaired groups.

Findings appear to indicate that there is a predictable range of moods during 3-week and 5-week outdoor expeditions. For example, in the beginning of an expedition, it was found that tension/anxiety was high and then decreased over the remainder of the expedition. Depression/ dejection was found to be elevated at the beginning, with a moderate level in the middle and a low level for the remainder of the expedition. Anger/hostility was moderate to high in the beginning and decreased throughout the remainder of the expedition. Fatigue/inertia was high in the beginning, low in the middle, and either moderate or low at the end. Finally, confusion/bewilderment was found to be high in the beginning and decreasing throughout the remainder of the expedition. Approximately 10-14 days into the expedition seems to be a pivotal period on 3-week and 5-week outdoor expeditions. It is not apparent whether it is physical demands or group dynamics which trigger the changes in moods.

This study documented trends in mood states and alerts leaders to times when groups may be in flux. The results show that there are consistent trends in groups. The intensity of moods may vary from group to

group slightly, but there seems to be certain key times when the psychological aspects of the group may inhibit full enjoyment and participation. When compared to 10-day short courses, it seems that mood trends follow similar patterns. It is speculated that participants may gauge their mood states to the amount of time available on the trip.

### References

- Cutler, B. (1988). Anything for a thrill. *American Demographics*, 38-41, 59, 61.
- Darst, P. W. (1980). *Outdoor adventure activities for school and recreation programs*. Minneapolis: Burgess.
- Ewert, A. (1989). *Outdoor adventure pursuits: Foundations, models, and theories*. Worthington, OH: Publishing Horizons.
- Johanson, K. (1984). *Accepted peer practices in adventure programming*. Boulder, CO: Association for Experiential Education.
- LeUnes, A., Hayward, S. A., & Daiss, S. (1988). Annotated bibliography on the profile of mood states in sport, 1975-1988. *Journal of Sport Behavior* 11 (3), 213-239.
- McNair, D., Lorr, M. & Droppleman, L. (1971). *Manual for the Profile of Mood States*. San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing Service.
- Petzoldt, P. (1984). *The new wilderness handbook*. New York: Norton.
- Sessoms, H., & Stevenson, J. (1981). *Leadership and group dynamics*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Simer, P., & Sullivan, J. (1983). *The National Outdoor Leadership School's wilderness guide*. New York: Simon and Schuster.